
Religious Tourism: Concept of Community-Based Tourism in Aceh Singkil, Indonesia

Religious
Tourism

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283

Abstract

Purpose – This research aimed to identify the ideal concept of tourism development in Aceh Singkil, Indonesia, and to explain how the application of religious tourism is based on the society as a community. The community included three parties, namely, government, community, and private.

Methodology – For this research, both a qualitative approach and a phenomenological method were used to get the accurate results. Although the recent method used was a qualitative research approach, the data were discovered through three instruments: observation, interview, and documentation. Observation involved observing a variety of tourism activities in the field study as well as informants. While the interview was conducted by participant method, the data found were familiar without being engineered by the informant.

Finding – Aceh Singkil is one of the areas in Aceh Province that has good tourism potential including natural beauty resources, geographical location close to any district, and a diverse of community culture. However, the local government does not have ideal concepts to develop these resources. The pattern of development is still done in traditional ways without the involvement of private parties and the community. The local community is only used as an object of tourism activity and its existence is not so obviously involved. As a result, tourism in Aceh Singkil has no direction of development. Based on this research, it was found that the relevant tourism concepts to be developed in Aceh Singkil are based on religious tourism (Halal Tour), as Halal Tourism is a reflection of the culture of the Aceh Singkil community.

Research Limitations – This research has limitations on non-specific religious tourism and limited quantitative data as well as a vast range of research areas.

Originality/Value – Religious tourism research is the mainstay of research concepts in Islamic countries as well as in Indonesia especially in Aceh provincy, so it is necessary to find the ideal concept for its application and become an example for other regions in the future.

Keywords Tourism, religious tourism, community-based tourism

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1. Introduction

The tourism potential in Aceh Singkil is a perfect potential because it is sustained by multi-ethnic cultural diversity and was different by other districts in Aceh generally only dominated by one or two ethnicities, with this diversity being a potential for greater tourism development in Aceh Singkil. These excellent potentials include the rich biodiversity,



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maritime tourism, religious life that always influenced the lives of the people, and the socio-cultural diversity possessed by the people.

In Aceh Singkil district, marine tourism, with 99 islands located in Kecamatan Pulau Banyak, always awaits visitors. Its landscape consisting of a range of Bukit Barisan with some beautiful rivers is an adventure area in nature tourism for the youth and teenagers, nature lovers, cross nature, and so on, as well as with traditional art that is very unique and interesting, when compared with other areas in this archipelago. All of these potentials when developed present maximum gain, and it is clear that in future this region will become an ideal income from this sector, such as the Bali Island today.

In Aceh, and generally in Indonesia, the concept of Halal Tourism has seriously been discussed and campaigned, but until now it is just a discourse and has not seen any improvement. As a dominant Muslim country to improve itself to develop tourism programs with various concepts that exist based on their own local wisdom, similar to Malaysia which since 2010 has been the halal center of the world, this halal center targeted in 2010 to have at least 5 percent of the world halal center with at least 10,000 exporting companies (Ali, 2016).

Every tourism development effort is necessary to pay attention and learn the values that exist in the society. Because all the values that exist need not necessarily match and are contrary to the values of development, it is even possible, and often proven by social scientists, that some of the values of the society, including those who are deemed to be backward or undeveloped, have a positive nature or influence on the developmental efforts if these are known better and are used effectively (Alfian, 1986).

Generally, during this time in Aceh Province, the development of tourism always oriented with religious values (religious concept). But in the field we see that the direction of the concept has not been realized, and it even tends to be oriented with the concept of the center, that is, with the concept of "SAPTAPESONA." This concept is not necessarily suitable to be developed in Aceh Singkil district, because the traditions of the people in this area are very different from the people in other places, especially outside Aceh Province.

As the mainstay sector expected in the future in the improvement of the regional economy, tourism is expected to contribute significantly to the regional and local economies. The economic impact of tourism is heavily dependent on the kind of tourism developed. This sector has the potential both to create employment opportunities and to increase the incomes of local communities, as this economic sector will also push the other sectors unknowingly.

2. Formulation of the problem

This study aims to explain the ideal concept of tourism and religious tourism (Halal Tourism) in Aceh Singkil.

3. Theoretical framework

Foster stated that on an international context, the term *tourism* was first defined in 1937 by statisticians of the United Nations. The definition of *foreign tourists* is this: someone who visits a country, where it is outside the usual residence, for a minimum of 24 hours. Moreover, a person who lives in the country less than 24 hours is called an excursionist. In accordance with this definition, the destination of tourists is to relax, household reasons, health, business purposes, conferences, meetings and diplomatic in addition to people who come with cruises although for less than 24 hours (Sukarsa, 1999).

4. Result and analysis

Aceh Singkil district has great potential of becoming a tourist attraction, and both the already-engineered and the unspoiled parties, just say seriousness-related parties manage it

professionally. To promote this sector, the related parties need to work seriously, because the field of tourism is closely related to other fields. There is also a tourist attraction and tourism development framework that needs to be developed in the future.

