

## **Developing Arab-Islamic Tourism in the Middle East: An Economic Benefit or A Cultural Seclusion?**

*Masoud Imani Kalesar<sup>1</sup>*

### **Abstract**

The 9/11 Terrorist attack within American territory have had dramatic consequences for the global tourism market and was seen as an economic significant setback in industry history. Paradoxically, the Arab tourism sector did not suffer as expected considering the causes and scope of the crisis. In fact, intra-regional tourism boomed in post-2001 like never before, as many Arab citizens changed their traditional travel behaviors by fear of backlashes and Islamophobia and preferred to stay in the Middle East for vacations.

This paper is an attempt to present the emergence of these new tourism markets in the Middle East and to analyze them from a critical aspect.

**Key words:** Arabs, Culture, Economy, Islam, Middle East, Tourism

---

1. PhD of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India & Visiting Researcher in EUISS.

**E-mail:** imani.masoud@gmail.com

**Introduction**

The Middle East is endowed with vast natural, historical and cultural resources. The vestige of ancient civilizations and the richness of Arab and Islamic culture are major assets for the region's attractiveness. Yet the Arab World counts for only 3 per cent of international tourism and most of its tourism industry is devoted to leisure of western travelers. In comparison with other regions, especially Europe, regional and domestic markets largely remain underdeveloped. The percentage of Arab tourists in global tourism is only about 2.5 per cent of the total. In the same way, it is estimated that around 60 per cent of them used to head outside of the region for vacations.

For a long time, tourism besides pilgrimages had been seen as culturally undesirable or economically unnecessary by Arab authorities. Nevertheless, many economies of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, especially North African Arab States highly rely on tourism revenues. Tourism is seen as a vital sector that can bring jobs and hard currency, support indigenous sectors, spread of infrastructures and support for an outward oriented growth strategy enabling developing states to join the global market. It is also an effective tool of economic development that may offset economic hardships caused by restructuration in a liberalized global economy.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is among some governments' foremost priorities to constantly expand tourism in their countries and in the region as a whole. Tourist arrivals in the Middle East are however intrinsically conditioned by the geopolitical context, perceptions of stability, and security considerations in the region. Terrorism also is a regional predicament.

The 9/11 Terrorist attack within American territory have had dramatic consequences for the global tourism market and was seen as an economic significant setback in industry history. Paradoxically, the Arab tourism sector did not suffer as expected considering the causes and scope of the crisis. In fact, intra-regional tourism boomed in post-

---

1. It also will have hybrid cultural impacts: favorable and adverse.

2001 like never before, as many Arab citizens changed their traditional travel behaviors by fear of backlashes and Islamophobia and preferred to stay in the Middle East for vacations.

The sudden expansion of intra-regional flows and its consequences immediately sparked off interests by Arab governments, tourism actors, international observers and academics and was referred to as 'Arab Tourism'. At the same time, this phenomenon shed light on the specific needs and expectations of Muslim vacationers, who may prefer to remain within a familiar culture while travelling. This particular segment of the tourism market has been defined as 'Islamic Tourism'. More generally, Islamic Tourism refers to tourism mainly by Muslims, although it can extend to non-Muslims motivated to travel in the Muslim world. (Al-Hamarneh, 2008) & (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2009) It materializes in more Islamic organized tourist programs and destinations. Islamic Tourism is now considered as a promising market with high demand considering the size of the Muslim community in the Middle East and in the world, and a major new trend for the Middle Eastern tourism industry.

Therefore, Arab authorities have quickly embraced this emerging tendency and dedicate increasing energy and investments to promote these new dynamic segments. But the emergence of such identity-based tourism practices raised new concerns on their motives and implications, considering that most of these new travel patterns somehow emerged in reaction to cultural tensions and misunderstandings with Western countries in the specific post-9/11 global context.

This paper is an attempt to present the emergence of these new tourism markets in the Middle East and to analyze them from a critical aspect. Why are Arab states interested in developing intra-regional and intra-Muslims tourism flows? What are the main motives explaining the recent huge promotion of Arab and Islamic Tourism?

Is the new focus on Arab and Islamic tourism by Arab

governments mainly motivated by financial gains, or does it have some more cultural and political grounds, by trying to promote Islamic culture and by creating a distance with international tourism? Expectations of considerable economic benefits and economic integration seem to be at first a major driving force for investments in these new profitable segments, since it is increasingly necessary for Arab states to find reliable alternative sources of revenues; but we wonder if there could be some more culturally-related reasons to encourage regional flows, for instance in order to strengthen community bounds and to express a cultural specificity.

### **Recovering Tourism Industry in Arab Countries**

The 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington and the following launching of a war in Iraq had strong disruptive effects on international tourism by creating a worldwide insecurity feeling and paranoia. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) registered in October 2001 a worldwide drop of 11 per cent in tourist arrivals and 20 to 30 per cent decrease in travel reservations during the months following the attacks.

The global tourism arrivals experienced their first decline since 1982. The Arab Muslim origin of the hijackers and the recognition of the Islamist fundamentalist group Al Qaeda as the instigator of the bombing contributed to mostly directing and increasing suspicions toward not only Muslim people but also the Middle East. The definition in 2002 by George W. Bush of an 'Axis of Evil' constituted of the rogues states such as Iraq and completed by John Bolton's addition of Libya, Syria largely brought the focus on the dangerousness and inhospitable character of the countries of the region.

As Hazbun notes, "*the 'neighborhood effect' has been a central impediment to tourism development across even the most stable countries of the region*". (Hazbun, 2006) It means that any act of violence or destabilization in the region has a direct negative impact on tourism

industries of all Arab countries, mostly because Western tourists have a uniform and predominantly prejudiced negative image of the Middle East. As a result of this 'crisis of confidence' and fear of a 'clash of civilization', the Middle East suffered in 2001 the largest regional decline of 30 per cent. Tourist arrivals dropped by 1.3 per cent and tourism receipts by 5.2 per cent. According to the WTO, '*Talk of the 'Axis of evil' is causing potential travelers to rethink travel to the Middle East and North Africa region*'. (World Tourism Global Trends Reports, 2007) Therefore, 60 to 70 per cent of reservations in North Africa, Jordan and Egypt were cancelled. Tunisia saw a decline of 38 per cent of arrivals, especially from its biggest markets Germany and France. Most of the 14 per cent of decrease in Moroccan tourism was due to diminution of Western tourists: 40 per cent less Americans, 25 per cent less Italians and 17 per cent less Germans in 2001. Hotels occupancy levels in Dubai fell to 20 per cent. However, this pessimist trend happened to be short-lived. (Al-Aïdi, Autumn 2001)

