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Religious tourism in Mecca, Saudi Arabia

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Declaration

I declare that the thesis hereby submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Tourism and Hotel Management at the Budapest Business School has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other institution. This thesis and the work presented in it are my own and have been generated by me as the result of my original research; it is my work in design and in execution and that all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged. I understand that my thesis may be made available to the public.

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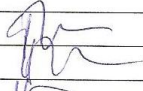

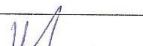
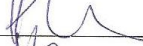



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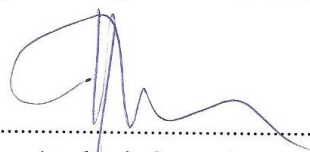
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

The reason why the author chose this topic, religious tourism in Mecca, is because she has always been interested in Islam, the Middle Eastern countries and culture.

After some family holidays to Middle Eastern countries, at the age of 14 she started learning Arabic language and as it took relatively short time to learn how to read and write, she continued studying it. While learning Arabic, in order to practice she read many articles and books about the religion and life in these countries. First the main reason why the author was so interested in the cradle of Islam, Saudi Arabia, was because of the situation of women. It is a country where the legal system is based on Islamic law, there are no cinemas, women are not allowed to drive, could not vote up till 2011 and they have to cover themselves when going out to the street. After reading several books in this topic the author started to study the religion itself and its main teachings. This is how she arrived to the topic of the pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia.

The topic of this thesis is religious tourism to the birthplace of Islam, Mecca. According to the author when it comes to tourism, many people totally forget about Saudi Arabia, as a tourist destination, although year-by-year millions of people visit it to perform their once in a lifetime religious obligation, the pilgrimage.

By introducing the history of religion and what is the pilgrimage about, she would like to highlight the importance of this religious duty from tourism point of view.

1.2 Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the thesis states that the differences in the organization of the pilgrimage tours to Mecca from European and Arab countries result from religious reasons.

As a consequence the aim of the research was to test and find out if Muslims living in European countries have the same opportunities in case of travelling for pilgrimage as those living in the Arab world. As the author stated in the hypothesis

the differences may result from religious reasons, as in the majority of European countries Muslims are in minority while in the Arab world, Islam is the prevailing religion.

The author has never heard of any previous research about the same issue, therefore she found it very interesting to compare different countries' Muslims and their experiences about travelling for pilgrimage.

1.3 Aim

The main aim of this research is to present the steps of pilgrimage planning and arrangements in different countries and see how the number of Muslims changed in Europe and Hungary over the years.

As a result of globalization people can move from one country to another, therefore if the number of Muslims in a certain country is about to increase it can have an impact on the need for the existence of religious institutions and travel companies which can provide assistance in arranging pilgrimage tours and related services.

In order to discover what are the options or planning processes of Muslims travelling for their pilgrimage from distinct parts of the world, real experiences of participants will be analyzed and compared.

1.4 Objectives, structure

In the author's objectives first of all she would like to introduce what is the pilgrimage and its steps. In order to understand the different rites and their significance, religious tourism is defined and the short history of Islam is described first. It is followed by discussing how Mecca and Madinah has changed during the years, what infrastructural and superstructural developments were carried out to serve the growing number of pilgrims. The third objective is to analyze the differences in travel patterns of European Muslims and those who live in one of the Arab countries, through the example of the United Arab Emirates and Hungary. After this, the economic importance of pilgrimage in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is introduced shortly.

1.5 Summary

To sum up in this thesis the author would like to introduce and describe one of the main pillars of Islam religion, the pilgrimage which is a life-changing, spiritually enriching experience for all Muslims who have the ability and opportunity to perform it in their life. Then, based on the experiences of people from Hungary and the United Arab Emirates, she will compare how muslims travel to Saudi Arabia, what opportunities they are provided by travel companies or religious organizations and what is the main reason of the differences in travelling options.

Throughout this thesis a number of Arab origin words will be used which will be written in italics like for example *Hajj* or *Ihram*.

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In the literature review the author would like to introduce religious tourism and the short history of Islam, followed by the types and main rites of the pilgrimage. After this the infrastructural and superstructural developments in Mecca and Madinah will be discribed to emphasize the country's importance as a touristic destination.

2.1.1 Religious tourism:

Religious tourism means when people travel for the purpose of religion to visit sacred and holy sights, for example churches, shrines or monasteries, to make a pilgrimage or missionary work or to participate in events and festivals connected to religious feasts. People already travelled for religious reasons in ancient Greece or pre-Christian times but religious tourism became popular in the Middle Ages, when people started looking for salvation, they visited holy places as pilgrimage. Later as they had more free time and during the period of the grand tours they started travelling more and more, also for leisure.

Today religious tourism, including pilgrimage is becoming more popular and it is a rapidly growing segment within international tourism, although earlier it was considered to be a niche segment. Many people wish to escape from the modern life

and everyday rush to visit religious destinations or participate on a spiritual journey. (Tarlow, 2014) When it comes to religious tourism, it is essential to make a difference between those, who travel to a destination in order to visit a historical sight from cultural point of view, combining it with leisure and those, who are looking for a spiritual or religious experience.

2.1.2 Pilgrimage tourism

One segment of religious tourism is the pilgrimage tourism when people travel to fulfill a religious duty or show loyalty to their faith. They can visit certain objects in connection to a religious event or natural places. In ancient Greece people travelled to Delphi, in India to places with special energy and in Palestine to the temple in Jerusalem. According to Omar Sayfo in order to understand the basic concepts of one's religion, the person has to experience what the founders of the religion experienced. Because as a religion moves away from its origins in time and space, the different external effects continuously change it. (Sayfo, 2006)

The holiest cities and religious sights from the point of view of religious tourism today include Mecca and Madinah in Saudi Arabia, Jerusalem in Israel, Santiago de Compostela in Spain, the Vatican in Rome, Lourdes in France, Bethlehem in Palestine, the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, different locations in India and many others.

2.2.Short history of the Islam:

Islam is a monoteistic religion which is one of the biggest religions with more than 1,5 billion adherents, called Muslims. It originates from the 7th century Arabian Peninsula and was founded based on the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.

Earlier in the 5th and 6th centuries the Arabian Peninsula was the location of wars between nomadic tribes due to the harsh circumstances of life. It was a desert where people lived from animal keeping, agriculture and handicraft. However on the western side of the Peninsula the Incense trade route could be found, which connected Jemen with the Northern part and later due to the Persian and Roman wars it became even more significant when it took the role of the famous Silk Road,

connecting Rome with China. First products were shipped to Aden, today's Jemen and from there they were transported to Gaza by caravans. The nomadic, Bedouin tribes living along the trade route took advantage from the trade and soon they became rich. Earlier these tribes believed in polytheism and animism, they worshipped different objects, trees and stones just like the Kabah in Mecca, today's Saudi Arabia which soon became the centre of commerce. But as a result of growing rich suddenly the social system and traditions started to change. (Horváth, 2001)

2.2.1 Prophet Muhammad

Prophet Muhammad was born in 570 A.D. in Mecca. After the death of his parents and grandparents he was raised by his paternal uncle, Abu Talib. Although he had a difficult childhood and never learned to read and write, Mohammad became a merchant. He travelled a lot thus met other cultures and religions as well, like the Judaism and Christianity. He married a widow of a rich merchant, this way he became one of the wealthy Meccans. (Malik, 2005)

After the age of 40 he started concentrating more on religion, he often went to meditate and pray in the Al-Hira cave. In the year 610 A.D. while he was in the cave he received the first revelation from God, through Archangel Gabriel. The revelations continued and 3 years later Muhammad started to preach publicly rejecting paganism, polytheism and injustice. First he was followed only by his family-members, friends and some members of his tribe, but when some of the wealthy Meccans embraced the Islam, his persecution started. Those who were prominent in trade and even the leader of the Quraysh tribe rejected the prophet's teachings, fearing that it would threaten their trade and would change the position of Mecca as a center of religious cults. As a result of the persecution, in the year 622 A.D. Muhammad had to leave Mecca and he emmigrated to the city of Yathrib, today's Madinah, where he was welcomed. This is called *Hijrah*, and marks the starting point of the Muslim calendar. He had a mosque built in the outskirts of the city and thanks to the growing number of followers the first Muslim community came to exist. On the other hand there was a Jewish presence in the city, including some wealthy tribes with whom the Prophet had some conflicts, as they did not want to follow and accept his teachings. Muhammad started a mission, he drafted the constitution of Madinah, which defined the relations, rights and rules between the

different tribes of Yathrib. This constitution established the first Islamic state. (Malik, 2005)

After this, people of Madinah with the leadership of Prophet Muhammad started fighting with Mecca for several years. The Treaty of Hudaibiyyah in 628 A.D. stated that they will not make war for 10 years and Meccans will allow people of Madinah to visit the holy city. After the Meccans broke this treaty several times Prophet Muhammad with 10 000 people went to Mecca in 630 A.D. and without any resistance from the side of Meccans, they were able to return to the Prophet's home city. Missionary campaigns started to spread the religion and as a result the nomadic tribes soon converted to Islam and the whole Arabian Peninsula became Muslim. The Prophet destroyed all the pagan idols connected to the Kabah and in the year of his death, 632 A.D. he performed a pilgrimage with his followers. Hundred years after the death of Prophet Muhammad, Islam spread to Spain, Egypt, Palestine, Syria and even as far east as China. (Malik, 2005)

The Prophet died without appointing his successor. Moreover he did not have a male heir, only a daughter, Fatima. Eventually Prophet Muhammad's friend and father-in-law, Abu Bakr became the first caliph. On the other hand, Fatima got married to Ali ibn Abu Talib who was considered to be the legitimate successor of the Prophet by his followers. (Nasr, 2014) Therefore there was a strong opposition between Ali's followers, the *shias* and those who thought that the Prophet's friends and companions should be the caliphs. Those who belonged to the lower levels of society supported Ali, due to his modest lifestyle and after the death of the third caliph, Uthman, Ali assumed the position. But Ali was accused of having killed the previous caliph, thus a war started between the Umayyad family and Ali. After some minor clashes they came to an agreement, what was not accepted by some of Ali's followers. They considered it as betrayal of the religion, formed the Kharijite group and in 661 A.D. Ali was assassinated by them. (Szentmihályi, 2012)

This was the start of the Umayyad dynasty but when their ruler died, a war broke out for succession. In 750 A.D. the period of Abbasid dynasty and the Islamic Golden Age started, during which the first public hospitals were opened, one of the oldest universities in the world was established and trade was flourishing. But then the Ottomans appeared, they conquered most of the Muslim countries, reached Europe and spread the religion to the Southern part of the continent as well.

Caliphate was abolished in the 1920's by the first president of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

2.2.2 Quran and pillars of Islam

It was during the reign of Abu Bakr that the Prophet's companions started to collect the verses of Quran to create a manuscript. Abu Bakr authorized the preservation and compilation of the Quran in a written format. Around the year 650 A.D. standard copies of the Quran were ordered by the third caliph, Uthman ibn Affan. They used the copy of Abu Bakr to prepare the standard one, thus the present format is accepted to be the original version, compiled by him. (Hoye, 2006) This way the Quran became the holy book of Islam and the proof of Muhammad's prophethood, including revelations from God. It has 114 chapters, called *suras* which are further divided into verses, called *Ayahs*. It includes historical events, legal and ethical subjects, other areas of life, it concentrates on the main beliefs of Islam and is the basis of religious life of every Muslim. It is also important to mention the other main sources of the religion, namely the *Sunnahs* and *Hadiths*. *Sunnah* means the words, actions and the way of life of the Prophet while *Hadith* means narration or report about the Prophet's life. In some verses of the Quran it is commanded to obey the messenger whose actions were based on the revelations from God, this way it can be seen why *Sunnahs* and *Hadiths* are important. (Goldziher, 1981)

The 5 pillars of Islam represent the essence, core values of the religion and the teachings of the Prophet. These are the following:

1. Declaration of faith (*Shahada*)
2. Daily ritual prayer (*Salat*)
3. Paying the alms tax (*Zakat*)
4. Fasting in the month of Ramadan (*Sawm*)
5. Pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*)

The first pillar expresses the two fundamental beliefs that makes someone a Muslim; it is a statement, meaning that there is no other god, but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger. When someone would like to convert to Islam he/she has to declare this statement.

