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Welcoming the Economic Transformation of the Ummah in Aceh through Muslim Friendly Tourism Destinations

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Abstract: This research highlights how tourism management based on religious values or known as Muslim-friendly tourism can invite global tourists, while maintaining a balance between modernity and local wisdom but able to contribute in reducing social inequality, especially poverty fluctuations. This research not only explores the landscape of Aceh as a Muslim-friendly tourist destination, but also identifies alternative strategies in creating a halal tourism ecosystem that supports the image of inclusive economic transformation of the people in Aceh. This research includes descriptive qualitative field research, using the Systematic Literature Review Analytical approach. The data sources used to achieve the research objectives refer to the utilization of primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was obtained through observation, while secondary data was obtained through documentation techniques from various valid relevant sources. The data analysis procedure starts from data reduction, followed by data presentation, conclusion drawing and data verification. The research findings show that Muslim-friendly tourism offers significant opportunities to reduce poverty through the creation of new jobs, empowering MSMEs, encouraging better infrastructure development, increasing sources of diversification of community income, and elevating Aceh's image as a global Muslim-friendly tourist destination. Therefore, the tourism sector can be a locomotive that brings significant changes to the economic landscape of Aceh. With strong collaboration between the government, the community, and the private sector, Aceh has the potential to become one of the leading tourist destinations that is not only economically beneficial, but can also provide spiritual benefits for Muslims around the world. Transforming the ummah's economy through the Muslim-friendly tourism sector is not only about creating economic opportunities, but also about building a better future for future generations. It is a step that, with proper planning

and implementation, can lead Aceh to a more prosperous, sustainable, and dignified economy in the eyes of the world.

Keywords: Aceh; People's Economy; Muslim Friendly Tourism.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menyoroti bagaimana pengelolaan pariwisata berbasis nilai-nilai agama atau dikenal dengan wisata ramah muslim dapat mengundang wisatawan global, sambil menjaga keseimbangan antara modernitas dan kearifan lokal namun mampu memberi kontribusi dalam mengurangi kesenjangan sosial terutama gejala kemiskinan. Penelitian ini tidak hanya menggali lanskap Aceh sebagai destinasi wisata ramah muslim, tetapi juga mengidentifikasi strategi alternatif dalam menciptakan ekosistem wisata halal yang mendukung citra transformasi ekonomi umat di Aceh secara inklusif. Penelitian ini termasuk penelitian lapangan yang bersifat kualitatif deskriptif, menggunakan pendekatan Systematic Literature Review Analitis. Sumber data yang digunakan untuk mencapai tujuan penelitian merujuk pada pemanfaatan sumber data primer dan sekunder. Data primer diperoleh melalui observasi, sementara data sekunder diperoleh melalui teknik dokumentasi dari berbagai sumber relevan yang valid. Adapun prosedur analisis data dimulai dari reduksi data, diikuti penyajian data, penarikan kesimpulan dan verifikasi data. Temuan penelitian diketahui bahwa wisata ramah muslim menawarkan peluang signifikan untuk mengurangi gejala kemiskinan melalui terciptanya lapangan kerja baru, mampu memberdayakan UMKM, mendorong pembangunan infrastruktur yang lebih baik, meningkatkan sumber diversifikasi pendapatan masyarakat, dan mengangkat citra Aceh sebagai destinasi wisata ramah muslim global. Maka sektor pariwisata dapat menjadi lokomotif yang membawa perubahan signifikan bagi lanskap perekonomian daerah Aceh. Adanya kolaborasi yang kuat antara pemerintah, masyarakat, dan sektor swasta, Aceh berpotensi untuk menjadi salah satu destinasi wisata unggulan yang tidak hanya menguntungkan secara ekonomi, tetapi juga dapat memberikan manfaat spiritual bagi umat muslim di seluruh dunia. Transformasi ekonomi umat melalui sektor pariwisata ramah muslim bukan hanya perkara menciptakan peluang ekonomi, tetapi juga tentang membangun masa depan yang lebih baik bagi generasi mendatang. Sebuah langkah yang jika mampu dilakukan dengan perencanaan matang dan implementasi yang baik, dapat membawa Aceh menuju perekonomian lebih sejahtera, berkelanjutan, dan bermartabat di mata dunia.

Kata Kunci: Aceh; Ekonomi Umat; Wisata Ramah Muslim.