The Qur'an is a foothold in religious tourism research because as explained in the opening Tafsir Al-Kasysyaf, Al-Zamakhshari (Quraish, 1998, pp. 56–57) argues that in addition to studying the Qur'anic interpretation is "fardhu 'ayn," which also means that every Muslim must learn and understand the Qur'an. But this does not mean that he must understand it in accordance with the understanding of the former people. Because Muslims are commanded by the Qur'an to use their minds and to decide those who only follow the elders and the ancestors regardless of what they actually do; are they 'ala hudan (in truth) or 'ala dhalal (in error).

But it does not mean that every Muslim can express his opinion on the verses of the Qur'an without fulfilling the necessary requirements for it. Every qualified Muslim is obliged to understand the Qur'an, since the verses are not revealed only to the Arabs at the time of the first Prophet, and not especially to those living in this century. But the Qur'an is for all humans, from the time of descent to the end of the world.

All are invited to communicate by the Qur'an and instructed to think its contents in accordance with their minds. True reason is a gift from Allah SWT, but the way it is used differs from one to another caused by the differences between themselves: the educational background, the lessons, the culture, and the experiences during one's life. Abbas Mahmud Al-Aqqad writes: "We are obliged to understand the Qur'an in the present time as is required of the Arabs living in the preaching period of Muhammad SAW."

4.1. Islamic Religious Tourism

Religious tourism is easy-to-perform in Aceh Singkil, because the people of Aceh Singkil Regency are aware of the benefits of the tourism sector, that is it can grow new income for the community. If the prosperous society with income continues to grow, of course the local government will automatically help to push the Pendapatan Asli Daerah (PAD), because it

No.	Tourism Attraction	Location	The Distance from District City (km)
1	Palambak Ketek Island	Pulau Banyak	45
2	Palambak Gadang Island	Pulau Banyak	40
3	Tailana Island	Pulau Banyak	50
4	Ujung Lolok/Tuangku Island	Pulau Banyak	60
5	Bengkuru island	Pulau Banyak	75
6	Biawak Island	Pulau Banyak	60
7	Sikandang Island	Pulau Banyak	55
8	Paris Lake	Danau Paris	50
9	Rawa Singkil	Singkil	2
10	Pulo Sarok Beach	Singkil	1
11	Belibis Lake	Singkil	50
12	Cemara Indah Beach	Singkil Utara	15
13	Lae Gecih Water Fall	Simpang Kanan	40
14	Siompin Water Fall	Suro Makmur	45
15	Lae Petal Water Fall	Suro Makmur	50
16	Bungara Water Lake	Kota Baharu	55

Table 1.
Tourism
Destinations In Aceh
Singkil

Source: Adapted from any sources.

will give birth to new economic sectors, such as restaurant, hotel, parking, travel, and other income taxes, and can open a new workforce in Aceh Singkil. In the context of the Aceh, religious tourism is said to be any policy taken to build a tourism program based on Islamic values, not ruling out other religious ritual values. Now Aceh is the enactment of Islamic Sharia, and automatically every aspect of tourism development program must be based on Shari'ah Islam.

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From some developed tourism concepts in Indonesia, not all of them are suitable to be applied in Aceh Singkil district, because Aceh Singkil Regency has its own characteristics from other areas in terms of community culture, ethnicity, and religion and tourism object consists of islands and geographical location directly adjacent to North Sumatra, which is the entrance of foreign tourists in the island of Sumatra. From the existing concept, which is considered more suitable to be applied in Aceh Singkil district is the concept of religious tourism. The advantages of this tourism concept can be enjoyed by non-Muslim tourists as well. It is hoped that with the application of this concept, the object of wisata of Aceh Singkil Regency is increasingly in demand and growing. That way, not only domestic tourists but also foreign tourists including non-Muslim tourists are expected. For more details, see the following flow of consideration of the application of the concept of religious tourism in Aceh Singkil district.

4.2. Community-Based Tourism: A Concept to Develop Religious Tourism

Public participation to develop religious tourism in Aceh Singkil became the most important in realizing integrated tourism with various sectors of the tourism industry. The effort to privatize tourism by delegating its management to the private sector is not the right choice to solve the problem. Privatization has the tendency of groups and individuals to overcome resources. While the community will remain the object, coolies and spectators will be responsible for the progress that occurred in the area. On the other hand, the management of tourism that is controlled by the government has classical consequences. That is, related to the government's ability to manage it.

Therefore, it is appropriate for tourism management to involve three participants, namely, the public, the private sector, and the government. Each of the three elements has their own roles that support each other. They are links that are interconnected. The community as a group is in direct contact with tourism activities and requires a private role for investment. However, the government plays a role to maintain the stability of the tourism area to remain conducive and safe from various disturbances and threats.

The collaborative action of these three elements leads to the foundation and step to create a community-based tourism. That is, the involvement of the local community is a must. The people who plan and do it evaluate over the course of the tourism program.

