



Wisata Halal Aceh Sebagai Instrumen Peningkatan Perekonomian Indonesia Dalam Menggandeng Wisatawan Mancanegara

Aceh's Halal Tourism as the Instrument to Increase Indonesia's Economy by Attracting Foreign Tourism

Farah Ghina Fadhilah¹⁾

Isnashella Pertiwi Widyastuti²⁾

Muhammad Fawwaz Syafiq Rizqullah³⁾

Faculty of Social and Political Science – Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta University^{1,2,3)}

Email: farahghna@gmail.com¹⁾

isnashella@yahoo.com²⁾

syafiqrizqullah@gmail.com³⁾

Submit: 10/4/2020; Direvisi; 20/4/2020; Publish; 30/4/2020

Abstract

The aim of the research in this paper was to examine the prospect of halal tourism in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam province as the instrument of Indonesia's soft diplomacy in increasing international cooperation that affects Indonesia's economy. The reason behind this research conduct was due to the myriad of Indonesia halal tourism as destination which had earned several achievements in the context of the 'World's Most Popular Halal Tourism Destinations' by the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI). Aceh became one of the provinces in Indonesia that is made as the focus of halal tourism development and has won two prestigious awards at the World Halal Tourism Award. By using the theory of soft diplomacy by Joseph S. Nye, Jr., and Qualitative data approach from journal, book, and other credible resources, this article found that Aceh can be a unique and appealing halal tourism area that can become a medium for Indonesia's soft diplomacy in conducting international cooperation, especially with others Islamic countries in the world. Therefore, it can increase Indonesia's domestic economy significantly, especially to Aceh province, which will eventually give a significant impact to Indonesia's national economy.

Keywords : Halal tourism Aceh; Economic Increase; Soft Diplomacy.

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian yang ditulis pada paper ini adalah untuk mengkaji terkait bagaimana wisata halal provinsi Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam sebagai instrumen soft diplomasi dalam meningkatkan kerja sama Internasional yang berimplikasi terhadap perekonomian daerah dan perekonomian nasional. Penelitian ini didasari oleh banyaknya destinasi wisata halal di Indonesia yang telah mendapatkan penghargaan dalam konteks 'Destinasi Wisata Halal Populer Dunia' oleh Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI). Terlebih lagi Aceh yang menjadi salah satu provinsi di Indonesia yang di jadikan sebagai fokus pengembangan wisata halal yang telah meraih dua penghargaan bergengsi di ajang World Halal Tourism. Sehingga, dengan menggunakan teori soft diplomacy oleh Joseph S. Nye, Jr., dan metode Kualitatif sebagai metode penelitian yang bersumber dari jurnal, buku dan sumber-sumber yang bersifat kredibel lainnya. Hasil dari penelitian ini menemukan bahwasannya Aceh dapat menjadi objek wisata halal yang khas dan unik sehingga wisata halal Aceh dapat menjadi media soft diplomasi Indonesia dalam melakukan kerja sama Internasional terutama dengan negara-negara Islam lainnya di dunia. Sehingga, hal tersebut berimplikasi terhadap peningkatan perekonomian domestik Indonesia secara signifikan baik terhadap pemasukan pemerintah daerah dan masyarakat Aceh yang akhirnya berimplikasi terhadap kondisi ekonomi nasional Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Wisata Halal Aceh; Peningkatan Ekonomi; Soft Diplomasi.

1. INTRODUCTION

Halal tourism has long been a model relied on by many Muslim-majority countries (Djakfar, 2017). One of the countries that rely on halal tourism for economic increase is Malaysia (Hasyim, 2013). With cultural diversity, Malaysia makes its halal tourism as their focus of income and economic increase. Even Malaysia in 2020 will already be a country with high income and can be categorized as a developed country (Musa, 2013). In addressing to this, it is clear that halal tourism has become one of the supporting instruments in creating an economic increase in Malaysia.

The other country is Turkey which turns its historical Islamic civilizations and the specialty of halal foods as the instrument to attract Muslim world to visit Turkey (Amnar, 2017). This gives the impact on Turkish economic growth whose tourism contributes a large amount of income. This is due because there are many Muslim communities who have want to go to Turkey for the Islamic nuances that Turkey offers (Aliah, 2016).

Other than those two countries, Saudi Arabia makes its cities, Mecca and Medina, as ones of the sources of incomes for the Saudi Arabia's economy. Not only a place for worship, but also as a religious tourism destination considering that there are many historical relics and also to *tadabbur* (to see) Rasulullah SAW's historical efforts while he was preaching in Mecca and Medina (Lees, 2006). That surely impacts the economy of Saudi Arabia as it is always visited by Muslim communities around the world every day.

