

## Developing Syariah Tourism in Aceh: Potencies and Challenges

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### ABSTRACT

Syariah Tourism is growing rapidly due to the high expenditure of the global Muslim market for the tourism sector which leads to the lifestyle and the typical needs of Muslims to be a very important thing to be presented in every tourism service. Aceh as one of the provinces in Indonesia which is known by the implementation of Sharia' is one of the priority areas of Syariah Tourism development. However, what and how the halal tourism is is not widely known yet, so that some potencies and resources of halal tourism in Aceh, especially Banda Aceh has not been well developed. This study aims to determine the public perception about Syariah tourism as well as to know what are the potencies and challenges in the development of Syariah Tourism in Aceh. This research uses the qualitative method with interview and observation. The results show that Syariah tourism is not only understood as a great opportunity for Aceh tourism, but it is also an obligation in Islam and the culture of Acehnese, so it must be implemented in every tourism development in Aceh. Potencies of Syariah Tourism in Aceh is the cultural values of society that is based on Islamic values, Aceh Islamic heritage with religiosity atmosphere, and then tsunami heritage that presents spiritual value to tourists. However, these potencies are also challenging because the belief and stigma that Aceh is majority of Islam, so that all things are 100% halal, so as in terms of hygiene, and service at tourist attractions are still needserious attention

Keywords: Syariah Tourism, Aceh, Perception, Potencies, Challenges

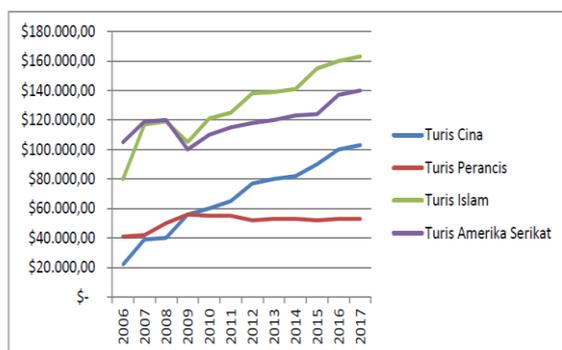
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### INTRODUCTION

#### Background

Syariah tourism is a new tourism concept developing in the world nowadays. This development is driven by the increasing number of muslim population which continue to develop every year. In 2010 moslem population was 1,6 bilion of the 5,3 bilion

people in the world (23,4% of the total population in the world) and is estimated by 2020 to be 1.9 billion from 5.8 billion of the world's population or about 24.9% of the total population in the world (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2009). The large Muslim population of the world directly affects the tourism world. This is evidenced by the growing amount of Muslim tourist spending that continues to increase over time



Source: Crescenting & Dinar Standard (2012).

Figure 1. The Growth of Tourist Spending in the World.

Figure 1. shows the growth of Muslim tourist spending is higher than the other tourists spending in the world. It shows directly that Muslim tourists are a very important market to be targeted in the tourism industry. Some countries begin to develop tourism that accommodates all the Muslims needs and habits. These countries are Thailand, Australia, Europe and Japan, while the majority Muslim countries are Malaysia and Turkey (Sucipto and Andayani, 2014).

Based on the UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization) survey of 2013, Turkey and Malaysia are ranked 6th and 10th of all the countries most visited by tourists in the world. According to Sofyan (2012), those two countries can be ranked 6 and 10 for applying Syariah tourism in their country. Malaysia is seriously working on this tourism sector by establishing a special directorate dealing with Islamic Tourism under the name of the Islamic Tourist Center (ITC) established in 2009 with the main task of promoting Malaysian tourism to Islamic countries and the world Islamic community (Sucipto and Andayani, 2014).

Seeing the successful tourism segment promoted by the Malaysia government with Islamic Tourism term, Indonesia under the coordination of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of

Indonesia also began to develop this Tourism. Indonesia has launched this Tourism in 2012 under the name of Syariah Tourism and inaugurated by the President of Indonesia on October 30, 2013 at the Jakarta International Expo (JIEXPO) Kemayoran, Central Jakarta (Kemenparekraf, 2013). Then changed and finally agreed with the name of Halal Tourism.