As Ala Al-Hamarneh and Christian Steiner observed '*the predicted wide-ranging collapse of the tourism industry in the Arab countries after the attacks did not take place*'. (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004)

Data from 2002-2003 show signs of a rapid recovery for most of Arab tourism industries. In 2002, the Middle East surprisingly experienced the highest growth rate in tourist arrivals of the world with 16.7 per cent. In 2004, the overall growth level reached 20.4 per cent, with 16 per cent of supplementary arrivals for Lebanon, 9.4 per cent for UAE and 9 per cent for Tunisia. The Middle East registered in 2004 three times more tourists than in 1994, i.e. 35 millions. The tourism receipts for Egypt, Jordan and UAE grew by 24.81 per cent between 2001 and 2002. Unexpectedly, while the USA suffered huge loss in tourism after 9/11, the Middle East region experienced a rapid and 'big bounce back'. (World Tourism Global Trends Reports, 2008)

For most observers, this speedy recovery of tourism industries in the Middle East has been due to the compensation of the loss of

international tourists by the redirection and expansion of intraregional flows of Arab tourists. In the years following the attacks to the World Trade Center, most of the Arab countries have recorded unprecedented arrivals of tourists from inside the region, mostly from the Persian Gulf. Syria and Lebanon appeared as favorite destinations. In 2002, the number of tourists in Syria increased by 25 per cent, among which majority were Iraqis or Persian Gulf citizens. For example, it is reported that the number of Iraqi tourists visited Syria increased by 68 per cent between 2001 and 2002. Syria received 40 per cent more Qataris, 22 per cent more Kuwaitis and 12 per cent more Yemenis. (Al-Hakeem, July 1, 2006)

The global context seemed even more profitable to the Lebanese tourism industry, which emerged as the 'big winner' with more than 1 million visitors in the same period. Among those, only 3 per cent were non-Arab tourists, while 59 per cent were of Arab origin and 38 per cent of Lebanese origin. The Saudis share of tourism in Lebanon jumped from 7.7 per cent in 1995 to 15.1 per cent in 2001 and to 23.6 in 2002. Dubai remained the 'epicenter of the rebound' and the prime vacation destination for Arabs, especially from inside the Persian Gulf. Smaller players like Jordan and Egypt also largely benefited from this redirection of Arab travel patterns. Jordan received 25 per cent more tourists from the Middle East region in 2001, while they consisted 22.5 per cent in Egypt. The share of tourist arrivals from within the Middle East region clearly expanded between 2001 and 2004 from 22.4 per cent to 40.8 per cent. Data for 2009 still record more than 4.8 million Arab tourists travelling in neighboring countries. At the same time, the share of Arab visitors to the USA and to Europe dropped respectively by 50 and 30 per cent. (World Tourism Global Trends Reports, 2009)

This rapid change in vacations plans following the 9/11 attacks can mostly be understood as a 'protective and defensive' move against growing 'Islamophobia' and upsurge of anti-Muslims behaviors in

Western countries. As Al-Hamarneh and Steiner wrote, *'images of Arabs, Muslims, and Islam in North America and Europe have suffered immensely since the September 11 attacks. The fact that the terrorists were of Muslim and Arab origin gave a major push to racist attitudes in Western societies'*. (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004)

The global shock provoked by the 9/11 was reinforced by a series of Islamist terrorist attacks directly aimed tourists in Jerba, Bali, Casablanca, or Amman between 2001 and 2005, creating a climate of psychosis. Consequently, Muslims suffered severe stigmatization and intolerance from Western societies, resulting in unfriendly and racist behaviors, increased bureaucratic hassles and strict security checks with tourists originating from the Middle East. Therefore, most of Arab tourists preferred to avoid travelling in the USA and in Europe in the period following the 9/11 events and decide to spend their holidays in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon or Egypt instead. *'These destinations were accessible by land, making them affordable destinations for large families.'* (Hazbun, March 2003) Therefore, *'The spontaneous reaction of Arab and Muslim tourists, who spent their holidays in the region and avoided European and North American destinations, saved many national tourism industries from collapse'* (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004)

For Muslims and Arabs from the Middle East, Dubai is becoming a favorite destination for short holidays. Security, near-home tourist locations, and common culture are primary reasons for the choice of destinations after September 11. For Arabs and Muslims, the feeling of being misunderstood and unwelcome in non-Muslim countries had increased. Over-reactions, ignorance, and xenophobia, difficulties to get visas (especially in European, North American and Australian airports and hotels) forced many people to change their traditional holiday destinations.

### **Arab-Islamic Tourism: Initiations and Policies**

This shift in Arab travel patterns and domestic flows was quickly

understood and mobilized by governments of the region. Though intraregional exchanges preexisted in the region and were already discussed as a potential alternative tourism market since the beginning of the 1990s. However, 9/11 events accelerated the process and brought light on the phenomena. Thus, Arab and Islamic tourism received more serious attention, creating a dynamic of discussion and initiatives to foster and develop this sector. *'The tourism industry in the Arab World responded to the negative publicity caused by the terrorist attacks with within-region promotions and marketing tactics.'* (Abdullah, December 18, 2007) Beside short term recovery measures in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, that we aiming at keeping the tourism industry afloat by trying to attract Arab and Muslim tourists, a longer term new interest for the development of an intra-regional tourism market clearly appeared from that period onward.

Governments of Arab states acknowledged that the lack of domestic tourism and very weak intra-regional flows constituted the basis of the crisis by putting the whole tourism industry under main dependency of the fluctuations in international tourists' arrivals. Even though the importance of regional flows for the region was known from the 1990's, the overall promotion and marketing of this segment of the tourism market in the Middle East had been largely ignored and underestimated before 2001. Meanwhile most of the investments and infrastructures planning in the region continued to primarily target foreign tourists. Arab and Muslim countries have since then largely reshaped their strategies toward more intra-Arab and intra-Muslim cooperation and coordination in the field related to tourism. (Al-Hamarneh, March-April 2005)

Multilateral institutions such as the Arab League highlighted from 2001 onward the need for growing investment in intra-regional tourism. The Amman 2001 Arab League summit's final communiqué acknowledges *"the relatively growing importance of the tourism sector on the Arab level and the competition this sector is facing on the international*

level." (Amman Arab League Summit, 2001) It therefore calls upon states to "*spur inter-Arab tourist activities*" by supporting investments, promoting transportation services, and facilitating entry. This concern is repeatedly asserted in every final statements of the League since then. The 2008 Damascus Summit's final document states that '*Arab leaders urged the Arab states to study the enactment of laws and regulations to encourage inter-Arab tourism*'. (Damascus Arab League Summit, 2008) In 2001, Uthman Al-Aïdi was already foreseeing potentially necessary reforms to facilitate and sponsor intra-regional tourism when he said '*It is necessary to lift all restrictions imposed on Arab countries which limit tourist influx as these have a negative impact on the promotion of Arab National Tourism and on the economy of Arab countries.*' (Al-Aïdi, Autumn 2001)

