

Optimizing the Potential Strategy of West Sumatra Tourism Destinations Towards the Leading Halal Tourism Destinations in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Tourism makes a significant contribution to the Indonesian economy. West Sumatra has a great potential to get investors to develop its tourism, because it has a beautiful nature coupled with its diverse and unique culture. Although several awards have been won by West Sumatra, West Sumatra has not been able to reflect a "decent" class in terms of infrastructure readiness, management, supporting facilities, and low awareness of community tourism culture. The purpose of this research is to formulate a strategy for halal tourism in West Sumatra in order to build a positioning to increase the competitiveness of halal tourism in Indonesia. This research is a qualitative descriptive study using secondary data from scientific journals, previous research, and publications. Primary data collection techniques were obtained by means of in-depth interviews with semi-structured methods and non-participatory observation techniques. In order to build a positioning to improve the competitiveness of halal tourism in Indonesia, the implementation of halal tourism marketing strategies that can be done is DOT (Destination, Origin, Time), BAS (Branding, Advertising, Selling), POSE (Paid Media, Owned Media, Social Media, Endorse). Meanwhile, the strategy for developing human resources for halal tourism is to create sustainable and competitive human resources, distribute tourism scholars, and create qualified and trained human resources. In addition, the strategy of making West Sumatra as Indonesia's leading halal tourist destination is to increase public awareness to be involved in sustainable development tourism programs, add and improve tourism support facilities, promotion through digital media, and increase halal tourism certification. Based on the results of the study, recommendations were obtained on how to manage halal tourism in West Sumatra to become Indonesia's leading destination.

Keywords: Strategy, halal tourism, West Sumatra, halal destination, Indonesia

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism makes a significant contribution to the Indonesian economy. The impact of tourism is not only on Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but also creates added value, absorbs labor, and increases the country's foreign exchange. The development of halal tourism has begun to be carried out by various countries, both Muslim and non-Muslim countries, and this is in line with the increase in Muslim tourists from year to year [1]. Halal tourism contributes to sustainable development and explore the scope of halal tourism to contribute more in relation to sustainable development [2]. Indonesia, which is predominantly Muslim and supported by natural resources, has great potential to become a major player in the world's halal tourism sector. This advantage should be used as a momentum in developing halal tourism in Indonesia.

Sharia tourism is an activity that is supported by various facilities and services provided by the community, businessmen, government and local governments in accordance with sharia provisions [3]. Halal tourism is not always related to religious values, but rather leads to a lifestyle. The condition of halal tourism in Indonesia is still not optimal, even though the potential for developing halal tourism in Indonesia is very large [3]. Only a small proportion of the target population stated that they understood the concept of halal tourism and had received special training on it, but Indonesia had to take a firm position in positioning itself as a halal tourist destination because the religious profile is the most influential factor [4]. Following are figures and predictions of size and projected population growth based on majority religious groups in 2010-2050 [5].

Table 1 The future of world religions: population growth projections 2010-2050 [5]

Religion	2010 Population	% of World Population in 2010	Projected 2050 Population	% of World Population in 2050	Population Growth 2010-2050
Christian	2.168.330.000	31.4	2.918.070.000	31.4	749.740.000
Moslems	1.599.700.000	23.2	2.761.480.000	29.7	1.161.780.000
Unaffiliated	1.131.150.000	16.4	1.230.340.000	13.2	99.190.000
Hindus	1.032.210.000	15.0	1.384.360.000	14.9	352.140.000
Buddhists	487.760.000	7.1	486.270.000	5.2	-1.490.000
Folk Religions	404.690.000	5.9	449.140.000	4.8	44.450.000
Other Religions	58.150.000	0.8	61.450.000	0.7	3.300.000
Jews	13.860.000	0.2	16.090.000	0.2	2.230.000
World Total	6.895.850.000	100	9.307.190.000	100	2.411.340.000

2. BACKGROUND

One of the potential halal tourist destinations is West Sumatra. West Sumatra has a great potential to get investors to develop its tourism, because it has a beautiful nature coupled with its diverse and unique culture. According to the West Sumatra Provincial Government, the proudest economic sector is tourism, which if its potential is explored, it can become the motor of the regional economy so as to improve the welfare of the people of West Sumatra. However, currently West Sumatra is considered not ready to compete in terms of tourism because it is still constrained by many factors. To overcome this, there are several things that must be considered and improved, such as the segmentation strategy, tourism targets, and the positioning of West Sumatra tourism [6].