The second pillar, *Salat* means the 5 prayers per day, in the direction of Mecca. The first at dawn (*al-fajr*), the second at midday (*al-zuhr*), then comes the one during the afternoon (*al-asr*), at sunset (*al-maghrib*) and finally the evening prayer (*al-isha*). Before each prayer Muslims have to carry out a ritual washing of the face, feet and hands and the prayers include a series of set positions. (Sayfo, 2006)

Alms-giving which is the third pillar is required of every adult who has the sufficient means. It means spending a portion of one's wealth for the benefit of someone in need. Earlier it was a kind of tax, trying to eliminate the financial gaps in the society.

The fourth pillar is the fasting during Ramadan which is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Muslims must not eat or drink, must abstain from sexual intercourse from dawn till sunset. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims can concentrate on their religion even more, by looking for forgiveness, expressing gratitude and refraining from envy and violence. (IslamReligion.com, 2006) For those who are ill, elderly, travelling, expecting a baby, breastfeeding and menstruating women, fasting is forbidden.

Pilgrimage to Mecca, in Arabic the *Hajj* is the last pillar of Islam and it means that each Muslim is obliged to make the pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca at least once in his or her lifetime. It must take place in the last month of the Islamic year, in the month *Dhu Al-Hijjah*.

2.2.3 Introduction of the *Hajj*:

As mentioned earlier the pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the five pillars of Islam, and it is mandatory for every able-bodied, financially capable Muslim to visit Mecca for the purpose of *Hajj* (major pilgrimage) at least once in his/ her life. However if someone has the ability to perform it more than once, he/ she can do so. *Hajj* is important because it is a journey to God and a symbol of total submission to God. It was Abraham who built the foundations of the Kabah and he was ordered to call people to make pilgrimage. But *Hajj* became one of the five pillars of Islam after the pilgrimage of Prophet Muhammad.

If one performs the pilgrimage will have rewards. For instance his/ her past sins will be forgiven and supplications will be accepted by God. The main reward for *Hajj* is Paradise, a life full of happiness. Moreover it strengthens one's faith and increases patience.

In order to place the annual pilgrimage in time, it is important to mention the Islamic calendar. It is a lunar calendar with the starting date of 16 of July, 622 A.D., the date of Prophet Muhammad's emigration from the city of Mecca to Madinah. In this calendar one year consists of 12 months, 354 days. The months consist of 29 or 30 days. The Islamic months are (each with a maximum 30 days):

1. *Muharram*
2. *Safar*
3. *Rabial-Awal*
4. *Rabiat-Thaani*
5. *Jumada-al-Awal*
6. *Jumaadat-Thaania*
7. *Rajab*
8. *Sha'ban*
9. *Ramadan*
10. *Shawal*
11. *Dhul-Qadah*
12. *Dhul-Hijjah*

The months of the pilgrimage are from the 1st of *Shawaal* until the 13th of *Dhul-Hijjah*. In order to complete the pilgrimage there are some conditions to be met, these are the following: to be a Muslim, to have reached puberty, to be free (not a slave) and sound- minded, to have the financial ability and possess physical means and for women to have a so called *Mahram*. (Davids, 2006) *Mahram* means those males whom a woman can not marry legally, for example her father or son. If a woman does not have a *Mahram* but she has the financial ability, she can send somebody to perform *Hajj* on her behalf. This means that *Hajj* can also be performed on behalf on somebody. For example if one has the ability to do it but dies, or due to old age or illness can not participate on *Hajj* can send someone to perform *Hajj* on his behalf. A woman can perform *Hajj* or *Umrah* on behalf of a man as well as another woman. (Sayfo, 2006)

There are three different types of *Hajj*:

1. *Hajj Tamattu*
2. *Hajj Qiran*
3. *Ifrad*

Before describing the different types, there are some terms which has to be defined, for example *Ihram*. *Ihram* means a certain state and is a primary requirement of the pilgrimage. It is also a name of a particular clothing what pilgrims wear. All pilgrims must take a bath, cut their nails, remove unwanted hair and after these, they can put on their *Ihram* garments. Garments of men consists of two pieces of white cloth, one is worn around the waist, the other has to be thrown over their shoulder. Women can wear their own clothes but they should cover their body except their face and hands. The material can not be opaque, it must be loose enough and it must not be decorative or attractive. Furthermore women must not use perfume or make-up. (Davids, 2006)

The state of *Ihram* means that pilgrims have to have an intention in their hearts about performing the *Hajj* or *Umrah* (minor pilgrimage). There are certain statements, they have to say in case they would like to perform *Hajj* or *Umrah*, or both of them. There are some prohibitions in the state of *Ihram* including sexual intercourse, obscene speech, getting married, engaging in hunting or disputing with others. Prophet Muhammad specified certain geographical locations, called *miqat* where pilgrims have to assume the state of *Ihram*. These points differ depending on which part of the world the pilgrim comes from. Those pilgrims who travel by plane can wear their *Ihram* clothes before the plane takes off, but they must state their intention upon reaching the *miqat*. If somebody enters Mecca without assuming *Ihram* has to return to the nearest *miqat* and also sacrifice an animal (*Fidyah*). (Iszlám Egyház Fordító Iroda, 2005)

Umrah, as mentioned above is a minor pilgrimage which can be performed any time during the year. It is a shortened form of the pilgrimage during which pilgrims perform only some of the rites of *Hajj*.

2.2.4 Types of pilgrimage

The first type of the pilgrimage is *Hajj Tamattu*, the one Prophet Muhammad instructed Muslims to perform. This means *Hajj* and *Umrah* together. First pilgrims have to enter into the state of *Ihram* with the intention of performing *Umrah* only. After having finished all the rites they can remove *Ihram*, meaning that they completed *Umrah*. Then again, they have to enter the state of *Ihram* with the intention of performing *Hajj*. The sacrifice of an animal is compulsory.

In case of *Hajj Qiran* both *Hajj* and *Umrah* are performed in one *Ihram*. It means pilgrims must not take off their *Ihram* clothes after *Umrah* and they must sacrifice an animal.

And the third type, *Ifrad* is the simplest form. Pilgrims enter into *Ihram* state with the intention of performing *Hajj* only. In this case it is optional to sacrifice an animal. The sacrifice is called *Hady* and pilgrims may eat from the meat. The sacrificial animals can be camels, goats, sheep or cattle. Usually camel is shared among more pilgrims. Those pilgrims who failed to perform an obligatory act of *Hajj* or did something prohibited have to offer another sacrifice, called *Fidyah*. The meat of this sacrifice is always distributed and offered to poor people. If a pilgrim can not afford the sacrifice, can fast instead. (Davids, 2006)

2.2.5 Rites of the Hajj:

Upon reaching Mecca, people have to visit Masjid al-Haram which is the Sacred Mosque surrounding the Kabah and the largest one in the world. Anwar Aimen (Aimen, 2002) mentioned that the Kabah is mistakenly called a stone, while it is a house including a special stone in its eastern corner. This is the Black Stone and it was placed there by Prophet Muhammad. According to the traditions the Kabah was built by Abraham as a holy sanctuary to worship God. (Germanus, 1976) Pilgrims have to encircle the Kabah counterclockwise, seven times, the first three rounds should be made at a quick pace. Male pilgrims have to keep their right arms uncovered and the left covered. This is called *tawaf*, symbolising how people's life revolves around God. If possible they have to kiss it, if not, they may touch it with their hands or a stick or point towards it. After pilgrims have completed the *tawaf* they should proceed to the station of Abraham inside the mosque to perform a

prayer. Then, pilgrims have to drink the Zamzam water. The famous Zamzam well is located in the territory of the mosque. It is considered a special water which cures all kinds of diseases, and is connected to the story of Abraham's son, Ismael who was thirsty, thus God created this well.

The next rite is the fast pace walking between the hills of Safa and Marwah. It commemorates the story of Abraham's wife, who ran seven times between these two hills to find water for her son, Ismael. The distance between them is around 390 meters and Muslims have to walk back and forth seven times, starting from Safa, finishing at Marwah. (Germanus, 1976) In case a pilgrim intended to perform *Hajj Tamattu*, the first part *Umrah* is completed at this point, by removing *Ihram* garments and shaving one's head or cutting the hair. Then they put on their *Ihram* again and express the intention to perform *Hajj*. (Rashid, 2011)

On the first day of *Hajj*, 8th of *Dhul-Hijjah* pilgrims should go to Mina and stay there for a day and night, praying. The next morning they go to Mount Arafat from where Prophet Muhammad preached his last sermon emphasizing human equality. This is one of the most significant rites of the *Hajj*, the so called „standing at Arafat". After a short stay, at sunset pilgrims leave for Muzdalifah where they spend the night and pray.

In the morning they should proceed back to Mina, collecting seven, small pebbles on the way. On the 10th of *Dhul-Hijjah* they have to perform the stoning of the devil by throwing seven pebbles at al-Jamarah al-Aqabah, the largest of the three pillars. This happens in memory of Abraham, who took his son to Mina, to obey God and sacrifice him. According to the legend Satan appeared and wanted to make Abraham change his mind, but he together with his wife threw pebbles at the Satan. As a result God's response was to send an angel with a ram, to be sacrificed instead of the child. After the stoning people have to slaughter their sacrificial animal. Those who do not have the sufficient means to offer a sacrifice have to fast for ten days. Then male pilgrims who are performing *Hajj Tamattu* and already shortened their hair during the *Umrah*, should now shave their heads. Women should only cut their hair. (Sayfo, 2006)

The next step is to visit Mecca again for the last *tawaf*. They have to pray and drink from the Zamzam water again. Those performing the *Hajj Tamattu* should

proceed to the area of Safa and Marwah again. After completing it pilgrims can return and stay in Mina until the 12th or 13th of *Dhul-Hijjah*, throwing pebbles every day at the middle and large Jamarah. Before departure the last rite is the farewell *tawaf* around the holy Kabah. (Rashid, 2011)

Visiting Madinah is not obligatory but as the Prophet's grave and mosque is situated there, it attracts a great number of pilgrims. There is a graveyard in Madinah where many companions and daughters of the Prophet are buried. There are several mosques which can be visited and the plain of Badar where the first battle between Muslims and the Quraysh tribe took place. The Prophet said that if one prays in his mosque it is a thousand times better than to pray in any other mosque, therefore many Muslims desire to visit the city of Madinah.

2.3 Development of infrastructure and superstructure in Mecca over the years

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with its almost 30 million inhabitants is located on the Arabian Peninsula, bordered by Yemen, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq and Jordan. Its total area is a bit more than 2 million square kilometres, constituting most of the territory of the peninsula. It was founded by Abdulaziz bin Abd al-Rahman al Saud, the first monarch of Saudi Arabia in 1932, by uniting four, earlier distinct regions. (Rozvány, 2007) The present king of the country is Abdullah ibn Abdulaziz since 2005. Saudi Arabia's capital is Riyadh and except foreign workers almost all of the population is Muslim, from which about 90% are *Sunnis*. The kingdom's third and fourth largest cities, Mecca and Medina were the main birthplaces of Islam.

The city of Mecca is located in the region of Hejaz, on the western part of the country. As it was the birthplace of Prophet Muhammad, today it is considered to be the holiest city of Islam. The region and city of Mecca developed and changed significantly over the history. For many centuries people did not construct houses or any buildings nearby the holy Kabah which served as a sanctuary for more pagan gods. It was Qusai ibn Kilab, the great-great-great-grandfather of the Prophet and leader of the Quraysh tribe, who first allowed the construction of houses in the region, leaving just enough space for pilgrims to walk around it. These houses were built in a circle around the holy sight and the closer they were located to it, the

higher levels of society owned them. He also had the House of Assembly built, which served as a meeting place for the leaders of different tribes.