INTRODUCTION

The trend of halal tourist destinations has now become a global phenomenon that attracts the attention of many countries. Not only countries with a majority Muslim population such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Morocco, and Brunei Darussalam, but also non-Muslim countries are taking advantage of this opportunity. Countries such as Thailand, Japan,

Singapore, France, and Taiwan, including Korea are preparing to become major halal tourism destinations.¹ A number of these countries are trying to offer various Muslim-friendly facilities, ranging from the provision of halal food to places to pray in public places, although some are still in the development stage to meet the needs of international Muslim tourists. This view is supported by a study conducted by Hamid and his colleagues showing that Japan and Thailand have started to develop halal tourism through the provision of halal food in various public places, ranging from airports, restaurants, to city centers. In addition, prayer facilities have also begun to be more easily found in public places. This is part of the effort to answer the needs of Muslim tourists.²

Halal tourism is taking off, with data showing that the halal tourism market will be worth USD 260 billion by 2023, and is predicted to experience significant growth of 5% over the period 2024-2032. This is due to the increasing consumer demand for sustainable food choices.³ Interest in halal tourism destinations is expected to continue to increase along with the projected increase in the world's Muslim population which is predicted to reach 9.31 billion by 2050, or around 29.68% of the world's population. If Indonesia can capitalize on this opportunity well, the halal tourism sector can become a driving force for a more advanced economy.

As a country with the largest Muslim population in the world. Indonesia has significant potential to develop halal tourism destinations. Data from the first semester of 2024 shows that the Muslim population in Indonesia reached 245.97 million people or 87.08%. This number represents 13.1% of the total world population.⁴ Of course this opens a unique opportunity to take advantage of the halal tourism market. In addition, Indonesia is the largest archipelago with more than 17,500 islands and more than 360 ethnic groups.⁵ Thus giving birth to a rich diversity of cultures and traditions as well as mesmerizing natural scenery, both land and sea, complete with appetizing culinary delights. Moreover, the results of a survey conducted by *Expat Insider Internations* in

¹ Kemenparekraf/Baparekraf, "Potensi Pengembangan Wisata Halal Di Indonesia," Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif/Badan Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif (Kemenparekraf/Baparekraf), 2021, <https://kemenparekraf.go.id/ragam-pariwisata/Potensi-Pengembangan-Wisata-Halal-di-Indonesia>.

² Siti Halimah Ab Hamid et al., "Implementing Big Scale Halal Tourism in Malaysia," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 8, no. 16 (2018): 304-18, <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v8-i16/5134>.

³ UnivDatos, "Pasar Pariwisata Halal: Analisis Dan Prakiraan Saat Ini (2024-2032)," univdatos.com, 2024, [https://univdatos.com/id/report/halal-tourism-market/#::~:~:text=Ukuran dan Prakiraan Pasar Pariwisata, konsumen terhadap pilihan makanan berkelanjutan](https://univdatos.com/id/report/halal-tourism-market/#::~:~:text=Ukuran%20dan%20prakiraan%20pasar%20pariwisata,%20konsumen%20terhadap%20pilihan%20makanan%20berkelanjutan).

⁴ Nabilah Muhamad, "Mayoritas Penduduk Indonesia Beragama Islam Pada Semester I 2024," *databoks.katadata.co.id*, 2024, Mayoritas Penduduk Indonesia Beragama Islam pada Semester I 2024.

⁵ Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, "Indonesia," 26 Agustus 2022, 2022, <https://kemlu.go.id/canberra/id/read/indonesia/2186/etc-menu>.

2022 placed Indonesia as the second friendliest country in the world.⁶ Thus identifying that Indonesia has a high social value, and further adds to the potential Indonesia to build a Muslim-friendly tourism sector that can support the economy of the people in a sustainable manner.

Data released by the *Global Muslim Travel Index* (GMTI) 2023, managed to place Indonesia in the first rank as the best halal tourist destination in the world from 140 other countries.⁷ This position must be able to be maintained by Indonesia through a number of advantages owned in order to continue to be a leader in the global halal tourism sector, and be able to contribute more significantly to the pace of the economy. Furthermore, although Indonesia has succeeded in occupying the first position as the world's best halal tourism destination. However, the contribution of the tourism sector to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is still below 5% or around 4.6% in 2024.⁸ In fact, with a number of potentials, such as the number of Muslim population, natural beauty, and rich cultural heritage, the development of halal tourist destinations should be able to run more massively. This figure is relatively small when compared to the potential possessed by each region in Indonesia. Thus, halal tourism management efforts need to be renewed or optimized to increase the attractiveness or number of tourist visits in order to have an impact on economic growth, especially through the halal tourism sector.

The development of halal tourism must cover various scales, both at the national and regional levels, including Aceh as one of the provinces in Indonesia which is famous for its rich Islamic culture. Even Aceh received official permission from the Indonesian government to implement Islamic law. Aceh with a series of uniqueness, such as the thick application of Islamic law, the diversity of cultural heritage, historical wealth and stunning natural beauty. Being an extraordinary potential in building Muslim-friendly halal tourism that is attractive, innovative and able to boost the local economic structure while strengthening the national economy.

There are several indicators that illustrate the alignment of the application of halal tourism in Aceh, among others, the selection of Aceh as one of the 10 provinces that are the focus of halal tourism development

⁶ Annissa Mutia, "Indonesia Masuk Daftar Negara Paling Ramah Sedunia 2022," 19 September 2022, 2022, <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2022/09/19/indonesia-masuk-daftar-negara-paling-ramah-sedunia-2022>.

