

Implementation of Halal Tourism in Non-Muslim Countries (Study in Thailand)

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Abstract

Along with the development of halal tourism, many Muslim and non-Muslim countries are trying to capture the Muslim tourist market by providing tourism products, facilities and infrastructure to meet their needs. Publications and theoretical studies in this field are still limited, but studies related to the provisions and commitments on halal tourism and its patterns are considered lacking. Thus, the scarcity of literature and special studies in this field are aimed at exploring and describing the concept of halal tourism in an Islamic context with special references to verses of the Qur'an and Hadith as the main sources in Islam. The purpose of this study is to describe the implementation of halal tourism, because this halal concept has become a lifestyle for most of the population in the world. This type of research belongs to the category of literature writing. The results of this study show that the tourism sector has an active contribution to improving the welfare of a country. Halal tourism is the implementation of the embodiment of the nuances of religiosity covered in the mu'amalah aspect as an application of aspects of socio-cultural and socio-economic life based on shari'a principles. This study also presents the concept of halal tourism and halal tourism in Thailand.

Keywords: halal industry, halal tourism, implementation of halal tourism

A. Introduction

Halal tourism is a new phenomenon that arises from the growth of the halal industry. Along with the advancement of the halal tourism industry, many Muslim and non-Muslim countries are trying to capture the Muslim tourist market by providing various tourism products, facilities and infrastructure to meet their needs. The word halal itself comes from Arabic which is not only related to food products, but includes all types of products and services offered. Halal in Islamic sharia is everything that is allowed. Furthermore, there is currently a halal certification that provides guarantees for a Muslim because it is considered to meet the requirements of Sharia law which must be obeyed by all Muslims. Meanwhile, for non-Muslims, halal products are only limited to product quality. Halal cannot be captured as a brand alone but also includes cleanliness, safety, and quality throughout the production chain, from the beginning to the end. So halal cannot be used only as a branding, but must be emphasized as a philosophy. (satriana & faridah, 2018)

Recently, halal tourism has become a hot trend in the international tourism industry. Halal tourism is divided into two, namely religious tourism and Islamic tourism or what is commonly referred to as shari'a tourism in Indonesia and

Malaysia. Some examples of religious tourism include christian tours to the holy land of Palestine, hajj and umrah to Makkah, or visits by Jews to the holy tomb in Israel. From the example above, it can be concluded that the term religious tourism is not synonymous with tourist activities carried out by Muslims alone. (wahidati & sarinastiti, 2018)

Meanwhile, Islamic tourism by Islamic tourism centre Malaysia is defined as “any activity, event and experience undertaken in a state of travel that is an accordance with Islam.” While Henderson views that the concept of islamic tourism includes all trips made by muslims who make religion an important consideration, although not as the main motivation. From these two definitions, it can be taken that Islamic tourism is a tour carried out in accordance with the provisions of Shari'a in the Islamic religion.

According to chookaew, the concept of halal tourism itself refers to Islamic values which are reflected in various aspects of tourism consisting of halal products and services. The combination of Islamic values with elements of tourism requires perfect and comprehensive guidance so that every development carried out can be achieved optimally without abandoning compliance with Islamic shari'a. In Islamic terminology, this kind of thing is called maqashid Sharia or the intention of implementing a set of Islamic Sharia in various lives, in this case in the field of tourism. The author highlights Thailand as a non-Muslim country crowded with tourists who love cultural and natural exploration.

In southeast Asia, Thailand is one of the muslim minority countries that are Muslim friendly to tourists. Based on the Global Islamic Economy Indicator 2019-2020, Thailand is in the top ten. While the report in the 2019 Global Muslim Travel Index, Thailand ranks second and Singapore becomes the first in the category of non-OIC countries based on environment, access, services, and communication with the aim of providing comfort for Muslim tourists when visiting the country (mastercard & crescent rating, 2019).

Several studies on halal in Thailand have been carried out such as halal certification for industries in Thailand which has rapid development, especially for food made with a good service system so that the quality of halal products can be exported to Muslim countries such as Indonesia and other countries. Thai public diplomacy through the halal industry that explains the government's goal of building an image of a Thai state that is friendly to Muslim tourists.

This study aims to analyze the extent of the development of halal tourism in Thailand. This research uses qualitative methods with direct observation techniques used to complete the data, namely collecting documentation. Observations were made to observe the activities of Muslim tourists in carrying out their religious practices and the way they obtain halal food to fulfill their observance of religion in traveling.

B. Discussion

1. *The Concept of Halal Tourism in an Islamic Perspective*

Halal tourism refers to the provision of tourism products and services that meet the needs of Muslim tourists to facilitate worship and other requirements in accordance with Islamic law. This includes the preferences of Muslims, which

according to behaviourism refers to the culture of customs, clothing, food, and behavior in the area. (Budiarmo, 2022). The concept of Islamic tourism is not only limited to religious tourism, but also extends to all forms of tourism except those that are contrary to Islamic values.

The Qur'an is a guide in all activities for Muslims. Religious rules also affect the flow of tourism, many countries provide alternatives for Muslim tourists to choose convenient tourism facilities. Moreover, Islam is built on the concept of human welfare and good living that emphasizes brotherhood and social and economic justice. This requires a balanced satisfaction of the material and spiritual needs of fellow human beings. This statement means that understanding the central role of the Qur'an will be paramount before the discussion of halal tourism in Islam.

