
The Halal Tourism Trajectory, the Emergence and Challenge: The Case of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam Post-2004 Tsunami

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ABSTRACT

Halal tourism has attracted a lot of attention in contemporary tourism and hospitality research. However, only a few studies have attempted to understand the emerging process and challenges in practicing halal tourism in a specific geographic location. This study aimed to investigate the new, emerging halal tourism that has been taking place in Aceh, following the tsunami that struck it in 2004. The research was based on fieldwork conducted in 2016 and 2017 in Aceh, using interviews and focus group discussions with tour guides, tour agents, community members, and the local government. Additional online interviews were performed in 2020. The results suggest that the new niche of ‘halal tourism’ is driven not only by the market, but the community, as well. Moreover, the implementation of halal tourism under Aceh’s Sharia Law has been challenged by both internal and external factors. Internally, it is challenged by the risk of natural disasters, risks of political instability, and institutional managerial problems. Meanwhile, externally, practicing halal tourism is challenged by the misperceptions of Islam (Islamophobia) and the marketing label.

Keywords: *disasters; halal tourism; Indonesia; sharia; tsunami*

INTRODUCTION

Halal tourism and hospitality services are new fast-developing products. It gains attention in both managerial practice and academic discussion. Halal tourism is defined as the form of tourism activities of Muslims travelling and staying in places outside their usual environment that follows the teaching of Islam (Duman, 2012). For a product(s) to be halal, it must meet the requirements of Sharia as derived primarily from the interpretation of the Quran and the Sunnah (the life guidance from Prophet Muhammad). However, few studies have focused on the halal tourism growth process, products characteristics and challenges in particular areas, especially in the region that implements Sharia as a formal governance principle. Thus, there is a lot of space for discussion and exploration.

Aceh is one of the provinces in the Republic of Indonesia. It is unique because Aceh is the only

provinces in Indonesia that implement Sharia Law. Aceh had experienced two disasters i.e., earthquake and tsunami in 2004 and political conflict. On 26th December 2004, an earthquake and tsunami killed over 250,000 people and destroyed thousands of buildings in Aceh and surrounding areas and counted as one of the largest and deadliest tsunamis in the record of human history (Paris et al., 2009). Before the tsunami, Aceh experienced severe political conflict, as a consequence of the Freedom Movement (GAM) that demanded Aceh to declare independence from Indonesia. The conflict ended when two leaders signed the Memorandum of Understanding on 15th August 2005 in Helsinki, Finland, less than a year after the tsunami. Aceh was designated as a special region after Jakarta issued Law of Special Region (No.44/1999) and the Law of Special

Autonomy of Province of Nangroe Aceh Darussalam (No.18/2001), respectively in 1999 and 2001. The special autonomy granted Aceh ‘exceptionalities’ in the fields of religion, custom (*adat*), education and the role of the *ulama* in governing the province (Ichwan, 2016). The implementation of Sharia Law in Aceh is also a part of the follow up for the Memorandum of Understanding.

This paper focuses on the exploration of halal tourism that was established post-disaster and post-political conflicts in Aceh. It is based on the empirical research conducted in 2016 and 2017 that includes: interviewing the villagers in Nusa Gampong Aceh, local tourists, hotel owners, restaurant owners, and Aceh tourism board officers; and focus group discussion with 15 tour guides and six tour providers. Furthermore, the secondary data was collected from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, the National Agency for Disaster Management (BNPB/*Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana*), Statistics Indonesia, news media and literature to build an understanding of the halal tourism practices and challenges in Aceh.

The case of Aceh is very complex to be studied because it is connected with the event of tsunami 2004, political dynamic and social-economic post-disaster that were remarkable for the tourism study. Therefore, to have a clear framework, this study aims to explore halal tourism development covering the process of development, the characteristic of halal tourism products and market, and the halal tourism development challenges.