⁷ Komite Nasional Ekonomi dan Keuangan Syariah, "Indonesia Peringkat Pertama Destinasi Wisata Halal Terbaik Dunia," kneks.go.id, 2023, <https://kneks.go.id/berita/569/indonesia-peringkat-pertama-destinasi-wisata-halal-terbaik-dunia?category=1>.

⁸ Imamatul Silfia, "Ekonom: Kontribusi Pariwisata Terhadap PDB Bisa Tembus 5 Persen," [antaranews.com](https://www.antaranews.com), 2024, <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/4428889/ekonom-kontribusi-pariwisata-terhadap-pdb-bisa-tembus-5-persen#:~:text=Ekonom: Kontribusi pariwisata terhadap PDB bisa tembus 5 persen - ANTARA News>.

in Indonesia. Aceh has around 797 tourist attractions and 774 cultural heritage sites spread across 23 districts or cities. Aceh's achievements, including recognition as the best Muslim tourist-friendly cultural destination and Sultan Iskandar Muda Airport as the best Muslim-friendly airport, show the great potential Aceh has. Aceh also had the opportunity to win 2 prestigious awards in the 2016 *World Halal Tourism Award* in Dubai, namely the category of *World's Best Airport for Halal Travelers* and *World's Best Halal Cultural Destination*. In addition, in 2019 Aceh successfully ranked second out of 5 provinces in Indonesia as *Indonesia's Leading Halal Tourism Destination* based on the *Indonesia Muslim Travel Index* (IMTI) standard which refers to the provisions of the *Global Muslim Travel Index* (GMTI) standard. Aceh's success in achieving the second position as Indonesia's best halal tourist destination 2019 certainly strengthens Aceh's image as a halal tourist destination worth visiting. This achievement also provides encouragement for Aceh to appear more confident, while increasing competitiveness, both at the national and international levels.⁹

Although Aceh's halal tourist destinations have a series of achievements and interesting uniqueness, the management of the tourism sector in Aceh has not been fully utilized to the fullest. So that it has less impact on the economy. Especially in overcoming the fluctuation of poverty in Aceh, which is still the poorest province in Sumatra with a poverty rate of 14.45% or as many as 806.75 people in the March 2023 period. This value is the highest when compared to the average poverty rate in Sumatra of 9.27% and the national 9.36%.¹⁰ In addition, although Aceh is known for its uniqueness as a region that implements Islamic sharia values in daily life, abundant cultural heritage and local traditions, as well as varied tourist wealth. However, the diversity of Muslim-friendly tourist destination options is still very limited. The Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) of Aceh Province released that, in the January-August 2024 period, as many as 20,640 foreign tourists visited Aceh. Visitors were dominated by tourists from Malaysia, followed by Australia, Singapore, France, and Germany.¹¹ Whereas the increasing number of tourists from

⁹ Humas Aceh, "Aceh Raih Peringkat Kedua Destinasi Wisata Halal Indonesia Versi IMTI 2019," 10 April 2019, 2019, <https://acehprov.go.id/berita/kategori/pemerintahan/aceh-raih-peringkat-kedua-destinasi-wisata-halal-indonesia-versi-imti-2019>.

¹⁰ Antoni, "Aceh Masih Menjadi Provinsi Dengan Tingkat Kemiskinan Tertinggi Di Sumatera," rri.co.id, 2024, <https://www.rri.co.id/daerah/844624/aceh-masih-menjadi-provinsi-dengan-tingkat-kemiskinan-tertinggi-di-sumatera#:~:text=KBRN%2C Lhokseumawe%3A Data tingkat kemiskinan,dan nasional 9%2C36%25>.

¹¹ Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Aceh, "Kadisbudpar Aceh: Turis Asing Meningkat Pada Agustus, Capai 3.042 Orang," disbudpar.acehprov.go.id, 2024, <https://disbudpar.acehprov.go.id/berita/kategori/berita/kadisbudpar-aceh-turis-asing-meningkat-pada-agustus-capai-3042-orang>.

Muslim countries, the halal tourism market share is a rapidly growing sector globally.

Halal tourism or Muslim-friendly tourism is now not just a trend, but has become a necessity for most travelers. Muslim-friendly tourism includes facilities and services that make it easier for Muslim travelers to experience tourist activities comfortably, such as the provision of halal food, easily accessible places of worship, and culture that is in line with Islamic values. Thus, developing Aceh as a Muslim-friendly tourism destination has great potential to boost the local economy, increase tourist visits, and introduce Aceh's rich local culture and natural beauty to the world. Aceh, as an area rich in Islamic values, has a golden opportunity to utilize this potential to answer the growing needs of Muslim tourists. This research seeks to explore how the economic transformation of the ummah in Aceh can be realized with the innovation of maximizing the Muslim-friendly tourism sector, as well as its impact on improving the welfare of local communities.