Of the three previous examples, another reason that also causes why Aceh's halal tourism is increasingly in demand is due to the increase of Muslim population in the world each year which also signifies the increase of Muslim travellers around the world (Heriani M. B., 2018) as shown in the graph below:

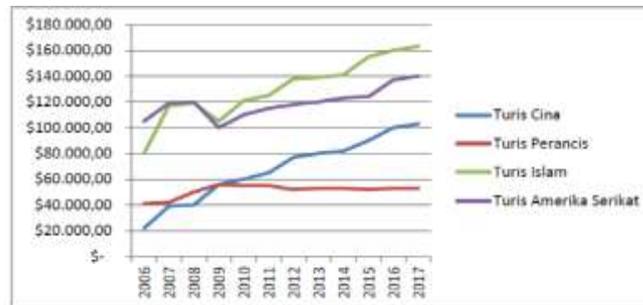


Figure 1. The Growth of Tourist' Spending in the World.
Source: Crescenting & Dinar Standard (2012).

The fact supports Indonesia to develop its halal tourism potential that Indonesia owns. In Indonesia, the administration of President Joko Widodo sets tourism as an eminent sector of national development in increasing the quality of Indonesia's economy (Syamsi, 2015). Indonesia's tourism becomes a sector that contributes a large number to the economic growth in Indonesia. Other than that, tourism is included in the 'core economy' which is believed as 'promising' in increasing the world economy (Hendry Ferdiansyah, 2020). Indonesia's cultural diversity and natural wealth could be a potential soft-diplomacy instrument through tourism. Tourism, which carries local culture and its cultural values, could be a distinctive potential for Indonesia to compete in global economy. In the same regard, Aceh's halal tourism is also used as a means of diplomacy and communication instrument of Indonesia to the international world in order to promote Indonesia's tourism, which leads to economic increase.

Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam Province is a potential that may be able to raise Indonesia's economy with its halal tourism. Aceh is a region that has a lot of potential to be used as halal tourism destinations (Nora Ramdhana, 2016). The abundance of tourism opportunities that Aceh has is believed to inspire the increase of the regional economy, as well as in the national scale. Therefore, Aceh's halal tourism, which is also an instrument of soft-diplomacy, should be optimized by the regional government, assisted with the participation of the society and other supporting elements, especially with the central government in order to boost the economic increase in halal tourism sector.

The urgency and the importance of this research are that the opportunities of halal tourism can be featured to increase Indonesia's economy. This refers to the 'promising' halal tourism, that afterwards Indonesia won few of the awards on the "World Halal Travel Award" that was held in the United Arab Emirates. Indonesia won the 'World Best Family Friendly Hotel', 'World Best Halal Honeymoon Destination', and 'World Best Halal Tourism Destination' (Anisah, 2019). Subsequently, there is no doubt that the potential for halal tourism in Indonesia; Aceh as

the object of this research can be a good source for Indonesia's economic growth which is eminent amidst the current global economic competition.

In a study conducted by Andini Risfandani, by using qualitative method, the writer provides the example regarding how the potential for the development of halal tourism in Aceh upsurges the economy (Risfandani, 2019). However, the study does not provide an explanation on how halal tourism can become soft diplomacy means which gives a lot of advantages, including the economic growth of the society.

Therefore, this research provides a renewal in which previous research did not explain how halal tourism can be an instrument of soft diplomacy that can lead to the economic growth of a country (Chan, 2019). In halal tourism, Aceh does not merely offer halal tourism packages as offered in Muslim minority countries such as halal food and praying places (Iskandar, 2020). However, the province which is called as the Veranda of Mecca also implements Islamic law in carrying out daily life, including in managing tourism object. The application of Islamic law by the Aceh regional government is what later became one of the main attractions for tourists, which is interesting to be researched because it is different from other regions. Aceh tourism is also packaged in the form of religious tourism, arts, culinary, cultural heritage and others that support halal tourism (Rahmi, 2017). From those facts, it proves that a research related to halal tourism in Aceh is interesting to be examined and studied, of which the implication is to strengthen the cooperation with the international world as well as to increase regional and national economy.