Among his recommendations, inspired by the declarations of the Executive Committee of Arab Tourism Ministers were: the need to boost intraregional transportation by opening air routes for Arab airlines and offering priority fares to Arab tourists, by developing road infrastructures and highways, creating rest houses and services along highways, limiting taxes on individual cars or buses in order to facilitate movements between Arab countries; and finally promoting sea transport by joining Arab seaports and opening new shipping ways. At the same time, entry visas should be excluded for Arab and Muslim tourists and the role of Arab media in helping to promote regional tourism by broadcasting informative and marketing programs on tourism destinations should be highlighted. He insisted that '*marketing Arab tourism as Arab in character and dominated by Arab features, with its own traditions and customs, is also convenient for the requirements of Arab tourism.*' (Al-Aïdi, Autumn 2001)

Resolutions taken by Arab governments led to the creation of several inter-governmental cooperative organizations such as the Arab Tourism Ministerial Council aimed at implementing recommendations of the Arab League and promoting the Arab

tourism industry through the development of inter-Arab Tourism. At its June 2001 meeting, the Council addressed efforts to boost inter-Arab tourism and how the Arab media could help offset negative images of the region and Islamophobia (Hazbun, 2008). At the occasion of the 2009 Council in Sanaa, Prince Sultan bin Salman, chairman of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities reaffirmed that *“the meeting will underline the need to promote inter-Arab tourism and achieve tourism integration as a step toward economic integration of Arab states. The tourism sector is upbeat in the Arab world as inter-regional and domestic travel is on the rise,”* and called for enhancement of joint Arab work in the field of tourism. (Abdullah, December 18, 2007)

The Arab Tourism Organization was set up by the Arab League of Nations as an independent body to further the development of the tourism sector throughout its member countries. Headed by Bandar Al-Feihad and based in Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, it recently urged for a stronger inter-Arab flow and signed in 2007 an agreement with the Siraj Capital Ltd. Investment Company to create an Arab Tourism Bank. This step was taken according to a resolution made by the Arab ministers of Tourism. According to Siraj Capital Ltd press release, the main purpose of the ATB would be capitalizing \$2 Billion by serving all Arab countries to structure and manage several investment funds. Though investment would happen exclusively and directly in certain Arab countries, the ATB and Siraj Capital would also target other investment funds focusing on the other tourism sectors such as hotels, travel services, restaurants, sports tourism, entertainment and touristic venues, and health and religious tourism throughout the Arab world. Similarly, the first Arab World Travel and Tourism Exchange conference was successfully organized in 2003 in Beirut and brought together the most prominent figures of the Arab tourism industry. (Florian, May 6, 2008)

At the same time, several innovative steps were taken to increase

cooperation among Muslim states and to promote Islamic tourism. International tourists arriving in Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) countries increased to 92.4 million in 2004 from 34.1 million in 1990, with an annual growth rate of around 7.4 per cent, exceeding the international growth rate and ratios of conventional tourist attractions, making it an attractive potential market. From October 2000 onward, The Islamic Conference for Minister of Tourism (ICMT) annually gathers OIC member States representatives and this with growing success. (Islamic Conference of Ministers of Tourism of the OIC Member states, October 2001) From the first meeting of the conference in 2000 in Iran and the formulation of the Esfahan declaration till the 2008 meeting in Syria, the number of participants increased from 31 states to 57. The Conference aims at enhancing cooperation and common tourism strategies by formulating joint efforts at collective marketing, joint investments, mutual financial support, and common code of behavior. Its also organize collective experts' meetings and investment forums.

However, the Conference mostly aims at enouncing a collective strategy to increase intra-Muslim and Islamic tourism by defining programs of action and goals for the promotion and development of tourism in the Islamic world. This includes for example financial support in tourism investments and activities by the Islamic Bank for Development; establishment of a joint intra-Muslim center for tourism marketing and promotion; easing of visa restrictions and thus enlarging of travel options between Muslim countries; easing of the intra-Muslim cash-flow and investment restrictions; and promotion of infrastructures and means of transports with moderates fares.

Every year, the OIC organizes the Global Islamic Tourism Conference and Exhibition, an annual forum for the global Islamic tourism industry. It aims at '*gathering leading relevant regional and international travel and tourism professionals to network and unlock the business potential within the Islamic tourism industry around the world.*'

(GITCE website, Retrieved on: Spring 2010) In 2008, the GITCE was the occasion to establish a World Secretariat on Islamic Tourism and to define the seven wonders of the Islamic World. As Al-Hamarneh has noted, *'Turkey, Iran and the Middle Asian countries are becoming important export tourist markets to UAE and Egypt. The Persian Gulf countries are becoming important export tourist markets to Malaysia and Indonesia. Traditional Arab, and Muslim-oriented destinations are booming (Cairo, Beirut, Bahrain) and new ones aim to place themselves on the Arab and Muslim tourist maps (Sharjah, Ain Sukhna, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur).'*' (Al-Hamarneh, November-December 2004)

Ironically enough, on the very morning of 9/11, the new London-based bilingual quarterly of tourism in the Islamic world, *'Islamic Tourism'* was presented in Damascus by its publisher Abdel Sahib Al-Shakiry. It has since then become a major source of information and discussion on the nature and promotion of tourism between Muslim countries. It aims at providing a reflection on the possibilities offered by the development of new forms of tourism and especially by the growth of Arab national tourism and religiously inspired travels. It also calls for the creation of faculties and academic researches dedicated to the study of this phenomenon and thus largely contributed to raising the interest on these issues. (Al-Shakiry, Autumn 2001)

The concrete implementation of these recommendations mainly occurred in the form of increased bilateral cooperation between the states of the region. Since 2001, new policies emerged to facilitate cross-border travel especially for Arab and Muslim citizens. Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon eliminated visa requirements for tourists from the Persian Gulf in order to encourage Arab tourism. The Persian Gulf States have started to plan for an internal common visa and Saudi authorities had the idea of creating an 'Umrah' visa to foster off-season religious tourism. Many countries of the region tend to increase their economical cooperation resulting in removal of financial and administrative constraints or unification of transport

and transit fees. The bilateral agreements between Egypt and Jordan led to the opening in 2003 of a maritime route between Aqaba and Sharm El Sheik. In 2008, Syrian Minister of Tourism Saadallah Agha al-Qalaa called for simplifying entry procedures in border checkpoints and adopting an open air policy among member countries' airports. (E-Turbo News, April 7, 2008)

### **Economic Potential of Arab-Islamic Tourism**

The importance of intra-Arab tourism has mostly been revealed after the post 9/11 downfall of the tourism, from which most of the Arab countries were able to recover quickly due to their ability to attract more tourists from the region and to diminish their dependence on Western markets. Since then, Arab-Islamic tourism has been more and more seen as a profitable emerging new tourism market with huge economic potentials and investment possibilities.