Several previous studies have attempted to discuss the phenomenon of halal tourism, but there are still limitations in uncovering problems and formulating comprehensive and massive strategies that can be used to assess or develop a flexible Muslim-friendly halal tourism sector. A number of previous studies focused more on aspects of halal tourism such as tourist interest, the development and potential of halal tourist destinations, the concepts applied, the level of tourist satisfaction, including the suitability between halal certification and implementation in the field. Some studies also discuss development strategies, opportunities, challenges, and factors that influence tourist decisions in choosing halal tourist destinations, both at the national and regional levels such as research by Yusuf *et al.* examining the factors that influence tourist interest in halal tourism in Aceh using a quantitative approach through multiple linear regression tests. The results of the analysis show that tourist perceptions, accessibility, communication, environment, and service quality are the main factors in attracting visitors to halal tourist destinations in Aceh.¹² Similar research was conducted by Desky *et al.*, who examined tourist satisfaction with halal tourism in Aceh using multiple linear regression analysis. The research findings show that halal tourism has a positive impact on the satisfaction of tourists visiting Banda Aceh.¹³

¹² Muhammad Yasir Yusuf *et al.*, "The Determinants of Tourists Intention to Visit Halal Tourism Destinations in Aceh Province," *Samarah; Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 5, no. 2 (2021): 892-912, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjkh.v5i2.9270>.

¹³ Harjoni Desky, Beverly Thaver, and Syamsul Rijal, "Analysis of Tourist Satisfaction with Halal Tourism in Aceh," *Indonesian Journal of Halal Research* 4, no. 1 (2022): 1-8, <https://doi.org/10.15575/ijhar.v4i1.14479>.

Meanwhile, Carrollina and Triyawan examined the development of halal tourism in East Java using SWOT analysis. The findings revealed that the halal tourism sector is still underdeveloped due to limited facilities and low public knowledge about halal tourism. Therefore, updating facilities in accordance with Islamic principles is needed.¹⁴ Ferdiansyah *et al.* also studied the development of halal tourism in Indonesia through the application of the concept of *smart tourism* with a descriptive qualitative approach. The research found that the development of halal tourism can be done by creating family-friendly destinations, facilities that support the needs of Muslim tourists, and providing interactive and easily accessible information.¹⁵

On another occasion, Basit attempted to reveal the development of halal tourism in Kuta Mandalika, using SWOT analysis to explore the direction of halal tourism destination development policies in the area.¹⁶ A similar study was also conducted by Cadith *et al.* in DKI Jakarta with the aim of exploring the potential, problems, and strategies for developing halal tourism in DKI Jakarta.¹⁷ Amrin *et al.* examined the concept of halal tourism development in the *new normal* era with the object of research in Bima Regency, West Nusa Tenggara using exploratory qualitative methods and SWOT analysis, and concluded that halal tourism has great potential in the Bima Regency area, West Nusa Tenggara.¹⁸

Rahmi also conducted a similar study examining the impact of halal tourism on Indonesia's economic growth, with a qualitative approach from BPS data, GMTI, *World Halal Travel*, and *Tourism Halal Travel*. The research findings show that halal tourism has a positive impact on the Indonesian government.¹⁹ Another study reviewed by Abrori and Makki highlighted the potential of halal tourism in Situbondo, known as

¹⁴ Riska Carrollina and Andi Triyawan, "Analysis of Halal Tourism Development Strategy in East Java Province," *Journal of Islamic Economics and Philanthropy* 2, no. 01 (2019): 234-50, <https://doi.org/10.21111/jiep.v2i01.3099>.

¹⁵ Hendry Ferdiansyah *et al.*, "Pengembangan Pariwisata Halal Di Indonesia Melalui Konsep Smart Tourism," *Tornare; Journal of Sustainable Tourism Research* 2, no. 1 (2020): 30, <https://doi.org/10.24198/tornare.v2i1.25831>.

¹⁶ Abdul Basit, "Strategi Pengembangan Pariwisata Halal Di Kuta Mandalika Kabupaten Lombok Tengah," *Tourism Scientific Journal* 7, no. 1 (2022): 130-54, <https://doi.org/10.32659/tsj.v7i1.143>.

¹⁷ Juliannes Cadith *et al.*, "Strategi Pengembangan Wisata Halal Di DKI Jakarta," *Publikauma: Jurnal Administrasi Publik Universitas Medan Area* 10, no. 1 (2022): 73-88, <https://ojs.uma.ac.id/index.php/publikauma/article/view/6839>.

¹⁸ Amrin Amrin, Yono Yono, and Zakaria Zakaria, "The Development Concept of Halal Tourism in Indonesia in the New Normal (Study in Bima Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province)," *Al-Infaq: Jurnal Ekonomi Islam* 13, no. 1 (2022): 181, <https://doi.org/10.32507/ajei.v13i1.1308>.

