

SEVEN REQUIREMENTS OF MUSLIM GUESTS

Halaal tourism is no longer a flight of fancy and the impressive market figures are no pie in the sky either. From \$126 billion dollars in 2011 it is expected to grow to \$200 billion by 2020. This burgeoning market is being fuelled by travelers from the oil rich nations of the Middle East; the fast emerging middle class of South East Asia; and from European countries with large Islamic populations such as France, Britain and Germany.

Research shows that Muslims value things just as much as other travelers do with regards to comfort, safety, good food, cleanliness and very importantly respect and dignity. However, the majority expressed dissatisfaction related to consideration of their faith and values. Therefore travel to predominantly Muslim countries is obviously an easier lifestyle choice with the top three destinations being Malaysia, Turkey and the UAE.

With the right offerings and marketing, many countries have started grabbing a larger portion of the Muslim tourism trade. Understanding and catering to the faith-based needs of Muslim travelers will not only bring more of these tourists to the destination, but will also be a catalyst for new business ventures.

Support from governments and industry has seen the emergence of entrepreneurs in many “new” destinations. For example, Thailand, a predominantly Buddhist country has worked tirelessly to project itself as a Muslim-friendly destination and is already reaping the rewards; Queensland Tourism in Australia set up a special website dedicated to Halaal travel and the Gold Coast arranges Ramadaan lounges for breaking of the fast; Dubai boasts magnificent shopping with lots of prayer spaces; hospitals in South Korea are providing prayer rooms while New Zealand has launched a Halaal culinary guide.

With its experience as a Halaal regulator over many years, SANHA has compiled a list of “doable” requirements many of which require minimal expenditure. With proper training and promotion of an establishment’s readiness to serve this market, there is no reason why guests will soon be beating a path to their door.

SEVEN REQUIREMENTS

1. **Halaal Food:** An extremely important part of the Muslim faith that heavily influences the choice of venue. Provision for Halaal meals and ensuring a list of easily accessible Halaal-certified outlets and caterers will be a major plus factor for any establishment.
2. **Prayer facilities:** The provision of prayer mats, the current prayer times and the direction of prayer shown in the rooms will most certainly be a boon for Muslim guests.
3. **Availability of water in wash rooms:** a big plus for your guests as the use of water in the toilets is a basic hygiene requirement. This is easily addressed by the installation of hand showers or bidets.
4. **Female swimming / spa times:** Offering female only or exclusive spa or pool swimming times, will help ensure your Muslim guests feel comfortable.
5. **Female housekeeping and room staff:** Dress codes in Islamic cultures are relaxed behind closed doors and therefore hotels must be sensitive and address the concerns many Muslim travelers have with female housekeeping and room staff.
6. **Important contact information:** A list of local Masaajid (mosques) and a few important Islamic institutions be available for guest contact and cultural tours.
7. **Availability of the Quraan:** a simple way to send out a welcoming message to Muslim guests is to let them know that copies of the Quraan are available for use.

Help them to help ourselves. If you are a Muslim guest then talk to the hospitality industry about your needs and if you are in the industry then talk to your Muslim guests about what you could provide for Muslim travelers and you could soon have them wearing out your welcome mat.

CALL US - WE CAN HELP