

## **The marketing of religious tourism: islamophobia hinders the efforts of professionals in the sector?**

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### **Abstract**

Morocco is a North African country known for its history and ancient civilization, making it a destination of choice for tourists from all over the world. Several strategies have been adopted to promote this important sector. Indeed, religious tourism which is an essential lever of this sector participates in the development of Moroccan tourism by a large number of tourists each year. Several religious and cultural sites in Morocco are the content of a marketing approach promoting these sites as places of attraction for tourists.

However, the September 11 attacks in New York upset global stability and security. After this tragic event by Al-Qaeda of a fanatical Islamic reference, the phenomenon of Islamophobia has projected itself onto the world media scene while producing stereotypes that portray Islam as a religion of violence and Muslims as insurgents bloodied. As a result, tourism in the Arab countries and especially in Morocco is influenced by this phenomenon which has greatly reduced the number of tourists who visit the kingdom. In this article we intend to study by an empirical study the impact of the rise of Islamophobia in Western countries on religious tourism in Morocco.

**key words:** religious tourism; islamophobia; marketing

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## **Marketing del turismo religioso: ¿la islamofobia enseña a los profesionales del sector?**

### **Resumen**

Marruecos es un país del norte de África conocido por su historia y civilización antigua, por lo que es un destino de elección para turistas de todo el mundo. Se han adoptado varias estrategias para promover este importante sector. De hecho, el turismo religioso, que es una palanca esencial de este sector, participa en el desarrollo del turismo marroquí por un gran número de turistas cada año. Varios sitios religiosos y culturales en Marruecos son el contenido de un enfoque de marketing que promueve estos sitios como lugares de atracción para los turistas.

Sin embargo, los ataques del 11 de septiembre en Nueva York alteraron la estabilidad y la seguridad mundial. Después de este trágico evento de Al-Qaeda de una referencia islámica fanática, el fenómeno de la islamofobia se ha proyectado en la escena mundial de los medios mientras produce estereotipos que retratan al Islam como una religión de violencia y a los musulmanes como insurgentes ensangrentados. Como resultado, el turismo en los países árabes y especialmente en Marruecos está influenciado por este fenómeno que ha reducido en gran medida el número de turistas que visitan el reino. En este artículo pretendemos estudiar mediante un estudio empírico el impacto del aumento de la islamofobia en los países occidentales sobre el turismo religioso en Marruecos.

**palabras clave:** turismo religioso; islamofobia; márketing

## Introduction

Morocco is a North African country known for its history and ancient civilization, making it a destination of choice for tourists from all over the world. Several strategies have been adopted to promote this important sector. Indeed, religious tourism which is an essential lever of this sector participates in the development of Moroccan tourism by a large number of tourists each year. Several religious and cultural sites in Morocco are the content of a marketing approach promoting these sites as places of attraction for tourists.

However, the September 11 attacks in New York upset global stability and security. After this tragic event by Al-Qaeda of a fanatical Islamic reference, the phenomenon of Islamophobia has projected itself onto the world media scene while producing stereotypes that portray Islam as a religion of violence and Muslims as insurgents bloodied. As a result, tourism in the Arab countries and especially in Morocco is influenced by this phenomenon which has greatly reduced the number of tourists who visit the kingdom. In this article we intend to study how does this phenomenon hinder the development of religious tourism in Morocco?

### I. Morocco: tourist destination of choice

Tourism is today the main source of export earnings, well ahead of the automobile, chemicals, food, IT or petroleum industries. It involves considerable capital investment, generates substantial income and creates significant jobs. Thus, for many countries, it is an indispensable source of currency. The tourism sector occupies an important place in the Moroccan economy. It is increasingly considered by senior officials as a strategic sector to support economic development.

The tourism industry in Morocco is an important economic sector; good year bad year, it represents 8% to 10% of the country's GDP<sup>3</sup>. In terms of tourism, Morocco has remarkable assets: its climate, its specific culture, its imperial cities and its geographical position.

Tourism is one of the major vectors of the Moroccan economy which is expected to gain even more importance. It is a motor industry that has long allowed to trigger a deep dynamic of economic and social growth, especially through the income generated and the jobs created.

Morocco's official entry into the world tourism market is usually set for the second half of the 1960s, when Morocco, through the Development Plan, made tourism one of the priorities. However, the appearance of tourist demand in Morocco dates back long before.

Moroccan tourism which is a lever for the Moroccan economy has experienced a diversity of the product is itself facilitated by a diversity of potential (Berriane, 1993)<sup>4</sup>. Morocco as a tourist country owed its fame at the time first of all to its historic and cultural centers scattered across the country and to the variety and beauty of its landscapes and sites. Morocco is home to several types of tourism, in particular, seaside tourism, green tourism, cultural tourism and health tourism ... etc. in this research article we will look at a type of tourism which is religious tourism and the interviews which block its development especially with the upheavals that the

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<sup>3</sup> Moroccan Ministry of Tourism 2018.

<sup>4</sup> M. Berriane (1993) - Le tourisme des nationaux au Maroc (une nouvelle approche du tourisme dans les pays en développement), Annales de Géographie, n° 570 (mars-avril 1993), pp. 131-161, Paris.

world has experienced lately notably a social phenomenon which appeared in the last years in the united states and Europe which islamophobia.

## **II. Tourism marketing in morocco: vision strategy**

Ultimately, tourism marketing can be defined as the management process that allows tourism businesses and organizations to identify their customers, current and potential, to communicate with them to identify their needs and influence their desires and motivations at local, regional level., national or international in order to formulate and adapt their products in order to optimize tourist satisfaction and maximize their organizational objectives.