Tourism constitutes one of the major economic sectors in terms of employment capacities and source of foreign exchange earnings in many MENA states which have in part relied on its gains to implement liberalization reforms. In turn, the stability of many economies of the region largely depends on the profitability of tourism and any downturn in arrivals can have disastrous economic consequences. According to UNWTO reports, direct and indirect effects of tourism contribute for 9 per cent of total employment (1 in every 11 jobs) in the Middle East and were expected to rise by 1 in 10 jobs by 2010. The tourism sector also constitutes 9.6 per cent of the GDP (158 bn \$) of the region in 2009 and 13.4 per cent of export earnings (100 bn \$), expected to grow to 226.8 bn \$ in 10 years. (Global Futures and Foresight, 2007) Some economies are highly dependent on tourism. Tourism receipts in the Egyptian current account increased from \$304 million in 1982–83 to \$6.429 billion in 2004–05. It is the largest single source of foreign exchange earnings for the Egyptian economy.

In the last two decades, tourism offered more jobs than any other sectors: its directly provides jobs to one million Egyptians, and indirectly to five millions. No other economic sectors experienced the same impressive growth over the last 30 years. In 2004, all indirect revenues counted for almost 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the national GDP. Similarly in Tunisia and Morocco, tourism is in first position among exported products and services. It counts for 5 to 6 per cent of the GDP and covers over 40 per cent of trade deficits. In Tunisia, more than 100,000 persons indirectly depend on tourism for employment. In Dubai, tourism counts for 12 per cent of the GDP and annually brings more than 700 million \$ benefits to the Emirate. These revenues and hard currency are key factors in the economies of the MENA region as they help to finance public spending, to overcome recurrent balance for payments problems and budget deficits, to absorb large portions of the work force from traditional sectors with minimum training and to consolidate the integration of the Arab economies into globalization. However, the bulk of the tourism sector was and still is constituted and directed toward European and American travelers.

The share of national and domestic tourism in the Middle East counting for 42 per cent remains small compared to 58 per cent of expatriate tourism. In Europe for example, 88 per cent of tourism is national or regional. MENA states especially in North Africa mostly focused since the 1970s on leisure and relaxation tourism in the form of enclave beach resorts or packaged tours to historical sites to cater for the European market. Therefore, tourism flows to these locations and the rest of the region have long been hampered by regional political instability and negative external perceptions of the region.

Moreover the national economies have been highly dependent and hampered by the fluctuations of tourists arrivals according to the upsurges of violent events affecting the region, such as the Persian Gulf War, the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts or terrorist attacks on foreigners. Thus, Arab states look for alternatives to overcome these

obstacles in order to constantly benefit from tourism revenues and in that context, intra-regional tourism seems to be a serious and encouraging solution. In fact, Arab regional flows not only are less vulnerable to regional political instabilities but Arab tourists also have different travel behaviors, as Waleed Hazbun noted : *'These tourists, do not generally stay at tourist hotels, go to tourist restaurants, and visit tourist sites typically popular with non-Arab international tourists (such as Roman ruins). In contrast to international tourists, Arab tourists generally travel in the summer months, rent long term apartments, and engage in family-oriented activities such as visiting amusement parks and shopping'*. (Hazbun, March 2003)

After 2001, most governments realized the need to *'more cater to the demand of Arab tourists who usually opt for parks, recreational centers and bungalows in natural and open spaces.'*(AFP, November 12, 2007). These specific consumer patterns benefit to a larger number of local tourism actors in contrast with standardized large-scale Western tourism practices and enclave tourism which tend to limit contacts with and integration of local businesses. Similarity of cultural values and way of life also contribute in making Arab-Islamic tourism more adapted and more accepted by local populations.

Current underdevelopments of this new market and positive prospects on increasing regional flows in coming years offer encouraging perspectives of investments and benefits in this sector, which explain the growing interest by Arab governments and private investors. In 2007, the World Travel Market Global Trend Report forecasted that the number of inbound tourists in the Middle East will grow by 66 per cent between now and 2011, and that more than 55 million people will be visiting the region by that time. Global Futures and Foresight report 2007 estimated the number of tourists in the region to be more than 150 million in 2020. (Ian, May 22, 2008) Fiona Jeffery, chairman of World Travel Market underlined that *'a large portion of these will be intra-regional, boosted by increased transport*

*connectivity between cities and better infrastructures*'. (Al-Shakiry, May-June 2006) At the same time, WTM foresees that tourism revenues in the Middle East in 2011 will reach 51 billion dollars, twice as more than current revenues. The report also predicts the rise of tourism that follows Muslim precepts. Saeed Ahmed Mohammed bin Butti, chairman of Al Dhiafa Holding and Jinan Hotels and Resorts believes that there is a need to enhance tourism and services in Arab countries, as tourism contributed a substantial amount to the Arab world's gross domestic product. According to him, "*Arab tourism is the main source of tourism income, as the Arab tourist spends more and stays longer, and that's why occasional tourism should be developed and supported by providing a perfect setting for investments, facilitating the movement of Arab assets, facilitating travel between Arab countries.*" (Al-Shakiry, May-June 2006)

According to the WTO, Arabian tourists spend 10 to 50 per cent more than the average traveler. For the year 2008, spending on travel and tourism in the region accounted for \$3.63 trillion. Residents from the GCC countries are estimated to spend \$20 billion on annual vacations, with Saudi Arabian tourists spending \$8.5 billion, followed by Kuwaiti and tourists from UAE (\$5 billion each), Qatari tourists (\$600 million), Omani tourists (\$400 million), and Bahraini tourists (\$300 million). (Travel and Tourism News Middle East, 2008-09) Therefore, the Jordan Tourist Centre recently engaged a new promotional campaign targeting the Persian Gulf market and ensured that the country had plenty of apartment's rentals available.

With 300 million Muslims in the Arab World and one billion worldwide, Islamic and religious tourism markets are also promising. According to the president of the World Religious Travel Organization, Kevin J. Wright, "*religious tourism is recognized as one of the most resilient markets in the travel industry. With more than 300 million global travelers annually, the faith-based travel and hospitality market provides destination management organizations, wholesalers,*

*suppliers and travel agents unprecedented opportunities for new business avenues and clientele."* (Hasharina, Murphy & Muhammad, 2006)

Religious tourism's contribution to the economy of the region is already significant as the sector is valued at \$18bn per year. Muslim travelers already count for 10 per cent of the world tourism market. In 2005, religious tourism accounted for 35 per cent of arrivals and was the second most important category of purpose of travel in the Middle East.