The second caliph Omar ibn al-Khattab had the first line of houses, located closest to the Kabah demolished in order to expand the territory of the Grand Mosque of Mecca, due to the increasing number of pilgrims each year. People could also visit the holy sight during night time as he ordered lights to be set up. Roads and houses were built between Mecca and Madinah to facilitate the travel of pilgrims. Later, during the time of Uthman the third caliph, this territory became even bigger by demolishing another line of houses and it was covered by a wooden roof. In the 930's A.D., during the reign of the Abbasid caliphate the city of Mecca was robbed by a religious group, revolting against the Abbasids and they stole the Black Stone. In 952 A.D. it was returned to Mecca. During the Sharifate of Mecca, ruling from the end of the 960's, the sharifs protected the city of Mecca and its pilgrims. In the following centuries, during the time of the Mamluks and Ottomans this territory was continuously developed. The Ottomans controlled Mecca and Madinah, paying attention to the protection and preservation of the holy sites. They even ensured the pilgrimages to Mecca by appointing a delegate to lead pilgrims from different parts of the peninsula and Africa. In addition to this, while Sultan Abdulhamid ruled in the beginning of the 19th century a railway was built between Istanbul and Madinah which transported pilgrims. (Alkhateeb, 2014)

2.3.1 House of Saud

The real development happened and was initiated by the House of Saud and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. He was an Islamic scholar who founded Wahhabism, which was the purification of Islam according to him. Muhammad ibn Saud, the first ruler of the House of Saud supported his ideas and they formed an alliance by marrying Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab's daughter to Abdulaziz ibn Saud, the son of the ruler. (Rozvány, 2007)

During the reign of Abdulaziz ibn Saud the oil reserves of the country were discovered in the end of the 1930's and commercial production began. From this time on, the the king started spending the incomes from oil, on modernization and the development of infra- and superstructure, as the country did not have modern

transportation facilities or ports. He introduced modern technology and improved health care. His main aim was to make it possible for every Muslim to visit the holy sights and Grand Mosque of Mecca, so he initiated a major renovation which lasted for 12 years and as a result of which the territory of the mosque expanded to 160 thousand square metres. Speaking about the Grand Mosque the Holy Kabah has to be mentioned. The first house of God is covered by a black cloth, called Kiswah. This was changed several times during the history but it was King Abdulaziz who had a factory built in 1927. In the middle of the 1920's he ordered the region between the hills of Safa and Marwah to be paved with granite and the awning which protected people from the sun was renewed to provide a better service to pilgrims. He also ordered the Prophet's Mosque to be renovated in Madinah. (King Abdulaziz Public Library, 2014)

After his death in 1953, one of his 45 sons, King Saud followed his example and established the Ministries of Health, Education and Commerce. During his era the kingdom's first university was opened, the King Saud University. As an addition to this, he also expanded the Grand Mosque, its capacity reached 400 thousand worshippers.

King Faisal started his reign in the 1960's and emphasized the importance of education. Based on the idea of King Saud he ordered the construction of the King Fahd Causeway which aimed to connect Saudi Arabia with the Kingdom of Bahrain. After several years of planning and construction it was inaugurated in 1986. Also he prepared a five year plan for the development of the country's economy and opened the first public school for girls. He promoted the establishment of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which included 57 countries. In the 1960's and 1970's after the Arab-Israeli wars and the oil crisis, due to low airfares pilgrimage became more popular and an increasing number of people wished to visit Mecca.

King Khalid succeeded Faisal and he concentrated on the development of infrastructure and agriculture. He introduced a second „Five-year-plan” and launched another development plan. Additionally several schools were opened during his reign and he supported the formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which was established in 1981, promoting economic cooperation among six countries. These were Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. In 1981 King Abdulaziz International Airport was opened in Jeddah. The most unique

feature of this airport is the *Hajj*-terminal, which was created for pilgrims and can accommodate more than 80 thousand people. During the time of King Faisal the number of pilgrims visiting Mecca was around 250 thousand and in 1975 it increased to 900 thousand. To provide safety and comfort to pilgrims in 1975 the first Jamarat Bridge in Mina was built. This made the stoning of the devil easier by providing two levels from where people could perform the ritual. In 1976 the port of Jeddah started its operation and many pilgrims arrived to this port. The above mentioned Kiswa factory was inaugurated in 1977 and from this time on the departments of the factory were responsible for the dying of silk, embroidering the inscriptions from the Quran and assembling the Kiswa. (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington, DC, 2013)

While King Fahd ruled, the economic development continued and Saudi Arabia became a wealthy nation. He established roads, airports, hospitals and universities. In 1979 the Saudi Public Transport Company was established to provide international and chartered bus services for *Hajj* and *Umrah*. In 2002 they provided around 7000 buses for *Hajj*. In 1983 the King Khalid International Airport was opened in Riyadh and later in the 1990's the King Fahd International Airport in Dammam. King Fahd was the so-called Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques which was a title, meaning the responsibility of maintaining the two mosques in Mecca and Madinah. He was responsible for a major expansion of the Holy Mosque in Mecca which enabled more than 1 million pilgrims to pray at the same time. The roof was enlarged, new entrances and gates were built and two additional minarets were constructed. Moreover for the safety of pilgrims the tiles were changed to a special heat-resistant marble and escalators were added. In 1985 they started working on the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, where they built 6 additional minarets, 7 entrances, elevators and stairs. He further developed the region between Safa and Marwah by installing new doors and widening the first floor. (King Abdul Aziz Public Library, 2014)

2.3.2 King Abdullah and the modern times

In 2005 King Abdullah ascended to the throne. He also has the title, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and focuses on development in health, education, infrastructure and economy. Due to the growing number of pilgrims

visiting the city of Mecca each year, King Abdullah ordered the largest expansion project of the mosque in the history of Saudi Arabia to have a capacity of 2 million people. There are about 100, numbered entrances to the Masjid al-Haram and it has 9 minarets with a height of 98 meters. For the prayers there are 4 floors available; basement level, ground floor, middle floor and roof level. Tawaf can be performed on the middle floor and roof, but the roof is only for males usually. This roundabout provides 3 thousand square meters extra space and can accommodate more than 1500 wheelchairs at the same time. There are elevators and escalators at many locations which can be accessed from outside and inside as well. What is more many entrances provide access for wheelchairs.

The Al-Souq Al-Sagheer Tunnel was constructed to separate the lanes for vehicles and pilgrims in the vicinity of the mosque. King Abdullah wanted to develop the area outside the mosque, providing restrooms and other services. He ordered the construction of a railway network in order to provide transportation for pilgrims between the different sites and to decrease traffic jams caused by the huge number of buses transporting people. Now this railway connects 9 stations between Muzdalifah, Arafat and Mina. All the stations include two, air-conditioned waiting areas with a capacity of 3 thousand people. The Mecca Royal Clock Tower which is a mixture of a hotel complex and residential building was started to be built in 2004. Considering the importance of the 5 daily prayers and their timing, this clock tower symbolizes discipline. This huge building has 7 towers, the tallest housing the clock. There is a five-star Fairmont Hotel, shopping mall and permanent residents inside.

In 2006 they demolished the earlier mentioned Jamarat Bridge as it could not handle the large number of pilgrims. Instead they built a new, 5 level structure which could accommodate even more people. It is 950 meters long, 80 meters wide, has 12 entrances and 2 helipads which can be used in case of emergency. In 2008 King Abdullah had the region between Safa and Marwah expanded, providing four floors, escalators and elevators with a total area of 125 thousand square meters. Moreover he started a project with the main aim of preserving and ensuring the constant supply of the Zamzam water. Two lines were installed with filters to sterilize the water, including a tank which can hold 10 thousand liters of water. This system can purify 5 million liters of water per day. (King Abdulaziz Public Library, 2014)

Another project was the provision of improved tents for pilgrims, because during their stay in Mina they stay in tents. This system of tents has to provide accommodation for more than 2,5 million people in 2,5 million square meters considering their safety as well. They divided this huge territory into sectors, and the sectors to camps. All camps are surrounded by walls, have a main entrance, several exits and provide kitchen, bathrooms and other facilities. Public telephones are available as well in Mina and Arafat. These are card phones and cards are available in different denominations starting from 10 Saudi Riyals. (King Abdul Aziz Public Library, 2014)

Bearing the name, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah found it extremely important to develop the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah. To provide shade outside, an additional 86 automated awnings were set up which open and close automatically and have a system of rain water discharge. New entrances, staircases and escalators were constructed and the whole building is fully air-conditioned. To serve to growing number of pilgrims the King Abdulaziz International Airport has to be expanded as well. It was confirmed in 2009 that the first phase, the development of *Hajj* terminals was completed. Seven new terminals were built and arrival lounges were established to handle 3700 people per hour. The main aim is to increase the capacity of the airport to 80 million people per year and to provide additional facilities like restaurants, shops and hotels. The project is expected to be completed by the beginning of 2016. (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington, DC, 2013)

2.3.3 Security and healthcare

Security and health services are more and more important during the pilgrimage. When during the pilgrimage people try to make their way from one place to another, they can cause panics or severe accidents. Especially the stoning ritual is dangerous because more than a million people can gather at the same place to carry out the stoning. There were many incidents and/or accidents in the past few years, for example:

1. In 1987 400 people died and 650 were wounded because Iranian pilgrims rioted and there was a clash and the same year around 2500 pilgrims died because of different accidents
2. Two bombs exploded and killed 1 person and wounded another 16 in 1989
3. In 1990 a stampede at a tunnel in Mecca killed 1426 pilgrims (The Guardian, 2006)
4. In 1994 around 270 people died due to stampede during the stoning ritual
5. In Mina, in 1997 a fire killed 343 pilgrims and 1500 were injured (Al Jazeera, 2009)
6. Due to panic 119 people fell off the underpass near Jamarat Bridge in 1998
7. 251 people died during the stoning ritual in 2004
8. In 2006 as a result of a coach accident 34 people injured and 3 died on the way from Madinah to Mecca, another 289 died during the stoning of the devil

Several measures were introduced in the past few years, some barriers were built and the new, five-level structure allows more people to approach the pillars at the same time. At the present, a plan is organized to separate pedestrians and vehicles during the movement from Mount Arafat to Muzdalifah. Likewise it forbids people to carry bags or packages while they are carrying out the Jamarat ritual and enforces one-way traffic in many sites of the *Haji*. Also some 1200 cameras were installed inside the Grand Mosque to observe and ensure the security of people. In 2013 electronic gates were built at the entrance of Mecca to control the flow of people. (Karasik, 2013) As an addition to this the Saudi Civil Defense regularly provides units who provide security at the Grand Mosque.

Regarding health services there are seven hospitals in Mecca with high quality health care. Inside the Grand Mosque of Mecca there are emergency clinics to assist pilgrims and Red Crescent is also present during the annual pilgrimages. Also medical care is provided to all the pilgrims free of charge. In Mina and Arafat there are medical facilities including mobile clinics. In order to ensure safety in respect to health, the government introduced scanning equipments at many ports to ensure that people with infectious diseases will not be able to enter the country and perform the pilgrimage. What is more the Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia advises those who are pregnant or elderly and those with chronic diseases or immune

deficiency to postpone their pilgrimage for their own safety. (NHS National Health Services Scotland, 2014) There are some guidelines for pilgrims to be followed, for example to wash hands regularly, to avoid hand contact with eyes and mouth, to wear facemasks in the crowd, to avoid contact with animals during their journey, to maintain personal hygiene and to use disposable tissues. Moreover some boards with safety tips were placed in different locations as reminders. These tips include avoiding annoying others, performing the rituals moderately and avoiding overcrowding and pushing. The ministry also launched a mobile application which makes it possible for pilgrims to receive information about health issues. It includes health alerts, shows the nearest health care facilities in Mecca and Madinah and gives advices on how to deal with basic diseases.

