Muslim Business Traveler Insights 2016

By Mastercard & CrescentRating
October 2016
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About CrescentRating

CrescentRating is the leading authority on Halal travel. The company uses insights, industry intelligence, lifestyle, behavior and research on the needs of the Muslim traveler to deliver authoritative guidance on all aspects of Halal-friendly travel to organizations across the globe.

Formed in 2008, CrescentRating services are used by every tier of the tourism industry globally, from government bodies and tourism agencies to hospitality service providers, to inform how they can meet and serve the needs of the Muslim traveler.

CrescentRating's services include rating & accreditation, research & consultancy, workshops & training, ranking & indices, destination marketing, event support/partnerships and content provisioning.

HalalTrip and Muslim Travel Warehouse are sister companies of CrescentRating Pte. Ltd.

About Mastercard

Mastercard is a technology company in the global payments industry. Mastercard operates the world’s fastest payments processing network, connecting consumers, financial institutions, merchants, governments and businesses in more than 210 countries and territories.

Mastercard's products and solutions make everyday commerce activities - such as shopping, traveling, running a business, and managing finances - easier, more secure, and more efficient for everyone.
Muslim Travel Market Overview

The Muslim population is growing rapidly and is expected to reach 26 percent of the world’s population by 2030. This has led to a large increase in the number of Muslims taking up travel for leisure, religious, business and healthcare reasons.

According to the latest Mastercard-CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), there were 117 million international Muslim visitor arrivals in 2015 and this is projected to increase to 168 million by 2020.

The key reasons for travel are for leisure, to perform religious obligations and business.

The majority of Muslim travel is for leisure (including Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR)) which accounts for around 75 percent of Muslim travel. Religious travel constitutes around 10 percent and is primarily to perform Hajj and Umrah.

Business travel accounts for around 10 percent. Travel for medical or healthcare reasons is less than 1 percent of the Muslim travel market.
With the majority of Muslims representing growing economies such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey and economies in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), business travel is projected to grow rapidly. Availability of business opportunities, especially in developing countries, attracts a large number of business travelers. This segment has also seen growth contributed by the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events) sector. Most large travel agents in the GCC countries now have a separate division for MICE.

Another key driver for growth in Muslim business travel is the increasing number of Muslim professionals (both males and females) now entering the workforce.

This report looks at the travel behavior and patterns of Muslim business travelers. Although their general behavior is not very different from other business travelers, travel and hospitality service providers can find many opportunities to cater to their specific faith-based needs.
Muslim Business Traveler Insights

Muslim business traveler insights are based on an online survey and interviews conducted with 250 frequent Muslim business travelers. The objective was to understand the behavior and presence of Muslim business travelers in the following areas:

**Profile**

Of the 250 respondents, 73 percent were males and 27 percent females.

52 percent of the travelers were C-Level executives or business owners. 80 percent of them have been at their current workplace/employer for more than two years. 60 percent of them have made between 4 to 20 trips in 2015.

The travelers were from a wide range of company sizes: from SMEs to large corporations. Figure to the right gives the breakdown of the respondents by the size of the establishment.

44 percent of them spent less than USD 2000 per business trip followed by 38 percent spending between USD 2000 and USD 5000.

The majority of business trips are three to four days long. A good percentage of business travelers also disclosed that their typical business trip is five to six days long.

69 percent of respondents combined business and leisure travel “sometimes”, while 18 percent always combine business travel with leisure.
Key reasons and concerns when planning a business trip

The main reasons for business travel among Muslims is no different from your typical business traveler. The majority of them – more than one in two (57 percent) – travel to attend conferences or exhibitions. The second and third most common reasons were for meeting clients (45 percent) or potential clients (44 percent).

Overwhelmingly, the main concern of business travelers is “safety and security” of the country they are planning to visit. This is followed by concerns of religious tolerance.

### Key reasons for travel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attend conference or exhibition</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings with clients</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct workshops</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend training</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting suppliers</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospecting for new business</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal company meetings</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Key concerns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety and security</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious tolerance</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and environment risks</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political stability</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectivity</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prices and expenses</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation of destination</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and cultural barriers</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reduced travel during the month of Ramadan

The majority of business travelers (70 percent) avoid traveling during the Muslim month of fasting (Ramadan). Only one in four business travelers (27 percent) will travel irrespective of whether it is the month of Ramadan or school holidays.
**Trip Planning**

**Majority find information online**

Business travelers are increasingly relying on online research when planning their trips (88 percent). The next highest source of information is from family and friends (43 percent).

