

Halal Tourism in Aceh: Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Halal tourism is an alternative in increasing the economy. Aceh is an area that has natural and cultural potential in the development of halal tourism. This study aims to analyze the potential and challenges of developing halal tourism in Aceh. Secondary data is used as the basis for obtaining qualitatively analyzed information. The results of the study indicate that there are several opportunities for developing halal tourism such as the majority of Acehnese are Muslim, the application of Islamic law, natural beauty and panoramas, interesting culture and history. In addition to opportunities, there are also challenges in the development of halal tourism, such as the lack of public understanding of the concept of halal awareness, geographical factors, demographic factors, factors of concern and seriousness from the government and the private sector, and infrastructure factors.

Keywords : Halal Tourism; Opportunities; Challenges;

A. INTRODUCTION

Halal tourism is one of the market segments that is being cultivated by the global world, both Muslim and non-Muslim countries (Chookaew, et. Al. 2015). Indonesia is a country that has great potential in developing halal tourism. This is because the majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim and the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. Indonesia is a country consisting of islands that hold natural beauty, ranging from Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Papua, to small islands which are said to be hidden paradises in the world.

Indonesia is also a country with various tribes and cultures. It is recorded

that there are approximately 1,340 ethnic groups in Indonesia with various cultural backgrounds, languages, and customs. This is one of the advantages of Indonesia to become a tourist area, especially halal tourism. The tourism sector has proven to be one of the sectors that contributes a lot of income to the country, contributing significantly to the Indonesian economy, foreign exchange earnings, and employment, (Sucipto & Andayani, 2014).

The Ministry of Tourism has made halal tourism a national program, by setting 15 (fifteen) provinces to be the focus of developing halal tourist destinations. The province is given the authority to manage tourism in its area autonomously. The appointment by the

Ministry of Tourism is expected to make halal tourism superior and become the main destination for tourists (Ferdiansyah et al, 2020).

One of the provinces included in the program of the Ministry of Tourism is Aceh Province. Aceh tourism has promising potential to be developed due to its unique customs, attractive natural charm, and delicious culinary flavors. (Shaleh & Anisah, 2019). This fact can be seen from the high number of tourists visiting Aceh, both domestic and foreign.

Table.1 Number of Tourists Visiting Aceh in 2016-2020

No.	Years	Domestic Tourism	Foreign Tourist
1	2016	2.077.797	76.452
2	2017	2.288.625	75.758
3	2018	2.391.968	106.281
4	2019	2.529.879	107.037
5	2020	4.080.374	0
Total		13.368.643	365.528

Source: Aceh Culture and Tourism Office, 2022

The province of Aceh itself has a lot of natural beauty, both from mountain tourism, sea tourism, and other natural attractions. Aceh is also known as a culinary paradise with its cuisine that has its own spice characteristics and of course halal guarantees. One of the famous ones in Aceh is a coffee shop with typical Acehnese coffee (Taqwadin, et al., 2019). So it's only natural that Aceh is called the

area of a million coffee shops with the habits of Acehnese people who like to enjoy coffee. Speaking of customs and history, it seems that Aceh is one of the most appropriate places to study, starting from the history of the Aceh sultanate to how the culture is applied with its various customs, and of course there are many more things that are distinct advantages in the Veranda of Mecca (Santoso). et al, 2021).

Therefore, Aceh is a very strategic area and suitable to be used as a halal tourism market (Razalia, et al, 2021). The beauty of tourism in Aceh is expected in the future to become the best halal isata market in the world in order to deliver economic prosperity for the people of Aceh and also increase the regional and state economy.

This opportunity must be utilized by the Aceh Province to be more serious in developing halal tourism with Islamic nuances. Isn't the current halal lifestyle already worldwide? (Nurhasanah & Ramadan, 2019). Supposedly Aceh's desire to implement Islamic law that is kaffah also pays attention to halal tourist destinations that can also increase the economy of the Acehnese people. This is also supported by the development of the world which is starting to look at halal tourism (Samori, et.al 2016). Therefore, it

is interesting to analyze the potential and challenges of halal tourism in Aceh.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Halal Tourism

Halal tourism has a strong relationship with Islam, because travel in Islam is a must. The trip can be done for various reasons, such as traveling for Hajj or Umrah. Tourism is an activity that humans do consciously to get various satisfactions, both from the services provided and new experiences that are not obtained in their daily lives (Satriana & Faridah, 2018).