According to Google Indonesia data based on the Google Search engine, ticket searches to West Sumatra in 2017 ranked first and continues to increase every month. This indicates that West Sumatra tourism is getting better so it deserves to be Indonesia's leading halal destination [7]. A number of destinations in West Sumatra that are designated as halal tourist destinations are Lake Singkarak, Lake Maninjau, Twin Lakes, Sianok Gorge, Gua Jepang, Cubadak Island, Anai Valley, Istano Pagaruyuang, and the Mentawai Islands. In 2016, Indonesia won 12 categories in the World Halal Tourism Awards 2016, West Sumatra became one of the regions that won three categories, namely: *World's Best Halal Tour Operator*, *World's Best Halal Destination*, and *World's Best Halal Culinary Destination*. [3]

Although several awards have been won by West Sumatra, West Sumatra has not been able to reflect a "decent" class in terms of infrastructure readiness, management, supporting facilities, and low awareness of community tourism culture. Various attempts have been made to build a better West Sumatra tourism sector, but the realization plan tends to be slow because the problems and challenges of the local socio-culture tend to be closed to protect their customs from outside influences. [8]

To make West Sumatra a halal tourist destination, it requires the readiness of resources who have the ability and in-depth knowledge about halal tourism. The purpose of this research is to formulate a strategy for halal tourism

in West Sumatra in order to build a positioning to increase the competitiveness of halal tourism in Indonesia.

3. METHODS

This research is a qualitative descriptive study using a case study approach with data collection in accordance with the research focus, namely the strategy of West Sumatra to become Indonesia's leading halal destination. A literature study will be carried out to examine how the halal tourism strategy in West Sumatra is in order to build a position to increase the competitiveness of halal tourism in Indonesia. Primary data collection techniques were obtained by means of in-depth interviews with semi-structured methods and non-participatory observation techniques. The criteria for research subjects are to understand well and be involved in implementing the strategy of West Sumatra to become Indonesia's leading halal tourist destination for at least three years. The informants in question are the Head of the Organization Section, the Head of the Public Relations Section, and the Head of the Information Media and Documentation Section of the West Sumatra Tourism Office. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained through documents, proposals, reports, publications, books, scientific journals, and previous research relevant to this research in the last five years. Qualitative data analysis in this study used an interactive model where the data analysis components included reduction, data presentation, and interactive verification during data collection [9]. Then the discussion will further explore the development of halal tourism in West Sumatra, examine the concept of halal tourism, discuss opportunities and challenges, as well as how to have the right marketing and human resources strategies so that halal tourism in West Sumatra becomes a leading halal destination in Indonesia.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Constraints to the Implementation of Halal Tourism in Indonesia

The majority of Indonesians embrace Islam. Halal is anything that is free from prohibitions and has been

