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Unlocking the Potential of Halal Tourism in Bandung City: A Qualitative Analysis of Public Diplomacy and Economic Growth

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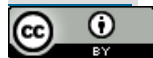
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ABSTRACT

In this study, it was discussed about the role of sharia tourism as a means of Indonesian public diplomacy to increase the number of tourist visits and the regional economy, especially in Bandung City which is a sharia tourist destination. The research method used is qualitative with an approach to the concept of public diplomacy and Islamic tourism. The results showed that Indonesia's public diplomacy efforts in promoting itself as a sharia tourist destination have succeeded in attracting foreign tourists, especially Muslim tourists, as well as investment. In addition, sharia tourism has also experienced a positive increase, so that the increase in the number of tourist visits and investment can be used to develop the regional economy, especially in Bandung City as a sharia tourist destination

INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector has emerged as a vital economic driver, significantly contributing to foreign exchange earnings and employment opportunities. In Indonesia, tourism's contribution reached USD 13,568 million in 2016, marking a notable increase from USD 12,225 million in 2015, and is projected to boost GDP by 15% in 2019 with substantial domestic and international travel (Ndjurumbaha, Tiwu, & Ballo, 2024). The halal tourism segment, particularly in West Java, exemplifies this growth, catering to Muslim travelers and enhancing local economies through increased job creation and infrastructure development (Nizar, Ratnasari, & Usman, The Contribution of The Halal Tourism Sector to East Java's Economic Growth, 2024). However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and service quality persist, necessitating government and industry collaboration to meet the demands of this niche market (Nizar, Ratnasari, & Usman, The Contribution of The Halal Tourism Sector to East Java's Economic Growth, 2024). Overall, the tourism sector's rapid expansion underscores its potential to foster economic growth, improve community welfare, and create a sustainable framework for future development (Ndjurumbaha, Tiwu, & Ballo, 2024) (Kaleeshwari.S, 2024).

Background

Halal tourism is a rapidly growing segment that offers services and facilities aligned with Islamic principles. This type of tourism provides comfort and security for Muslim travelers, allowing them to enjoy their travel experiences while fulfilling their religious obligations. Since 2016, West Java has been actively developing halal tourism, with Bandung City being identified as the most promising destination. Bandung City's majority Muslim population, access to various developed tourist destinations, and increasing tourist appeal make it an ideal location for developing halal tourism.

Despite its potential, Bandung City still faces several challenges. Although it has received recognition from the Ministry of Tourism and has

signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry, the concept and principles of halal tourism are not yet widely understood by the local government and tourism industry stakeholders. The management of halal tourism in Bandung City is currently under the responsibility of the West Java Provincial Tourism and Culture Department. Additionally, the city's tourism products, particularly food, tend to be halal by default due to the majority Muslim population. However, this lack of awareness regarding the critical aspects of halal and tayyib products in consumed goods is a concern. According to regulations, tourism products must have a halal certification from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) to ensure their halal and tayyib status (Hasan, Sulong, & Tanakinjal, 2020).

METHODS

This research aims to explore the integration of halal tourism into Indonesia's foreign policy as a tool for public diplomacy, focusing on enhancing national interests like increasing tourist visits, attracting investments, and establishing a welcoming image for Muslim travelers, particularly from the Middle East (Kusumawardhani, 2024) (Nizar, Ratnasari, & Usman, 2024). By utilizing a qualitative approach involving in-depth interviews, document studies, and field observations, the study seeks to provide valuable insights into the potential of public diplomacy through halal tourism development, aiming to offer policy recommendations for the Indonesian government to leverage halal tourism effectively in foreign policy strategies (Ahmad, Sukri, & Haryanto, 2023). The research aligns with the growing importance of halal tourism in Indonesia and its economic impacts, emphasizing the need for strategic efforts to meet the demands of Muslim tourists and enhance destination competitiveness (Somadi, Cupian, & Hayati, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The focus of the research is Indonesia's foreign policy, which integrates the potential of sharia tourism as an instrument of public diplomacy to fulfill national interests such as increasing the number of tourist visits, attracting investment, and