Ian Yeoman, professor of Tourism Management at Victoria University and futurologist specialized in travel concurs with Wright as he states that '*religious tourism vacations will grow by 50 per cent by 2010 both for Christians and Muslims*'. (Ian, May 22, 2008) He also noted that Islam is the fastest growing major religion in the world and the number of practicing Muslims will overtake Christians by 2040. According to him, the Middle East is the region of the world associated with religious tourism because it hosts major pilgrimages centers for Islam, Christianity and Judaism but is above all a special place among Muslims for Islam's holiest places such as Kaabah, Al-Nabawi Mosque or Baitul Muqaddis are located there. Pilgrimages to Mecca and other holy sites already are a huge industry and main source of income for Saudi Arabia. In 2005, 2.56 million Muslims took part in the Hajj, an 8848 per cent increase since 1930 and 33 per cent increase since 2004.

However, it is worthy to note that half of these pilgrims originated from Asian Muslim communities. (Islamic Tourism, October 25, 2009) Most pilgrims tend to stay longer and longer, approximately one month and to visit other sites across the country. The ministry of Hajj reports huge investments by the government to facilitate and increase pilgrimages, for example by expanding the two mosques in Mecca and Medina for a cost of \$11 billion and constructing more highways. The religious tourism sector could clearly help drive Middle East's industry revenues.

Muslim tourism, beyond pilgrimages, is still a largely untapped market, this mostly being due to the specific requirements and conditions of the Islamic way of life, which have not been taken into consideration and integrated into international leisure and hospitality strategies mostly modeled to fulfill needs of Western travelers. As Nazlida Muhammad and Noor Hasharina Hashim underlined, '*Based on the Islamic worldview of God, man and nature, tourism is part of the religion and travel is fundamental to Islam*'. (Hasharina, Murphy & Muhammad, 2006)

Travel is encouraged in order to lead a healthy and stress-less life, to strengthen the bounds of the *Ummah*, to increase one's knowledge of other cultures and to '*reinforce one's submission to God through the beauty and bounty of God's creation*'. (Hasharina, Murphy & Muhammad, 2006)

However, even during travelling, Muslims are requested to respect fundamental Islamic precepts such as prohibition of alcohol, non-halal food, gambling or mixing of men and women; following of Islamic dress, religious duties such as praying or fasting... Many Muslim tourists may have been discouraged from travelling across the region or internationally as they feared not to find touristic infrastructures or accommodations adapted to their lifestyles and respecting their beliefs. The development of a Muslim-friendly and Islam-compliant touristic environment thus offer huge prospects and is now referred to as 'Halal Tourism'. Islamic hotels are for example becoming increasingly popular in the Middle East. Among key features, a Shariah-compliant hotel includes serving of halal food, information on prayer times or availability of prayer rooms; women staff dressed according to Islamic norms; ban of alcohol; gender separated facilities such as lady-only swimming pools or ladies floors. The most popular Islamic hotel branch, the Jawhara group, exists in the Middle East and especially in Dubai since 25 years. Shazah hotels or Almulla Hospitality are planning to increase their

offer in coming years. According to Hani Lashin, General Manager of *Jawhara*, 'Islamic hotels will comprise at least 40 per cent of the market in the UAE within the next five years'. (Twinam, 2009)

Rates of occupancy in existing Islamic hotels in Dubai almost reach 100 per cent. Landmark Hotel Management based in the UAE plan to build ten new Shariah-compliant hotels and apartments across the Middle East by 2010. As the WTO report underlines, the forecasted growth of regional flows calls for 'tailored Halal tourism products and services' to be developed within the region to cater to this dynamic market. Therefore, halal transportation could also be developed by launching for example a Halal airline, which would provide Halal food, calls for prayers, Qu'rans in front seats, religious entertainment programs and separate sections for men and women, using the model of the budget airline set up by the Vatican in 2007 to transport pilgrims. Dubai's Ice bar is another example of Halal product, modeled on western models but serving no alcohol.

The 2009 Global Islamic Tourism Conference & Exhibition was combined with the second National Halal Conference and Exhibition, gathering Halal industry networks and organizing a three-day Global Islamic Food Festival. The Conference was re-entitled 'Islamic Tourism and Halal Week' and main goals were to strengthen the Halal industry and to tap the opportunities thereof. Among Halal tourism opportunities, the development of 'women only hotels' promises to be successful, especially in countries like Saudi Arabia where women still can not travel or check in without a male guarantor. The first 'Ladies floor' was created in 2007 in the Rosewood Cornice Hotel in Jeddah in response to a growing demand from Arab ladies and female travelers. The Chopard Floor at the Jumeirah Emirates Towers in Dubai also provides a female-only staff. The Luthan Hotel & Spa was the first entirely female-only hotel in the region and immediately reported 50 per cent occupancy after opening. Its clientele comprises non-Saudi businesswomen and Saudi

leisure guests. Dubai also launched women-only buses to encourage women to use public transport when travelling alone. (WTO, 2009) The report presents female-only accommodation as a major new trend in the Middle Eastern tourism industry. Egypt and Saudi Arabia are seen as key target markets for female-only concepts, since women account for almost half of their total population. In most of Middle Eastern countries, this market is significant as more women or businesswomen express the need or interest to travel but are limited by cultural, religious and social norms which stigmatize women travelling alone. This concept could also easily be exported to other countries or other sectors to cater for security needs of women.

WTO 2007 report however stressed on the fact that *'Middle East tourism is still missing out by targeting Muslims and non-Muslims in exactly the same way'*, therefore failing to exploit the full potential of Islamic tourism. (WTO 2007) As the scope for investment remains huge, the report urged the region, especially the Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia to more assertively promote the Islamic tourism market which is seen as a critical future economic sector for the Middle East.

Consequently, opportunities for investments in regional tourism infrastructure are huge. Rohit Talwar, CEO of Fast Future predicted the establishment of 900 new hotels in the MENA by 2020 and recalled that *'the sheer scale of spending on travel and tourism across the Middle East demands an equivalent investment in the supporting leisure landscape if the region is to succeed in attracting the visitor levels it is targeting'*. (Islamic Tourism, October 25, 2009)

Prospects to transform regional and religious tourism as money-making sectors are all the more encouraging considering the sustained rise in oil incomes in the region and the redirection of investments in the MENA. After 9/11, the tendency from Arab investors has been toward diversification of their assets and most of them chose to invest instead in ambitious projects in their region, especially in the tourism sector. The rise of petrodollars thus provides

a concrete financial source to further develop their Arab-Islamic tourism and to sustain infrastructures development, business and consumerism necessary to the growth of the sector. The growth of these new tourism niches would be highly beneficial for the MENA economies and private actors, and the perspective of economic gains is clearly a major motive for Arab governments and firms to invest to support these emerging markets. As Al-Hamarneh confirms, the economic concept of Islamic tourism considers intra-Muslim tourism *'either as new markets to be integrated in the existing tourism strategy, or as a possible replacement of the floundering and problematic European and North American markets after 2001.'* He adds that *'the economic concept is the most wide-spread and widely discussed in the Arab and Muslim worlds at different levels'*. (Al-Hamarneh, March-April 2005) It then becomes clear that for many tourism actors in the Middle East, the primary goal is to boost tourism revenues by taking advantages of new market segments and new destinations, in order to contribute to the economic development of the region.