The next section provides the theoretical framework of the research including; reorganising the destination post-disaster, branding and philosophy of halal tourism, and understanding the trajectory. After that, section three explains the methodology of the research. Section four shows the results of the research which is followed by section five that discusses and analyses the findings. The last but not least, section six concludes the research by reflecting the analysis and linking it to the bigger context on halal tourism.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Reorganising the destination post disaster

The literature on tourism study highlights the need to understand the relationship between tourism and crisis events (Faulkner & Vikulov, 2001; Prideaux, Laws, & Faulkner, 2003; Ritchie, 2009). Beirman (2003) identified five types of events that could impact the tourism industry, i.e., war and conflict, crime, terrorism, natural disasters, and health-related crises. The literature has drawn an accord that disaster has been a threat to

tourism development due to its effect on the image of the destination as a non-safe destination and it is eluded by the potential visitors. Most research into tourism in a crisis concentrates on economic and financial crises, with only a few papers explicitly focusing on an environmental crisis resulting from a natural disaster (Hall, 2010). However, in some cases, the disaster could also open the windows of opportunity for a new form of tourism (Rindrasih, 2019). The windows of opportunity could only be realized through innovation and transformation of the tourism industry that has completed its recovery process.

Tourism recovery post-disaster is not a tranquil phase. It is related to not only reconstruct the facility and infrastructure, but also the reorganizing of the brand and image of the destination. The problem appears when the image of the destination was inflicted by a natural disaster. However, the past mega-disaster event that occurred in one area could be one of the powerful selling points of the city. For example, disaster tourism or dark tourism is the main attraction in some areas, like what has been described by Lennon and Foley (2000) and Ashworth (2004). The destination brand creates a unique identification of geographical territory as well as drawing the line in the travel services market by promoting the destination’s key advantages that are different from other places. UNWTO (2009) stated that the character of a place that attracts people to visit could be seen as destination branding. Destination brand may increase the recognisability and memory of the region, impact the level of attractiveness upon potential tourists, and stimulate activity among residents (Mariani, Baggio, Buhalis, & Longhi, 2014). The brand of the area displays the value and vision that should be determined by both tourists and residents (Winfield-Pfefferkorn, 2005).

Destination branding has become an essential issue in tourism marketing since the competition in the global market is quite high that stimulates regions to accelerate promotion (Kamenidou, Mamalis, & Priporas, 2009). In a disaster area, the image of the destination has been negatively impacted. A negative image could discourage tourists to visit the destination. Therefore, reorganization and rebuilding the image of a post-disaster destination is necessary to promote the destinations and recover from decreasing tourism performance. Thus, the destination needs management branding (Andersson, 2007). Destination branding comprises the promoting process that requires the coordination between stakeholders and tourism actors in the system, which include: travel agents, museum, theatres, hotels, tourist’s authorities, and residents (Kalandides, Braun, Kavaratzis, & Zenker, 2013).

Halal Tourism: Between Branding and Philosophy

The term 'Halal' is linked to the Islamic faith. This is not only addressed food products, but also various types of products and services offered to the Muslim population. The meaning of halal refers to something permissible under Shari'ah which attaches a credence quality attribute (Jafari & Scott, 2014). Muslim is obliged to follow the Shari'ah as the main root of Islamic teaching. According to Huat (2009) Halal products covers cleanliness, safety and quality in the whole supply chain, from farm to fork and thus, Halal cannot be captured as a brand. Moreover, Wilson and Liu (2010) stated that "Halal is a philosophy, which while apparent and effective in branding, marketing and product development; stretches much further into disciplines such as management, organizational behaviour, cultural anthropology and sociology."

Term halal is important because Muslim should avoid doubt in selecting and consuming something related to their daily life. Thus, giving the label of 'halal' makes Muslim easily purchase or consume that product. It expresses that the needs for labelling halal are paramount as some Muslim in the world make up 24.1 % of the world population in 2015 and getting an increase. Furthermore, in the context of tourism, putting a label of halal will provide benefits to attract the Muslim market.

Halal tourism focuses on many different issues. Mohsin et al., (2016) highlighted the growing Halal tourism market segment and identify the fundamental needs of this segment. For instance, the participation and engagement (by Muslims), tourism places and destinations (Islamic destinations), product(s) private places, food, entertainment, beverage, and managing the offered service processes (marketing and ethical considerations) (Duman, 2012; Tajzadeh-Namin, 2012).

The study of halal tourism can be categorised into two dimensions, the dimension of traveller and the dimension of a host. The traveller's dimension has been explored in some literature such as the number, the prospects, and the needs. In the number, the Muslim traveller's market has been impressively high in statistics both in size and scale. It is estimated that the Muslim population will grow 2.8 billion or 30% of the world's population by 2050 (Scott & Jafari, 2010). The Middle East and North Africa are two major areas where Muslims live. A study has also been performed on the travel segmentations of halal tourism and the strategy in marketing of halal tourism (Battour & Ismail, 2014; Battour & Ismail, 2016; Mohsin, Ramli, & Alkhulayfi, 2016).