building an image as a country that is friendly to Muslim tourists, especially for countries in the Middle East which are tourist target markets. The integration of halal tourism into public diplomacy strategies has been successful in attracting Muslim tourists and investments, thereby contributing positively to the regional economy. This success is attributed to the development of halal tourism infrastructure, cultural sensitivity, and regulatory frameworks. The study by Ratna Pratiwi, Dida, and Sjafirah (2018) highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity in attracting Muslim tourists (Pratiwi, Dida, & Sjafirah, 2018). Similarly, the study by Dewan Syariah Nasional Indonesia (2016) emphasizes the need for regulatory frameworks to ensure that tourism products meet halal standards (Indonesia, 2020). Moreover, the study by Hasan (2016) underscores the critical role of halal certification in ensuring the quality of tourism products. This is particularly relevant in Bandung City, where the majority Muslim population relies on halal food and beverages. The study by Subarkah (2018) also underscores the economic benefits of halal tourism, highlighting its potential to contribute positively to the regional economy (Subarkah, 2018). Additionally, the study by Atatürk University, provides insights into the role of media in public diplomacy, emphasizing its effectiveness in engaging various stakeholders and influencing public opinion (Son, 2022). This is crucial for promoting Bandung City as a halal tourism destination, as media can play a significant role in disseminating information about the city's attractions and facilities. Furthermore, the study by Dida and Sjafirah (2018) highlights the importance of cultural diplomacy in enhancing the halal tourism experience. By engaging with local communities and stakeholders, halal tourism can be tailored to meet the specific needs and preferences of Muslim travelers, thereby enhancing their overall experience. The study by Ratna Pratiwi, Dida, and Sjafirah (2018) also underscores the need for infrastructure development to support the growth of halal tourism. This includes the provision of prayer facilities, halal food options, and comfortable

accommodations that cater to the needs of Muslim travelers.

Halal tourism has emerged as a significant component of Indonesia's public diplomacy strategy, aimed at enhancing the country's economic growth and international reputation. The development of halal tourism infrastructure, cultural sensitivity, and regulatory frameworks has been instrumental in attracting Muslim tourists and investments. This approach is supported by the strong correlation between tourism and economic development, where the growth of tourism can drive economic growth in a region. According to Cooper's economic tourism model, tourism consists of three interrelated elements: tourists as consumers, currency as an element in economic transactions, and goods and services from the economic sector (Ratna Pratiwi, Dida, & Sjafirah, 2018).

Muhammad Afdi Nizar presents an interesting hypothesis about the causal relationship between tourism and the economy:

- a) Economic growth is driven by tourism, meaning the development of tourism influences economic growth (the tourism-led economic growth hypothesis);
- b) Tourism is driven by the economy, meaning economic growth influences the development of tourism (the economic-driven tourism hypothesis);
- c) Both (economy and tourism) benefit each other and have a two-way causal relationship (the reciprocal causal hypothesis) (Ratna Pratiwi, Dida, & Sjafirah, 2018).

Nizar argues that two factors build the relationship between tourism and the economy:

- a) Tourism can impact the economic sector by creating jobs, affecting income, the balance of payments, and foreign exchange earnings through various aspects such as tourist spending, tourism development, and the import and export of goods.
- b) Tourism can stimulate economic growth by being a stimulus for certain products and forming new communities that have the

potential to increase income and create jobs in the region.

Tourism plays an essential role in enhancing the economic sector by promoting local businesses and creating new job opportunities. The strong linkage between tourism and the economy makes tourism a resilient economic driver in times of crisis. Moreover, tourism is easy and cost-effective to develop, and the economy becomes an essential element in assisting the development of tourism, particularly halal tourism. Bandung City has great potential to become an economic pillar through halal tourism, which continues to rise as an alternative economic driver by increasing tourist visits and investments in the city.

Halal tourism as a tool for public diplomacy involves several key strategies. Firstly, participating in international events is crucial for introducing Indonesia as a halal tourism destination. For instance, Indonesia introduced itself as a halal tourism destination in the Middle East through the World Halal Travel Awards 2015, an international event awarding halal tourism players worldwide. This event took place on October 20, 2015, in Abu Dhabi. Indonesia won three awards in different categories at the World Halal Tourism Destination Awards for Lombok, the World's Best Halal Honeymoon Destination for Lombok, and the World's Best Family-Friendly Hotel for Sofyan Hotel Betawi in Jakarta. These awards were given at the World Halal Tourism Award 2015. At the same event in 2016, Indonesia won 12 awards from 1.9 million voters from 116 countries, as announced by Indonesia Travel. Indonesia also showcased its halal tourism industry at the Jeddah International Tourism and Travel Exhibition (JITTE), Saudi Arabia's largest tourism exhibition, from February to March 2018, to gain international recognition and attract tourists from the Middle East.