#### **Beyond Money: A Cultural Isolationist Project?**

Islam, especially after 9/11 has been *'often associated with ultra-conservatism, terrorism, oppression and anti-Western sentiment by outsiders and the marketing of Islamic destinations can be a daunting task. The political tensions between the West and some Muslim countries have also reinforced mutual suspicions, which may be aggravated by media reporting.'* (Zamani-Farahani, Henderson, 2009) Samuel Huntington's theory on 'clash of civilization' gained new attention and a new credibility to underline and explain oppositions between Westerners and Arab/Muslims. In that context, discussions on promotion of a new 'Islamic' type of tourism were welcomed with reluctance and concerns. A. S. Shakiry, publisher of the *Islamic Tourism* magazine faced suspicious questions and uncertainties about the nature, motivations and aims of this new concept. (Al-Shakiry, January-February 2005)

The promotion of an Islam-based tourism or the sudden reorientation of Arab travelers might have been analyzed by foreign observers as either a religious strategy to foster fundamentalism or a political will to unite Arabs and Muslims together through emphasis on commonality of culture and values, in order to confront or oppose the West on civilizational basis. In that perspective, there would be political or ideological motives for Arab governments to encourage Arab-Islamic tourism in the region. Reasons explaining the new interest by Arab states in this market certainly go behind economic gains. As most official statements prove, the rise of intra-regional, intra-Muslim tourism is also perceived as a necessity and a chance to valorize Middle Eastern and Islamic cultural heritages and to encourage solidarity in the *Ummah*.

According to Al-Hamarneh, Islamic Tourism should also be understood as a cultural and religious concept which aims at including Islamic religious-cultural sites in tourism programs in order to revive the Islamic and Arabic cultures and to build cultural self-confidence. In that context, Middle Eastern authorities and tourism actors are re-discovering and rehabilitating '*second ranging marks of Islamic cultural heritage, such as shrines, tombs, old battle sites, ancient pilgrim routes etc.. and including them in special tourism programs*'. (Al-Hamarneh, 2008)

New tourism programs now promote sites such as Mu-ta and Mazar in Jordan, Islamic routes in Oman, shrines in Morocco or historic cities of Samarkand and Bukhara. This new market is taken very seriously by Saudi Arabian authorities who now try to diversify their tourism sector and to combine pilgrimages with leisure type activities and visits to other cultural sites. Saudi Arabia is spending millions to restore its heritage, for example the tombs of Mada'ine Saleh, former capital city of the Nabataea civilization or the historical city of Ad-Dar'iyah and tries to bring tourism in these regions by building road infrastructures and accommodations. Saudi Arabia is

indeed seen as the future leading state in terms of religious-cultural Islamic tourism, considering the number of historical wonders it contains and that have not been yet exploited, such as the tomb of Ahl Al Bayt or the Al Baki' region.

Several other Arab countries have already successfully managed to valorize and make good use of less known cultural vestiges: Egypt for example promoted the Al Hussein Mosque and the tomb of Mohammed Ibn Bakr. Syria also hosts several remarkable shrines such as Assayida Zainab and Assayida Roqaya Bent Al Imam Al Hussein or of the Prophet Yahia. The remains of some revered religious figures, such as Abdullah Ben Rawaha or Zaid Ibn Haretah are also well protected by the Jordanian state. Iraq also is hoping to attract numerous tourists to the holy sites of Najaf and Karbala in the peaceful future.

A. S. Shakiry largely pleaded in favor of a cultural interpretation of Arab-Islamic tourism. Restoring, safeguarding and promoting Islamic and Arabic relics of the past, especially holy places and mausoleums and creating a historical consciousness among believers are according to him essential. Sponsoring the conservation of important Islamic sites all over the Middle East but also in the rest of the world is not only a religious duty but also a way to reinforce Arab and Muslim cultural pride and unity: *'Would it not be time to give this type of tourism and our peoples, the attention they deserve, so we can be proud to announce it to other nations, and to make it a source of prosperity for our country and show consideration and respect for our history?' 'We hope that the issue of the restoration of the tombs of Al Baqia and the preservation of the sanctity of the graves of Muslims will receive attention and priority. Our respect for our history and the history of the protectors of our faith and good Muslims, will force the world to respect us, and vice versa...The restoration of Al Baqia, could have another wide-ranging benefit: rebuilding the unity of Muslims. For example, Saudi Arabia is not only sheltering the Kaaba and the tomb of the Prophet but also preserving the*

*history of Muslims with their various faiths and doctrines*" (Al-Shakiry, March-April 2008)

The revival of cultural awareness and defense of an Arab-Islamic cultural identity seem to have coincided and been partly motivated by post 9/11 denigration of Islam and wave of Islamophobia. In turn, it could have been the sign of a political will of community withdrawal and cultural isolation, by stressing on fundamental cultural differences with the West and rejection of a Western cultural domination.

As Al-Hamarneh suggests, there is clearly an urge to *'reorient tourist destinations towards less consumption and "western culture" loaded sites toward more Islamic historical, religious and cultural sites'*. In the same way, *"the cultural concept attempts to revive the Islamic and Arabic cultures in the discourse of tourism as a counterpart to the process of cultural globalization dominated by 'McDonaldization' and 'Cocalization' "*. (Al-Hamarneh, 2008)

Islamic Tourism also integrates more religious conservative motivations, which try to valorize a more conservative Islamic lifestyle and underline its incompatibility with Western type of tourism practices dominating the modern tourism industry. The demand for Islamic resorts, hotels or transportation reveals the reluctance of religious-conservative families and individuals to travel in liberal or western style locations and the condemnation of travel behaviors regarded as un-Islamic. The growing urge for more strict Islamic-conservative locations and programs tend to create a new *'Islamic tourist space'* and contain the risk of transforming into a more isolationist and exclusive *'community tourism'*.