In the dimension of the host, the motivation to develop halal tourism has been mostly dragged from the emerging of halal tourism in the world. The increasing number of Muslim tourists influences the policy and planning in tourism-related, for example by adding information about prayer time, the location of the mosque, and halal food. Likewise, tourism operators are encouraged to educate their staff on cross-cultural communication to treat Muslim tourists with respect (Timothy & Iverson, 2006). Besides, some additional hotel facilities are demanded, since Muslims observe a dress code and avoid free mixing between male and female (Hashim, Murphy, & Hashim, 2007).

The emerging halal tourism that is initiated by the local community obtained less attention. Din (1989) mentioned that, due to religious beliefs, tourism activities were discouraged in some Muslim countries because they were confronting the local values and norms. The research conducted by Joseph and Kavooosi (2001) examined the impact of western tourism on the host community in Pushkar, India. It stated that tourism is perceived as a threat to "tradition" and religion even though a dominant part of the population is reliant on its economic benefits. Similarly, Henderson (2003) explained that in the context of Islam teaching, there was a concern from the Muslim social leaders and citizens that tourism could create problems. For instances, drug and alcohol consumption, spread unacceptable behaviour and immodest dress, open displays of affection between males and females, and leading to sexual prostitution and gambling that is forbidden by Islamic law.

Although halal tourism in the western world is emerging, it is not surprising in Muslim countries, because being 'halal' is a way of life practised every day. Accommodation, foods, cosmetics, and tourist attractions have been designed to meet the need for domestic tourists who mostly are Muslims. It can be said that 'Halal life' (being acceptable by Sharia) is an identity for the majority of Muslim who practice their religion. Possibly, there is a process of translating the Muslim identity to tourism products. It allows the community to gain benefits from the tourism industry without undermining their religion.

Understanding the Trajectory

The previous literature has open up discussion on the halal tourism development and its emergence, as well as reorganizing the post-crisis destination by shifting the brand from tourism as usual to halal tourism branding. However, it is also noted that some researchers argue halal is not branding, it is a philosophy (Wilson & Liu, 2010). It is clear that analysing the halal tourism trajectory post-

disaster is a complex issue and related to many elements.

This paper attempts to link these two concepts together by understanding the process of the emerging halal tourism in Aceh and how it works in the post-crisis recovery strategy. Moreover, the paper explores the characteristics of the product and market and the challenges that followed the process of development. To give a better illustration, Figure 1 below presents the analytical framework of this article.

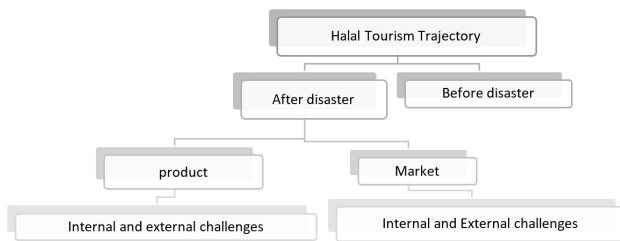


Figure 1. Illustration of the analytical framework. Source: Author analysis, 2021.

METHOD

Research Design

This research employs a qualitative research method. This method is adequate for research that requires a complex detailed understanding of the issue. This method is also important to develop theories when partial or inadequate theories exist for a certain population and samples or existing theory does not adequately capture the complexity of the problem (Cresswell, 2007). This study aims to answer the three research questions:

1. How does the halal tourism development trajectory in Aceh post-2004 tsunami?
2. What is the characteristic of halal tourism products and market in the Aceh?
3. What are the halal tourism development challenges that have been taken place in Aceh?

Due to the nature of the research questions, a qualitative research design was adopted with primary data collected by in-depth interviews and focus group discussion, rather than a survey-based quantitative comparison that only partially reflected the experience.

