

Sharia Tourism Development Strategy for West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia

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Abstract Sharia tourism consists of recreational activities that are based on Islamic values. Indonesia is a predominantly Muslim country, and this is especially true of West Nusa Tenggara Province. However, the word tourism market does not associate the province with the concept of sharia travel. The Indonesian tourism ministry has designated three provinces for sharia tourism development: Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam, West Sumatera, and West Nusa Tenggara. These three provinces should be in a good position to implement this policy. West Nusa Tenggara (also known as Nusa Tenggara Barat, or NTB) is well positioned to prepare for the arrival of tourist from Muslim countries and regions because Muslims comprise the majority of the population there. NTB is known as having “a thousand mosques”, as well as many Islamic boarding schools and clerics. It has many places of Islamic heritage, there are many hotels and restaurants serving halal food, and its art and culture reflect the nuances of Islam. This paper assesses potential sharia tourist destination in West Nusa Tenggara using qualitative methods to recommend a tourism development strategy.

Keywords Tourism development strategy · Sharia · Economic development · West Nusa Tenggara · Islam · Indonesia

Background

The most fundamental value in Islam is that the individual’s noble character is put into practice. Islam teaches commendable behavior in all aspects, such as establishing a sense of human brotherhood and getting to know each other, which tourism can help with. As described by Allah in the Qur’an (chapter 49, Al Hujurat, The Private Apartments, 13): “*O mankind! We have created you from a male and a*

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female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another" (Yusuf 2005). Therefore, for Islamic cultures, it is important to show visitors how their religious values are sympathetic with hospitality and mutual understanding.

West Nusa Tenggara (also known as Nusa Tenggara Barat or NTB) is well positioned to prepare for the arrival of tourist from Muslim countries and regions because Islamic culture is well represented there. NTB is known as "the islands of a thousand mosques" (CTO 2015). A mosque is a place of prostration and place of worship for Muslims, as well as an activity center and various Muslim social activities. The question is whether the slogan of "a thousand mosques" has anything to do with the actual behavior and culture of the Muslim community of West Nusa Tenggara. Theoretically, it has a very close relationship with the spirit of worship in praying time in the mosque, however in fact, the mosque is crowded with worshippers only on Fridays.

Sharia tourism is a recreational activity that reflects Islamic values. Sharia travel is growing worldwide and offers increasing business opportunities for entrepreneurs, including those in West Nusa Tenggara. Awareness of the benefits of the Islamic halal concept is increasing in terms of food, travel, financial services, and in other areas. West Nusa Tenggara is a province with Muslim-majority population, but it is not associated in the world tourism market with the concept of sharia travel, as compared to other places in the world, such as Turkey and Malaysia. Muslim travelers seek vacation experiences that fit their values and West Nusa Tenggara could serve as one of the main destinations for them (Bahaman 2012).

If tourism in West Nusa Tenggara is to reach the province's goal of two million tourists, the potential of sharia tourism, and the participation of religious communities, needs to be developed. Sharia development principles are highly relevant to the goals of sustainable tourism development, growth and employment promotion, poverty alleviation, environmental preservation, good governance, integrated cross-sector participation, cross-regional participation, and encouraging public and private sector partnerships. Islamic culture is deeply integrated into the lives of Muslims in West Nusa Tenggara. As such, the development of sharia tourism should receive extensive support from both from the Government and the businesses.

Questions that need to be addressed in this current condition are: first, what are the strategies to develop the potential of tourism in the West Nusa Tenggara? and second, how does the sharia tourism contribute to support the economy of the West Nusa Tenggara? This paper aims to explore and describe the sharia tourism potential in West Nusa Tenggara, and to propose development strategy that explores these potentials as well as to estimate the contribution that can be given to economic development to support a sustainable tourism.

Methodology

The paper relies on qualitative methods to define issues and present a tourism development strategy. A description of a potential approach to sharia tourism is laid out, as well as requirements for the infrastructure necessary to support its development. Strategies are proposed based on normative descriptions from the Qur'an.

Discussion

The potential for sharia tourism development in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) is based on the heritage of the region. NTB has a majority Muslim population with an abundance of mosques and numerous Islamic Boarding Schools. It also demonstrates the culture and art of the Islamic religion along with halal products and Islamic festivals. The successful strategic development of these sharia tourism products required that the government of NTB guides the tourism destination in a manner that will fulfill the prerequisites of sharia tourism. Without a focused collective action in this way, creating sharia tourism destination in NTB cannot be achieved.

Strategic tourism development needs to initially focus on the availability of supporting infrastructure and accessibility improvements within tourism destinations. This includes identifying core destination areas for development and providing adequate transportation systems. For sharia tourism, human resources must also be developed so that those responsible for providing services to sharia tourism customers will have a deep understanding of the essential aspects of sharia. This can be accomplished in collaboration with local universities and other educational institutions that educate tourism operators and produce sharia travel guides. Equally important is the standardization of Islamic tourism products, such as hotels, restaurants, spas, and travel agencies. Essentially, Lombok as a tourist destination should create a friendly, safe, and convenient atmosphere for Muslims travelers and non-Muslim travelers to achieve success in developing sharia tourism.

The major potential sharia tourism destinations in West Nusa Tenggara Province include the following:

- (a) Mataram (NTB's capitol city) and its surrounding areas
- (b) The resort area of Senggigi, including the three Gilis (small islands), on Lombok island
- (c) The emerging resort areas Kuta, Mandalika and the surrounding area on Lombok island
- (d) The SAMOTA (Sumbawa) region, including the Teluk Saleh lagoon area, the Moyo Island protected area, and Tambora Volcano and their surrounding area
- (e) The Alas Utan coastal district in West Sumbawa and its surrounding area
- (f) The Pototano, Maluk areas in West Sumbawa

- (g) The mining town of BatuHijau and the Dodo Rinti protected forest (future mining) area in Sumbawa
- (h) The Hu'usurfing district in Sumbawa and its surrounding area
- (i) The Wawo-Rada-Sape harbor area of West Sumbawa

Developing a diversity of sharia tourism areas around NTB, and transportation linkages between them, will allow for a greater number of visitors and avoid over capacities during peak seasons, which will improve the level of the tourist experience.