Secondly, the provision of halal tourism facilities and services is essential for attracting Muslim tourists. The Bandung City Government, as one of Indonesia's sharia tourism destinations, strives to ensure that the available services and facilities facilitate Muslim tourists in their tourism

activities. This includes places of worship, halal products, sharia hotels, and halal travel packages. In Bandung, places of worship such as mosques or mushollas are easily found in shopping centers and around tourist attractions. Additionally, several hotels in Bandung are sharia-based, and restaurants are halal-certified. The Bandung City Government continues to develop the potential of sharia tourism in the region to make Bandung a favorite tourist destination for everyone. There are many sharia-based hotels, restaurants, spas, and salons in Bandung. All these efforts aim to provide the best travel experience for Muslim tourists visiting Bandung City.

Thirdly, organizing international events is crucial for promoting halal tourism. As times change, halal tourism is increasingly in demand and becomes a promising business potential. Therefore, developing halal tourism is necessary, and declaring a "Muslim Friendly City" can be a strategic step in making Bandung the best halal tourism destination in Indonesia. To this end, the Bandung City Government ensures the provision of services and facilities that ease Muslim tourists in conducting their tourism activities. This is realized by providing places of worship like mosques or mushollas, halal-guaranteed products, sharia hotels, and halal travel packages. Furthermore, there are also halal-certified restaurants in Bandung. These efforts aim to attract Muslim tourists to Bandung and make it their primary halal tourism destination in Indonesia.

Lastly, conducting international cooperation is essential for the development of halal tourism. International cooperation can be realized through public diplomacy efforts by the government, which believes that the country is a worthy partner in establishing cooperative relationships. In the tourism industry, transportation is one of the crucial aspects that facilitate access to tourist destinations. Bandung City, as a sharia tourism destination, typically welcomes tourists who arrive by air. The Bandung City Government and the Ministry of Tourism will soon sign a memorandum of understanding regarding the development of halal tourism. During the meeting, the Ministry of

Tourism outlined four programs related to halal tourism, including labeling all food and beverages to ensure product halalness, ensuring clean water for purification purposes, providing adequate places of worship, and increasing the visibility of business entrepreneurs. Introducing halal tourism destinations in Bandung can also be done through international events related to halal tourism. Through such events, mutual understanding between tourists and the local community about the existing tourist destinations can be achieved. The Bandung City Government strives to develop the potential of halal tourism in the city, making Bandung a favorite tourist destination for everyone. Despite the pros and cons of the "Muslim Friendly City" declaration for halal tourism development in Bandung, the city government continues to enhance Bandung's halal tourism potential. Halal tourism in Bandung has been proposed by the central government, and the West Java Provincial Government has also issued guidelines for halal tourism.

The impact of halal tourism as a public diplomacy tool is significant. Public diplomacy aims to enhance a country's positive image to attract public interest, particularly tourists. In this regard, the public diplomacy efforts by the Bandung City Government to promote halal tourism destinations have been successful, as evidenced by the increased number of international tourist visits to Indonesia and Bandung through the Husain Sastranegara airport. Furthermore, public diplomacy efforts by the West Nusa Tenggara Government have also yielded results, as seen from the increase in tourists from the Middle East, from 851 tourists in 2017 to 11,645 tourists by January 2019. This indicates that public diplomacy efforts can influence tourist visits to a destination and positively contribute to the tourism sector's development.

The integration of halal tourism into Indonesia's foreign policy has been successful in attracting Muslim tourists and investments, thereby contributing positively to the regional economy. The development of halal tourism infrastructure, cultural sensitivity, and regulatory frameworks has

been instrumental in this success. The strong correlation between tourism and economic development makes tourism a resilient economic driver in times of crisis. Public diplomacy efforts through international events, provision of halal tourism facilities and services, organizing international events, and conducting international cooperation have all contributed to the growth of halal tourism in Bandung City. The impact of these efforts is evident in the increased tourist visits and investments in the city. Therefore, continued development of halal tourism infrastructure, cultural sensitivity, and regulatory frameworks is crucial for enhancing the halal tourism experience in Bandung City and making it a preferred destination for Muslim tourists.