¹⁹ Asri Noer Rahmi, "Perkembangan Pariwisata Halal Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Pertumbuhan Ekonomi Indonesia," *Islamicconomic: Jurnal Ekonomi Islam* 11, no. 1 (2020): 1-22, <https://doi.org/10.32678/ijej.v11i1.226>.

the city of santri, using a qualitative approach with the Spradley model.²⁰ Parhan *et al.* discussed the opportunities and challenges of halal tourism in Bandung.²¹ Qita *et al.* studied halal tourism management with a bibliometric approach.²² On the other hand, Muhammad *et al.* investigated the validity of halal tourism that has obtained halal certification. The results of the analysis found that the majority of Indonesian halal tourism is not fully in line with sharia principles even though it has received halal certification from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). There is a gap between halal labeling and implementation in the field.²³

Although a number of scholars have attempted to discuss halal tourism, there is still a lack of in-depth understanding to create a Muslim-friendly halal tourism destination sector that can attract more visitors. Thus, a new study is needed that can integrate the results of previous research, in order to fill the existing gaps and provide more holistic guidance in developing Muslim-friendly halal tourism in a more flexible and complex manner. Furthermore, as global developments are increasingly paying attention to the halal tourism sector, it is time for Aceh to rise up and make Muslim-friendly tourism an important pillar in the regional economy. Considering this, this research aims to explore the landscape of Aceh as a Muslim-friendly tourism destination and how this sector can encourage sustainable economic transformation of the people in Aceh.

This research is very important and interesting to conduct because it offers a strategic solution in encouraging the development of Aceh's regional economy based on local wisdom and tourism potential. Aceh, as a region with a rich culture and deep Islamic history, has a promising opportunity to develop tourist destinations that are not only attractive to Muslim tourists, but can also have a positive impact on the welfare of the people. Through the development of Muslim-friendly tourism, Aceh can attract international travelers who seek spiritual and cultural experiences that are in accordance with Islamic principles. In addition, the Muslim-friendly tourism sector has the potential to create new jobs, increase local revenue, and introduce Aceh to the outside world as a friendly and

²⁰ Faizul Abrori and Mustaqim Makki, "The Dynamics and Potency of Halal Tourism in Situbondo as a City of Santri," *Tasharruf: Journal of Economics and Business of Islam* 6, no. 2 (2021): 150, <https://doi.org/10.30984/tjebi.v6i2.1636>.

²¹ Muhamad Parhan et al., "The Opportunities and Challenges Halal Tourism in Bandung Indonesia Regency," *Jurnal IPTA; Industri Perjalanan Wisata* 9, no. 1 (2021): 81, <https://doi.org/10.24843/ipta.2021.v09.i01.p08>.

²² Sabiq Al Qita, Silma Lafifa Sunarya, and Aam Slamet Rusydiana, "Manajemen Pariwisata Halal," *Journal of Islamic Tourism, Halal Food, Islamic Traveling, and Creative Economy* 2, no. 2 (2022): 140–57, <https://doi.org/10.21274/ar-rehla.v2i2.5919>.

²³ Muhammad, Syabbul Bachri, and M Husnaini, "Bias or Reality: Rethinking of Halal Tourism in Indonesia," *Karsa: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture* 30, no. 1 (2022): 34–54, <https://doi.org/10.19105/karsa.v30i1.3322>.

inclusive tourist destination. This research not only explores existing economic problems, but also identifies alternative strategies in creating a halal tourism ecosystem that supports the image of sustainable economic transformation of the ummah in Aceh.

In addition, this research is also relevant for promoting diversity and strengthening the social cultural values of the Acehnese people, which have strong roots in Islamic tradition. This makes the topic particularly relevant in the midst of efforts to integrate economic potential with religious values that can provide long-term benefits for the people of Aceh in particular and other communities as a whole.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research includes descriptive qualitative field research, using the *Systematic Literature Review Analytical* approach. This method provides a more in-depth review, identifies gaps in existing research, and is based on more credible evidence so as to provide a strong basis for further development of theory or practice, or policy.²⁴ The data sources used in obtaining various information and supporting data needed to achieve the research objectives refer to the utilization of primary and secondary data sources. All data was collected through observation and documentation techniques. Observation is done by observing phenomena in the field to identify trends, gaps in the literature and evaluate the consistency of previous findings. The observation technique in this research makes an important contribution to a more in-depth and systematic understanding of the topic being examined as well as strengthening the arguments and conclusions drawn. The documentation technique of this research was obtained from various relevant sources, such as books, academic journals, *online databases*, mass media, data portals, and various other accesses that can be accessed by the public. Data was also collected through government publications such as BPS Aceh Province and the Aceh Tourism Office, to provide a comprehensive and valid explanation of the research topic in line with the available data.

While the data analysis of this study refers to the data analysis technique proposed by Miles and Huberman in Sugiyono in 2019, starting from data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing and finally data verification.²⁵ Data reduction includes the process of selecting and simplifying the raw data that has been obtained. Data presentation is done by arranging data in a systematic and easy-to-understand form, especially for readers, to then formulate conclusions. The data analysis process is then verified again and carried out continuously until the data reaches a

²⁴ Uma Sekaran and Roger Bougie, *Research Methods for Business* (Jakarta: Salemba Empat, 2017).

²⁵ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif Dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2019).

saturation point, namely when no new data is found that changes the conclusion.