According to Mohsin et al. (2016) halal tourism is a form of service provided both in the form of services and products that are in accordance with Islamic law, so that the needs of tourists can be met. Halal tourism according to the Global Muslim Travel Index (Global Muslim Travel Index, 2016) is a tourism activity with the aim of providing services and facilities to tourists that are in line with Islamic values.

Meanwhile, the National Syariat Council of the Indonesian Ulema Council (DSN-MUI, 2016) states that halal tourism is a travel activity of a person or group to visit a place for recreational purposes, develop themselves, learn the uniqueness of a place, see tourist attractions in a certain period based on the following principles: sharia principles. Sharia

tourism activities must contain two important elements, namely: *First*, free from things that smell like shirk and lies. *Second*, create and add value benefits both materially and spiritually.

The definition of halal tourism according to the Ministry of Tourism (2012) is an activity that is supported by various services and facilities provided by the government, entrepreneurs, and the community, which are in accordance with halal regulations. Halal tourism can be used by all groups, both Muslims and non-Muslims because of the shape of the product and services of a general nature. Meanwhile, according to Battour & Ismail (2015) halal tourism is every behavior and location of Muslim tourism in the tourism industry that puts forward Islamic law as a reference in traveling.

The concept of halal tourism is understood as the implementation of the values of Islamic teachings in carrying out a tourist trip without discriminating against non-Muslim tourists which can be used as soft power to attract Muslim and non-Muslim tourist visits (Kusumaningrum et al, 2017). Halal tourism is tourism that prioritizes Islamic values in every activity. Halal tourism is not only interpreted as religious tourism, namely visits to places of worship for pilgrimages or other places of worship. But also pay attention to travel

etiquette and other facilities (Chookaew, 2015).

The concept of halal tourism and conventional tourism in general have similarities. It's just that in halal tourism activities, there are several provisions that must be complied with, such as the form of tourist packages, food, drinks, and accommodation must be in accordance with Islamic provisions. The concept of halal tourism is expected to be enjoyed by all groups, both Muslims and non-Muslims.

There are several terms in the mention of halal tourism, such as *halal travel*, *halal lifestyle*, *Islamic tourism*, *halal friendly tourism destinations*, *sharia tourism*, *Muslim-friendly travel destinations*, and others. The concept of halal tourism from an industrial point of view is a product that complements conventional tourism. Halal tourism and conventional tourism have the same purpose, as long as they do not violate Islamic rules and ethics (Suparmin & Yusrizal, 2018).

There are 8 (eight) standards that must be met in halal tourism, both in terms of management and administration, namely: *First*, all forms of service must be in accordance with Islamic values. *Second*, tour guides and all tour operators must be ethical and obey Islamic rules. *Third*, all halal tourism activities must comply with

and in accordance with Islamic teachings. *Fourth*, halal tourism facilities and infrastructure must comply with Islamic principles, such as maintaining the cleanliness of places and food. *Fifth*, halal tourism facilities and infrastructure must be in accordance with international halal service standards. *Sixth*, provide a safe and convenient means of transportation. *Seventh*, provide a proper place of worship. *Eighth*, do not travel to places that are prohibited by Islam (Chukaew, 2015).

C. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses secondary data in a qualitative form. The research uses the literature review method from various previous studies. Secondary data was obtained from various journals, books, and other related sources. Descriptive analysis method was used to analyze the data obtained. The data obtained are compiled which are then analyzed and interpreted so that the desired results are obtained.

D. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF THE AUTHOR

Aceh province is very synonymous with the name Islamic law. Islamic law applied in Aceh has become an attraction for tourists (Berutu, 2016). Most tourists who visit Aceh come from Malaysia. It is possible that there are

similarities in customs and culture that apply between Malaysia and Aceh (Istiqamatunnisak, 2012).

Table 2. Data on Foreign Tourist Visits in Aceh 2019

No.	Country	Number of Visits (Persons)
1	Malaysia	19.642
2	UK	3.075
3	USA	1.373
4	Germany	1.189
5	China	1.015
6	Australia	760
7	France	552
8	Singapore	423
9	Canada	418
10	Netherlands	332
11	Other	5.686
Total		34.465

Source: Aceh Culture and Tourism Office, 2022

Based on the table, it can be seen that in recent times the number of foreign tourists visiting Aceh has increased every year. One of the countries that contributed the most tourists came from Malaysia. The number of tourists from Malaysia coming to Aceh Province is due to the beautiful rural atmosphere and the simplicity of rural communities which are a concern for tourists. This is also a separate entertainment for those whose daily life is full of work, so that the rural atmosphere becomes a refreshing atmosphere to relieve fatigue in their office world (Muiz 2019).