By 2015, the Tourism Ministry has set 3 areas as the focus of Syariah tourism destinations development. The three areas are Aceh, West Sumatera and West Nusa Tenggara (Yuanita, 2015). Of these three regions, Aceh is the most distinct area of other regions. This is because Aceh is the only province in Indonesia to apply sharia law officially based on Law No. 44 of 1999 concerning the Implementation of Aceh Province Special Feature concerning the implementation of Islamic S. Such privileges give Aceh the widest possible opportunity to implement Shariah Islam in a *kaffah* manner, so that it can be interpreted that the whole aspect of community life in Aceh is regulated based on Islamic values, not least in the tourism sector. It is proven from the RIPPDA (Renacana Induk Pengembangan Pariwisata Daerah)<sup>1</sup> of Aceh Province in 2007 which states that Shariah Islam as tourism potential and the society preparation in tourism development. The implementation of the RIPPDA is seen from the Islamic tourism promotion conducted by the local government in Aceh and the efforts on field implementation conducted by WH (*Wilayatul Hisbah*) or sharia police in enforcing Islamic Sharia by doing a fashion raid to cover the *aurat* for the visitors especially those who go to the tourism area.

Aceh is known for its Islam, in this case Islamic Sharia, so it is interesting to know how the public perception about halal tourism currently developed, such as how do they

<sup>1</sup> RIPPDA: The Master Plan of Regional Tourism Development

understand about the halal tourism, what halal tourism potential owned by Banda Aceh, and what challenges appear in its development. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the public perception of halal tourism concept, the potential of Halal tourism in Aceh, and the challenges of developing Halal tourism in Aceh.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Islamic Tourism

After the tragedy of September 11th, 2001, Islam was identified as terrorists so the worldview of Islam was very bad. It directly affects the tourism sector of Muslim countries, because of the negative stigma about Islam, tourists become frightened, even canceling their visit to Islamic countries. This fact encourages the idea to slowly eliminate negative stigma about Islam so that tourists will visit Islamic countries again, Shakiry (2006) gave the name "Islamic Tourism" (Al-Hamarneh and Steiner, 2004). According to Shakiry (2006), the concept of Islamic Tourism is not only limited to religious tourism, but extends to all other forms of tourism, as long as it does not contrary with Islamic values. According to him, Islamic Tourism also has the essence that supports the ethics code of world tourism, which respects the values of humanity and local values of local communities, nurturing nature and environment, and encourage the solidarity and economic development of local communities.

Operators and travel agents around the world are quick to grasp the opportunity of the emergence of Islamic Tourism, as evidenced by online tourism advertising where they have started incorporating elements of Islam on their website, such as prayer times, halal food suppliers list, and tips on Islamic travel to attract and provide information for Muslim travelers (Hashim, Murphy and Hashim, 2007).

Although growing rapidly, there is no definitive definition of what is meant by According to Abdullah (2012), Henderson (2010), Kamarudin & Ismail (2012), Islamic Tourism until now, some terms such as Halal Tourism, Muslim Tourism is also still often used, so the concept is still ambiguous . Some definitions of Islamic Tourism from various perspectives and opinions, among others: Dogan (2011) defines Islamic Tourism is limited to tourism activities by Muslims in destinations for relaxation and entertainment purposes in tourist places that apply the principles of Islam, especially on the beach. Henderson (2010) also argued that Islamic tourism is a tourism done mainly by Muslims, although it can include non-Muslim people who are motivated to travel in an Islamic way.

Islamic Tourism Center (ITC) Malaysia also has its own definition of Islamic Tourism, an interesting travel-related activity to explore the history, art, culture and heritage of Islamic history or experience the Islamic way of life, in accordance with Islamic beliefs. Then Bhuiyan (2011), argued that Islamic Tourism is a journey with still doing religious duty and respecting the values of Islam.

Duman (2011) further revealed that the definitions of Islamic Tourism are first, the perpetrators of tourism is a Muslim. Secondly, its tourism destination is in the nuanced Islamic or Islamic state. Thirdly, the dimension of tourism activity concerns on economy, culture, and religion. Fourth, the products offered (accommodation, travel, food and beverage facilities), as well as product management services (related to marketing and ethics).