2.3.4 Accommodations

Regarding accommodations when one would like to travel to Mecca can choose from a large variety according to taste and/or budget. Many large hotel chains are constantly building new hotels in Mecca making it the city with the most hotel rooms (60 thousand) in the whole Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The highest quality and internationally branded hotels are located around the Grand Mosque of Mecca while outside this area some unbranded hotels and furnished apartments are available for pilgrims. According to statistics the total number of hotels in Saudi Arabia in 2012 was 1098. (MAS Tourism Information and Research Centre, 2012) The majority of high quality hotels and 63% of all hotels were located in Mecca. The city where 19,3% of hotels

Projects	Size (sqm)	Expected No. of Keys	Establishment Type
Jabal Al Kaaba	1.3 million	8,500	Villas, Apartments, Hotels, Business Facilities and Retail
Jabal Omar	2.2 million	13,500	37 Hotel Towers
King Abdul Aziz Road	N/A	28,000	Hotels, Apartments, and Commercial
Dirb Al Khaleel Project	57,725	TB C	Hotels, Furnished Apartments and Residential
Abraj Al Bait	35,000	22,000	Commercial, Medical, Hotels, Furnished Apartments and Residential
Jabal Khandam	2 million	TB C	Hotels, Furnished Apartments, Residential and Commercial

*Table1 Holy cities on the road to re-development;
source: Colliers International, 2014*

could be found was Madinah.

At present 12 new hotels are planned to be built with more than 6 thousand rooms. Marriott International will increase its portfolio to 11 properties in total. (Top Hotel Projects, 2013) Hyatt wants to open 3 new hotels. Additionally the largest Holiday Inn is planned in Mecca with the expected opening in 2016 aiming to have almost 1300 rooms. InterContinental Hotels Group already has 24 hotels with almost 6 thousand rooms in the kingdom. The volume of hotel investments in Mecca is predicted to hit 500 billion Saudi Riyals by 2015. (Taha, 2013)

The picture demonstrates the upcoming developments in the city of Mecca. (Colliers International, 2014) It clearly shows that many new hotels, apartments, residential buildings, parking spaces will be constructed, along with recreational- and commercial areas, medical centers and business units.

To meet the requirements of the growing number of pilgrims in the future the development of Madinah is very important. King Abdullah announced in 2012 the expansion of the Prophet's Mosque by adding 12 hectares, to have a holding capacity of 1,6 million people by 2040. The Development Authority of Madinah already set the demolition plans, according to which even hotels and furnished apartments will be swiped away due to the expansion of the mosque. In 2014 the construction of the 340 thousand square meter territory pilgrim city was started in Madinah which will consist of hotels, a hospital, offices, bus and train station and will be able to accommodate 200 thousand people. The Haramain High Speed Railway is expected to open in December, 2015. It will connect Mecca, Madinah and Jeddah, a length of 480 kilometers with a speed of 320 kilometres per hour.

2.3.5 Negative impacts

But the development of infrastructure and superstructure has some negative impacts on Mecca and Madinah. First of all *Hajj* symbolises equality of people in front of God. But these days this concept does not prevail anymore as the newly constructed luxury hotels offer a wide range of services. Almost all hotels provide 24 hour room-service, butler service and wealthier pilgrims can pay more than 5 thousand US dollars for a night in a suite. Although during the performance of the rites of *Hajj* or *Umrah*, all pilgrims are dressed the same way, some might see this

religious obligation a holiday, while earlier it was considered an effort. At the same time many Muslims from all around the world can never afford to fulfill this duty. Also according to some pilgrims, traffic jams and environmental pollution leads to the loss of spirituality in the holy places.

Secondly, as a result of all these multi-billion dollar mega-projects and commercial developments, the two cities changed a lot over the past few years. Historical buildings, mosques, burial places, streets, schools, markets, thousands of homes and even whole neighborhoods were completely destroyed in order to modernize the region and accomodate the vast number of pilgrims. Mainly the modernization happened in the central part of Mecca, around the Grand Mosque. For example the house of the Prophet's first wife was demolished to have space for public lavatories, and in the place of the former house of Abu Bakr a Hilton hotel stands. The Royal Clock Tower was built in the location of a former Ottoman fortress. On the western side a construction of 40 towers was started which will include hotels, providing 11 thousand rooms. (Colliers International, 2014)

At the same time noise pollution is increasing, traffic jams are constant and electricity shortages persist in the outskirts of the region. Although it is much easier to fulfill the religious duty today, many pilgrims and locals are disappointed and complaining about the transformation of the religious places and the loss of spirituality. There are many discontent citizens who lost their homes because of the expansion of the Masjid al Haram. The Islamic Heritage Research Foundation fought to protect the historical and religious sights of the 2 cities but they did not succeed. The development and modernization are not the only reasons for destroying historical buildings. The rulers of the kingdom would not like to keep the relics of Prophet Muhammad because they think it will lead to worshipping idols.

Authorities, supported by religious scholars claim that the expansion of the mosques in Mecca and Madinah is not possible without removing some historical relics. As long as Wahhabi clerics has a monopoly of preaching and the monarchy supports them the distruction of historical relics will not stop.

2.4 Summary

In the literature review religious tourism and Islam was introduced with its short history, followed by the description of the main pilgrimages and the rites of

Hajj. Also the developments of infrastructure and superstructure in Mecca and Madinah were detailed to show its significance from tourism point of view.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Introductions

Research means exploring and searching for information on a specific topic or issue. Its main aim can be to solve a problem, to test a hypothesis or to suggest new interpretation of a concept. The methodology of research depends on personal preferences and the topic as well. The author is going to introduce secondary and primary research methodologies and the data analysis methods.

3.2 Secondary research

Secondary research means collecting, examining and analyzing information or data which was already collected by someone else. Sources of secondary research can include for example books, studies or different articles. (Babbie, 2008)

3.2.1 Literature search

Usually researches involve a literature search which means reviewing different literature before the actual research methodology is carried out. Literature search and review can provide a background and academic basis for a certain topic or question.

3.2.2 Data collecting methodologies

It is always the secondary data that is collected first. There are 2 main groups of sources of secondary data, the first is internal sources. This means for example collecting information from our previous studies, while external sources can include books, journals, reports or studies of different organizations. (Babbie, 2008)

3.3 Primary research

Primary research means a new survey or research carried out by the researcher to examine a specific problem or question. Sources can include questionnaires, interviews or observation of a group or phenomena.

3.3.1 Primary data research

Primary data or information is usually collected after the secondary data collection. Data collected can be qualitative or quantitative. Qualitative data usually answers to questions like why, when or how showing how individuals feel or think about something. These data can not be measured. To collect qualitative data the following tools can be used: interviews, focus groups, observations. Quantitative data is usually measurable and deals with numbers. Examples for quantitative data can be percentages or number of people who have the same characteristics, level of skills, duration of a condition or results of different surveys. (Babbie, 2008)

3.4 Data analysis methods

In order to analyze data first organization, representation and interpretation of the information is needed. There are different ways of quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

3.4.1 Quantitative data analysis methods

The aim of data analysis is to interpret the results or responds received. Quantitative data can be organized and summarized, then tables, charts and other graphical displays can be created from it. Today online questionnaires and its services provide the benefit of displaying the results themselves.

3.4.2 Qualitative data analysis methods

Qualitative data provides a more complex picture about an issue than quantitative data. In case of qualitative data the description of experiences and feelings is important, not the numbers. In this kind of data analysis it is important to

identify and understand categories of data and emerging patterns. To analyze all the data reading, listening and understanding it is the first step. The second step is to focus on the purpose of the data collection, to know what we would like to find out or prove. Then the information has to be categorized for example based on the questions and connections should be found between the categories. The last step is to interpret the data, to find the main points or findings as a result of the research to develop a theory. In this step the main focus is on finding the meaning of data and not only listing it. (Renner, 2003)

3.5 Summary

When selecting the research methodology many factors have to be considered as each research topic or question may require different methodology and it can affect results as well. Always the most reliable method should be used to produce reliable findings.

4. Description of the authors research

4.1 Introduction

The author framed her research following the knowledge claims of pragmatism. In order to be able to analyze and compare differences in pilgrimage tours' organization, situations, actions and their consequences have to be investigated. Her strategies of inquiry include mixed methods and sequential procedures. It means starting with broad or general concepts and phenomena, followed by qualitative methods of inquiry, including detailed description of individuals' experiences. The data collection methods include interviews with pilgrims and an organizer in Hungary and questionnaires to foreign pilgrims, living in the United Arab Emirates.

4.2 Secondary research

When it comes to secondary research, in case of this topic written literature can be used effectively while describing religion and the pilgrimage itself. This is especially beneficial because historical data can be collected. In order to see the different ways of travel organization travel company's websites proved to be the most useful. To prove the economic importance of the pilgrimage mainly statistical reports were analyzed, mainly that of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities and the Tourist Information and Research Centre.

4.3 Primary research

The author's primary research consisted of collecting data and information through questionnaires and interviews. Both the interviews and questionnaires included the same questions, but due to the fact that questionnaires were sent to foreigners, the questions were in English. The research can be called phenomenological, as participants had to be chosen based on 2 criteria, they had to be Muslims and have already had to perform one type of pilgrimage to Mecca. As a result, her sample was not randomly chosen, but specifically only those could be interviewed or asked who totally matched the criteria. Both interviews and questionnaires engaged a relatively small number of participants, all together 9 people.

The interviews were made face-to-face and were recorded with the previous consent of the interviewees. The interview included a standardized set of open-ended questions and some additional questions were asked if more detailed description of an action or event was needed. These interviews took approximately 35-40 minutes with each interviewee.

In the questionnaires sent to the United Arab Emirates, all questions were open-ended so there were no set answers from which participants could choose, just like during the interviews. The first few questions/points are the introductory questions, followed by the method of tour organization and the necessary steps, then come those questions about mode of transportation and accommodation and the final set of questions regarding personal experiences and further comments. The structure of the questionnaires and interviews were the same.

4.4 Data analysis methods

Quantitative data generally means numerical data which can describe a situation or event. Quantitative data sources can come from interviews, questionnaires or documents. These data can be organized and summarized, tables and statistics can be created from it and it can provide information about similarities and differences in a certain field.

The author's research focused on qualitative data collection and its analysis. She collected narrative data which were the results of open-ended questions during the interviews and written answers of the questionnaire. To analyze all the data reading, listening and understanding it is the first step. The second step is to focus on the purpose of the data collection, to know what we would like to find out or prove. Then the information has to be categorized for example based on the questions and connections should be found between the categories. For example she grouped the questions into 3 groups and then compared the differences in participants' responses to these questions.

The last step is to interpret the data, to find the main points or findings as a result of the research to develop a theory. In this step the main focus is on finding the meaning of data and not only listing it.

5. Research analysis and results

5.1 Introduction

In this section the way of organizing tours will be compared through the example of Hungarian and Emirati pilgrims. Travel companies' offers and packages, religious organizations' activities and pilgrims' experiences will be analyzed to provide a general picture about the differences and similarities in the methods of *Hajj* and *Umrah* trips' organization.

5.2 Examples and comparison of the organization of pilgrimage tours

5.2.1 Institutions, rules

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia the Ministry of *Hajj* was created to provide services and assistance to pilgrims and coordinate the work of companies and individuals who serve pilgrims. This ministry is responsible for improving the quality of hospitality services, building and maintain mosques, cooperating with service providers, resolving complaints, facilitating and supervising the performance of *Hajj* and *Umrah*. They determine *Hajj* and *Umrah* procedures for Saudi and international pilgrims and create regulations regarding the different services. (Ministry of Hajj, 2014)

All non-Saudi Arabian citizens who wish to perform *Hajj* or *Umrah* need a visa, which is issued by the Saudi embassies only for the period of the pilgrimage. This visa does not allow one to visit other cities of the country. But visas are issued based on quotas, different for each country. The system of quota was introduced in 1987 when Iranian pilgrims rioted and attacked the Saudi security personnel resulting in more than 400 people's death.