![Graph showing sources of information](image)

**Selected comments from Muslim business travelers**

“For Muslim-specific needs, I will run a Google search which will usually bring up blogs by someone who has made a list or review of mosques, Halal restaurants and hotels and prayer rooms for example, in various destinations. My main needs when planning a trip are which hotel to stay at (neighborhood quality, past reviews, quality of breakfast and F&B options nearby), interesting sights to see if I have the time, and I will usually also look out for Halal restaurants or mosques.”

“I try to minimize the number of apps I use when planning a trip to minimize any stress. My main medium for consolidating trip/booking receipts is still via email, and then I store PDF copies on Dropbox on my phone. It will be amazing if I can tell an app that I’m heading to London, and it generates and emails me a single report/page of information on all the things I need to know and links I can click on to make bookings for hotels, etc.”
Air ticket and Accommodation Booking

Increasingly, business travelers are making their own bookings, especially when it comes to accommodation. More than 50 percent book their own air tickets and accommodation.

The vast majority of business travelers book their accommodation after purchasing their air ticket.
Airports

The availability of prayer facilities (78 percent), Halal dining options (71 percent) and Wi-Fi (67 percent) at airports are the top three most important services identified for business travelers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most important services at airports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quiet place to relax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilets with water usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wi-Fi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halal dining options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer facilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selected comments by the travelers

“Prayer rooms are often located far away from passenger traffic and ablution areas are not always available or next to prayer rooms.”

“WiFi should be free for 24 hours, not just 1 hour like in some airports.”

“I'm assuming that the prayer facility will have a place for wudu. If it doesn’t, it should have. Some airports do not have wudu facilities and you have to use the regular washrooms which are some distance away.”

“Any airport that has a place to pray (before and after security) is on my list of top airports! Also, Muslim-friendly staff in the airport helps ease the airport experience.”

“Airports with interfaith prayer halls are very important”

More than 50 percent are willing to pay for transit hotels/dayrooms, followed by lounge services (48 percent) and shower facilities (33 percent).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transit hotel &amp; dayrooms</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lounge services</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shower facilities</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage / locker for hand bags and personal items</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Onboard the plane

The majority of business travelers who participated in this survey travel on economy class (54 percent). Some of them opt for premium economy as well (22 percent).

As for the features and services considered most important when choosing an airline, the availability of Halal food and ticket prices came out tops among the survey respondents.
Most business travelers tend to take the opportunity to sleep while onboard a plane. This is followed by watching movies. Work takes a “back seat” while on air.
Performing prayers onboard the plane

When it comes to performing prayers onboard the plane, most perform while seated. Currently only a few airlines have a space allocated to perform prayers onboard flights.

Selected comments by the travelers:

“I asked permission from the air hostess regarding a place to stand and pray, on a couple of airlines they've asked that I pray in my seat.”
“It would be wonderful to pray in-flight but with the current sentiments, I would likely feel safer praying when I reach my destination.”

“Very difficult to find a place to pray standing unless the plane is empty.”
“Preferably at airports, but if there isn’t enough time, then in the plane standing, and if there is no space on the plane, then on my seat.”

When it comes to performing ablution, which is required to perform the prayers, most try to find other ways than using the flights lavatories.

Selected comments by the travelers:

“I use khuff- leather socks.”
“I use the wipe over socks method instead of the gymnastics of "foot in the sink"
Accommodation preferences

Most Muslim business travelers opt for 4-star hotels. Airbnb-type accommodation have yet to gain popularity amongst them.

The typical budget for accommodation per night is between USD 100 to 200.
Wi-Fi is considered the most important service for business travelers at their accommodation.

Proximity to Halal food is the most important consideration for Muslim travelers when choosing accommodation.
Dining at the destination

The most preferred dining outlets are restaurants that serve only Halal food. However, some business travelers are also comfortable dining at other types of restaurants as long as the food is clearly marked to avoid non-Halal food.

Seafood or vegetarian restaurants are the most preferred options in the case of unavailability of Halal assured restaurants.