DISCUSSION/RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Muslim Friendly Tourism Destination Landscape

Muslim-friendly tourism destination is a tourism concept designed to meet the special needs of Muslim tourists, but still open and can be enjoyed by tourists from various backgrounds, including for non-Muslims. This concept prioritizes Islamic principles related to social, cultural, and religious norms in the management of tourist destinations.²⁶ Although categorized as "Muslim-friendly", this destination still has a universal appeal and is able to provide a valuable experience for anyone who visits. The implementation of Muslim-friendly tourism is based on the value of visitor benefits, namely:

1. For Muslims; fulfilling spiritual and practical needs

Muslim-friendly tourist destinations offer comfort and convenience in carrying out daily activities in accordance with religious teachings. One of the main characteristics of this destination is the provision of adequate worship facilities, such as mosques or prayer rooms and wudu stations, as well as clean and comfortable lodgings, which are strategically located around the tourist area. This makes it easier for Muslim visitors to pray on time without having to worry about the location or cleanliness of the place of worship. In addition, Muslim-friendly tourist destinations also ensure that halal food is always available, whether in restaurants, cafes, or hotels. Animal slaughtering and food processing that meet halal standards are prioritized in the management of these destinations. Not only that, many Muslim-friendly tourist destinations also provide tour guides who understand religious needs, so that Muslim tourists can feel more comfortable and calm while exploring the destination. Other facilities that support the comfort of Muslim travelers are private spaces to rest, such as hotel rooms that separate male and female facilities, and swimming pools that separate male and female areas to maintain privacy and respect. All these aspects are designed to ensure that Muslim travelers can enjoy their vacation without having to feel alienated from their religious obligations or adherence.

²⁶ Ari Ana Fatmawati and Sugeng Santoso, "Penguatan Rantai Nilai Pariwisata Sebagai Strategi Pengembangan Kawasan Kota Tua Jakarta Menjadi Kawasan Wisata Ramah Muslim," *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Bisnis* 6, no. 3 (2020): 284–304, <https://doi.org/10.22441/jimb.v6i3.9825>.

2. For non-Muslims; offers an interesting and experience

For non-Muslim travelers, Muslim-friendly destinations offer a unique and immersive experience, allowing non-Muslim travelers to learn more about Islamic culture and Muslim society. For example, by visiting historic mosques that are synonymous with stunning architecture, or taking part in cultural festivals that incorporate the spiritual and social values of the Muslim community. This provides an opportunity for non-Muslim travelers to understand more about Islamic life and teachings, which can be an experience in enriching the perspective of non-Muslim travelers towards different religions and cultures. Moreover, beyond the aspect of worship, non-Muslim tourists can also enjoy various activities that are usually available in other tourist destinations, such as enjoying the beauty of nature, participating in *outdoor* activities, or visiting historical sites that have connections with the rich history of Islam. Visits to Islamic historical sites, such as historical mosques or relics of Islamic kingdoms can provide new insights into civilizations and history that are not only influential for Muslims, but also for the world in general

Hagia Sophia is a brilliant example of how a Muslim-friendly tourist destination can create an inclusive space for visitors from various religious backgrounds, while maintaining its spiritual integrity and historical value. By becoming a place of worship that is open to the public, Hagia Sophia shows that faith-based tourism destinations do not have to be exclusive or limited to certain groups, but can be a symbol of diversity and a bridge for interfaith peace. As a global site, Hagia Sophia provides important lessons for the management of Muslim-friendly tourist destinations that respect history, religion, and cultural diversity.

Muslim Friendly Travel Destinations; Bridges of Culture and Religion

The specialty of Muslim-friendly tourist destinations is the ability bridge the understanding between cultures. Although designed with the comfort and needs of Muslim travelers in mind, these destinations can still be enjoyed by non-Muslim travelers who want to explore the beauty of Islamic culture or seek spiritual tranquility presented by an atmosphere of peace and simplicity.²⁷ Muslim-friendly destinations also emphasize the values of tolerance and harmony. For example, such destinations tend to organize events or activities that involve the participation of various communities, both Muslim and non-Muslim, in order to introduce

²⁷ Arif Luqman Hakim and Mochamad Novi Rifai, "Strategi Pengembangan Pariwisata Ramah Muslim Di Pantai Kuta, Nusa Tenggara Barat," *E-Journal Ekonomi Dan Bisnis Akuntansi* 11, no. 1 (2024): 116–21, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.19184/ejeba.v11i2.52145>.

universal values such as the value of peace, cooperation, and mutual understanding. This concept makes Muslim-friendly tourist destinations not only a place for vacation. But also a place to build intercultural dialogue and strengthen social relations between religious communities.

One of the things that distinguishes Muslim-friendly tourist destinations is the ability to accommodate the various needs of travelers without limiting who can visit. The facilities are designed to meet international standards, making even non-Muslim travelers feel more comfortable and welcome. For example, while there are facilities for worship, the destination also provides a variety of recreational activities to suit the interests of travelers from different cultural backgrounds. This gives a sense that the destination does not belong to just one religious group, but is an open space for anyone who wants to experience peace, natural beauty and cultural diversity.