Interview and Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussions, observations and in-depth interviews were performed in Aceh from June to September 2016, from February to April 2017 and November 2020. Two focus group discussions were conducted with fifteen tour guides and six tour providers. This research chooses

to focus only on certified tour guides. In 2017, there were 60 certified tour guides and more than 100 uncertified tour guides in Aceh (Tribunnews, 2017). Using the snowball sampling methods 15 the tour guides could be contacted and asked to join the FGD. The selection of focus group participants and interviewees was based on snowball sampling because the tour guides and tour agents' contact details could not be accessed. The FGD's were conducted for 120 minutes with Bahasa Indonesia as a native language of all participants and researcher. The result of FGD is translated into English for the next analysis. The last data collection process was conducted in 2020 to get the newest data during the pandemic of covid-19 by interviewing several key actors such as the member of the Aceh Tourism Board and tour guides.

The in-depth interviews were conducted with the community and the government officer. The six-member of the Nusa Gampong Aceh tourism community organization were interviewed. Separate meetings were conducted with representatives of the Local Disaster Management Agency, the Aceh Tourism Board, and Aceh's Board of Regional Planning and Development. Besides, 20 hotel owners and eight restaurant owners were also interviewed.

Data Analysis

The interviews and focus group discussions date were recorded, transcribed, coded, catalogued and analyzed in MS Word documents. It is classified, to create a clear storyline in what Bryman and Burgess (2002) call 'analytic induction', which echoes the grounded theory method. It incorporates an iterative process of going back and forth between original data and theoretical concepts to reach abstract categorization.

RESULTS

Halal Tourism Development in Aceh Before and After Tsunami 2004

The occurrence of the tsunami has created the breakthrough of the Aceh tourism development path. Before the tsunami, Aceh experienced a long phase of political conflict that forced the tourism industry to be locked in stagnation. The number of foreign tourists was reported fewer than 9,000 people per year during the decade before tsunami 2004. It made tourism as unpromising economic sectors for Aceh. The situation got worse when the tsunami happened at the end of 2004. It was reported only 83 foreign tourists and 294,538 domestic tourists visited Aceh (Statistics Indonesia, 2005). Interestingly, during the recovery phase, hundreds of government and

non-government organizations stayed in Aceh to assist the humanitarian action for recovery. Consequently, the media spotted Aceh in many headline news for several months. This was beneficial for promoting the existence of Aceh to the world.

The tsunami has triggered the need to settle a 30-year conflict by the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on 15th August 2005 in Helsinki, Finland. The Sharia Law implementation in Aceh as part of the consensus of peace agreement generates remarkable new beginning of tourism development since Aceh launched ‘halal tourism’ as both branding and mission. The statement in Helsinki MoU also supported it; “Aceh has the right to set and raise taxes to fund official internal activities. Aceh has the right to conduct trade and business internally and internationally and to seek foreign direct investment and tourism to Aceh”.

Thirteen years after the tsunami, the situation has shifted significantly. In 2017, the statistic of tourism reported receiving more than 62,000 foreign visitors, which was five times higher than it was in 2006 (Statistics Indonesia, 2017). Data shows the majority of nationality visiting Banda Aceh is from Malaysia that made up 77.32 per cent in 2015. Furthermore, Chinese nationality was the second-largest market for Aceh. The total visits of domestic and foreign tourists had reached up to 2,154,249 visitors in 2016. This significant escalation of the number of visitors indicates that the end of the conflict and accessibility has supported the increasing flow of visitors. Figure 2 illustrates the number of foreign visitors in Aceh from 2000 to 2016. Although the sharing of tourism in the regional economy is not significantly major for Aceh, the increasing aggregate of share has been observed post-disaster.

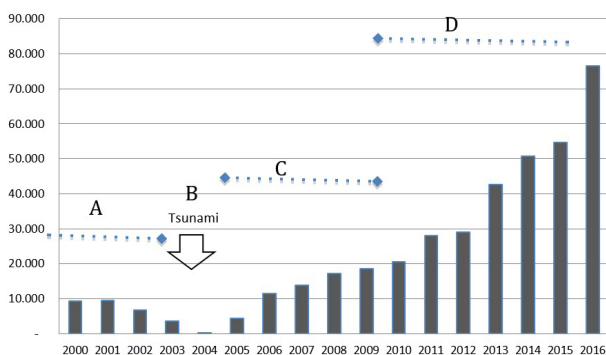


Figure 2. Number of foreign tourist visits to Aceh (2001 – 2016). Source: (Tourism Board of Aceh, 2017)

After 2016, the data from Statistic Indonesia (BPS, 2020) shows a steady number of 33,000 visitors. It should

be noted that the data from the Aceh tourism board and the statistic Indonesia shows different results, which might be implied from the different counting method. However, the increasing of the number is enough to give us an illustration that tourism activities have been emerging. Both data from the Aceh tourism board and Statistic Board illustrates the increasing number of visitors.