Most preferred dining options at the destination

- Restaurants and eateries that serve Halal food only 44%
- Restaurants that clearly label all food so that I can avoid pork, lard and any non-Halal meats, fats, etc. 43%
- Must not serve alcoholic beverages 7%
- Indifferent (any will do) 4%
- Other 2%

Most preferred options in case of no Halal assured food

- Seafood only restaurants
- Vegetarian only restaurants
- Would consider eating vegetarian food at non-Halal restaurants
- Bring my own food
- Would prepare a sandwich/noodle by myself or fruits
- Other
Interviews

Yosita Oramahi
Head of Content Partnerships
Beach House Pictures
Singapore

Could you give a brief overview about yourself

I started my career with RCTI, one of Indonesia’s leading terrestrial channels, while I was still in law school. I was entrusted with various responsibilities in production, research and programming before landing my last role as Head of International Acquisitions which put me in charge of a team responsible for selecting and acquiring all genres of foreign content for the channel. After 11 years with RCTI, I moved to Singapore and spent the next 11 years as a member of Discovery’s International Business Affairs team, responsible for negotiating content deals ranging from acquisitions, commissions and co-productions for the networks’ Asia-Pacific region.

Currently I work at Beach House Pictures, Asia’s largest independent production company specialising in factual, entertainment and children’s content for the international market.

How often do you travel for business/work (Internationally) and what are the main reasons for travel?

I usually travel about 3 to 6 times a year, depending on how busy things are. The main reason is to attend industry events/markets and to have meetings with various production partners and broadcasters to discuss ongoing and potential projects.

What are your general concerns when you plan your trip, during the trip and after the trip?

My main concern when planning a trip is usually the availability of halal food as well as wudhu (ablution) and praying facilities especially in non-Muslim countries.
What are your main concerns as a Muslim business traveler when you plan your trip and during the trip especially as a Muslim Female business traveler?

My business trips usually involve meetings at industry events and/or our partner’s offices and when I'm in a non-Muslim country, the challenges I typically face are in these main aspects: availability of halal food, access to prayer and wudhu facilities and also business-related activities. During overseas business trips, I need to ensure my meeting schedules are such that I can fulfil all my professional obligations and still perform my prayers at the appropriate times. This is not always easy especially when the venue of these markets/events do not have a prayer facility (it could just be a small room/cordoned area in one corner of the building) and the meeting schedule is back to back with lunch meetings in between which then affects my ability to perform mid-day and afternoon prayers on time.

The availability of halal food in non-Muslim countries can sometimes be a challenge too and I also need to ensure that activities I participate in are still within the permissible confines of my faith. So while breakfast, lunch, dinner and coffee/tea meetings are fine, cocktail parties and/or drinks in the evening to talk about a project is not something I am comfortable doing.

Which are the Airports, Airlines and destinations that you feel comfortable in during a business trip as a Muslim traveler?

As a Muslim traveler, the most comfortable airports for me are the ones that have a prayer and women’s wudhu facilities. The wudhu sections at some airports are not secluded enough, making it hard for hijabis like myself to perform wudhu as we are in partial view of others. Regarding airlines, almost all airlines now serve halal food as an option so that is not an issue. In terms of destinations, this is also not an issue as long as I am smart with my planning.

Safety, however, is an issue that I will take into consideration and I would plan any trips to those destinations with caution.

What would enhance your business trip as Muslim female business traveler (services, apps)?

We have enough apps for prayer times and qiblah directions these days so this is not an issue. Perhaps an app that could easily identify mosques/prayer rooms and halal eateries in non-Muslim destinations would be most helpful. In terms of services, it would be good to have prayer facilities at industry events/conference halls but I know this necessity is not going to be something that many event organisers will even be aware of unless we help raise the issue and create awareness.
Could you give a brief overview about you and your company

I am the founder and CEO of The Productive Muslim Company - a productivity training company for the Muslim world.

How often do you travel for business/work (Internationally) and what are the main reasons for travel?

I travel for business/work at least 5 to 6 times per year. My main reason for travel is to deliver international workshops and/or meeting clients 1-1 for consultancy.

What are your general concerns when you plan your trip, during the trip and after the trip?

Accessibility of the country concerned (e.g. if I need to apply visa, how long will it take me to apply and get the visa), cost of the flights and availability of reasonable priced hotels/ Airbnb apartments.

What are your main concerns as a Muslim business traveler when you plan your trip, during the trip and after the trip?

My main concern as a Muslim business traveler would be how “Muslim-friendly” the destination is, e.g. availability of halal foods/mosques in the country I'm visiting.
Which are the Airports, Airlines and destinations that you feel comfortable in during a business trip as a Muslim traveler?