The special service providers and division of the Ministry of *Hajj* in Saudi Arabia are called Tawafa Establishments and there are 6 of them, one for the pilgrims of South Asia, one for Arabian countries, for Non-Arab African countries, for Iran, for the Muslims of Turkey and Europe and finally one for South East Asia. Their role is very important during the *Hajj* as they are responsible for organizing transportation, meals, accomodation in the locations of the pilgrimage and providing assistance and guidance. They usually take passports of pilgrims and provide them an ID card instead, they function as site inspectors, checking conditions of accomodations and deal with problems, disputes and lost pilgrims.

5.2.2 Visa

There is different visa for *Hajj* and *Umrah*. Usually application forms can be requested in the Saudi Arabian embassies of each country. Those visiting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the purpose of performing *Hajj* and travel by air will receive a visa which expires at the end of the Islamic month *Dhul-Hijjah* or no later than the middle of *Muharram* month. The visa of those travelling by bus expires on

the 5th of *Muharram*. Pilgrims arriving to the kingdom by land have to arrive at the end of *Dhul-Qadah* month (the one before *Dhul-Hijjah*) and those coming by air or sea have to arrive by the 4th of *Dhul-Hijjah*. The requirements for *Hajj* and *Umrah* visa are the following:

1. The person applying for visa must have a passport which is valid at least for the following six months, it should have at least 2 empty pages for visa, adjacent to each other and it has to be acceptable for entry to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
2. All applicants must provide at least one recently-made, passport size color photograph with white background. The applicant must face the camera on the photograph.
3. An application form must be filled with black ink pen or printed and submitted. The form must be signed and stamped by an authorized travel agency or organization.
4. The *Mahram*, travelling with women has to provide complete information on his spouse and childrean or any relative with whom he is travelling. He has to provide also copies of marriage and birth certificates.
5. The person applying must have a non-refundable 2-way ticket and confirmed reservation.
6. Proof of meningitis and ACYW135 vaccination must be submitted for adults and children above 15 years. Infants and children below 15 are required a vaccination report for polio and meningitis. All certificates of vaccination should have been issued not more than 3 years prior and not less than 10 days prior to entering the kingdom.
7. All applicants must submit 2 certified checks or cashier checks paid for pilgrimage services, like for example tour guide, tent accomodation. Checks have to include name of pilgrim, passport number and date of issue. Children between 7 and 15 only have to pay half of the amount. Children under the age of 7 do not have to pay. (Saudia Airlines, 2014)

5.2.3 United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates is a neighbouring country of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with a population of around 9,3 million people according to 2014

statistics. It is a federation of seven emirates, these are the following: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Ajman, Sharjah, Ras al-Khaimah, Fujairah and Umm al-Quwain and it was established in 1971. The two most populated emirates are Dubai and Abu Dhabi. In this country the number of expatriates significantly exceeds the number of native Emiratis. Expatriates coming from different continents represent more than 85% of the total population. The majority of Asian people come from China, Iran, the Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan and India, there are many from other Arab countries and also more and more Europeans move here for the purpose of work. Around 76% of the population is Muslim, 9% follows Christianity and 15% belongs to other religions. (Todorova, 2010) According to the Pew Research statistics the Muslim population in the UAE is about to increase by 39,3% by 2030, resulting in almost 5 million people. (Pew Research Center, 2011)

The United Arab Emirates according to 2011 statistics is the country sending the most pilgrims to Saudi Arabia from among the GCC countries. (MAS Tourist Information and Research Centre, 2012)

In order to control the number of pilgrims and provide safety for them the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia introduced policies and quotas. In 2013 and 2014 the *Hajj* quota for UAE allowed approximately 5000 people, some 3800 Emiratis and 1200 expatriates to participate on the pilgrimage. In 2012 the number of allowed pilgrims was higher, but due to the ongoing construction of the mosques, Saudi Arabia introduced some restrictions. Also those who would like to travel to Mecca for *Hajj* or *Umrah* from one of the emirates need to contact a service provider and must apply for visa through this agent. The Saudi embassies usually do not provide visa to those who wish to travel individually. The Ministry of *Hajj* appoints certain travel agents who are authorized by the government to organize tours and arrange all the necessary documents for a pilgrim. There is a list of authorized travel agents in 50 countries, which can be amended only by the ministry. (Ministry of Hajj, 2014)

In the UAE currently there are 22 licenced *Umrah* travel agencies and around 60 *Hajj* agencies. It is the General Authority of Islamic Affairs& Endowments who is responsible for organizing *Hajj* and *Umrah* affairs, granting permissions, regulating the performance of *Hajj* and *Umrah* contractors and review guidelines. Moreover they provide services and assistance in the application for new license or renewal of license. Also they reply to all legal inquiries, supervise mosques and

religious institutes and disseminate Islamic knowledge through different channels. (General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments, 2007)

Muslims in UAE, who would like to perform one of the pilgrimages can choose from a variety of travel agencies who offer different packages. Usually these package include visa arrangement, accomodation, transportation to and in the destination and meals. Prices differ based on the type and quality of accomodation, its distance from religious sights and the mode of transportation. In case of travelling by car or bus the journey might take as long as 17 hours, while by plane it is only 2,5 hours. Packages range from 25 000 AED to 100 000 AED. Those with lower cost usually provide more distant accomodation from the main religious sites. In 2013 those for 80 000 AED included accomodation in four or five star hotels and business class airline ticket. In order to analyze some examples and compare the different offers of travel agencies the author will introduce a few travel agents and tour operators in the United Arab Emirates.

The first agency is called Al Hammadi Travel and Tourism. They offer packages by luxurious bus, by plane and to individual passangers. As an addition to this they also provide visa arrangement, hotel bookings, sightseeing tours and airport meet&greet services. One of their offers is a 4 nights Mecca& 4 nights Madinah *Umrah* package in 3* hotels, transportation is by luxurious bus and meals are not included in the price. It costs 1000 AED per adult per night and 700 AED per child per night. In case someone does not need transportation the company can arrange *Umrah* visa and accomodation separately. Another package including 3 nights in Mecca and 2 nights in Madinah, by plane and luxurious bus has a price of 3700 AED per adult per night in a triple room in 5* hotel. The same triple room in a 3* accomodation is 2800 AED per night. In case pilgrims would prefer to stay in a double room in the 5* hotel it is 4000 AED per night. For children, requiring bed it is 1800 AED for 1 night. This offer does not include meals and a 1000 AED deposit has to be paid in advance for booking. (Al Hammadi Travel and Tourism, 2012)

Dnata *Hajj* and *Umrah* is a brand of the Emirates Group, based in Dubai. Their aim is to provide solutions for pilgrims by offering different category hotels and organizing tours. They organize special VIP *Hajj* packages the total cost of which might costs as much as 80 000 – 100 000 AED. This price includes 2 first class tickets on Emirates Airlines, a double room in one of the world renowned

hotels located next/close to the main religious sights and private car transportation during the pilgrimage.

Al Rayah Travel and Tourism also deals with *Hajj* and *Umrah* services and aims to provide the best services and prices to their guests. They organize regular *Hajj* and *Umrah* trips and even have special offers like for example in case of one *Umrah* trip, they offer pilgrims to book 2 nights and get one night free of charge, with accomodation in the Mecca Royal Cloctower for 550 AED per night. All of their package tours include 4* or 5* accomodation and bus transportation from the UAE. Their vip services consist of farewell services at the airport and meet&assist services at the destination, private aircraft, luxurious means of transport, insurances, entertainment services and gifts.

Luxury *Hajj* and *Umrah* packages from the Middle East, USA and UAE usually incorporate special elements and services in their exclusive offers. These can be the following:

- Meet&Assist service upon arrival at the airport
- Free visa
- First class airline ticket
- 5* hotel accomodation in the vicinity of the Grand Mosque in Mecca
- All-inclusive service
- Private tent accomodation in Mina and buffet meals, sometimes also private bathroom
- Luxurious bus transportation in the destination

5.2.3.1 Results

In order to discover and analyze the main trends of travelling for *Hajj* or *Umrah* in the United Arab Emirates the author designed a questionnaire which was sent to people who have already been on one of the pilgrimages. She compared the answers of 5 participants, all of whom organized his or her tour and travelled from the UAE.

The first participant, from now on called A, is a Jordanian lady between the age of 50 and 55 who travelled to perform *Hajj* in 2014 with her husband. They

spent 6 days in Mecca. The second participant, B, is a 20-25 year old male from Syria who performed his *Umrah* together with his parents in 2014 and were in Mecca for 3 days. The third pilgrim, indicated as C, travelled in 2011 with his sister and uncle to perform *Umrah*, is 25-30 years old and is from Sudan. They were in the city of Mecca for 10 days. The next person, D is an Egyptian man, 30-35 years old and performed *Umrah* with a group of friends in 2010 and spent 10 days in Mecca. The last participant, E, is also a male, 20-25 years old from Pakistan, performed *Umrah* in 2014 travelled with a group, stayed for 5 days in Mecca.

A, B and D participants all started to plan their trips 2 months in advance, while C and E agree that 3 weeks were enough to arrange their trips. Pilgrim A visited different *Hajj* agencies and finally she chose Al Raya, mentioned above earlier. She applied for visa at this agency, they required her passport and 4 photos, results of her necessary vaccinations and 350 AED as the cost of the visa. She travelled with a group of approximately 90 people and the package included flight, hotel, transportation in the destination and insurance. Doctors, an Islamic rules consultant and even an administrator travelled with the group. In order to prevent health problems the Health Authority Abu Dhabi introduced a *Hajj* vaccination programme, which provides 3 vaccines for everyone who is planning to participate on the pilgrimage. Their advice is to take these vaccines at least 2 weeks prior to the trip. Pilgrim B also arranged the trip by contacting a travel agency to issue their visa, book accommodation and transportation. They travelled with a group of 30 people and according to his answer he did not arrange any type of insurance. The Egyptian D and Pakistani E pilgrims only arranged their visa and transportation through a travel agency. Pilgrim C did not contact any travel company for his *Umrah* trip, he applied for visa, booked airline tickets and accommodation individually.

As all participants are Muslims they did not have to prove their religion. It is the Ministry of Interior in the UAE who provides background history about citizens to the Saudi embassy, including their religion. Based on the answers of participants it takes 1-2 weeks to receive the *Hajj* or *Umrah* visa.

All pilgrims agreed that *Ihram* clothes are the most important item to take, A highlighted first aid kit, Vitamins, medical mask and *Hajj* instruction book as other necessary items. The first 3 pilgrims travelled by airplane. A travelled with Etihad Airlines from Abu Dhabi to Jeddah Airport, which is around 70 kms far from Mecca.

They were taken from Jeddah to Mecca by bus, arranged by the agency. All the group members' passports were taken by the agency, they received it upon the arrival back in Abu Dhabi. B travelled from Dubai to Jeddah by FlyDubai. He was the only one who took 3 pieces of bags with him, including a luggage. Others took only 1 piece of luggage with them. Their passports were not collected by the agency, although he travelled with a group, just like pilgrim A. From Jeddah they were taken to Mecca by bus. Participant C also arrived to Jeddah Airport from Abu Dhabi, by Saudi Airlines and from there he took a taxi to arrive in Mecca. D and E pilgrims both went from Abu Dhabi to Mecca by bus. All pilgrims travelling by air had special *halal* menu on the plane. In Arabic language *halal* can mean an action or object or food which is allowed, or can be used based on the Islamic law. For Muslims consuming food made of pork is prohibited. Therefore on airlines flying to Saudi Arabia halal menu must be available.