Marketing Strategy

Because Islam is a cultural attraction for tourists, it is necessary to provide government support for cultural development as an essential element in the marketing of NTB Province. Art gallery facilities need to be improved and national and international Islamic events should be organized. In addition, guides need to be properly educated to inform tourists about the local Islamic arts and culture. In addition, more standard marketing strategies need to be adopted to develop a marketing plan for sharia tourism, including the strengthening of stakeholders and the organizing of partnerships among them, the building of cooperative promotional networks with other sharia tourism destinations at the national and international level, and cooperation with airlines that serve Islamic tourist source countries.

Issues in Sharia Tourism Development

The development of sharia tourism needs to take into account Islamic values to be successful. In Arabic, travel is often termed *as-siyahah*, taken from the phrase *saha-maasiyahah* (running water, to thaw, or to melt). The expression is used to refer to water that flows and runs on the ground. *As-siyahahis*, when used in a human context, means traveling on the surface of the earth to worship, increase piety, or sometimes without any purpose. Travel is basically permitted in Islam, unless there is an indication that something does not allow it. The Islamic philosopher IbnuHazm (994–1064) suggested that that traveler is allowed as long as the sun has not slipped on Thursday (before the start of the Friday day of prayer). Within Islam, most travel is allowed, within the following rules:

1. Some travel is required for all Muslims to do as a religious obligation, such as the obligatory pilgrimage (the Hajj to Mecca in Saudi Arabia).
2. Some travel is *sunnah*, which is not required by Islam, but for which a Muslim is rewarded if doing it. An example of an *umrah* (“activity”) that is *sunnah* is to visit Mecca in the non-Hajj season.

3. Travel can be *makruh*, which is an activity that is not a sin, but is better for a Muslim to not do because the reward is not worth it (like smoking cigarettes).
4. Travel can also be *haram*, or unlawful for Muslims, if it is to do an evil deed.

Popular opinion among Islamic scholars is that travel for entertainment and pleasure is allowed. It is permissible to visit non-Muslim countries for purposes of safety and security and for business purposes. In addition to the quote about brotherhood from the Qur'an above, the following are statements specifically on travel from the Qur'an (Yusuf 2005):

- Al-Ankabut:20—*Travel in the land and see how (Allah) originated the creation, and then Allah will bring forth the creation of the Hereafter, verily, Allah is able to do all things.*
- Al-Fathir:44—*Have they not traveled in the land, and see what was the end of those before them- though they were superior to them in power? Allah is not such that anything in the heavens or in the earth escapes Him. Verily, He is all-knowing, all-omnipotent.*
- Saba':18—*And We placed between them and the towns which We had blessed, towns easy to be seen, and We made the stage (of journey) between them easy (saying): Travel in them safety both by night and day.*

Sharia Tourism Development

The development of sharia tourism begins with improving capacities for creating tourism businesses and creating policies on halal activities, both food and amusements. This requires good cooperation and education between the government, religious leaders, youth leaders and the business sector, as well as local residents.

With regard to halal, basically food and drinks of any kind are permitted, with some exception. For example, Allah says in the holy Qur'an (29): "He it is Who created for you all that is on earth." Nevertheless, anything that can harm the body, religion and morals, including as pork, liquor, and alcohol, is forbidden. Pork is forbidden in Islam based on the statement in the Qur'an (Al Baqarah 173): "He has forbidden you only the Maitah (dead animals), and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that which is slaughtered as a sacrifice for others than Allah." Whereas *khamr* (Arabic) is any beverages, foods, and substances that alters, interferes with, or controls the mind and senses. Liquor is prohibited based on Allah's statement in the Qur'an (al Maidah 90): "O you who believe! Intoxicants, gambling, Al Ansab and Al Azlam (arrows for seeking luck or decision) are an abomination and is of Shaitan's (Satan's) handiwork. So avoid (strictly) that (abomination) in order that you may be successful."

To maintain a destination as sharia tourism, it must adhere to strict policies and control of the implementation of sharia travel. This includes the provision of halal foods, as well as, maintaining a clean environment that is consistent with practicing

religious values, and preserving Islamic cultural values. Sharia tourism can bring contribution to the economy of the West Nusa Tenggara Province. With its majority Muslim population, tourism can provide employment for Muslims, especially for Islamic events, at Islamic venues and on Islamic tours. Increasing employment translates into increasing revenue for the Muslim population, and therefore contributing to poverty alleviation. To support sharia tourism, the destination needs to increase its development with Islamic nuances. At the same time, this approach could foster the emergence of new innovations, based on Islamic values. In the end, creating a sharia destination that complies with the teachings of Allah will bring blessings from Allah.

Conclusions

The development of a sharia tourism destination is feasible and will bring much opportunity for West Nusa Tenggara Province, due to its majority Muslim population and culture. A long term strategic development approach should be adopted that integrates all relevant stakeholders. The teachings of Islam do not prohibit travel for good purposes. However, halal products and activities cannot be compromised because these are the provision of God. Economic benefits that a sharia tourism destination could bring include, among others, an increase in labor absorption and an increase in income for many Muslims in West Nusa Tenggara. Better relationships and increased friendship among Muslims across the world would also be an expected outcome.

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