A more complete definition proposed by Hassan (2004), Islamic Tourism according to him is a new dimension of ethics in the tourism field. It means that the values of morality are upheld. This tourism has a principle to respect the local beliefs and traditions, and care of the environment,

bringing back values, ethics and morality amidst a culture of rampant consumerism and fostering understanding and dialogue between different countries, cultures and civilizations to find out the backgrounds from different communities and relics. According to Chookaew *et al.* (2015), there are factors of this tourism measurement standard in terms of administration and management, they are:

- a) The tourists service should be in accordance with the Muslim principle as a whole
- b) The guides and staff must be discipline and respect the principles of Islam
- c) Organize all activities according to Islamic principles
- d) buildings must be in accordance with the principles of Islam
- e) Restaurant should follow international halal service standards
- f) The transportation service must have a security protection system
- g) There is a mosque for Muslim tourists

Traveling to places that are in accordance with Islamic principles.

From Syariah/Islamic tourism characteristics described by Chookaew *et al.* (2015). Based on Alim *et al.* (2015), there are four important aspects that must be considered to support the tourism, among them are:

- i. Location: Implementation of Islamic system in tourism area. The tourism location selected is the allowed Islamic rule and can enhance the spiritual values of tourists.
- ii. Transportation: Implementation of the system, such as the separation of seats between men and women who are not *mahram* so that Islamic law is still applied and make the tourists feel comfortable.
- iii. Consumption: Islam is very concerned about the halal aspect of consumption; it is mentioned in Q.SAl-Maidah verse 3.

The halal aspect here is either from its nature, its acquisition and its processing. In addition, a study shows that food plays a central role in choosing a tourist destination.

- iv. Accommodation/Hotel: all work processes and facilities provided run in accordance with the principles of sharia. According to Rosenberg , the services here are not limited to food and beverage scope, but also in the facilities provided such as spa, gym, swimming pool, living room and functional for men and women should be separated.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses qualitative method by collecting data through interview and observation. Observations were made by observing and recording the situation and conditions of several tourist sites, transportation, several eating places and hotels in Banda Aceh. Then the determination of informants interviewed through purposive sampling. Interviews were conducted with various levels of society, from government, religious leaders, tourists and tourism businesses. The data analysis used is qualitative descriptive. The type of data required in this study is divided into two, primary and secondary data. Primary data will be obtained through observation and interview. Secondary data is obtained from documentation of text, images, or audiovisual recordings to reinforce and enrich the primary data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Public perception about Syariah tourism

Syariah Tourism in Banda Aceh was officially inaugurated in 2016 by the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia after several years previously known with the term of Sharia tourism. There are various community views on halal tourism; among

them is the view that halal tourism is an opportunity for Banda Aceh's potentials. As proposed by KM<sup>2</sup>, a tour guide in Banda Aceh and IM<sup>3</sup>, one of the managers of Baiturrahman Mosque Banda Aceh:

“Syariah tourism introduces to the world that our products are halal and hygiene. Aceh also has the courtesy and hospitality, we are welcome to anybody who come to Aceh. We show that Aceh is not inclusive and Aceh people is not narrow minded”. (KM)

“In my opinion, Syariah tourism is how the parties, in this case is tourism department can explain to the community how to create .. what .. products in more specific terms, for example, food, how we display halal food products, it not just food, but from all sides of life “. (IM)

KM and IM see that Syariah tourism is a great opportunity for Banda Aceh which has a lot of tourism potential. Therefore, efforts and cooperation of all parties to develop and package these potentials is very important to do. Then MU, a leader of the Tourism Studies Program at a private university in Banda Aceh also revealed that the halal tourism is a good start for Banda Aceh to improve the tourism sector, but it must not violate the rules of God that created us. This is as stated by ABD, one of the Dayah scholars (Heriani *et al.*, 2018). ABD understands halal tourism as Islamic tourism.

“*Alhamdulillah* with the program from the government for Islamic tourism means that there are overseas guests who may be visiting our place, *alhamdulillah* because then we will be

famous in other countries. Well it's our hope hopefully the guests who come from other countries also obey the rules of Islamic religion. MU and ABD argued that Syariah tourism will be a great opportunity for the development of Banda Aceh tourism, it also provides hope for the sustainability and preservation of the religious and cultural values of Aceh people through tourism”. (ABD)

JM, an informant who is a scholar has another opinion:

“If I read the reference they also have Islamic tourism not halal tourism, just where halal is placed ... halal hotel ... halal food. The food must be stamped as halal food, halal stamped hotel... outside Aceh, spa should be stamped as halal spa. In Aceh, spa is not for the men ... spa is only for women .. it is guaranteed that the service will be done by real women, so ... because in Aceh there is no spa for men ... maybe there is also ... the masseur ... there are ... masseur by blind people for example .. so we can say that there is spa for men .. .. so I guess ... how to say .. Aceh is Islam”. (JM)

JM is more likely to agree with the term Islamic Tourism or Syariah Tourism, because the reference of Halal Tourism used by the Ministry of Tourism is Islamic Tourism and Aceh is known as Islamic area with halal things. According to him, Halal tourism emphasis is only on the appearance of a halal logo or stamp, where everything should be given a halal logo.