In examining halal tourism in Aceh, this research has important objectives that underlie why there should be research related to Aceh's halal tourism. The first matter that underlies why this research should exist is related with the research on how Malaysia as Indonesia's neighboring country can maximize its halal tourism potential so that it becomes a distinctive icon that can increase Malaysia's economy (Faridah, 2018). Secondly, there is a trend of halal tourism in Indonesia which is also practiced by few other regions which should also be practiced by Aceh as a region that is known as the Veranda of Mecca, that is famous for its Islamic traditions (Heriani, 2018). Thus, the first objective of this research is to look at how significant Aceh's halal tourism is in boosting the regional and national economy. The second is how Aceh's halal tourism can be a unique soft-diplomacy for foreign tourists as a medium for the missionary endeavor of Islam and Indonesian culture, which both of these objectives will be further discussed in the discussion section.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In analyzing this research, the authors used soft diplomacy conceptual framework from international relation studies by Joseph Nye as a tool of analysis. In International Relation studies, the function of power is to influence others in order to get advantages, mostly in economy. However, power is divided into two kinds of power: soft and hard power. In this paper, the author used the soft power to puzzle out the object of analysis (Nye, 2011).

Contextually, soft power is a diplomatic means used by a state to influence other states to get what they want without using coercing means such as nuclear armed conflict or economic sanction as how hard power influences others. Soft power utilizes the country's culture, political ideology and policies as the tools to influence and to get what they want from other states (Nye, 2009). Soft diplomacy nowadays possesses great

influence in development in terms of international relations, global oriented cultures and economic growth.

By using soft diplomacy by Joseph S. Nye, Jr., this paper predicts that Aceh halal tourism will be provide two benefits for both Aceh society and the nation, they are:

1. Aceh halal tourism has huge potential for tourism and it has differentiating uniqueness in terms of Islamic culture which is converted into an attraction point of benefit. Should this be related with the soft diplomacy theory, this will transform into an instrument which would attract foreign tourists to visit and to engage in cooperation.
2. By becoming the soft diplomacy media which would invite a lot of foreign tourists. Aceh and its halal tourism will become a leading sector that can be relied on to build Indonesia's economy, especially in the western part of Indonesia or at least in Aceh region itself, which eventually will affect the national development.

The research methods used within this research were library research technique and qualitative data approach to explain how Aceh halal tourism as a soft diplomacy instrument attracts international tourists and how Aceh halal tourism can affect the economic growth in Aceh and the nation.

1. Library Research Technique. Library research is step used to gather information in order to write a paper, create a presentation, or complete a project. It also collects primary and secondary data related to the material. These library research data can be obtained from books, journals, official website, trusted site and so on (Library, 2018)
2. Qualitative Data Approach. Qualitative data is the non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations to discover underlying meanings and patterns of relationships. This approach is the most commonly used approach in field research and historical research. In other words, qualitative analysis is a method to examine social research data without converting them to a numerical format (Babbie, 2010).

Thus, both of library research technique and the qualitative data approach were used as the research methods. Furthermore, the data that had been collected were then processed qualitatively in accordance with the problem, objectives, and theoretical basis, which could later be concluded.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Aceh as Indonesia's Instrument of Soft-Diplomacy

Tourists' interest in halal tourism is progressively increasing. The increase is allegedly due to the awareness increase of Muslims who are traveling within the consideration of halal foods and products, so that many countries or regions choose to provide facilities for halal tourism or sharia travel. Indonesia as a country with a Muslim majority population has the privilege of establishing tourism with Islamic concept or halal tourism. Moreover, Aceh is a city that gets the honorable title of "Veranda of Mecca". With this potential, Aceh continues to utilize it for the development of halal tourism (Destiana & Astuti, 2019)]. In addition to this, Aceh is also supported by a strategic position in terms of its geographical location. The richness in flora and fauna, tropical climate and high biodiversity are wonderful advantages for Indonesia to become a tourist destination. With these conditions, tourism destinations that can

be offered by Indonesia are nature tourism, cultural tourism, and artificial tourism, which are also found in Aceh Province.

There are many things that can be found and activities to be done as soon as foot is set in the land of the Veranda of Mecca. Aceh has so many attractions that can attract tourists to visit. Aceh is famous for its 'Baiturrahman' Grand Mosque, a mosque of the pride of the Acehnese and a tourist attraction for religious tourism destination that is rich of history. In the 2016 National Halal Tourism Competition (KPHN), Baiturrahman Mosque succeeded in winning 'the best halal tourism attraction' category (DisbudparAceh, 2016). Especially after the 2004 Tsunami, this mosque still stands sturdily while the buildings around it had been razed to the ground. That triggers many Muslims in the world who want to see with their own eyes of how the majesty and beauty of this mosque as a house of Allah that is protected and maintained to stay sturdy (Dwi Hastuti, 2016).