With regard to the aforementioned discussion, the study finds that till now the management of the tourism sector has not touched upon the efforts of managing the tourism sector from various sectors in Aceh Singkil in an organized manner organized by the community. Instead, management is done by individuals who lead to privatization efforts

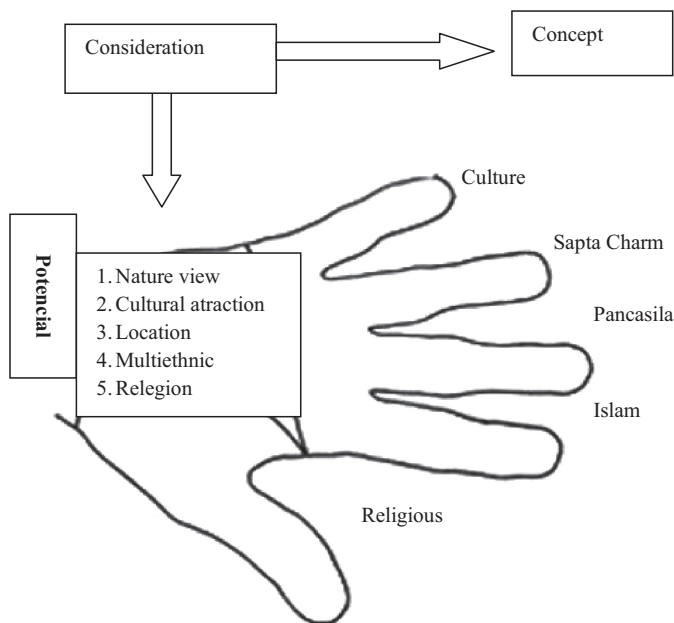


Figure 1.
Tourism concept of
religious tourism in
district Aceh Singkil,
Aceh

and the tendency to control the “stalls“ simultaneously. Gampong (Village) Apparatus itself has not taken a firm step on the above phenomenon and leaves the society entrepreneurship without legal basis (legality). Wild stalls, huts, and simple home stay that are visible along the shoreline and other areas of tourism illustrate the lack of government preparedness.

Community-based tourism puts the sovereignty of the local community as the pioneer of tourism development in the region. The advantage of this type of tourism concept is the sense of responsibility of each community over its territory. Communities are in control of progress or are fully accountable if they fail. This concept also minimizes social jealousy among fellow citizens, as it is considered uneven in distributing resources. Society in this case is social capital. Capital means the existence of an investment with the expectation of a profit on what is invested.

The tourism sector management by the community enables the emergence of tourism industries, if they have adequate resources, adequate capital access, and local government support. Although the community is the prime mover, it still requires the private sector to invest its wealth and the existence of the government which creates a conducive atmosphere.

Community-based tourism governance has so far not entered into the blueprint of the tourism in Aceh Singkil district. In contrast, the role of individuals and the private sector in tourism development is dominant. The development of tourism and other development, if it does not involve community participation, will reap social disturbances that can impact on tourism activity itself.

The mechanism of governance of religious tourism offered in this research scheme is tourism based on the society by involving the private sector and the government. The pattern of relations between the three parties can be seen in the following figure:

The strategic steps that can be taken by the government of Aceh Singkil Regency is to formulate tourism policies that favor the interests of the local community by maintaining the

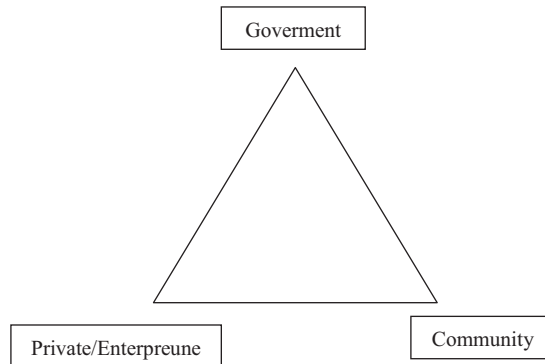


Figure 2.

local values owned by the community and not against Islamic norms (Syariah Islam). This can be done with several approaches. First, community groups (communities) are the targets, not targeting individuals. Second, the management of tourism is left to the Gampong (Village) government. Third, the establishment of a tourism business entity that is oriented to the public interest. Fourth, to open up opportunities for the private sector to invest in it. As mentioned earlier, private sector plays an important role for investment purposes so as to cover the lack of funds on the manager itself. It is just that this last approach needs to be explored and regulations that remain in favor of the interests of the local community. The trends that occur in tourism governance are managed by the private sector raising various issues, for example, the growth of social jealousy in the local community.

5. Conclusion

Development of religious tourism in Aceh Singkil should have a clear, measurable, and systematic road map that can involve three parties, namely, government, community, and private sector. These three parties have their respective salary-related roles. The pattern that was built so far is that the government neglects the community as a community; on the contrary, the community as an individual runs a tourism business without any support from the local government. Religious tourism also needs to put forward the values of local wisdom contained in the tourist area and obedient to the Islamic Shari'a law in force in Aceh. Religious tourism activities at least are observable from the behavior of tourists who still maintain the environment and are friendly to the ecosystem.

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