Pilgrims A and C mentioned that other nationalities in the group included Syrians, Americans, Canadians, Moroccans, Russians, Indians, Arabs from different countries and Africans. Those travelling by bus were together with Pakistani, Sudanese, Egyptian, Indian and Bangladeshi Muslims.

The package of participant A included a 3* accomodation, she stayed in one room together with her husband. Food was included in the price, she did not specify if it was half board or only breakfast, but also in the tents in Mina the agency provided meals. In the tents female and male pilgrims were separated. Pilgrim B had buffet breakfast and could choose from 2 restaurants in the 5* Fairmont Mecca hotel, in the Royal Clocktower and stayed alone in one room. The Sudanese C spent his nights in a 4* hotel and was alone in the room. Participant D rented a flat together with the other group members and 3 people shared 1 room, while E stayed in an apartment hotel and 4 people slept in the same room. They had to arrange their meals individually.

All participating pilgrims with the exception of A visited the city of Madinah either before or after their pilgrimage. Pilgrim A said that there was a tour guide with the group, it was the *Imam*, the Islamic rules consultant. The rest of the pilgrims did not have any assistance while performing their pilgrimage. All participants stated that despite the big crowd at the religious sights they felt safe and did not see or have any accidents. The first 3 pilgrims who travelled by air to Saudi Arabia used the

same company and same type of transportation on the way back, while D and E participants said they did not travel back with the same company.

According to B, C, D and E the whole trip fit their expectations, A said that she thought it will be harder and more stressful and spiritually it was beyond her expectations. She said she would love to perform pilgrimage again as it changed her life in a positive way, she became a new person. Other participants all agree that they would perform *Hajj* or *Umrah* and visit the holy sites again, they found it a life-changing experience after which all of them started to live a more religious life and left some of their bad habits like smoking.

5.2.4 Hungary and Europe:

These days Islam is said to be one of the fastest growing religions in the world, being present in many European countries. From 29,5 million in 1990 the number of Muslims in Europe grew to 44 million in 20 years. The followers of Islam constitute 6% of the total population of Europe and it is expected to grow by 2030. The majority of Muslims live in Eastern Europe. Based on statistical data from 2010, the biggest numbers live in France, Germany, the UK, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands. In Eastern Europe their number is expected to grow by almost 11,9% by 2030, in Northern Europe by 97%, Southern Europe by 28,9% and in Western Europe by 45%. The countries with the largest projected increase in the number of Muslims include the UK, Russia, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands and Austria. (Pew Research Center, 2011) Based on 2011 statistical data the European countries generating the highest number of inbound tourists travelling for religious reasons are the following: UK, Germany, France and Italy. (MAS Tourist Information and Research Centre, 2012)

In order to see how the Muslim population changed in Hungary over the decades, we have to go back to the Turkish rule, which lasted for 150 years. During the Turkish rule the majority of Hungary, North Croatia and Serbia belonged to the Ottoman Empire. It had an impact on culture and architecture, many baths and mosques were built in the territory of Hungary, some of which are still existing today. Moreover they established special schools relating to Islam religious sciences. Although it was not forced, many people converted to Islam.

Since 1949 there is a freedom of religion in Hungary. Today most of the Muslims came either from Turkey, Iran or the former Bosnia and there are Hungarians who converted to Islam. According to the statistics of the Central Statistical Office of Hungary the number of those who do not belong to Christian or Jewish religion belong to other religious groups, including Islam. The number of these people was 167 231 in 2011, while 10 years earlier it was only 96 760. (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 2011) But, based on a more specific research, carried out by the Pew Research Center, Hungary's Muslim population was 17 000 in 1990 and increased to 25 000 in 20 years. (Pew Research Center, 2011)

Officially in Hungary there is no approved *Hajj* travel company. On the other hand on the website of Saudi Arabia Market Information Resource there is a list of *Hajj* Travel Agents which are licensed and approved by the Ministry of *Hajj*. According to this list in many European countries licensed travel agents can be found. These countries include: Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Norway and Portugal. (Saudi Arabia Market Information Resource, 1997) In some of these countries the percentage of Muslim population is quite high compared to others, for example in France by 2030 it is expected to be 10,3% and in Belgium 10,2% of the population will be Muslim. On the other hand in Portugal the Muslim population constitutes only 0,6% of the population and it is not expected to grow in the following 10-15 years. (Pew Research Center, 2011) Despite the small number of Muslims in Portugal, still there are 5 licensed *Hajj* travel agents while in Hungary there is no company like this.

In Hungary at present there are religious organizations like the Hungarian Islam Community which was founded in 1988, its center today can be found in Budapest. Its members are Hungarian living in Hungary or abroad or other nationality Muslims, living in Hungary. This community having more than 1200 members, organizes events, teach Arabic language and Islam and carry out missionary works abroad as well. Moreover they support homeless people in Hungary and take care of the Muslim Cemetery of Budapest among many other activities.

Organization of Muslims in Hungary is an institution, founded in 2000 by Muslims living in the territory of the country with the main aim of practicing Islam.

They provide different programmes and lectures on lifestyle in Islam, understanding of and peaceful co-existence with other religions and assist Muslims in their religious duties, like for example indicating the 5 daily prayers, fasting during the month of Ramadan and performing the pilgrimage.

5.2.4.1 Results

Based on the experiences and stories of Hungarian pilgrims who have already performed the pilgrimage, all of them were informed by the Organization of Muslims in Hungary.

It is essential to highlight the 2 different ways how Hungarians can travel to Saudi Arabia. The first way, how 2 of the interviewees participated on *Hajj* was by the invitation of the Saudi king. This means that every year the Saudi king invites a certain number of muslims from all around the world to visit the kingdom and carry-out their religious duty. In this case participants do not have to pay anything, they are provided with accommodation, transportation to and in the destination, meals and a representative, called *mutawwif* who assists them during their stay. Although participants call this type of *Hajj*, invitation by the king, the manager of the Organization of Muslims in Hungary, Mr. Al-Sabai Abdulghani highlighted that the money does not only come from the king of Saudi Arabia. He said that as almsgiving and charity is a very important pillar of Islam, many rich people from all around the world contribute to this invitation by providing money. (Al-Sabai, 2014) As an example in 2014 King Abdullah hosted around 1400 pilgrims from 70 different countries to travel for *Hajj*.

In the interview F and G pilgrims were invited by the king for the pilgrimage. F had to apply at the Organization of Muslims in Hungary that she would like to participate on the 2009 *Hajj* and due to the illness of 2 other pilgrims she and her husband were chosen to be given the opportunity. Participant G just converted to Islam a few months ago in 2005 and just started visiting this organization when he was informed that he can travel to Saudi Arabia if he wants. Both of them travelled from Budapest but with different airlines. (Fischer, 2014) (Káldos, 2014)

There were Saudi representatives waiting for them at the airport and they were taken everywhere by the same bus which picked them up from the Jeddah airport on their first day. Pilgrim F was accommodated in a 3* hotel and travelled with

a mixed group while G travelled only with men and stayed in a guesthouse in Mecca. They stayed in one room with 2 or 3 other people.

Both pilgrims mentioned that the service exceeded their expectations as they received food and drinks at every step of the pilgrimage, they had buffet breakfast and dinner in the hotel and even they were provided with meals in the tent accommodation in Mina. Everything was complementary during their stay, the only things for which they had to pay were the souvenirs bought.

The Egyptian pilgrim H, living in Hungary went on *Hajj* in 2014 and paid approximately 2500-3500 Euros for the trip. He did not find it expensive as earlier he was living in the United Arab Emirates where prices are much higher. He travelled with a group of 16 people and first were taken by bus to Vienna, from there they flew to Jordan and after that to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. His experiences were almost the same as those of the 2 other pilgrims. He stayed in a 4* Hilton hotel very close to the Grand Mosque and all the meals and transportation were included in the price. (Bakri, 2014)

5.2.5 Comparing results

Comparing the experiences of pilgrims travelling from Hungary and the United Arab Emirates, it can be clearly seen that those from Hungary tend to travel for a longer period of time and most of the interviewees were invited by the king. In the UAE foreign nationality people can not be invited by the king, only UAE nationals, therefore they all had to pay the expenses related to the pilgrimage.

Despite the relative proximity of UAE to Saudi Arabia the majority of interviewees preferred to travel by plane and they contacted a travel company to arrange their visa, accommodation and transportation. In Hungary all pilgrims were informed by the Organization of Muslims in Hungary, who took care of all the arrangements. All of those pilgrims who travelled from Hungary participated on a package tour, as either it was an invitation, including every aspect of the tour or paid by the individual and the price included the same services as in case of the first type. For the pilgrims travelling from the UAE the situation was different as not all of them paid for a package tour.

One interesting point is regarding the accommodations when everyone travelling from Hungary said that men and women were separated while one of the

pilgrims from UAE mentioned that she shared one room with her husband. One reason why people travelling from the UAE performed mostly *Umrah* might be its closeness to Saudi Arabia, while the ones from Hungary performed *Hajj*. As Mr. Al-Sabai Abdulghani said *Umrah* planning is easier than *Hajj* that is why Hungarians usually need their organization to travel for *Hajj*. There was no unanimous answer about the collection of passports but all pilgrims agreed that the conditions of pilgrimage were safe and none of them got injured during the pilgrimage.

5.3 Economic impact of *Hajj*

5.3.1 Economy of the country

Until the discovery of oil, Saudi Arabia's economy was based on agriculture and the society depended on farming and commerce. They grew dates and vegetables which was enough for the community. It was only in the 1970's that the government introduced a programme to create new technologies and develop agriculture. Since then on, irrigation systems were built and production of basic food products, like for example meat and eggs started. Then, in 1938 the discovery of oil changed the situation. After this all incomes from oil were spent on the development of infrastructure and the promotion of industry.

Today the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest petroleum exporter and producer in the world. It has 25% of the world's petroleum reserves and this sector accounts for almost 50% of budget revenues. Saudi Aramco, the national oil company of the country which earlier invested a lot in new production and shipping facilities, has the largest crude oil reserves today. The country is member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and it is also part of the G-20, which includes those countries whose economies account for more than 80% of the gross world product. In 2005 it joined the World Trade Organization to enable its products to access global markets and to attract foreign investments. According to the report of the International Finance Corporation the kingdom is the 22nd most economically competitive country in the whole world.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a growing population which is expected to reach 31 million by 2015. More than half of the population is under the age of 25. Disposable incomes are increasing, there is free education and health care. Besides

oil, it exports metal products, construction materials and electrical appliances. At present the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a fast-growing economy with a strong support for the private sector aiming to increase employment opportunities. In 6 years, the country would like to launch economic cities which will increase per capita income and diversify the economy. Also real-estate industry plays an important role in the in creating a sustainable non-oil economy. (Rozvány, 2007)

5.3.1.1 Tourism:

The tourism and economy of Saudi Arabia has always been based on religious tourism and pilgrimage. The country is an important destination because of its natural beauties as well as from the point of view of the Islamic history. It has archaeological places, museums, World Heritage sites and natural wonders, like the beautiful waters of the Red sea. Because of the strict restrictions many people think that only Muslims can travel to this country but also non-Muslims visit it as tourists. Those who would like to travel to Saudi Arabia need a sponsor and visa. Visas are usually issued for those who visit the country because of business purposes, pilgrims or those whose relatives live in the kingdom. There are many business people travelling to the kingdom for a few days, participating on conferences or exhibitions. But there are no tourist visas issued, only group visas for guided tours. Of course the GCC citizens do not need visa to enter the country and they are also allowed to work and live there.

Many people have a negative perception about Saudi Arabia. It is a country where women are not allowed to drive and must wear a floor-length black dress and headscarf in public. They can not even walk on the street without a male and can not travel abroad alone or without written permission. Moreover cinemas are banned as well as alcohol. Some locals agree that opening the country for tourists would help them better understand their culture and religion, on the other hand the kingdom does not desperately need foreign currency and they are afraid of the effect of foreign tourists on the conservative and religious lifestyle of the kingdom.