I feel very comfortable in most Airports in the Middle East (Dubai/Qatar) and South East Asia (Malaysia/Singapore) due to the abundance of halal food and places to pray.

What would enhance your business trip as Muslim traveler?

An app that ranks all the airports in the world according to how Halal-friendly they are and a booking website that intelligently chooses flights that minimize enroute prayer times, suggests hotels near mosques and halal food, and gives you the exact location of prayer rooms inside major hotels.
Corporate overview

About MasterCard

MasterCard is a technology company in the global payments industry. We are leading the way toward a world beyond cash with the power to expand connectivity, opportunity and prosperity for individuals, businesses and communities.

We operate the world's fastest payments processing network, connecting consumers, financial institutions, merchants, governments and businesses in more than 210 countries and territories. Our products and solutions make everyday commerce activities - such as shopping, traveling, running a business, and managing finances - easier, more secure and more efficient for everyone. Through our payment solutions, we deliver value and connect close to two billion cardholders with tens of millions of merchants around the world.

As we move toward a world beyond cash, we are helping to secure a better, more inclusive future for everyone. We are committed to continuing to use our technology and expertise to deliver better ways to pay, creating a more connected world.

CrescentRating

About CrescentRating

CrescentRating is the world’s leading authority on Halal travel. The company's vision is to lead, innovate and drive this segment through practical and deliverable solutions in what is regarded today as one of the fastest growing segments in the tourism sector. The company uses insight, industry intelligence, lifestyle, behavior and research on the needs of the Muslim traveler to deliver authoritative guidance on all aspects of Halal-friendly travel to organizations across the globe.

Formed in 2008, CrescentRating services are now used by every tier of the tourism industry globally, from government bodies and tourism agencies to hospitality service providers, to inform how they can meet and serve the needs of the Muslim traveler. Its unique rating service, which combines detailed analysis, assessment and benchmarking, is now established as the premier Halal friendly standard for the industry.

The primary aim of CrescentRating is to enable Muslim travelers to explore any part of the world with the satisfaction that their needs and requirements are being met. CrescentRating's services now include rating & accreditation, research & consultancy, workshops & training, ranking & indices, event support/partnerships and content provision. HalalTrip and Muslim Travel Warehouse are sister brands of CrescentRating.

HalalTrip

About HalalTrip

HalalTrip's vision is to be the trusted global online platform, catering for Muslim travelers to make inspired and educated choices. It is the most comprehensive and innovative platform with its next generation mobile app. It makes destination discovery and trip planning fun and more intuitive for those looking for a Halal-friendly travel experience.

Muslim Travel Warehouse

About Muslim Travel Warehouse

Muslim Travel Warehouse is the world’s 1st global B2B travel aggregator offering Halal-friendly tourism packages, excursions and activities. It provides suppliers and travel agencies with a single platform for the growing Halal travel market. The travel agents will have access to comprehensive search and booking capabilities on a full portfolio of Muslim-friendly products.
Download other reports

**MasterCard-CrescentRating Ramadan Travel Report 2016**
The MasterCard-CrescentRating Ramadan Travel Report looks at the changing patterns of travel during the holy month of fasting. This comprehensive study gives destinations and businesses useful insights on how they can develop medium to long-term strategies to attract and cater to Muslim travels during the month of Ramadan over the next 15 years.


**Global Muslim Travel Index 2016**
The 2nd release of the annual report, GMTI 2016 is the most comprehensive research done on the Halal/Muslim travel, tourism and hospitality market. A collaboration between MasterCard and CrescentRating, it analyses 130 destinations across the globe to create an Index to benchmark destinations in the Muslim Travel Market.


**Global Muslim Travel Index 2015**
The MasterCard-CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index 2015 is the first comprehensive research on the Muslim travel market and uses in-depth data to explain how Muslim travel is impacting the worldwide travel market.


**Muslim Travel Shopping Index 2015**
The Muslim Travel Shopping Index 2015 contains a detailed analysis of the best shopping destinations for Muslim travellers, while providing a fascinating look at the behavioural trends and patterns of Muslim shoppers.


**The World’s First-ever Halal Travel Glossary**
CrescentRating, the world’s leading authority on Halal travel, has published this new guide which promotes accurate and consistent use of terms in the Halal travel market. Over 150 terms and concepts have been entered and validated with regular updates planned as the market matures.

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