Overall, Muslim-friendly tourism destinations are not just a place to take a vacation, but an experience that combines religious values, cultural climate, and humanity harmoniously. For Muslim travelers, these destinations provide comfort in performing spiritual worship and enjoying a vacation. While for non-Muslim travelers, these destinations offer new insights into Islamic culture and deep spiritual experiences. Thus, Muslim-friendly tourist destinations do not only serve as a place for recreation, but also as a tool to build interfaith understanding, promote tolerance, and enrich cultural experiences for anyone who visits them.

Portrait of Muslim Friendly Tourism in Aceh

In March 2023, Aceh was recorded as the province with the highest poverty rate on the island of Sumatra, reaching 14.45% or 806.75 people. This value is the highest when compared to the average poverty rate in Sumatra of 9.27% and the national 9.36%,²⁸ a reality that arouses the attention of many parties. Despite its abundant natural resources, Aceh still faces severe challenges in terms of equitable distribution of community welfare. The high poverty rate indicates an imbalance between the potential and the results achieved in economic development. Therefore, the transformation of the people's economy in Aceh is a crucial step in reducing this gap, focusing on sectors that can directly and sustainably empower people. One sector that offers significant potential in Aceh's economy is the tourism industry, especially Muslim-friendly tourist destinations. Especially since the majority of Aceh's population is purely Muslim, the development of tourism based on Islamic values is very relevant and can have a significant impact on the people's economy.

²⁸ Antoni, "Aceh Masih Menjadi Provinsi Dengan Tingkat Kemiskinan Tertinggi Di Sumatera."

Muslim-friendly tourism in Aceh, which emphasizes the principles of Islamic law in all aspects, from lodging that complies with religious norms to the provision of halal food, has a strong attraction for domestic and foreign tourists. This potential not only attracts Muslim tourists from all over the world, but also can change the face of Aceh into a more recognizable and desirable destination. Optimizing Muslim-friendly tourism destination in Aceh will open up various new economic opportunities. This sector will create jobs for local people, ranging from tour guides, hotel and restaurant managers, business actors, to transportation service providers and *souvenirs*. Each of these elements, if managed well, can help reduce the unemployment rate and have a direct impact on the welfare of the community. Furthermore, Muslim-friendly tourism also has the potential to elevate the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector, which is the backbone of the economy in many regions.

In addition, the development of Muslim-friendly tourism destinations in Aceh can help change the negative perception about Aceh. One of the negative perceptions that often arise is the view that Aceh is a conservative and backward region in terms of social and cultural freedom. Some outsiders, both domestically and internationally, view Aceh as a place full of strict rules, especially with regard to the application of Islamic sharia law. This view shows Aceh as a region that curbs individual freedom, especially in terms of dress, socializing, or even social activities. Acehnese society is perceived as very "rigid" in adhering to religious norms, which is seen as a barrier to more open social and cultural development.

To change this negative perception, Aceh needs to show the outside world that despite its strong traditional and religious values, it also has a more modern and dynamic side. Through incessant promotion of potential sectors such as tourism, arts, culture and education, Aceh can show a progressive and inclusive side that does not only focus on the past or aspects that are considered "rigid". Along with the development of better infrastructure and the opening up of discussion about diversity, Aceh has the potential to change its image and eliminate the stereotypes that have ensnared it over the years. Overall, although Aceh is often viewed with prejudiced eyes, many still do not see the tremendous potential of the province to become a model of how tradition and modernity can coexist harmoniously.

Aceh, which is known for its rich Islamic culture and history, with enormous potential for religious tourism, can become the center of world Islamic tourism. Through the utilization of historical heritage such as Islamic historical sites, magnificent mosques, and cultural events such as religious festivals. Aceh can attract tourists who are looking for an

immersive spiritual and cultural experience. This potential is very relevant in the midst of global trends that increasingly prioritize the spiritual and educational aspects of travel.

Economic Transformation of the Ummah in Aceh through Muslim Friendly Tourism Destinations

The transformation of the people's economy in Aceh through the development of Muslim-friendly tourist destinations is a crucial and very relevant topic given the significant potential of the tourism sector in strengthening the regional economy. This transformation is not only a strategic choice to revive the regional economy, but also a great opportunity to reduce the poverty rate which is still a major challenge in the province. With its rich nature, culture and deep Islamic history, Aceh has great potential to develop into a leading tourism destination that can empower the community's economy. Here are 5 strategic issues that could be crucial in this endeavor, including:

1. Local Job Creation

One of the direct impacts that can be generated from the development of Muslim-friendly tourism destinations is job creation. In the tourism sector, there are many job opportunities that can be undertaken by local communities, ranging from tour guides, hotel employees, halal restaurant managers, to cleaning and security officers. In addition, tourists also need various other services such as transportation, vehicle maintenance, and daily necessities that can be fulfilled by the local business sector. By introducing Aceh as a Muslim-friendly tourist destination, there is a chance that more job opportunities will open up, which can directly reduce the unemployment rate, a key factor that affects the poverty rate. Empowering local labor, especially in villages around tourist destinations, is one of the important things in inclusive and sustainable economic transformation.