The government would rather like to improve domestic tourism, this is why they established the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities in 2000. This organization aims to develop the tourism within the country, focusing on supporting domestic tourism, with success. In 2010, according to the Saudi Tourist Information

and Research Center the number of inbound travellers was 13 million, while almost 24 million Saudis participated in domestic tourism.

The main purposes of inbound tourist trips to Saudi Arabia in 2011 were the following: (MAS Tourist Information and Research Centre, 2012)

- religious purpose
- business
- education
- health and medical care
- leisure

Outbound tourism was the lowest, with a number of 7,5 million trips. Then, in 2012 the number of inbound tourism trips were 17,5 million, while outbound significantly increased to 20 million trips. Domestic trips decreased to 21 million. In 2014 the number of domestic tourists increased and there was a rise in religious tourism as well. When it comes to total tourism expenditures, religious tourism generated the highest percentage, with 62,7% of total expenditure in 2011. (MAS Tourist Information and Research Centre, 2012) They started supporting festivals and sport events for different age groups to boost tourism and invited local and foreign airlines to start operating in the country.

5.3.2 Results, *Hajj* and its impacts:

Before the discovery of oil the economy of Saudi Arabia depended on the annual pilgrimage, especially that of Mecca and Madinah. There were no other means of earning sufficient income for a living, therefore locals collected taxes from pilgrims. Up till the 1950's this was the main source of income from pilgrimages.

Today after oil, the annual pilgrimage is a major source of revenue for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It has been carried out for more than 1300 years and it can not be performed anywhere else. This shows that religious tourism in Saudi Arabia is consistent. It is said that with their wealth resulting from oil, the government does not depend on the pilgrimage but according to some predictions, the country may run out of oil to export by 2030, thus *Hajj* is becoming even more important. As mentioned earlier, the government spent big amounts of money in the past few years to improve infrastructure, develop retail services and sanitation

facilities, create accommodations and expand the major religious sites in Mecca and Madinah, in order to meet the needs of pilgrims, whose number increases year by year. It was the number of pilgrims and their spending which made all these infra- and superstructure developments possible. (MAS Tourism Information and Research Centre, 2012)

It is worth mentioning that unlike *Hajj*, *Umrah* can be performed throughout the whole year and it brings significant revenues to the kingdom. The most popular time of the year for *Umrah* is the holy month of Ramadan. To further enhance religious tourism the *Umrah* Plus programme was introduced. It is special because it includes some tourist trips besides the regular rituals. This way pilgrims are able to visit resort places, archeological sites and historical monuments. For instance in 2011 during Ramadan hotel occupancy was more than 90% in Mecca. In 2014 the number of *Umrah* pilgrims almost reached 7 million up to October. (MAS Tourist Information and Research Centre, 2012)

Hajj and *Umrah* and the continuously growing number of pilgrims have a significant impact on the economy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. For example,

أعداد الحجاج للفترة من عام 1416هـ حتى عام 1431هـ
The number of pilgrims for the Years From 1416H. (1995G.) to 1431H. (2010G.)

إجمالي الحجاج Total	الحجاج من الخارج From Outside The Kingdom	الحجاج من الداخل From Inside The Kingdom	العام Year
1865234	1080465	784769	1416هـ
1942851	1168591	774260	1417هـ
1832114	1132344	699770	1418هـ
1831998	1056730	775268	1419هـ
1839154	1267555	571599	1420هـ
1913263	1363992	549271	1421هـ
1944760	1354184	590576	1422هـ
2041129	1431012	610117	1423هـ
2012074	1419706	592368	1424هـ
2164479	1534769	629710	1425هـ
2258050	1557447	700603	1426هـ
2378636	1654407	724229	1427هـ
2454325	1707814	746511	1428هـ
2408849	1729841	679008	1429هـ
2313278	1613965	699313	1430هـ
2789399	1799601	989798	1431هـ

Table 2 The number of pilgrims for the years from 1995 to 2010, source: Central Department of Statistics & Information, 2010

(quotas) the amount of money coming from all pilgrims largely contributes to the

thinking about the expenses, some Muslims can not afford to perform the pilgrimage because of its high costs. On average it costs more than 4000 US dollars but can reach 12 000 US dollars for an individual to fulfill the religious duty. Pilgrims spend on travel packages or purchase accommodation, airfare and transportation separately, they pay for the sacrificial animal, spend on gifts and communication. Although there are restrictions on foreigners and Saudi nationals as well on performing the major pilgrimage

economic success of the country. The data on the picture were collected by the Central Department of Statistics & Information of Saudi Arabia and presents the number of pilgrims from 1995 up to 2010. (Central Department of Statistics and Information, 2010) Already in 1996, 1417 *Hijri* year a total of 1,9 million people performed *Hajj* and *Umrah*, the number of pilgrims participating on *Hajj* reached 1 million and it continued to increase. In 1429 *Hijri* year, 2008 the pilgrimage was performed by 2,4 million people, while in 2009 2,3 million pilgrims visited the holy cities, out of which 1,6 million were foreigners. In 2009 tourism represented more than 3,5% of the GDP. An estimated 2,7 million people, 1,8 million outside from Saudi Arabia performed *Hajj* in 2010. The 2011 pilgrimage generated a revenue of around 10 billion US dollars by attracting 2,9 million people more than half of which were foreigners. (MAS Tourist Information and Research Centre, 2012)

According to statistics collected from Saudi departments, in 2012, it is estimated that the number of foreign pilgrims increased a lot during the last 90 years. In 1920 this number reached only 58 thousand people while in 2012 more than 3,6 million Muslims took part in the major pilgrimage, 1,7 million came from 190 different foreign countries. More than 4,5 million participated on *Umrah* in the same year. Based on estimations by economists in 2012 revenues from *Hajj* and *Umrah* reached more than 16 billion US dollars, and it accounted for 3% of the GDP of Saudi Arabia. The year 2013 showed a 37% decrease compared to the previous year. Its main reason was the restrictions on pilgrims due to the construction of holy places. The total number of registered pilgrims was more than 1,9 million. In 2014 revenues from *Hajj* and *Umrah* increased compared to 2013 and together accounted for more than 18 billion US dollars. By 2025 the number of pilgrims may reach 17 million yearly and the contribution of tourism to GDP is expected to grow to 6% by 2023. (Shah, 2012)

What factors can effect the number of pilgrims?

- Political factors, for example if there is political stability in a country
- Foreign exchange and inflation
- Cost and availability of efficient means of transportation
- Government decisions and restrictions, like quotas limiting the number of people who can participate on *Hajj*

- The time of the pilgrimage, because people tend to avoid participating on *Hajj* during summer months (Abidin, 2001)

As the number of pilgrims is increasing and they need personalized services there is need to grow the Saudi hospitality sector. Tourism industry is already the second most important industry in Saudi Arabia and with its future growth it will provide more and more job opportunities. As around 5 million foreigners work in Saudi Arabia the main aim of the government is to provide long-term job opportunities for the young Saudi citizens as well, for example as tour guides on buses. There are the so called *mutawwifs* who are religious tour guides and responsible for looking after and providing personal services to pilgrims. In 2003 around 1500 young Saudi citizens were hired to work as *mutawwifs* and accompany pilgrims.

Upon completion, the train connecting Mina, Muzdalifah and Arafat provided almost 300 jobs. Within the National Project for Tourism Human Resources Development the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities introduced a programme about occupational awareness. It targets university students and emphasizes the advantages of working in the tourism. The 2012 *Hajj* season employed a total of 60 000 people and another 120 000 security personnel. In 2013 tourism industry generated 168 000 jobs directly. In 2014 some 20 000 seasonal jobs were available for Saudi citizens for the *Hajj* and by 2022 it is estimated to grow with another 160 000. (Al-Hamid, 2014)

Trading activities during *Hajj* and *Umrah* bring higher incomes each year. Many Saudis sell food, dates, perfumes, prayer mats and other souvenirs. In 2014 pilgrims performing *Hajj* spent over 500 million US dollars on gifts. (SME Times News Bureau, 2014) Although many of these products and souvenirs were made in China and Russia and their price can be extremely high in contrast to quality, the majority of pilgrims consider them as blessed gifts. On the other hand the sale of Saudi products is still low. This is the reason why economists emphasize the support of local industries. Locals should be encouraged to work in this industry and should be supported financially. This way with better marketing and the creation of high-quality, unique items, Saudi products could make much higher revenues.

Likewise, it is worth investing in real estate. Due to the increasing number of pilgrims the demand for accommodation is increasing as well. One real estate agent in Mecca said that he worked with investments for more than 30 years and saw enormous changes. Earlier one metre of land costed 3 US dollars and now the same can reach 22 thousand US dollars because of the increasing demand. (Sarfraz, 2013) Besides offering a good location with access for European, Asian and African markets, the country offers low energy prices, Saudi Riyal is one of the world's most stable currencies with very low inflation rate and the kingdom improves investment opportunities. There are no personal income taxes, the establishment of LLCs do not require minimum capital and different financial programmes are provided to foreign investors. Tourism investments are in the focus of development since they generate income and jobs. The Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities supports investments in this industry in order to develop this sector in the country, to attract more tourists and to make tourism eco-friendly.

5.4 Summary

All in all it can be seen that although quotas, prices and travel options differ in the countries, still being a pillar of Islam, the pilgrimage is a very important duty of every Muslim and they would all like to perform it once in their life. This way it is a huge business opportunity for Saudi Arabia with its positive impact on economy, enhancing growth and development.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion and evaluation

As a conclusion first of all the author would like to emphasize the main finding of the research, which shows that the differences in pilgrimage tour organization does not depend on religious reasons. It means that the ratio of Muslim population in a country does not affect the existence of companies/ organizations and the ways how pilgrimage tours can be planned and organized.

Secondly it proves the importance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a tourist destination. Pilgrimage is a great business opportunity for the kingdom, where the 2 main cities and its sites are continuously developed and modernized to accommodate the growing number of people visiting Mecca and Madinah every year.

Although it is a strictly religious country which can not be visited by tourists for the purpose of leisure, still tourism is a very important sector in its economy, by attracting millions of pilgrims each year who spend on accomodation, transportation, meals and souvenirs.

In the future, based on the predicted growth of Muslim population in Europe the economy of Saudi Arabia can be expected to rely on tourism to a greater extent, as pilgrimage is not only a form of tourism but one of the most important parts of Islam.

6.2 Recommendations

First the author would like to recommend this research to all those who are interested in Islam and the pilgrimage.

Also in her opinion it would be worth for travel companies in Europe and Hungary to consider growing Muslim population, as they will increasingly need different travel services to get to Saudi Arabia and perform the pilgrimage.

6.3 Reflection and evaluation of primary research and its methodology

In this research the primary research methods were indispensable parts of data collection especially in the case of Hungarian pilgrims. Due to the small proportion of Muslims in the population of Hungary there is a lack of sufficient information about the opportunities to travel for pilgrimage. In case someone does not belong to one of the religious institutions in Hungary, they are in a difficult situation because they have to apply for visa individually and arrange everything for this trip alone.

In case of the pilgrims of the United Arab Emirates questionnaires were enough as there is relevant information about the pilgrimage on websites of airlines and travel companies. People travelling to perform pilgrimage from this country can choose from a variety of travel companies and transportation options.

Finally, primary research methods were very useful from the point of view of understanding the emotional importance of pilgrimage. All participants found it amazing and a life-changing experience what brought peace and a new meaning to

their lives. It was a unique experience listening to and talking with these people who shared their experiences, views and emotions with me.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

In this section the author would like to give some suggestions to other students or those interested in the topic to carry out further researches on this topic.

As pilgrimage to Mecca is a constant never-ending religious duty for Muslims all around the world, this topic can be analyzed from many different points of views. It would be interesting to see how the infrastructure and superstructure of Mecca will be developed in the following years or decades and how it impacts the environment, society and the economy. It already caused disagreement and disapproval of the society as religious sites were destroyed to build new hotels, but its impacts on environment is another question and it may lead to serious problems in connection with sustainability.