So far, the Aceh Government through the Culture and Tourism Office

of the Aceh Province has tried to regularly organize interesting events to be followed with a very inspiring concept. It aims to become an angler or as a fishing tool to attract local tourists and international tourists to come to Aceh Province. Some activities that have been carried out by the Government are Aceh, such as coffee festivals, Aceh food festivals, selection of Aceh tourism ambassadors, traditional horse racing in Central Aceh and others (Saleh & Anisah, 2019).

Halal tourism itself is an element that must get a special touch from the government in its development compared to the conventional industry (Suryani & Bustaman, 2021). The potentials possessed by Aceh Province are clearly visible, such as when Aceh was able to receive nominations as the best Muslim tourist-friendly cultural destination, Sultan Iskandar Muda airport as the best Muslim tourist-friendly airport, and Baiturrahman mosque as the best tourist attraction in tourism competence. national halal. Even in 2022, according to the Indonesia Muslim Travel Index (IMTI), Aceh is included in 5 halal tourist destinations in Indonesia. (TEMPO.CO, 2022).

1. Halal tourism opportunities

Indonesia is a country with the largest Muslim population in the world.

The total Muslim population in Indonesia is around 87 percent more who occupy the territory of the Indonesian state. It is estimated that the Muslim population will increase every year, an interesting thing to see is where the culture of using halal products has become a trend. Many people now have migrated financially, fashion, including in the world of tourism. (Subarkah 2018).

By taking advantage of this moment to become a separate opportunity for the region and the community's industry in improving their economy, many developed countries have taken advantage of this good moment where they believe that by taking advantage of this can be one way to improve the economy of their communities and regions.

The province of Aceh is clearly very likely to develop halal tourism because Aceh is known for its natural beauty. Various types of tourism are available in Aceh, such as natural tourism with beautiful beaches and the sea, as found in the Sabang area, Lapu'uk Beach, and of course there are many more beaches that have their own beauty. In addition to having the natural beauty of Aceh, it also has a tourist area of mountains or highlands known as the Gayo area, Tangse Pidie sub-district and some natural beauty in other highlands,

which is followed by the beauty of the rivers that are still natural and beautiful in the wilderness of the rencong land. (Liputan 6, 2021).

Aceh province not only has natural beauty, talking about the culture and history of Aceh is a very interesting area to study. The province of Aceh, which is the area where Islam first entered the archipelago, has become an important history for tourists who are hunting for historical values. In addition, there is also the history of the kingdom of Aceh and the stories of kings who are very inspirational for educating tourist visitors (Binarto, 2020).

The application of Islamic law in Aceh is an opportunity to attract local and foreign tourists to visit Aceh. The province of Aceh, which applies Islamic law in all its activities, is unique in Indonesia. This is certainly a selling point that can be used so that halal tourism in Aceh becomes one of the prima donnas in Indonesia (Saputra, 2020).

The utilization of these opportunities is certainly very suitable for Aceh to become one of the halal tourism destinations in Indonesia and even internationally. The hope is of course that with the development of halal tourism in the province of Aceh, it can

be one aspect of the revival of the regional economy and society.

2. Halal Travel Challenge

The Aceh government must pay attention to several conditions that can interfere with the success of halal tourism being promoted. Among these conditions, such as the attitude of the community to participate in taking part in the success of halal tourism. The people of Aceh must provide a sense of security and comfort to both local and foreign tourists visiting their territory. Aceh is one of the regions known for its friendly attitude towards visiting guests. This attitude must be reflected when welcoming tourists. This has been reflected in the behavior of the Acehnese people, commonly known as the slogan "*peumulia jamee adat geutanyo*", which means that honoring guests is our common tradition. That is the attitude that the Acehnese people put forward to welcome guests who come to their area (Hermaliz, 2011).

The lack of public understanding of the concept of halal awareness is also a serious problem that must be resolved. Halal awareness is not only seen from food or drinks, but how the process and cleanliness must also be a concern (Fathoni & Syahputri, 2020). Whereas halal awareness has a relationship with religiosity and knowledge of the halal

concept (Nusran, et.al, 2018). The halal concept is in line with the rules of Islamic law run by the people of Aceh.