However, the valorization of cultural specificities in the discourses of intra-Arab and intra-Muslims tourism instigators looks more like an attempt to spread a positive image of the Middle East and of Islam and to counterattack prejudices by encouraging a better understanding of the Arab-Islamic culture, than like a mere cultural isolation: *'there are resources and tourist treasures of heritage hidden under*

*the dust of time and space. These were the Islamic heritage which it belongs to the humanity, and which, if one draws attention to them, they would become a center that radiates civilization whose returns would be beneficial to their people and the world tourist sector' (Shakiry, June 2006) 'From this point of view, tourism, due to the opportunities it offers people of different religions and cultures to come to know each other, can play a major role in bringing people together, providing mutual understanding and peace between the people of the whole world, and not only between its rich persons.'* (Shakiry, March-April 2008)

The final recommendations from the October 2009 Forum of Islam and Tourism in Sana'a illustrate the multiplicity of motivations to subtend promotion of Arab-Islamic tourism by Arab rulers. On the one hand, most recommendations clearly emphasized *'the importance of activating inter-Arab tourism and encourage the Arab and Islamic peoples for their religion unity, belief, the convergence of customs and traditions, cultures and interests, and to achieve the strengthening of linkages, mutual benefits and science, and gain experience, knowledge and build bridges of trust'* (Article 7) The Forum also pointed up that *'tourism has a great role in identification of Islam and spreading of Islam'* (Article 3). But on the other hand, the will to make Islamic and Arabic culture better known and understood by other nations was also obvious: Tourism is seen as a means to *'remove what is inscribed in memory of the semi-invalid and doubt about Islam [...] in order to obtain positive impact on non-Muslims'* (Article 3) and to *'explain and disseminate Islamic culture and values of Islam and its teachings of tolerance'* (Article 6). (Forum of Islam and Tourism, October 12-13, 2009)

Moreover, as stated in article 4 of the Isfahan Declaration, *'the Forum emphasized the duty to protect and secure the tourist [...] and to deal with him to reflect the correct tolerant image of Islam, and achieve good reputation of Muslims and their homelands.'* ICTM members asserted the necessity to present Islamic monuments, sites and places as *'the common cultural heritage of the world'* (OIC Isfahan Declaration, 2000).

In its 2005 Resolution for Tourism Development, the ICTM recognized that besides contributing to enhancement of the solidarity of the *Ummah* and of the economic cooperation among OIC members, *'tourism plays a pivotal role in promoting economic, social and cultural interactions amongst nations contributing to international peace and security as well as international understanding'*.

Arab tourism ministers further *'acknowledged the importance of the emphasis place by the WTO on tourism as a means of promoting peace and dialogue among civilizations'*. (Ma'ayeh, June 5, 2001) In that perspective, the promotion of Islamic heritage and tourism has to be seen not as the expression of a cultural isolationist process but rather as a means to improve the knowledge and understanding of the Arab-Islamic culture in the Middle East and in the world.

In fact, most of the new touristic destinations labeled as 'Arab' or 'Islamic' in nature do not exclusively target Muslims but also welcome foreigners as long as they respect local cultural codes. For example, Islamic hotels appear to be increasingly popular among non-Muslims as well *'for their quiet, family-friendly approach'*. According to Hani Lashin, General Manager of the Jawhara Group in Dubai, 80 per cent of its clients are non-Muslims, mostly coming from Germany and Korea. Only 40 per cent of the hotel staff is Muslim. In the same way, women-only hotels also attract a lot of non-Arab, non-Muslim female travelers who feel more comfortable and more secure without the presence of men. (World Travel Market, 2007) For Al-Hamarneh, the trend toward promotion of Islamic tourism is mostly an adjustment to a new market segment and to new demands and an extra-option which will be inserted into main-stream tourism and evolve in parallel to other types of tourism in the Middle East. (Al-Hamarneh, 2008)

The general trend in the region is toward a diversification of the supply in order to satisfy and cater to the needs of the largest variety of tourists possible, be it conservative believers, liberal Muslims or

non-Muslims. The share of Arab tourists, especially Persian Gulf male citizens travelling to Lebanon or Egypt in order to enjoy a more liberal atmosphere and the availability of alcohol, nightclubs or prostitutes is also a very profitable market for local businesses in these countries.

However, examples of successful coexistence of different market segments exist. The city of Sharjah has been developed as the most conservative Arabic and Islamic touristic destination of the UAE. Alcohol, bars, nightclubs and public beaches are banned while traditional 'oriental' architecture dominates and Islamic-Arab identity is promoted. This development strategy enabled Sharjah to become an attractive destination for culturally-sensitive tourism. In 2003, more than 400,000 tourists spent more than one million nights in the Emirate. The city is only few kilometers away from the cosmopolitan, liberal, leisure-oriented city of Dubai, therefore attracting international tourists interested in discovering a more traditional and typical Arabian atmosphere as well.

Dubai is representative of the diversity of profiles targeted by new tourism strategies in the Middle East: visitors range from regional and international businessmen coming for international meetings or conferences and extended Arab families, interested in shopping and family-oriented activities; to young Arab males coming for fun and entertainment and foreign tourists interested in spending luxurious vacations in impressive hotels or beach resorts.

Arab-Islamic tourism appears finally to be one of the several new options that tourism professionals and authorities of the region are trying to promote: medical and spa tourism, conferences and incentives; ecological and sport tourism; event tourism (Dubai shopping Festival, Jerash Festival of Culture and Arts), Constructions of fully-integrated tourist complexes and tourist gated communities such as Elgouna, Makadi Bay, Taba Heights, Marina and Port Ghalib in Egypt, Yasmine Hammamet in Tunisia, Tala Bay in Jordan, Al-Aqah in the UAE are also on the rise. (Dabrowska, September-October 2004)

These new forms of tourism target both rich Arab tourists and traditional European and American markets. In fact, Arab authorities have since 2001 continuously tried to restore previous international tourist flows by low prices policies, easy visa processes or aggressive destination marketing, at the same time that they were producing efforts to promote intra-regional tourism. Clearly, the growth of a regional and religious tourism market does not exclude the development of other non-Islamic non-Arab tourism segments. Foreign tourists remain a primordial source of revenues for Arab tourism industries and Arab states are even starting to target new emerging markets in Central and Eastern Europe. Saudi Arabia is now planning to welcome 1.5 millions non-pilgrims tourists by 2020.

### **Conclusion**

The growing intra-regional tourist flow is a phenomenon of importance for the Middle East as it holds the promise of increasing profits and new sources of development which are both vital to Arab economies. It also helps to limit the dependency on uncertain international tourism arrivals. It is also a chance to enhance regional cooperation and integration at economic and political levels and perhaps to pacify the region by promoting mutual understanding among its people. Among these new markets, religious and cultural tourism for Muslims and the related sub-segment of 'Halal Tourism' are most promising and offer huge perspectives for investments considering the existence of a growing demand. Arab authorities and private investors have two main motives to encourage Arab-Islamic tourism in the region: Although appealing economic gains are a primary reason to engage in this promotion, rulers and investors also wish to revive the Islamic culture by revealing and advertising the region's impressive historical and cultural heritage.