Her second suggestion would be to follow her thesis topic and make a research on the growing number of Muslims in the future and its consequences on the travel organization options. There might be a change in Hungary and other European countries, new licensed travel companies can be established offering pilgrimage packages to Muslims. The growing number of Muslims in Europe can lead to a growing need for these travel services which can be tremendous business opportunity in Hungary and abroad as well.

Also due to the quick development and modernization of cities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its regulations and policies may change, meaning that in the future borders might be opened to tourists for cultural and leisure trips resulting in great changes in the society and traditional lifestyle.

6.5 Summary, closing thought

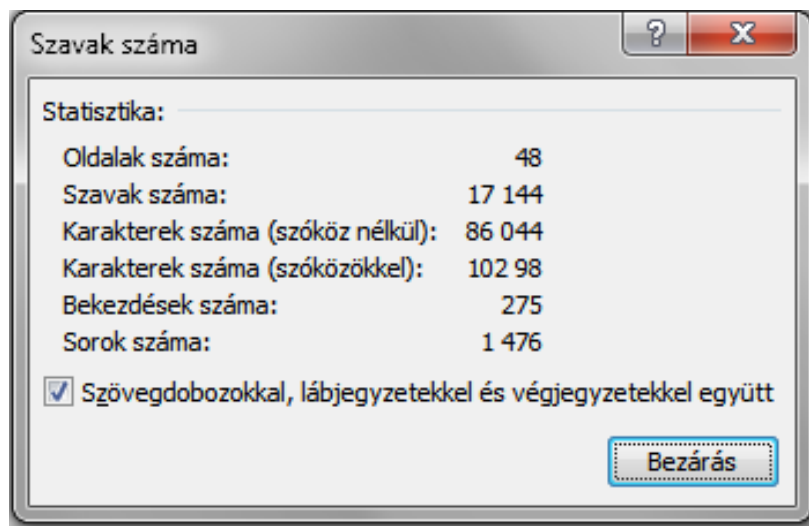
In the end the author believes it was worth dealing with this topic because it has always been close to her heart and she could discover and prove the importance of the pilgrimage to Mecca from tourism point of view. Moreover to religious Muslims who are waiting for and planning their trip sometimes throughout many

years, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with its most important religious sights means more than just tourism. It is a duty, a religious must besides the other 4 pillars of Islam and based on pilgrims' personal experiences it is a life changing experience that can never be forgotten.

Word and page statistics:

The statistics do not include the followings:

- title page
- declaration
- acknowledgements
- table of contents
- appendices
- references
- consultation report



Appendices:

1. Appendix: Number of Muslims in selected countries (Pew Research Center, 2011)

<i>Countries</i>	ESTIMATED MUSLIM POPULATION	PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION THAT IS MUSLIM	PROJECTED MUSLIM POPULATION	PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION THAT IS MUSLIM
	2010	2010	2030	2030
Austria	475,000	5.7%	799,000	9.3%
Belgium	638,000	6.0	1,149,000	10.2
Denmark	226,000	4.1	317,000	5.6
Finland	42,000	0.8	105,000	1.9
France	4,704,000	7.5	6,860,000	10.3
Germany	4,119,000	5.0	5,545,000	7.1
Greece	527,000	4.7	772,000	6.9
Ireland	43,000	0.9	125,000	2.2
Italy	1,583,000	2.6	3,199,000	5.4
Luxembourg	11,000	2.3	14,000	2.3
Netherlands	914,000	5.5	1,365,000	7.8
Norway	144,000	3.0	359,000	6.5
Portugal	65,000	0.6	65,000	0.6
Spain	1,021,000	2.3	1,859,000	3.7
Sweden	451,000	4.9	993,000	9.9
Switzerland	433,000	5.7	663,000	8.1
United Kingdom	2,869,000	4.6	5,567,000	8.2
Total for these countries	18,267,000	4.5	29,759,000	7.1

2. Appendix: World Muslim population, (Pew Research Center, 2011)

World Muslim Population (cont.)

	1990		2010		2030	
	Estimated Muslim population	Percent Muslim	Estimated Muslim population	Percent Muslim	Projected Muslim population	Projected Percent Muslim
Somalia	6,530,000	99.0	9,231,000	98.6	15,529,000	98.6
South Africa	525,000	1.4	737,000	1.5	799,000	1.5
St. Helena	<1,000	<0.1	<1,000	<0.1	<1,000	<0.1
Swaziland	4,000	0.5	2,000	0.2	2,000	0.2
Tanzania	7,637,000	30.0	13,450,000	29.9	19,463,000	25.8
Togo	449,000	11.4	827,000	12.2	1,234,000	12.2
Uganda	1,862,000	10.5	4,060,000	12.0	6,655,000	10.9
Zambia	33,000	0.4	59,000	0.4	94,000	0.4
Zimbabwe	94,000	0.9	109,000	0.9	155,000	0.9
Europe	29,650,000	4.1%	44,138,000	6.0%	58,209,000	8.0%
Albania	2,302,000	70.0	2,601,000	82.1	2,841,000	83.2
Andorra	<1,000	0.5	<1,000	1.1	1,000	1.1
Austria	161,000	2.1	475,000	5.7	799,000	9.3
Belarus	10,000	0.1	19,000	0.2	17,000	0.2
Belgium	266,000	2.7	638,000	6.0	1,149,000	10.2
Bosnia-Herzegovina	1,843,000	42.8	1,564,000	41.6	1,503,000	42.7
Bulgaria	1,155,000	13.1	1,002,000	13.4	1,016,000	15.7
Channel Islands	<1,000	0.1	<1,000	0.1	<1,000	0.1
Croatia	52,000	1.1	56,000	1.3	54,000	1.3
Czech Republic	<1,000	<0.1	4,000	<0.1	4,000	<0.1
Denmark	109,000	2.1	226,000	4.1	317,000	5.6
Estonia	9,000	0.6	2,000	0.1	2,000	0.1
Faeroe Islands	<1,000	<0.1	<1,000	<0.1	<1,000	<0.1
Finland	11,000	0.2	42,000	0.8	105,000	1.9
France	568,000*	1.0	4,704,000	7.5	6,860,000	10.3
Georgia	625,000^	11.5	442,000	10.5	433,000	11.5
Germany	2,506,000	3.2	4,119,000	5.0	5,545,000	7.1
Gibraltar	2,000	6.9	1,000	4.0	1,000	4.0
Greece	254,000	2.5	527,000	4.7	772,000	6.9
Hungary	17,000	0.2	25,000	0.3	24,000	0.3

3. Appendix: Middle East-North Africa, Countries with the largest projected percentage increase in number of Muslims, 2010-2030 (Pew Research Center, 2011)

MIDDLE EAST-NORTH AFRICA

Countries with the Largest Projected Percentage Increase in Number of Muslims, 2010-2030

	ESTIMATED MUSLIM POPULATION	PROJECTED MUSLIM POPULATION	PROJECTED PERCENTAGE INCREASE
<i>Countries</i>	2010	2030	2010-2030
Palestinian territories	4,298,000	7,136,000	66.0%
Israel	1,287,000	2,135,000	65.9
Yemen	24,023,000	38,973,000	62.2
Iraq	31,107,000	48,350,000	55.4
Western Sahara	528,000	816,000	54.5
Sudan	30,855,000	43,573,000	41.2
Kuwait	2,636,000	3,692,000	40.1
Oman	2,547,000	3,549,000	39.3
United Arab Emirates	3,577,000	4,981,000	39.3
Saudi Arabia	25,493,000	35,497,000	39.2

4. Appendix: Interview with pilgrims in Hungary
- 1) Please introduce yourself
 - 2) How were you informed that there is an opportunity to travel for pilgrimage?
 - 3) How long before the trip did the planning and organization of the trip started?
 - 4) What were the steps in the organization process? What did you do?
 - 5) Have you ever heard of any travel company in Hungary who helps or organizes these tours to Saudi Arabia?
 - 6) Did you have to prove your religion somehow when applying for visa?
 - 7) What were the most important items you took with yourself for this trip?
 - 8) When did you travel to the kingdom and when did you return to Hungary?
 - 9) Which airline(s) did you travel with and how many luggages did you take?
 - 10) Did you travel with a group from Hungary?

- 11) Upon arrival to the airport how did you get to Mecca or the next destination?
- 12) Did they provide you with meals or food packages during the pilgrimage?
- 13) What kind of hotel did you stay in, how many stars did it have?
- 14) Besides the sites of pilgrimage did you visit any other cities?
- 15) Did you have your passport with you during the pilgrimage?
- 16) Did you perform Hajj or Umrah?
- 17) Did you have to pay extra for the cost of sacrificing an animal?
- 18) Was the whole trip safe? Was there any accident in any site?
- 19) What was your overall experience about it? Did you change anything about your life after the pilgrimage? Would you like to return?

5. Appendix: Interview with the manager of the Organization of Muslims in Hungary

- 1) Please introduce yourself and the institution
- 2) Did the number of Muslims visiting this organization grow over the past few years?
- 3) Do you also provide assistance in case of Umrah trips or only for Hajj?
- 4) What are the steps of Hajj planning or organization?
- 5) Do pilgrims travel from Hungary through travel companies in Saudi Arabia?
- 6) Who is travelling by invitation of the king and who has to pay?
- 7) Is it the embassy or your institution who decides who can participate on Hajj by invitation?
- 8) How many pilgrims travel for Hajj from Hungary usually?
- 9) How much does it cost to those who have to pay for Hajj?
- 10) When people are informed about this opportunity? When do you start planning and collecting passports etc?
- 11) How do pilgrims have to prove their religion?
- 12) How long these trips are in general?
- 13) Do men and women travel together in mixed groups?
- 14) You mentioned that you accompany the groups sometimes, what is your task during the trips?

15) What type of accomodation is provided to the pilgrims?

6. Appendix: Questionnaire to pilgrims in the United Arab Emirates

- 1) Your name, age and gender
- 2) Your nationality and country of residence at the time of your Hajj or Umrah
- 3) Did you travel alone or with someone? Please specify with whom.
- 4) When did you start planning your Hajj or Umrah?
- 5) What were the steps of organizing it?
- 6) Did you contact any travel company for help? If yes, specify which one and describe in what they could help you.
- 7) How long did it take to receive the visa to Saudi Arabia?
- 8) Did you have to prove your religion?
- 9) Was there any other organization (cultural or religious) who helped you in planning or organizing your trip? If yes how did they help?
- 10) How did you prepare, what were the most important items that you took for the trip?
- 11) How many luggages and KGs did you travel with?
- 12) Exactly when did you travel to Mecca?
- 13) From which city did you travel? Was it a direct flight?
- 14) Which airline(s) or bus company did you travel with?
- 15) If you travelled by plane did they provide special halal menu?
- 16) Which city did you arrive in?
- 17) Did they take your passport or was it with you during the pilgrimage?
- 18) From the airport how did you get to Mecca or Madinah? (bus or taxi or?)
- 19) Did you travel with a group of people or individually?
- 20) If you travelled with a group, what other nationalities were in the group?
- 21) What kind of accomodation did you stay in? How many stars? Name the hotel if you remember please.
- 22) If you stayed in a hotel, did they provide you meals and food packages during your stay?
- 23) How many people stayed in one room in case of your accomodation?
- 24) Were men and women separated in the rooms and in the tent in Mina?
- 25) Did you visit any other cities besides Mecca during your pilgrimage?

- 26) Did you perform Hajj or Umrah?
- 27) Was there a tour guide or mutawwif with the group?
- 28) How safe did you find the locations besides the crowd?
- 29) Was there any accident or death while you were there?
- 30) After returning home did you change anything about your life?
- 31) Would you return to Mecca for Hajj or Umrah again?

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