These problems must be resolved immediately by conducting continuous socialization. Socialization can be done directly or indirectly. Directly, such as activating studies and seminars on the concept of halal. Indirect socialization can be done through print media intermediaries, making articles, magazines and other forms regarding the halal concept (Fathoni & Syahputri, 2020).

The implementation of halal tourism activities in Aceh basically has advantages and disadvantages. According to Saleh and Anisah (2019), there are several problems that can hinder the development of halal tourism in Aceh, including: demographic factors, infrastructure factors, the seriousness factor of the government and the private sector in halal tourism investment.

Geographically, the Aceh region, which is at the western tip of Indonesia, becomes an obstacle for tourists who come because it is not a strategic transit route. The effect of these problems makes tourists have to make a special agenda to visit Aceh. These problems also make tourists have to pay more expensive travel costs. In contrast to other areas which are transit routes, such as the island of Java,

tourists can travel simultaneously at a relatively cheaper cost.

Aceh's demographic factors that are different from other regions in addition to providing a positive value, can sometimes also have a negative impact. The majority of the people of Aceh are Muslim, of course, have a higher sense of fanaticism so that sometimes it causes discomfort for some tourists. The experience will be lost if the tourists have visited Aceh directly. This condition is because they only hear stories from the media and immediately make their own conclusions.

The Aceh government must be serious and consistent in overcoming these problems, so that the image of halal tourism and especially the application of Islamic law provides peace and security for all mankind. Reports from foreign media tend to be provocative and also have a negative impact on the implementation of Islamic law. So more roles are needed from all elements in order to be able to contribute positively to promoting halal tourism in Aceh.

The success of halal tourism must also be supported by adequate infrastructure. Especially in Aceh, the fulfillment of infrastructure that can support halal tourism is still relatively low. The provision of friendly and comfortable facilities must be available in sufficient

quantities, and in comfortable and appropriate conditions. However, the fact is that inadequate facilities and infrastructure are still found, such as the absence of toilets or toilets that are not clean, the unavailability of facilities for women and people with disabilities, narrow prayer rooms, and other problems (Rasyid, 2017).

The seriousness of the government and the private sector in investing in halal tourism is important. Halal tourism in Aceh has not become an attraction for investors to spend their funds. Some local tourist destinations basically still come from the initiatives of small or medium scale investors. Such conditions must be supported by the role of the government and the private sector, such as providing more adequate accommodation, so that the needs of tourists can be met. As we have seen how the condition of tourists who do not get lodging, so they are forced to stay at mosques, gas stations, and other public places (Liputan 6, 2022).

Meanwhile, the means of transportation are still dominated by small investors, such as rickshaws, public transportation, and others. Although it has been supported by Trans Kutaraja, it needs additional units and a wider range. It is more unfortunate that there are still officials who consider investment in the field of halal tourism to be less promising.

Even though the current condition of halal tourism is a big income for the APBN and ABBD if it is managed optimally (Rahmi, 2020).

Apart from these conditions, according to Santoso, et al. (2021) there are still several problems in the development of halal tourism, such as: *First*, tourist destination facilities are not feasible and adequate. *Second*, there is still a lack of halal certification in the tourism sector, especially regarding clean and halal culinary tourism. The existence of a halal certification arrangement strongly supports the success of halal tourism (Hamzana, 2017). Determination of halal food and beverages is not only based on halal certification, but also the role of all relevant parties, such as honesty and cleanliness of food vendors and others. *Third*, the location and conditions of tourism have not been well organized and designed.

E. CLOSING

Tourism is one sector that is very important and promising to be developed. Aceh is one of the areas with great potential in the development of halal tourism. This potential can start from very beautiful nature, very educational history, culture and others.

Aceh has a great opportunity in the development of halal tourism, because it

has beautiful nature and unique customs. In addition, the application of Islamic law in Aceh has also become an icon in attracting both local and foreign tourists to visit Aceh. The development of halal tourism is also faced with several problems that must be considered. Several challenges in the development of halal tourism in Aceh such as the lack of public understanding of the concept of halal awareness, the Aceh region at the tip of Sumatra, inadequate infrastructure, lack of halal certification, and obstacles in implementing the halal tourism program.

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