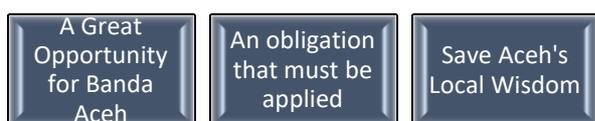
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<sup>2</sup> use of initials to preserve the privacy of informants

Furthermore, MPB, a Chairman of the Consultative Assembly of Ulama stated that:

“Halal tours, religious sourced tours. Tourists, facilities provided, guides, the food provided is all Sharia. That is what the religion hopes for, so if this is prepared by the government, it is the society’s hope that it is the descend of gods, what Allah wants are halal things, if we get something halal, we get Allah bless, hence since the beginning, halal tour conducted by us are all oriented to religion”. (MPB)

The opinion above suggests that Syariah tourism is a tourism based on religious values so that it is understood as an obligation that must be applied in every development of Aceh tourism, especially Banda Aceh, because the implementation of Syariah tourism is a form of obedience to religious orders. Based on the description of interview data above, it can be concluded that three main perception about Syariah tourism in Aceh are:



Source: developed from research (2016)

### The Potencies of Syariah Tourism of Banda Aceh City

#### Location

Banda Aceh city is an old city that has many tourist destinations, and most of them are places of worship, historical relics and relics of tsunami disaster that has spiritual values that is an attraction for tourists. As a region with Islamic Shari'ah privileges, Banda Aceh implement the Islamic system in all locations, including tourism areas, such as the appeal of the use of modest clothing, alcoholic beverages and nightclubs are banned. Here are some tourist destinations in Banda Aceh:

**Tabel 1. Banda Aceh Tourism Destination**

Historical, Cultural and Religious Tourism	Tsunami tour	Culinary tour	Natural tourism
1. Raya Baiturrahman mosque	1. Tsunami Museum	1. Coffee shop	1. Ceureumen Ulee Lheue beach
2. Blang Padang, <i>Aceh Thanks the World</i>	2. Boat on a house	2. Sceh typical culinary restaurant	2. Lampu'uk beach
3. RI-001 Seulawah aircraft monument	3. Kuburan Massal Korban Tsunami		3. Alue Naga beach
4. Kerkhof cemetery	4. PLTU Apung		
5. Aceh museum and Lonceng Cakra Donya	5. Baiturrahman Ulee Lheue mosque		
6. Bugis kings and Sultan Iskandar Muda cemetery	6. Rahmatullah Lampu'uk mosque		
7. Syiah Kuala cemetery			
8. Gunongan			
9. Putro Phang and Pinto Khop garden			
10. Gampong Pande			

Source: developed from research (2016).

#### Transportation

Transportation to Banda Aceh city consists of air transportation that is aircraft and land transportation like buses and travel cars, while transportation commonly used by society and tourists in Banda Aceh city are motor rickshaws and typical Aceh vehicles (already very rare) namely the labi-labi in the form of an old chevrolet car. Based on transportation characteristics in halal tourism

proposed by Chookaew *et al.* (2015), transportation in Aceh has not yet reached the application of a separation system of seats between non-mahram men and women. However, the habit of praying before the vehicle departs is a common habit, for example in Buses such as gambardi below which shows a bus conductor leading a safety prayer in front of the passengers.



Source: documented from this research (2016).

Figure 2. Bus Conductor is Leading Prayer before Departing.

In addition to the habit of praying together in the vehicle, the bus drivers also stopped to do prayers when praying time arrives. In addition there is an appeal from the relevant agencies to bus drivers and other public transport to stop when the call to prayer and stop at the nearest mosque or musholah to give the passengers time to perform the prayers on time, even on the way.



Source: Intsagram Buslovers Community Aceh.

Figure 3. Appeal to Vehicles on Prayers Time.