Another tourist's destination which also is ranked in the most popular tourist categories in "Anugerah Pesona Indonesia" is the Weh Island. Weh Island, which is part of Aceh, also applies Islamic law. This marine tourism on the western tip of Indonesia adds to the attractiveness of tourists because tourism businesses in Sabang have received halal certifications. In the tourist area of Pulau Weh, there is also a 0 Km of Indonesian Sabang monument (Native Indonesia, 2017). With the beauty of Weh Island, Aceh Government made decision in making Weh Island as one of the prominent tourism destination in Aceh that it can be proven by the mass of foreign and local tourists who visit the Weh Island to enjoy the beauty of its natural panorama (Dinas Kesehatan, Perikanan, dan Pertanian Kota Sabang, 2010).

Apart from the famous marine tourism, Aceh also has highland tourism that can attract tourists, the Gayo Highlands. The Gayo highlands present natural beauty, supported by a promising geographical location and natural beauty with the alignment of stunning hills. Other than that, Gayo Highlands also provides the taste of Gayo, which is Gayo Arabica Coffee that is well known throughout the world. The coffee plants that grow on the highlands make Gayo Arabica coffee to have a distinctive taste. Moreover, dances such as the Saman Dance which is a traditional Acehnese dance originated from the society of Gayo Lues, Southeast Aceh, Aceh Tamiang (Tamiang Hulu), and East Aceh (Lokop or Serbejadi areas) districts (Khaironi, 2017). With this traditional dance, Indonesia can take part in the international arena.

There is no doubt that Aceh is Indonesia's prominent halal tourist destination because this 'Veranda of Mecca' has won three categories in the 2016 National Halal Tourism Competition organized by the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia, which are: "Aceh as the Best Muslim Friendly Tourist Destination", "Sultan Iskandar Muda Airport as the Best Muslim Tourist Friendly Airport" and "Baiturrahman Grand Mosque as the Best Tourist Attraction". In addition to that, Aceh has also won two categories in the international award of World Halal Tourism Award 2016 which are: "World's Best Airport for Halal Travellers, Sultan Iskandar Muda" and "World's Best Halal Cultural Destination".

So, it can be a concrete example that the three examples of tourist attractions maintained by Aceh which have gained national and international recognition can prove that halal tourism has succeeded in becoming an effective instrument of soft-diplomacy. It is proved by the number of foreigners encouraged to visit Aceh as their destination which finally lead to economic growth. Apart from that, Aceh tourism also

becomes a soft diplomacy that drives international cooperation, in which international cooperation is carried out by the Aceh regional government with the international world especially with neighboring country, Malaysia (Rizal, 2019). This is due to the large number of Malaysian tourists visiting Aceh each year. Among the international cooperation, the regional government of Aceh also cooperates with India and Japan. This cooperation is possible because Aceh's halal tourism provides opportunities that are able to make the international world interested in establishing cooperation which also has an impact on increasing foreign tourists.

What can be learned from Aceh government in attracting foreign tourists is that they provide something attractive and unique. The uniqueness offered by the government of Aceh is to invite and introduce foreign tourists to Aceh with the concept of Familiarization trip (or to be short, famtrip). Famtrip itself is carried out in collaboration with the Provincial Government of Aceh, the Indonesian Embassy in Muscat, 7 participants, and agents/tour operators along with one journalist. The purpose of this Famtrip is to directly introduce the foreign tourists with the diversity of tourism, culture, and all other interesting things available in the province of Aceh. From this activity, it certainly has implications to cooperation and also the increase in the number of foreign tourists visiting halal tourism in Aceh (Muscat, 2019). Hence, what has been done by the Aceh Provincial Government can be learned by other regions that have the potential for halal tourism as well to be introduced to other countries using the same concept, which is the Familiarization trip.

Aceh Halal Tourism Affects the Increase of Foreign Tourists

Aceh's halal tourism is an instrument of soft diplomacy for foreign tourists to visit. As explained in the previous sub-chapter, the halal tourism that Aceh offers has succeeded to bring in tourists from various regions and countries to visit Aceh (Heriani, 2018). This is shown by an increase in the number of tourists on halal tourism found in Aceh. Tourists who visit not only come from local circles, but there is also an increase in the number of long-distance tourists or so-called foreign tourists (Alfanda, 2018). Aside from the natural factors that Aceh has, the increase is allegedly due to the Aceh's victory in several halal tourism awards in 2016 (Rahmi, 2017). As seen on the data (table 1), the number of foreign tourists visiting Aceh has increased a lot after 2016. It shows a drastic increase of foreign tourists' interest to visit tourist destinations in Aceh Province. This can be seen from the table below:

Table 1. Numbers of Foreign Tourists in Aceh in 2016-2019

Annual Data of Foreign Tourists in Aceh			
2016 (July- November)	2017 (January- December)	2018 (January- December)	2019 (January- December)
18.738	33.105	33.787	34.461

Source: Aceh's Central Bureau of Statistics

As seen from the Table above, since the implementation of Halal Tourism in Aceh, the year afterwards, to be exact after 2016, had a significant increase of foreign tourists (Rahmi, 2017). On the other hand, with the achievement of Aceh, Aceh's halal tourism needs to be continuously improved given that the halal tourism branding could be the factor that

pushes to the development of Aceh's tourism which is basically an instrument of soft-diplomacy for Aceh itself and also for Indonesia. In order to achieve this, there needs to be a cooperation between the government, investors, business actors, and relevant stakeholders so that the tourism potential can be realized optimally given the opportunities that Aceh has, which is the existence of Sharia-based accommodation and services and the natural beauty of Aceh.

Aceh's halal tourism has given a positive impact on the Aceh region both for its society and the government. This can be seen from how Aceh's halal tourism as a soft diplomacy instrument has provided an increase in visitors, which ultimately has implicated in the increase of economy in both regional and national.

The Impact of Aceh Halal Tourism on Indonesia's Economy

Other than attracting a lot of international tourists as a soft diplomacy instrument, halal tourism also proves to be an excellent sector in increasing the economy. By showing the development, Indonesia halal tourism has achieved a lot of international achievements. Based on data by World Travel and Tourism Council, Indonesia tourism sector has become one of the fastest in the world for development and growth that brings Indonesia to be at the 9th position in the world, 3rd in Asia, and 1st position in South East Asian in 2018. Indonesia tourism sector has contributed 10,4% for Indonesia's total economic income (WTTC, 2019). However, that was certainly not apart from the contribution of halal tourism implemented by Aceh government. By this fact, the opportunity in increasing the economy through halal tourism is a promising sector, especially for Aceh, by the uniqueness that can bring big potential and opportunity as the vacation destination for international tourist which can finally transcend Indonesia's economy.

Meanwhile, according to the previous data shown in the previous sub-chapter (see table 1), the number of international tourists increased since 2016 and the year after until 2019. This can become the barometer on how good the implementation of halal tourism is in attracting tourists to visit Aceh as their destination. If there is any increase in the number of tourists, of course this will give positive impact towards the economic condition, both for Aceh as the destination and Indonesia in the national level. In fact, based on the data from Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Indonesian Statistics in 2017, Aceh tourism sector contributed Rp.10,87 trillion or equal to 8.97% of the total Aceh economic income (Satriana & Faridah, 2018). With that, the number of tourists who visited Aceh brought a significant impact towards Aceh and Indonesia's economy.

On the other side, the tourism sector in current situation is in the 8th position for its contribution on Domestic Product Regional Income in Aceh (Fahreza & Masbar, 2018). The potential should be optimized to develop the economic value, one of which is through the halal tourism which can be maximized with the assistance of technology. Furthermore, by implementing that, it can provide wider information to international tourist around the globe to visit Aceh as the destination. Another action to be implemented in order to maintain and develop this Aceh halal tourism is by coordinating the stakeholders from up to bottom and vice versa. For example: to develop this Aceh halal tourism, the tourism and culture agency should cooperate with the other stakeholders such as transportation, communication, information agencies and also the locals to successfully implement this halal tourism to improve the local and national economy.

4. CLOSING

Halal tourism can become the excellent sector by local and national government in increasing the condition of economic. That was proved by Aceh halal tourism which has contributed a lot in lifting the economic sector in Aceh and has implicated to the national economic condition as well. In the others side, halal tourism also become the instrument of soft diplomacy in introduce how the Indonesia culture in influence the others country to make any cooperation and to gaining the economic profit which has proven by this paper.

However, from those facts regarding Aceh halal tourism the author gave the recommendation for the stakeholder who become the actor in implementing the halal tourism. Started from the national government until the society nearby the location of halal tourism should cooperate one and others, work hand by hand to success the implementation of halal tourism. Because it can significantly affect toward the economic condition in local and national level. In conclusion this halal tourism not only can be implemented in Aceh but also can implemented nationally if there is any support system from up to bottom and vice versa which finally can totally helpful for creating the welfare for Indonesia society in the near future.

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