Table 1. Data number of foreign tourists visited Aceh from 2009 to 2019

Year	Total
2009	10,000
2010	10,267
2011	13,448
2012	13,099
2013	15,469
2014	26,117
2015	28,375
2016	42,222
2017	33,105
2018	33,276
2019	34,465

Source: Statistic Indonesia, 2020

In terms of sharing of tourism to the economic, according to Statistic data (2016), in 2012 the sharing of accommodation, food and services activities was one per cent and transportation was 7.51 per cent. In 2015, the sharing of accommodation, food and services activities increased by 1.23 per cent and transportation sharing increased by 8.01 per cent.

Halal tourism has been declared by the Tourism board of Aceh (*Dinas Pariwisata Aceh*) as the main vision of tourism development for Aceh. While the capital region of Banda Aceh city has enacted the brand called “World Islamic Tourism”. Halal tourism can be seen as a win-win solution, as improving the tourism benefit without harming the community and cultures. It is mentioned in the official website of Aceh tourism board:

... The government of Aceh with the support from all parties needs to accelerate the cultural and economic development of Aceh by strengthening the cultural values and developing the tourism industry and supporting the diversity of Acehnese arts and culture, the beauty of nature and the Tsunami heritage by constantly referring to the principles and values of Islam (Aceh Tourism Board Website, 2016).

In sum, the endorsement of Sharia Law seems to oblige the community and the government to translate it in many aspects of government programs including tourism. Based on the interview conducted with the local government, the motivation to create ‘world halal tourism’ has been mostly driven by the enactment of Sharia Law rather than the emerging markets. As mentioned by the respondents:

‘The majority of us are Muslim; we want to develop a tourism that does not irritate our religion (Aceh tourism board, 2016)’.

Additionally, some tour guides explained that they have an individual mission to tell and spread the message to the tourists that Islam is a peaceful religion and the western media has wrongly perceived Islam. One of the tour guides mentioned:

‘Some of the tourists asked a lot of questions about Islam to me, I am a Muslim but I am not an ulama with high knowledge about Islam(smile). So, I did some reading before went to guiding because I want the tourists to bring a good message about Islam to their home country (tour guide, FGD 2016)’.

Practices of Halal Tourism in Aceh

The tourism products introduced by the Aceh government have been associated with Islamic activities. For example, Masjid Raya Baiturrahman is the biggest mosque in Aceh as the symbol and landmark with a 35-meter-tall minaret and seven domes. It was built in 1607 in the Sultan Iskandar Muda era, which remains existing post devastating earthquake and tsunami. Hundreds of couples from Malaysia, Singapore, and other provinces in Indonesia were visiting Baiturrahman mosque to get pre-wedding pictures at its landmarks. Museum Nagari Aceh exhibits various artefacts, ceramic, weaponry, calligraphy, traditional clothes, jewellery, traditional household appliances, and souvenirs from Zeng He, a Muslim Chinese general from the Ming dynasty in 1414. Next is Benteng Indra Parta, a remnant of the fortress of the Lamuri Kingdom from the Portugal army in the colonial era. There is also Kerkhoff, a 2,200 Dutch army cemetery who were killed during the war in 1870-1904 between Teuku Umar (Aceh Kingdom) and General Johan Harmen Rudolf Kohler. Some other destinations are related to the 2004 tsunami such as the tsunami museum that was open for the public in 2009, which has become the most visited place for tourists. It displays the documentations of tsunami including pictures, videos and some ruins, to

memorize and educate a new generation about a tsunami. Besides that, there is PLTD Apung, a 2,600 ton of power plant ship, which was brought by a tsunami wave from the sea to five km in the middle of the town. Some white sand beaches, such as Ulee Lheu, Loknga and Lampuuk, have also attracted many visitors in the weekend and holiday for surfing, swimming, and picnicking. Table 2 provides some Islamic tourists’ attractions and activities.

Table 2. Islamic tourists’ attraction and activities.