CONCLUSION

The integration of halal tourism into Indonesia's foreign policy has been successful in attracting Muslim tourists and investments, thereby contributing positively to the regional economy. The development of halal tourism infrastructure, cultural sensitivity, and regulatory frameworks has been instrumental in this success. The strong correlation between tourism and economic development makes tourism a resilient economic driver in times of crisis. Public diplomacy efforts through international events, provision of halal tourism facilities and services, organizing international events, and conducting international cooperation have all contributed to the growth of halal tourism in Bandung City. The impact of these efforts is evident in the increased tourist visits and investments in the city. Therefore, continued development of halal tourism infrastructure, cultural sensitivity, and regulatory frameworks is crucial for enhancing the halal tourism experience in Bandung City and making it a preferred destination for Muslim tourists.

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are suggested for the potential and development of halal tourism in Bandung City.

Enhance Infrastructure Development

To cater to the spiritual needs of Muslim tourists, ensuring the availability of prayer facilities in tourist areas is crucial. Increasing the number of halal-certified restaurants and food stalls will provide a variety of halal food options, enhancing the overall experience for Muslim travelers. Additionally, developing sharia-based hotels and accommodations that meet the standards of Muslim travelers will significantly boost Bandung's attractiveness as a halal tourism destination.

Cultural Sensitivity

Implementing training programs for tourism service providers can enhance their cultural sensitivity and understanding of Muslim customs. This will create a more welcoming environment for Muslim tourists. Organizing cultural events and festivals that showcase Indonesian culture and its compatibility with Islamic values will also help in attracting Muslim tourists while promoting cultural exchange.

Regulatory Frameworks

Strengthening the halal certification process is essential to ensure that all tourism products meet strict halal standards. Developing and enforcing guidelines and standards for halal tourism services will maintain consistency and quality, thereby building trust among Muslim tourists.

Public Diplomacy Efforts

Continued participation in international events like the World Halal Travel Awards and the Jeddah International Tourism and Travel Exhibition is vital for promoting Indonesia as a halal tourism destination. Utilizing media campaigns to promote Bandung City as a Muslim-friendly destination, highlighting its unique attractions and facilities, will further enhance its visibility on the global stage.

International Cooperation

Signing memoranda of understanding with international organizations and countries to enhance cooperation in the development of halal tourism will foster global partnerships. Sharing best practices and knowledge with other countries will improve the overall halal tourism experience,

benefiting both Bandung and its international counterparts.

Economic Benefits

Focusing on creating jobs in the tourism sector, particularly in small, medium, and large enterprises around tourist destinations, will stimulate local economies. Attracting investments from international companies specializing in halal tourism will further develop the industry and bring in new opportunities for growth.

Media and Communication

Engaging with local and international media to promote Bandung City as a halal tourism destination is crucial. Utilizing social media platforms to disseminate information about the city's attractions and facilities, targeting Muslim tourists, will expand its reach and influence.

Community Engagement

Engaging with local communities and stakeholders to ensure that their needs and preferences are met will enhance the overall experience of Muslim tourists. Developing community-based tourism initiatives that benefit local communities and promote cultural exchange will foster a more inclusive and sustainable tourism environment.

By implementing these recommendations, Bandung City can further enhance its position as a premier halal tourism destination. This will attract more Muslim tourists and investments, contributing positively to the regional economy and promoting cultural exchange and understanding.

Future research on the development of halal tourism in Bandung City should focus on several key areas to enhance infrastructure development. Firstly, there is a need to ensure the availability of prayer facilities in tourist areas to cater to the spiritual needs of Muslim tourists. Research could explore the most effective ways to integrate these facilities into existing tourist infrastructures and determine their impact on tourist satisfaction. Secondly, increasing the number of halal-certified restaurants and food stalls to provide a variety of halal food options is essential. Studies could investigate the best practices for achieving

widespread halal certification and assess the economic benefits of a diverse halal food offering. Lastly, developing sharia-based hotels and accommodations that meet the standards of Muslim travelers is crucial. Research should examine the requirements and preferences of Muslim travelers regarding accommodation and identify strategies to develop and market sharia-compliant lodging effectively.

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