The application of marketing to tourism and hotel industry is all the more necessary as they present important peculiarities compared to current products or services. On the one hand, tourism demand is characterized by very high elasticity with respect to income and prices and it is sensitive to the political, economic and social context. The demand no longer depends on the simple conjunctures of the tourist destination, but it comes from the regional, national and international context, characterized by a great interdependence, the dependence between the situations of the different stations, which makes the fact of identifying the demand, the 'assessing and acting on these building blocks is a most complex task. It is also reflected in seasonal imbalances (due to the lack of staggered vacations) and saturation phenomena, consequences of a distribution of space in tourist-emitting and receiving areas. On the other hand, the tourism product is a rigid product offered by a large number of businesses or various entities. Because the offer is not mobile or storable, tourist services are consumable on site. As many specificities which distinguish the tourist offer and thus distinguish tourism and hotel marketing practices.

## **III. Islamophobia: emergence of a phenomenon**

Islamophobia is a relatively new term that has its etymological roots in Europe at the start of the 20th century. However, fear and distrust of Muslims and being seen as diametrically opposed "others" have deeper roots in Europe. As Paul Weller observed, "Islamophobia is undeniably rooted in the historical heritage of a conflictual relationship that has developed over many centuries involving the overlap of religion, politics and war" (Weller, 2001). The concept of Islamophobia has been used in public space in Europe for several years, but its definition remains the subject of debate.

Alphonse Étienne Dinet and the Algerian intellectual Sliman ben Ibrahim, in their book in 1918 "bouts of delirium Islamophobe", cite a first use of the term Islamophobia (Dinet and Ben Ibrahim, 1918; Allen, 2010). Robin Richardson writes that in the English version of the book, the word was not translated by "Islamophobia" but rather by "feelings hostile to Islam". Dahou Ezzerhouni cited several other uses in French as early as 1910, and from 1912 to 1918 (Ezzerhouni, 2010). On the other hand, Fernando Bravo Lopez maintains that the use of this term by Dinet and ibn Sliman was a critique of attitudes too hostile to Islam by a Belgian orientalist, who is called Henri Lammens, He also notes that a early definition of Islamophobia appears in a doctoral thesis by Alain Quellien, a French colonial official: For some, the Muslim is the natural and irreconcilable enemy of the Christian and the European; Islam is the negation of civilization, and barbarism, bad faith and cruelty are the best you can expect from Muslims.

In addition, he notes that Quellien's work strongly supports the work of the French colonial department administrator 1902-1906 (Bravo, 2011).

The term "Islamophobia" was formed from the word "Islam" and the suffix "phobia", which derives from phobos, "fear", "dread" in ancient Greek. In French, the term "phobia" which comes from the psychic field which can mean on the one hand, in its strongest (medical) sense, a symptom prevails of obsessive neuroses. On the other hand, and in a reduced way in terms of psychic and emotional behavior, a very strong, irrational aversion or instinctive fear.

According to Abdellali Hajjat and Marwan Mohammed, Islamophobia is what is called racialization of Muslims. It is a set of speeches, a thought, which interpret the behavior and the thought of the supposed Muslims to one of their supposed religious affiliation. It is therefore a reduction of Muslims to a permanent religious identity (Hajat, Marwane 2016). Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg consider the term to be appropriate since it effectively reflects social anxiety towards Muslims (Gottschalk and Greenberg, 2008). American author Steven Sheehy argues that Islamophobia is an ideological formation that has been incorporated into the American psyche by imperialism and nationalism (Sheehi 2011). According to Jocelyne Cesari, Islamophobia is a "modern and secular anti-Islamic discourse", it does not recognize the impact of certain Christian discourses on Islam in its analysis, although Cesari mainly focuses on the European context (Cesari 2011). Thomas Deltombe notes that it is according to the possible definitions of the words used, we must clearly distinguish two positions: "Islamophobia of racist type (Muslim as ethnic category) or xenophobic (Islam as foreign element) and criticism legitimate religious dogmas, whatever they are. For Chris Allen, Islamophobia is a multi-layered discourse strongly influenced by the deep European tradition of anti-Islamic controversy and its history of intense interaction with Muslims living along its borders (Allen 2010). Allen ultimately opposes a definition of Islamophobia as an ideology that functions like racism by formulating a negative image of Islam and Muslims (Allen 2010). A number of academics and intellectuals have also attempted to define Islamophobia, calling it intolerance of the religious and cultural beliefs of Muslims (Esposito and Mogahed, 2007).

#### **IV. Islamophobia, underlying constraint of religious tourism**

Religious tourism is essentially based on the idea of making people travel so that they can get closer to a place dedicated to devotion, to memory, to the appearance of a presence or to a sacred or important place for a religious tradition.

Religious tourism in Morocco is marked on the one hand by the visits of the faithful sub-Saharan Sufis originating from Mali, Senegal and Niger who come for the pilgrimage to the spiritual capital Fes. on the other hand, Jewish faithful who also come for Jewish moussemes<sup>5</sup> in several corners in Morocco.

after several researches in several works on the relation which can exist between Islamophobia as a phenomenon of racism and discrimination which affects a minority because of its spiritual orientation and religious tourism in Morocco. we have seen that the impact of islamophobia is part of the big Muslim problem. we have found that attacks by Muslim fanatics anywhere in the world influence tourism in general in Muslim countries and Morocco is one of them.

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<sup>5</sup> an annual regional festival that combines a customary celebration, which can sometimes be religious (often to honor a saint) with festive and commercial activities

## V. Conclusion

Religious tourism in Morocco remains an active sector which generates an interesting turnover and currency. it is influenced by geopolitics and international conflicts.

through this work we want to identify the existing relationship between religious tourism and the phenomenon of islamophobia which is in direct relation to the terrorist attacks carried out by muslim fanatics. we have discovered that terrorism attributed to Muslims generally influences world tourism and especially tourism in Muslim countries.

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