permitted by Islamic law [10]. Meanwhile, halal is a concept of Islamic religious principles which is used to state that something can be consumed based on the Al-Qur'an, hadith, or ijihad (ulama agreement) [11]. There are three obstacles facing Indonesia in developing halal tourism [12], namely: (1) Public Perception. For Muslims in Indonesia, halal is something that has become a habit, so they often ignore the halal label on the products they produce. Even though this label is an important source of information for Muslim foreign tourists who come to Indonesia because on the label there is information that will determine consumer interest in consuming a product; (2) Halal Certification. Most of the products in circulation only have a halal label but do not have a "MUI Halal" certification which comes from the fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council which states the halalness of a product according to Islamic law. This MUI Halal Certificate is a requirement to obtain a permit for the inclusion of a halal label on product packaging from an authorized government agency. Often tourist destination owners think that halal is not important, many even refuse to carry out official halal certification because they have to pay a fee of IDR 2,500,000 per product every two to three years [13]. Meanwhile, most tourist destination owners in Indonesia feel they do not need to carry out halal certification because they feel they have implemented halal standards and come from an Islamic country. Even though this official halal certification is important to attract Muslim tourists from other countries; (3) Halal tourism in Indonesia is still limited to branding, while its application still does not reflect what halal tourism should be. It is not just a matter of safety and cleanliness, but these tourist locations must be halal according to religious teachings according to Islamic sharia. Often there are tourist destinations that have been labeled halal but in operational activities they are still not halal [14];

Table 2 Global Moslem Travel Index [15]

Family-friendly holiday and safe travel destination	Muslim-friendly services and facilities at the destination	Halal awareness and destination marketing
1. Family-friendly Destination 2. Muslim Traveler and General Safety 3. Muslim Visitor Arrivals	1. Dining Options and Halal Assurance 2. Access to Prayer Places 3. Airport Facilities 4. Accommodation Options	1. Ease of Communication 2. Muslim Travel Needs Awareness and Outreach 3. Air Connectivity 4. Visa Requirements
40% Weightage	40% Weightage	20% Weightage

(4) The lack of awareness of business actors regarding the assessment given by the Crescent Rating for GMTI (Global Muslim Travel Index) which includes the following criteria Family-friendly holiday and safe travel destination, moslem-friendly services and facilities at the destination, dan halal awareness and destination marketing [15].

4.2 The Implementation of Halal Tourism Marketing Strategy

Halal tourism marketing strategies that can be done are as follows:

- a) **DOT (Destination, Origin, Time)**. This strategy is used at the planning stage in tourism development, which includes:
 - (i) Objectives. Seeing tourist destinations that are of interest to tourists, and which ones are suitable for the development of halal tourism;
 - (ii) Origin. Looking at the country of origin of tourists, then segmenting tourists from which countries have a high interest in halal tourism, then intensifying the promotion of Indonesian halal tourism in that country;
 - (iii) Time. Hold events according to the vacation time of the tourist's home country.
- b) **BAS (Branding, Advertising, Selling)**. This strategy aims to build and implement the concept of halal tourism that will be offered to tourists, including:
 - (i) Brand awareness, by promoting the concept of halal tourism through advertisements on social media and traditional media such as TV and radio;
 - (ii) Advertising, by launching the "Wonderful Halal Indonesia" tourism campaign to increase brand awareness of tourists who love halal tourism in Indonesia through advertisements in print, TV and other social media as well as establishing tourism promotion cooperation with industry players;
 - (iii) Sales, is carried out by facilitating the sale of tour packages offered by industry players through trade shows and sales missions.
- c) **POSE (Paid Media, Owned Media, Social Media, Endorse)**. This strategy focuses on various media that can be used in promoting halal tourism, including:
 - (i) Paid Media, such as Discovery Channel, CNN, National Geographic, Youtube, Google, and others;
 - (ii) Owning the media by launching halal tourism campaigns such as Wonderful Halal Indonesia, Pesona Halal Indonesia;
 - (iii) Social Media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Website, and others, is an effective and inexpensive promotional media compared to others;
 - (iv) Endorsement through ambassadors, testimonials on various social media, inviting well-known figures such as artists or community leaders to promote halal tourism.

