

# The Social Significance of Religious Guides: The Development of the Flow of Religious Capital in the Islamic Religious Tourism Industry

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*As religious tourism developed, some stakeholders have focused on the religious guide as a spiritual leader of the pilgrimage to supply religious knowledge and deepen the spiritual experience of the participants. In fact, the customers of religious tour operators seem to recognise religious guides as the important element in selecting a religious tour, and religious tour operators actively promote these religious figures as a significant element in their tour services. This chapter, therefore, considers the social context of religious guides in the Islamic religious tourism industry by mapping them in the structure of the marketplace from the perspective of the flow of 'religious capital'. Particular focus is placed on clarifying the flow of the religious guide's religious capital in the religious tourism industry, and the social networking emerging from the religious tourism industry through considering the novel use of financial and physical resources in the marketplace for religious tourism.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The worldwide tourism industry has actively begun promoting related religious pilgrimage activities, which are usually based on charity and reciprocity among religious followers and community members, to enhance the commitment of various stakeholders in the field. The rapid expansion of religious tour operators and other tourism stakeholders, who organise religious tours to religious sites, has encouraged an expansion in the number of religious tours to these places and in the number of participants, regardless of religion. As a result, this new form of pilgrimage activity, which can be called 'religious

tourism', has become dominant in contemporary pilgrimage practices, visiting religious sites of any religion (Rinshede, 1992; Timothy & Olsen eds., 2006; Raj & Griffin eds., 2015; Olsen, 2018). Although some religious figures have condemned such developments, believing that they diminish the religious significance of pilgrimages, a majority of pilgrims have begun to participate in these tourism activities, which have become a part of their social life.

As religious tourism developed, some stakeholders have focused on the religious guide as a spiritual leader of the pilgrimage (they can also be called 'spiritual guides') to supply religious knowledge and deepen the spiritual experience of the participants (Shinde, 2010; Green, 2011, 2014; Reader, 2013; Kawashima, 2016; Yasuda, 2018). Some of the religious guides are firmly situated in a certain religious institution or religious hierarchy, while others are indigenous religious figures who sometimes remain ambiguous in any religious hierarchy. Although some of their activities are based on the traditional way of religious practices, other activities are recognised as innovative ones that go beyond the religious traditions. In this situation, people begin to choose their own religious guide according to his or her status in social life and religious preferences. In fact, the customers of religious tour operators seem to recognise religious guides as the important element in selecting a religious tour, and religious tour operators actively promote these religious figures as a significant element in their tour services to attract more customers. Thus, religious guides in religious tourism has become a significant topic to examine in this field of research.

In the case of Islam, the development of the religious guides has become a significant element in the practices of the pilgrimage to Makkah and other religious places. Many religious tour operators work competitively in the market to improve both the quality and the quantity of their services in the religious tourism industry (Yasuda, 2013, 2018). In this situation, some tour operators and religious guides have actively promoted religious tours to other fields like cultural tourism, leisure activities, and other entertainment, which are usually described as the core elements of secular cultural tourism in the international tourism industry, and not generally a destination for pilgrimage and religious tourism. As the tours of religious tour operators have expanded towards cultural heritage sites and leisure destinations, religious guides have begun to take on a significant role and have become popular in this type of tourism. This odd combination of religious guides and marketplace among religious tour operators has become a part of their core marketing strategy, and it seems to enhance the religious tourism industry as well as the self-enlightenment of their customers. In this sense, religious guides in the emerging religious tourism industry reflect the development of the market principle in the industry, and their marketing practices have a social significance by constructing new way of social meanings and contexts in Muslim societies. Describe the general perspective of the chapter. End by specifically stating the objectives of the chapter.

## **LITERARY REVIEW: MARKETPLACE AND RELIGIOUS CAPITAL IN THE RELIGIOUS TOURISM INDUSTRY**

The development of religious tourism has influenced various aspects of pilgrimage activities according to the spread of mass tourism and the international travel market, and pilgrimage activities are commercialised or commodified by the expansion of the involvement of the tourism industry. Some studies on religious tourism focus on the transformation of traditional religious sites and activities in conjunction with the contemporary tourism industry, and they limit the impact of religious tourism to traditional religious spheres (Eade and Sallnow eds., 1992; Shackley, 2001; Kitiarsa 2010; Reader, 2013; Olsen,

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