2. Empowerment of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)

The Muslim-friendly tourism sector in Aceh has the potential to catalyze the growth of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which are the backbone of the economy in Aceh. From Acehese specialties such as *Aceh noodles*, *kuah pliek*, goat curry, *savory rice* to local culture-based handicrafts and clothing, MSMEs have great potential to reach a wider market. Tourists who come not only spend money on accommodation, but also shop for unique local products. Training and mentoring programs for tourism-related MSMEs, such as halal culinary businesses, Acehese souvenirs, or gifts, can strengthen the competitiveness of local products in the global market. This will increase community

income, expand the market share of businesses, and in turn reduce dependence on the often unstable informal sector.

3. Infrastructure Improvement Drives Economic Growth

Investments in tourism infrastructure development will have a broad positive impact, not only on the tourism sector itself, but also on other sectors of the economy. Developing accessibility to tourist destinations, improving public transportation, and building better public facilities can improve the overall quality of life for the people of Aceh. The construction of roads, airports, terminals and other supporting facilities will facilitate the mobility of tourists, and this has the effect of increasing revenue from the services, trade and transportation sectors. As infrastructure develops, economic activities that support the tourism sector such as construction, logistics, and goods suppliers will expand, creating opportunities for more individuals to find employment and reducing poverty levels.

4. Diversification of Local Community Income Sources

Aceh has tremendous natural resources, ranging from beautiful beaches to charming mountains. By developing Muslim-friendly tourism destinations based on natural resources and local culture, the people of Aceh can have more diversified sources of income. For example, the ecotourism-based tourism sector, such as nature tourism, *trekking*, or religious tourism to Islamic historical sites, will open up opportunities for the community to utilize the potential of nature in a sustainable way. Tourism management that involves local communities can also ensure that tourism revenue is not only concentrated in big cities, but also flows to more remote areas. As a result, Aceh's economy will not rely solely on traditional sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, livestock and oil and gas but can develop more equitably in various fields to all levels of society.

5. Improving Aceh's Image as Global Muslim Friendly Tourism

Developing the *branding* and marketing of Aceh as a provider of Muslim-friendly tourist destinations will open up great opportunities in attracting international tourists, especially those from Muslim countries. Along with the increasing number of tourists, both domestic and foreign, the local economy will feel the impact. Especially in the hospitality, restaurant, and transportation sectors. Investment in the tourism sector driven by increased tourist arrivals can reduce dependence on less stable economic sectors. The establishment of a positive image of Aceh as a Muslim-friendly tourist destination also has the potential to attract the attention of investors and other stakeholders, who are ready to invest in the tourism sector and the local economy. In addition, the promotion of

Aceh's tourism can also introduce local products to the international market, which will open up export opportunities and thus increase people's income.

The transformation of people's economy in Aceh through Muslim-friendly tourism destinations has significant potential in reducing poverty by creating new jobs, empowering MSMEs, encouraging infrastructure development, and providing diversified sources of income for local communities. Furthermore, through enhancing Aceh's image as a global Muslim-friendly tourist destination, the tourism sector can become a locomotive that brings significant changes to Aceh's regional economic landscape. Through an inclusive and sustainable approach, Muslim-friendly tourism in Aceh will not only benefit the tourism sector itself, but also local communities who will feel the positive impact of this economic transformation.

CONCLUSIONS

As a province with tremendous potential in the tourism sector, the transformation of people's economy in Aceh through the development of Muslim-friendly tourism destinations offers a great opportunity to reduce poverty. This is because the development of Muslim-friendly tourism destinations can create new jobs, empower MSMEs, encourage better infrastructure development, and increase sources of income diversification. This sector can contribute an overall positive impact to the local community. Moreover, by elevating Aceh's image as a global Muslim-friendly tourism destination, the tourism sector can be a major driving force that can bring significant changes in the regional economic landscape. With an inclusive and sustainable approach, the Muslim-friendly tourism sector will not only benefit the tourism industry. It can also directly benefit the welfare of the people in Aceh, creating a more solid and sustainable economic foundation for the future.

Developing a Muslim-friendly tourism destination in Aceh province is an endeavor that requires attention to various aspects. With a strong collaboration between the government, the community, and the private sector, Aceh has the potential to become one of the leading tourist destinations that is not only economically beneficial, but also can provide spiritual benefits for Muslims around the world. Transforming the ummah's economy through the Muslim-friendly tourism sector is not only about creating economic opportunities, but also about building a better future for future generations. By aligning with deeply held spiritual values, the development of a Muslim-friendly tourism sector can be an effective solution to the problem of poverty in Aceh. A step that, if done with full planning and good implementation, could lead Aceh to a more prosperous, sustainable, and dignified economy in the eyes of the world.

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