No	Islamic tourists’ attractions	Tourist activities
1	PLTD Apung	Dzikir together
2	Tsunami Museum	Maulid Nabi Muhammad
3	Boat on the house	Ied Adha
4	Mosque dome Gurah Peukan	Sholat jamaah (pray together)
5	Syiah Kuala cemetery	1 Muharram celebration
6	Samudera Pasae	Charity events (zakat, orphanage, and boarding school)
7	Baiturrahman mosque	Tarekat/suluk in boarding school (learning Quran and Hadists)
8	Baiturrahim Ule Lheue	Ramadhan fasting
9	Indrapuri mosque	Married in Baiturrahman Mosque
10	Pustaka Kuno Tanoh Abee	Convert to Islam ceremony
11	Darussalam Labuhan Haji Boarding School	
12	Indra Patra	
13	Cut Nyak Din house	
14	Tujoh cave	
15	Syech Hamzah Fansuri	

Source: Aceh tourism board, 2017.

In addition, tourist package such as visiting *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), *panti asuhan* (orphanage), attending the Islamic festival (Eid day) have been sellable. Some offer Islamic heritage tours for tourists to explore and discover the history and culture of Islamic civilisation in Aceh. Tour providers emphasized how the tourists were eager to know and listen to the individual Acehnese survival experience when facing the tsunami. Therefore, they provided sessions of storytelling by the survivors to the tourists and visit the ruins of the tsunami, such as a boat on the house and mass grave of tsunami victims. Tour providers highlighted that their activities are geared

toward maintaining the values and modesty of Muslims who desire to follow the Quranic encouragement to travel throughout the earth to see God's signs and pattern all over the world. According to a tour agency, the sale of the Islamic package increases in Aceh, particularly in the inbound tourist's category. Therefore, it is expected that investments in the Islamic package market will grow.

Halal Tourism in the Aspect of Food and Accommodation

In the element of accommodation, Aceh has more than four hundred hotels with a combined total is around 7,380 rooms for rent both in a classified hotel and non-classified hotel (hostel, motel, homestay). More than half of the hotels are concentrated in Banda Aceh, with others scattered around the province. The number of rooms for rent in Aceh increased from 5,306 rooms in 2008 to 7,390 rooms in 2015, according to the Aceh Tourist Board. However, a few hotels have been constructed in the past two years, largely driven by the emerging tourism industry.

Practises of halal tourism in food and accommodation have been observed as the daily life of Acehnese. The restaurants always serve halal food according to the owner. The hotels deliver all guests with services that are compliant with Islamic teachings such as Qibla direction, halal food, alcohol-free beverage, and prayer room with a call for prayers. Although the motivations to visits Aceh vary from learning about the culture, Islam, to simple sightseeing of nature, all visitors experienced the halal tourism services because those are only available in Aceh. Additionally, coffee is also part of the major culinary attraction in Aceh which normally is cultivated by the local Acehnese.

The halal certification for food is performed by *Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama* (MPU/the Institute of Ulama Consultative Assembly and Food Assessment of Drugs, Cosmetics Institution (*Lembaga Pengkajian Pangan Obat-obatan, Kosmetika dan Makanan*/LP-POM). The certification is free of charge. However, in practice, the majority of the hotel and restaurant have no halal certification issued by the MPU/LP-POM. Some of the hotels gained certification as Sharia Hotel from the National Assembly for Sharia (Dewan Syariah National, Jakarta). Moreover, many restaurants put a sign of halal on the wall without having a certification. One of the restaurants' owner said: "I am a Muslim, I don't sell haram food, so I put the sign by myself." Some argued that halal is their way of life and they do not need to formalise it into a piece of paper.

Halal Tourism in the Aspect of Infrastructures and Facilities

The halal label can be observed in the supporting facilities for tourism-related activities. Sultan Iskandar Muda airport operates on domestic and international routes for almost 7,000 flights in 2016. It is recently nominated as one of the best world's halal airports by Halal Travellers in the World Halal Tourism Awards 2016 in Abu Dhabi. The airport is designed to meet the need of Muslim tourists by providing five large prayer rooms in a domestic waiting room, international waiting room, domestic arrival, international arrival, and parking area, which all can be used for travellers and workers. The prayer rooms are opened for 24 hours a day for Muslim travellers with prayer tools and display Qibla direction. All restaurants in Sultan Iskandar Muda airport are providing halal food with a 'halal certified' sign on the menu and posters. Accessibility and land transportation has been developed, such as 27.41 km asphalt road connecting North Sumatera to Banda Aceh. The places to pray (*musholla*) are scattered in many areas—with mostly on the side of the road at least one *musholla* in every two to five km.