## Consumption

Aceh Culinary is famous for its rich flavor of spices and has always been one of the favorite tourists. Enjoying Aceh coffee in Banda Aceh city is an agenda that is not usually missed when visiting the city with the nickname thousand coffee shops country. According to the data from the Tourism Office of Banda Aceh City in 2016, there are various types of culinary services business in Banda Aceh City, most of which are restaurants, cafes, coffee shops and several restaurants with a total of 575 units operating in Banda Aceh City. The large number gives many choices to tourists to enjoy Aceh typical culinary. Aceh is known as the Islamic region with the nickname Serambi Mecca, it explains that all the culinary offered in Aceh are halal. As stated by the RZ, an official of the Sharia Islam Office: "All culinary places opened to the public here are generally halal".

The belief of halal food in Banda Aceh was also put forward by BM, a Muslim tourist. He said:

"I'm sure all food served here are halal because I know what Aceh is, because in Aceh as we know 90% of the society are moslem, we do not need to be afraid".

The tourists believe that all food and beverages in Aceh is definitely halal. Therefore, without any halal label, he is convinced that the food served is 100% containing no banned elements in Islam, such as porks, alcohol, blood and wild animals.

## Accommodation/hotel

The number of Accommodations in Kota Banda Aceh is 54, consisting of star hotels, Melati class and guesthouse.

Table 2. Types of Accommodation in Banda Aceh City

No.	Hotel type	Total
1.	4 Star Hotel	1
2.	3 Star Hotel	6
3.	2 Star Hotel	1
4.	1 Star Hotel	3
5.	MelatiHotel	28
6.	Other acomodations (Guesthouse)	15
	Total	54

Source: Processed from BPS Kota Banda Aceh (2016).

All of accommodations above apply a guest screening system that brings the couple whether they are a married couple or not. If they cannot show the evidence, whether in the form of an ID card, marriage certificate or wedding photo, they are directed to choose a different room or are not even welcome at the hotel. As told by RM, a female tourist from Malaysia about her experience at the hotel:

“If at the receptionist i show, if so ... it might seem that man and woman show their wedding card, after that if they do not bring it, they can shoe their family card or birth certificate, marriage certificate, it's so good to avoid immoral”.( RM)

Accommodations in Banda Aceh have not been labeled as halal hotels or Sharia hotels, but the guarding of Islamic values has long been applied. It is intended that the hotel avoid activities that are contrary to the teachings of Islam and to remove the bad stigma of some people who think that the hotel is a place to do immoral activities.

### **The Challenges of Syariah Tourism Development**

The main challenge in developing Syariah tourism in Banda Aceh City is the willingness to do halal certification especially in the food and accommodation sectors. This is based on the Aceh people mindset and business actors that Aceh is Islam, Aceh is a

Shari'a country so that everything in Aceh is believed to have been 100% halal. The assumption is as proposed by one of the informants (JM):

“I can say that Aceh is Islam, almost 100% of the society is Islam, because of that it's difficult to see non-halal things.. it's definitely all halal.. so halal should not be our target”

JM also states that : “eventhough not triggered as Syariah/halal tourism, Aceh is already halal”.

In terms of halal products except non-Muslims, they eat pork, chinese people eat pork. The beliefs that all aspects in Aceh are halal, especially Banda Aceh is reasonable due to the strong identity and the Islam historical aspect of Aceh. But it should be the encouragement for all parties to prove the belief by actually providing guarantees and keeping halal food in Banda Aceh. Therefore, the socialization of understanding and checking on the halal of products, especially food, from elements, ingredients, processing up to the presentation needs to be done more actively to the culinary businessmen and the community.

### **CONCLUSION**

Syariah tourism that takes into account the Islamic values of location, transportation, consumption and accommodation is not only a great opportunity for Aceh tourism, but a must in Aceh tourism, especially Banda Aceh city because the historical and cultural background of Aceh people is identical with Islam as well as its implementation of Syariah Islam. Cultural values of society based on Islamic values is a great tourism potential, such as daily life of Aceh, relics of Islamic history of Aceh with the nuances of religiosity, as well as relics of the tsunami that presents the spiritual value to tourists . However, the understanding and stigma of stakeholders and the Aceh people who believe that Aceh is the majority of Islam and all things are definitely halal

becomes a major challenge in the development of halal tourism. Therefore, socialization and education by all stakeholders regarding Qanun Number 8 of 2016 About Halal Product Assurance System to build awareness of the importance of halal certainty of a product needs to be maximized to support the development of halal tourism.

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