4.3 The Implementation of Halal Tourism Human Resource Strategy

Increasing tourist loyalty is a great service by providing an "extraordinary experience" during the holidays. A well-structured workforce will improve human resource management capacity, strengthen education and training

facilities, and set clear standards through official Ministry of Tourism accreditation. For this reason, the development of a halal tourism HR strategy that can be done is as follows:

- a) Creating Sustainable and Competitive Human Resources. This is done by certifying competent personnel in the tourism sector in order to realize sustainable and internationally competitive halal tourism. These competencies include knowledge, skills and attitudes, especially in terms of halal tourism, where workers must have sufficient knowledge to follow the rules in providing services in the halal tourism sector properly.
- b) Distributing Bachelor of Tourism Graduates. The increasing number of tourism university graduates who are channeled into the tourism industry both domestically and abroad, it is hoped that the number of competent workers will also increase. For this reason, it is necessary to increase the high graduation standards in the tourism sector in order to produce graduates who are able to meet proper qualifications and have above average quality.
- c) Creating Quality and Trained Human Resources. One of the references that will be used as a human resource strategy is the service quality model which consists of five dimensions [16], namely:
 - (i) Tangible, namely the company's ability to show its existence to outsiders, either in the form of physical appearance or infrastructure;
 - (ii) Reliability, namely the company's ability to provide services as promised accurately and reliably in relation to applicable regulations in the field of halal tourism;
 - (iii) Responsiveness, namely the willingness to provide responsive, fast and precise service to customers by conveying clear information;
 - (iv) Assurance, namely knowledge, politeness, and communication skills, as well as employee credibility to foster customer trust;
 - (v) Empathy, namely giving special and sincere attention to customers, and understanding consumer wants and needs well.

4.4 The Halal Tourism Implementation Strategy in West Sumatra

Based on the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), there are six main needs Muslim tourists need, namely halal food, prayer facilities, Ramadhan services, water-friendly washrooms, no non-halal activities, and recreational facilities and services with privacy [15].

- a) Halal Food. Culinary is the main destination for most tourists. Halal culinary is one of the advantages of West Sumatra because West Sumatra won the award for the category "Best Culinary Destination", namely RM Seagrass Ombak. The next step that West Sumatra needs to take is to increase the number of halal restaurant certifications and encourage MSMEs to

produce many typical West Sumatra food souvenirs that have passed the halal certification.

- b) Prayer Facilities. When traveling, prayer must also be done. So it is important to provide prayer rooms in every tourist destination, even better if there is a mosque. Of course, the necessary facilities and infrastructure must be complete and clean but still apply halal rules.
- c) Water-Friendly Washroom. For Muslims, water symbolizes purity and cleanliness, which are the core aspects of faith. For this reason, it is necessary to pay attention to the cleanliness of the restroom facilities. A bidet is a handy feature provided in the restroom to clean yourself after using the toilet. The next important thing is the ablution facility which is an obligatory ritual before worshiping. Ablution cannot be done in a toilet with a bidet, so a separate facility is required which is usually equipped with a mushalla.
- d) Ramadhan Service. Although Muslims tend not to travel during Ramadan, many still want to spend time away from home, especially if this period coincides with school holidays. One way to attract Muslim tourists during this period is to be able to accommodate their needs, especially during the fasting month, for example, hotels where tourists stay provide halal food during sahur or breaking the fast.
- e) No Non-Halal Activities. Generally, Muslim tourists need a tourist destination with a family-friendly environment and will avoid places like discotheques. The strategy developed is to hold festivals / events in the month of Ramadan which will certainly attract tourists. The festival in question is a halal festival which will later hold various events such as breaking the fast together, and equipped with various outlets selling snacks to break the fast.
- f) Recreation Facilities and Services with Privacy. Muslim tourists will feel safe if the available facilities and services are separated between men and women, such as facilities in hotels where tourists stay have separate swimming pools or fitness centers for men and women or beaches that separate areas for men and women.