Furthermore, the three ferryboats with the capacity of more than 600 passengers from Ulee Lheue harbour (Banda Aceh) to Balohan harbour (Sabang) operate for daily routes.

DISCUSSION

Although the market segment of halal tourism in the world is emerging, halal tourism practices in the location that implemented Sharia is challenged by many factors. Based on the interview and focus group discussion, the challenges can be categorised into two scopes: internal challenges and external challenges. Internal and external challenges refer to the root of the problems and problem-solving sources. The internal challenges are identified from the local community, in-situ and specific. This also implies that the problem can be solved when the internal source has functioned well. Moreover, the external challenges reflect problems from outside the analysis boundaries, in which local policy could not affect directly the problem. Thus, to solve the challenges external agency are needed for intervention.

Internal Induced Challenges

The high determination of Aceh to develop the economy through halal tourism has not been supported by the strong awareness of disaster preparation for tourists. Although

Qanun number 19/2013 about spatial planning was enacted in NAD, the direct preparation programs targeted tourist's safety is still lacking. The geographical location of Aceh is the main vulnerable factor for development. After the tsunami in 2004, several big scale earthquakes hit Aceh, for instance, 39 people were killed in the 8.5 Richter scale earthquake in 2013 and 92 people were killed on 6.5 Richter scale earthquakes in 2016. Smaller-scale earthquakes had occurred since then. The high possibility of an earthquake and an increasing number of visitors who are not familiar with the location may threaten the vulnerability of the city. Besides the earthquake, a tsunami may be triggered when a strong earthquake is located in the sea. Additionally, flood and landslide have also been reported frequently in small-scale occurrences. However, certain information on what action should be taken and what should be not by the tourists in Aceh is observed as very limited.

Another internal challenge in tourism development for Aceh is the risk of conflict in the future. To support tourism development, violence and political conflict should be reduced. These incidents had created some sort of negative image from tourists. As the following tour guide explained during the focus group discussion:

'It is not easy to convince the potential tourists to visit Aceh, especially tourists from Jakarta (refers to domestic tourists) because they think that Aceh is the war areas. Although they already arrived in Aceh, some of them made a joke 'have you already write the testament in case you die in Aceh' (FGD, 2016).

The internal political environment affects the practice of tourism activities. Kofi Anan said that 'development and security are inextricably linked. A long period of conflict left a considerable number of ex-combatants of GAM who possibly need attention from the government. The problem might be arising if there is injustice in terms of giving opportunity for ex-combatant to work in the new phase of peace. However, several small-scale conflicts have threatened the security and safety of the city that have no association with the ex-combatants, for instance, some incidents before the election in 2009 and 2012, street violence throughout the year and unknown motivation of vigilante incidence. In addition, the ownership of guns has been predicted as the main factors of high violence post peace agreement. Although the Indonesian Military had some disarmament operations, some violence was reported.

Along with the development of halal tourism, some rejections of developing tourism remain to exist

due to the perception that tourism activities are unlawful such as alcohol, drugs, prostitution and gambling. *Qonun* (rule-based on Sharia Law) Aceh has been regulated that it is forbidden to all citizens including tourists to do certain things; drinking liquor and intoxicating food or drink, immoral action, gambling, and destroy part or all the physical tourism destinations. The tour guides presented that some communities have occurred somewhat rejections because they negatively perceived tourism activities as un-Islamic activities.

Halal tourism development in Aceh is also challenged by the internal factor of the lack of proper institution to deliberate the certification of the products as well as the hesitance of hotels and restaurants to formalize their business to have a halal certificate.

External Induced Challenges

It is not surprising that the implementation of sharia law and labelling tourism as '*halal*' can be a challenge in attracting investment and tourism. There is a misperception that investing and labelling the product as halal might be associated with terrorism, ISIS or other radical activities. Battour and Ismaili (2014) highlighted that halal hysteria as part of Islamophobia could decrease the willingness of tourist to visit a destination. It may also become a challenge for Aceh in promoting tourism. A foreign investor who invests their money in the tourism industry in Aceh is mostly having a connection with local people such as by marriage. It was observed that some hostel and cottage are owned by a foreigner who is married to local people.