However, it is notable that by taking advantage of their own resources and allowing Muslims to travel in accordance to Islamic

law requirements, Arab governments and people do not intend to isolate themselves or create a barrier with foreigners. On the contrary, they seem to aim at diversifying travel options in the region in order to satisfy everyone's needs; and at exhibiting a positive image of Arabic and Islamic cultures on the world stage. To sum up according to Al-Hamarneh, purposes of Islamic Tourism are: *'first, the revival of Islamic cultures and the spread of Islamic values; second, economic benefit for Islamic societies; and third the strengthening of Islamic self-confidence, identity and beliefs in the face of negative stereotyping in comparison to other cultures and lifestyles'*. (Al-Hamarneh, 2008)

The promotion of intra-Arab and intra-Muslims tourism should be rather understood, as a *'normal intra-regional tourism development that is equivalent to the intra-European, intra- Far East/Australian and intra-NAFTA tourism'* (Resolution on Tourism Development adopted by ICTM, September 2006) and not as a culturally exclusive process. It claims compatibility with the larger global concept of ethical, human, respectful and civilized tourism described in the WTO's *'Global Codes of Ethics for Tourism'*. Of course, Islamic-based tourism behaviors should be controlled in order to avoid extremism, fundamentalism or segregationist tendencies. Yet, the potential for positive consequences for the MENA region is such that most of international organizations urge Arab states to actively develop these new markets. By putting more emphasis on cultural assets of the Middle East, it is actually rather a chance to build a better reputation for the region and to integrate international tourism with domestic and regional Arab tourism within new forms of tourism.

If current projects are fully implemented, they might well contribute to positively reshaping the social and geopolitical structural context of the MENA region, intra-Arab relations, and the position of the Middle East at the international level as well.

### References

- Abdullah, S. (December 18, 2007) "GCC Urged to Intensify Role in Islamic Tourism", *Arab News*.
- AFP (November 12, 2007) 'Muslim Tourism Seen as Growth Market'.
- Al-Aïdi, A. (Autumn 2001) "The Future of Arab Tourism", *Islamic Tourism*.
- Al-Hakeem, M. (July 1, 2006) "Visitors Number on Rise in Saudi Arabia", *Gulf News*.
- Al-Hamarneh, A. (November-December 2004) "Sharjah, An Example of Islamic-Arab Tourism Development", *Islamic Tourism*, No. 14.
- ----- (March-April 2005) "New Tourism Trends in the Arab World", *Islamic Tourism*, No. 16.
- ----- (2008) 'Islamic Tourism' – A Long Term Strategy of Tourist Industries in the Arab World After 9/11?", *Center for Research on the Arab World*, University of Mainz.
- ----- & C. Steiner (2004) "Islamic Tourism: Rethinking the Strategies of Tourism Development in the Arab World after September 11, 2001", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, No. 24.
- Al-Shakiry, Abdel Sahib (Autumn 2001) "Finally-at Last! A Magazine for Islamic Tourism and Here Why", *Islamic Tourism*, No. 1.
- ----- (January-February 2005) "Islamic Tourism Prospects", *Islamic Tourism*, No. 15.
- Al-Shakiry, Abdel Sahib (May-June 2006) "Islamic Tourism, for whom?", *Islamic Tourism*, No. 23.
- ----- (March-April 2008) "Le tourisme religieux, plaque tournante du tourisme inter islamique", *Islamic Tourism*, No. 34.
- Dabrowska, K. (September-October 2004) The Rise of Islamic Tourism: International Conference Discusses Effects of 9/11 on Arab Tourism", *Islamic Tourism*, No. 13.

- *E-Turbo News* (April 7, 2008) 'Islamic Hotels in Demand in Middle East'.
- Florian, J. (May 6, 2008) 'Islamic Hotels Spread beyond Persian Gulf', *AMEinfo*.
- *Forum of Islam and Tourism in Sana'a* (October 12-13, 2009) "Final Statement and Recommendations".
- GITCE Website (Retrieved on: Spring 2010) *www.islamic-tourism.com./*
- Global Futures and Foresight (2007) *www.thetalentjungle.com/hotels-travel*
- Hasharina, Hashim N. & J. Murphy & N. Muhammad (2006) "Tourism and Islam, Understanding and Embracing the Opportunity, [http://web.biz.uwa.edu.au/staff/jmurphy/Touirsm\\_and\\_Islam.pdf](http://web.biz.uwa.edu.au/staff/jmurphy/Touirsm_and_Islam.pdf)
- Hazbun, W. (March 2003) "New Agenda for Tourism Development in the Arab World", *paper presented at the conference League of Arab States, Cairo, Egypt.*
- ----- (2006) "Explaining the Middle East Tourism Paradox", *The Arab World Geographer*, Vol. 9.
- ----- (2008) *Beaches, Ruins, Resorts, The Politics of Tourism in the Arab World*, Minneapolis: UMP.
- Ian, Yeoman (May 22, 2008) "The Religious or Not so Religious Tourist in 2030", *Hospitality.net*.
- *Islamic Tourism* (October 25, 2009) 'Islamic Tourism and Halal Week'.
- Ma'ayeh, S. (June 5, 2001) "Arab Ministers Address Challenges to Regional Tourism", *Jordan Times*.
- "Report on the Meeting" (October 2000) *The First Islamic Conference of Ministers of Tourism of the OIC Member States in Isfahan*.
- "Resolution on Tourism Development" (September 2006) *The 5<sup>th</sup> Session of Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers in Baku*.
- ----- (October 2001) *The 2<sup>nd</sup> Islamic Conference of Ministers of Tourism of the OIC Member states, Kuala Lumpur*.

- ----- (2008) *The 2nd Islamic Conference of Ministers of Tourism of the OIC Member states, Damascus.*
- "The Amman Arab League Summit's Final Communiqué Acknowledges" (2001).
- Travel and Tourism News Middle East (2008-09), *travel.einnews.com/middle-east/*
- Twinam, H. (2009) "Faith Tourism Boosts Travel market", *Islamic Banking & Finance.*
- World Tourism Global Trends Reports (2007, 2008 and 2009) *www.worldtourismdirectory.com/news/6356*
- World Travel Market (2007) 'Halal Tourism, Untapped Potential for Middle East'.
- Zamani-Farahani, H. & J. Henderson (2009) Islamic Tourism and Managing Tourism Development in Islamic Societies: The Cases of Saudi Arabia and Iran, *International Journal of Tourism Research.*