

# Chapter 7

## The Challenges and Opportunities in Addressing the Needs of Middle Eastern Tourists: An Australian Cultural Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter identifies and discusses the specific needs of Middle Eastern tourists visiting the Gold Coast, Queensland Australia. Based on empirical data collected through a qualitative study, self-administered questionnaires (N = 500) were distributed to Middle Eastern tourists who visited the Gold Coast and stayed at Gold Coast accommodation for at least one night. The 305 responses (61 percent response rate), generated a total number of 461 multiple responses. Content Analysis identified key themes and sub-themes associated with Islamic religious beliefs. The findings showed that the management of the Gold Coast accommodation sector had a distinct lack of information and understanding of Middle Eastern tourists' needs. This chapter*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-6272-8.ch007

*provides useful managerial and marketing recommendations, including suggested best practices, to hoteliers who provide accommodation services to international tourists, such as Middle Eastern tourists, and contributes to the limited knowledge on Islamic marketing. This in turn potentially contributes to the increased success of the tourism industry in developed countries such as Australia.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Traveling to different destinations is influenced by motivation which also explains a tourist's behavior (Janovic et al., 2013) including accessing the social media in their travel planning and decision making (Leung et al., 2013). In 2012 international tourism worldwide exceeded the 1 billion mark with 1,035 million tourists crossing borders, up from 995 million in 2011 (UNWTO, 2013). Tourism refers to persons traveling outside their place of residence for not more than one year for either leisure, business or other purposes without any award salary from their chosen place of visit (UNWTO, 1995). Over the past six decades, global tourism has increased to become one of the biggest and highest growing economic sectors in the world (Fowdar & Rooma, 2007; UNWTO, 2008). Forecasts prepared by UNWTO in January 2013 point to growth of 3 to 4 percent in international tourist arrivals for 2013, only slightly below 2012's level and in line with UNWTO's long-term forecast with prospects for 2013 being strongest for Asia and the Pacific at plus 5 to 6 percent (UNWTO, 2013).

Tourism, including the accommodation hotel sector, for the economy of many countries has gained prominence in its contribution to its country's wealth through job creation (Alvares, Hoti, & McAleer, 2007; Govers, Hecke, & Cabus, 2008; Tussyadiah, 2009) and contribution to GDP (Papatheodorou & Song, 2005; White & White, 2009; Wong & Yeh, 2009). Global tourism, including the hotel industry, was classified in 2008 as the fourth type of international business export income following fuels, chemicals and automotive products (UNWTO, 2008) and according to the Business Council of Australia increasingly determines Australia's future growth and economic prospects (Services Economy, 2007). A tourist's motivations are significantly associated with their satisfaction of a destination's attributes (Battour, Battor, & Ismail, 2012) thus the tourist plays a vital role in the sustainability and survival of a country's tourism industry (Juwaheer, 2006; Legcevic, 2008; Mey, Akbar, & Fie, 2006; Wang, Vela, & Tyler, 2008); hence it is essential to have an understanding of the diversity of cultures, and needs, of the international tourism and the host tourism market (Reisinger, 2009; Reisinger & Turner, 2003).

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