All strategies carried out must meet the main goal of making halal tourism a sustainable tourism (Sustainable Development Goals/SDGs). The General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) at the World Tourism Barometer UNWTO determines that it will develop tourism in several fields to carry out Sustainable Tourism Development, namely through sustainable and inclusive economic growth, promoting values and differences in culture and heritage, and poverty alleviation [17]. Strategies that can be done are:

- a) Actively offering and promoting to foreign and local tourists about tour packages available at certain events or holiday times, especially on important Islamic dates, it is mandatory to hold certain festivals and invite artists or public figures as a promotional attraction
- b) In promoting halal tourism destinations in West Sumatra through any media, it is necessary to include

several positioning statements that reflect the differences between tourism in West Sumatra and other regions. This will be a competitive advantage for West Sumatra because it has cultural properties that are not shared by other regions.

- c) To overcome unemployment in West Sumatra, basic tourism education and training will be carried out to obtain labor certification in the tourism sector. This program will create jobs and reduce poverty levels.

The strategy to make West Sumatra as Indonesia's leading halal tourist destination is to take the following steps:

- a) Increase public awareness to be involved in sustainable development tourism programs. The people of West Sumatra are still not aware of the importance of the contribution of the tourism sector to the economy, so a synergistic process is needed between the central government, the community and tourism business entities, to provide a strong belief that by opening up jobs. These opportunities will improve the economy and have the potential to attract outside investors to invest in West Sumatra for tourism development. Community concerns about the large number of tourists who come will create an unfavorable atmosphere that has the potential to damage the morals and customs of the community and can affect local culture. This is where the government plays an important role in convincing the public that this will not happen.
- b) Adding and improving facilities that support tourists while on vacation. Many things affect the experience of tourists when traveling, especially regarding the physical condition of these tourist destinations. If the infrastructure is not well organized and clean, tourists will feel uncomfortable when traveling, which will cause negative experiences for tourists.
- c) Promotion through digital media in order to reach a wider world market, save time and money, and make it easier for tourists to access information about various halal tourist destinations in West Sumatra. Digital effects are very effective in improving public services and spurring people's economic welfare.
- d) Build halal homestay accommodation in tourist destinations. For certain destinations such as in remote areas it is difficult to find lodging. By building a halal homestay, tourists don't need to be far from the inn to tourist attractions.
- e) Increase the certification of halal tourism aspects. Tourists will not know that a product is halal or not if there is no "halal label". For this reason, halal certification is needed starting from culinary, lodging, tourist attractions, to the services provided, which reflects that West Sumatra deserves to be dubbed the "Best Halal Travel Destination in Indonesia".

The implications of this research for the people of West Sumatra are expected to improve the quality of service and skills in the tourism sector so that they are ready to receive tourist visits to halal tourist sites in West Sumatra. The importance of the government's role in developing

programs that are able to educate the public to play an active role in developing hard skills and soft skills for communities around halal tourism.

Business actors in the tourism sector are expected to be able to actively participate in developing halal tourism so that they can become one of the successful examples of other halal tourism destinations in Indonesia. In addition, it is also important to increase the attractiveness of halal tourism through the application of an integrated system and new concepts so that tourists get the best service, feel comfortable and safe enjoying halal tourism in order to advance the world of tourism in the West Sumatra.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study contributes to the development of tourism management science, especially regarding halal tourism. The government and tourism business actors need to understand these factors in order to encourage and increase halal tourism in West Sumatra through various tourism improvement programs through socialization, regulations and sanctions for the realization of tourist-friendly halal tourism practices, which require support from the community. In order to build a positioning to improve the competitiveness of halal tourism in Indonesia, the implementation of halal tourism marketing strategies that can be done is DOT (Purpose, Origin, Time), BAS (Branding, Advertising, Sales), POSE (Paid Media, Owned Media, Social Media, Endorse). The strategy for developing human resources for halal tourism is to create sustainable and competitive human resources, distribute tourism scholars, and create qualified and trained human resources. Meanwhile, the strategy of making West Sumatra as Indonesia's leading halal tourist destination is to increase public awareness to be involved in sustainable development tourism programs, add and improve tourism support facilities, promotion through digital media, and increase halal tourism certification. From these recommendations, it can be seen how the management of halal tourism in West Sumatra will become a leading destination for Indonesian halal tourism.

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