There is an unsettled debate in the promotion and image of tourism in Islamic countries and the appropriate marketing material to attract tourists from overseas. Some studies have examined the destination images used in Muslim countries. Particular images include women in bikinis in destination promotion as a possible appeal to westerners versus images of a more 'traditional' nature. Similarly, the veiling of women may be seen as a sign of 'backwardness, oppression, inferiority' in the western press.

Moreover, the enactment of Sharia Law would make non-Muslim potential visitors hesitate to visit Aceh. The media spotted the caning punishment in Aceh due to unlawful acts such as gambling, adultery, homosexuality, and alcohol consumption and distribution. Since 2014, the *Qonun Jinayat* has been enacted for not only Muslim but also non-Muslim. Since then, there were 180 people punished by caning, according to the data from Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (as cited in Wardah, 2016).

The external environment may influence the

halal tourism practices in Aceh, especially the political environment in the Middle East and the relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia. Conflict located in the potential tourist's country of origin may affect the flow of visitors to Aceh. For example, the Arab Spring and fall in oil prices affect the outbound tourists from the Middle East.

Current Situation during Pandemic Covid-19

Similar to another region in the world, the situation of tourism in Aceh has been impacted by the pandemic COVID-19. The number of foreign visitors in Aceh have been dropped. It is reported in the Statistic of Indonesia, the number of foreign tourists in 2020 in January was 3,982, in February was 4,030, in March was 2,389 and in April was one person. The dramatically drops in the number of tourists may impact the halal tourism development in Aceh. The health protocol has been applied in some destinations in Aceh. The focus of the local government promotion moves from international to the national market.

CONCLUSION

This study illustrated the ongoing efforts of the Aceh government to develop tourism using the Islamic values as a post-disaster brand. The case of Aceh shows the very important fact that the post-disaster reconstruction combined with the peace agreement has succeeded in increasing the number of visitors and growing the tourism industry. Beyond the growth of tourism in Aceh, the establishment of 'halal tourism' is the point of interest discussed in this paper.

The case study of Aceh reveals an important notion in the tourism branding development, as well as of halal tourism. Firstly, the establishment of halal tourism in Aceh shows evidence that a new tourism niche can also be formed from the host-driven instead of guest-driven (market driven). Winfield-Pfefferkorn (2005) mentioned that brand displays the values and vision that should be determined by both tourists and residents however, this study found that the destination's brand is determined by the majority of residents' wants. Host-driven in Aceh is generated through Islamic beliefs that are legalized into Sharia Law. It is argued that the destination brand can be purely arrived from the community's will and intervention from the government is particularly on promotion, not in the 'creation' process. The facilities, accommodation, food, and tourism attraction are adapted and adjusted to match with the Sharia Law. The destination brand is

not only related to the geographical territory but also the culture and spirit of the host (Saraniemi & Ahonen, 2008). Additionally, the brand's function in Aceh is to identify the area as an Islamic one that follows the establishment of Sharia Law rather than attracting more visitors that were perceived to be a possible factor capable of destroying their local values.

Secondly, although the brand of halal tourism is derived from the interest of local citizens and the political direction, practicing halal tourism is facing a challenge in governing it. Governance of halal tourism in Aceh is particularly concerned with the possibility of disasters in the future, political disputes, conflicts of interest in the community, and marketing and labelling challenges.

To sum it up, this article provides an illumination to the study of destination branding development. Aceh's case shows that the brand is derived from the host's will to declare their identity, as they are located in an area implementing Sharia Law. Moreover, the branding development of halal tourism in the area that implements Sharia Law is challenged by both internal and external factors. The results of this research reflect that the brand and philosophy of halal became interconnected in the case study. This supports the research from Wilson and Liu (2010), which showed that halal can also be seen as a philosophy rather than branding. The 'halal' label can be an opportunity to attract more a domestic and muslim tourism segment, however at the same time it may reduce the willingness of non-Muslim travelers to visit the destination. The case of Aceh halal tourism's trajectory shows that the philosophy is more important than inviting Non-Muslim visitors to come to their neighborhood. This research has not yet covered the strategy of the community and tourism practitioners in dealing with the covid-19 pandemic, due to the nature of the pandemic, as it was still occurring during the writing process, therefore future research could study the strategy in dealing with the pandemic in practicing halal tourism, particularly in the other tourism destinations.

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