The verse signifies that those who travel for the purpose of worship need to be given special rations for charity. Another term is the word *hijra*. Rowley points out that *hijra* is traveling to Mecca to make a pilgrimage as part of the five pillars of Islam. Earlier history records that many companions of the Prophet migrated to other parts of the Arab region and even transcended geographical boundaries with proselytizing and *muamalah*. Tourism can also be said to be *hijra* to get new experiences. Through *hijra* one is shown to gain a lot of experience and increase in knowledge and spirituality. Therefore, *hijra* allows one to get a greater reward from God every time it is performed for worship. For this the Koran calls us the following: "*And whoever emigrates in the way of Allah, they will undoubtedly find on this earth a vast place of hijra and (sustenance) a lot. Whoever comes out of his house with the intention of emigrating because of Allah and His Messenger, then death falls on him (before reaching the intended place), then truly, his reward is set at Allah's side. And Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful.*" (QS. An-nisa:100).

Another meaningful expression about tourism is the word *al-rihlah*. *Rihlah* is used specifically for traveling for educational and trade purposes. The most famous is the writings of Ibn Batutah. There are several other books such as *rihlah fi talab al-hadith* (the journey in search of the Hadith of the Prophet). The Koran records *rihlah among* Arabs for business purposes. This can be referred to in the verse that reads, "*Their covenant (includes) travel in the dingin season and summer.*" (QS Quraysh: 2)

Analyzing the above terms, it is recorded that the Messenger of Allah performed *al-rihlah* through travel between Makkah and Syria in a series of businesses protected by Khadijah who later became his wife. Sometimes the word *rihlah* is also associated with spirituality which means Muslims who travel to visit holy places in Mecca, Medina and other places such as Jerusalem can also be referred to as *rihlah al-muqadassah* or *rihlah al-ruhiyyah*. *Rihlah* can also be claimed to be a wise journey to fulfill religious doctrines. The category of travel ordered in Islam can be described as tourism that has a different purpose from the mass common practice of tourism motivated mainly by pleasure and hedonistic pursuits.

Indeed the official definition of "tourists" does not include those who engage in work, whereas in Islam working and trading is indeed encouraged. Tourists can be attached to the pilgrimage trip. The secular meaning of tourism also implies vacation or non-work involvement which is a relaxed form of diversion from the

work situation. Holiday trips are meant to be relaxing and refreshing experiences.

In the spiritual context of tourism, pilgrimage has been a central theme and indeed historically the impetus and origin for what is now called Religious tourism had an influence on the daily activities of Muslims, whether at home or traveling, and thus formed a wise choice regarding the destination and what was done at the destination. Various verses in the Koran encourage people to travel because it will instill an awareness of the greatness of God's creation as in His words: *"Walk the earth, then notice how (Allah) began creation (beings), then Allah made the final occurrence. Truly, God is almighty over all things* (QS. Al-Ankabut:20). This verse implies that one of the purposes of tourism is for consideration and contemplation. Muslims are advised to travel around the world to reflect on God's creation.

Similar implications are corroborated by Zakaria who states that *traveling* and *touring* are strongly encouraged by Islam and are usually associated with the friendliness of its inhabitants, and the ease of obtaining halal food and access to worship. The serupa effect of the verse can also be found in another verse in which Allah Almighty says: *"Then do they never travel on earth so as to notice how the end of those who are before them. Allah telah destroy them, and for the pagans will receive (fate) that same."* (QS. Muhammad:10)

In addition, in addition to achieving physical goals, *traveling* is also encouraged by Islam to achieve spiritual and social goals. Verses related to this can be found in several places in the Koran for example Allah Almighty mentions: *"Say (Muhammad), "Travel on earth and see how the ancients ended. Most of them are people who fellowship (God)."* (QS.Ar Rum:42). In another verse, Allah says: *"And We made between them (the inhabitants of Saba') and the lands that We bless (the Levant), some adjacent lands and We set between those lands (distances) of travel. Walk ye in those lands at night and by day safely "*(QS.Al-Sabba:18)

On the other hand, traveling to some extent symbolizes the element as patience and perseverance. A similar view has been noted by other literature where it is said that the ultimate goal of the journey is to instill the realization of human weakness and appreciate the greatness and oneness of God through the observation of historical and man-made "signs" with his miracles, all of which are God-given. Meanwhile Hashim and Murphy argue that the attainment of spiritual goals can be fulfilled at a time when we are able to strengthen one's submission to God. On the other hand, the purpose of traveling in a social context is to encourage and strengthen the bonds of silaturahmi among the people. This view has a similar effect to Eickelman and Piscatori who revealed that a component of the spiritual journey needs to be carried out by emphasizing service to Allah by fostering unity among the Muslim community (*Ummah*). (kusumaningtyas, latifah, suprihandari, & syauqi, 2021)

2. Halal Travel Destinations in Thailand

Thailand is one of the countries in Southeast Asia that is consensual with halal pariwisata. Although Muslims in Thailand are only about 5% of the total population, halal tourism is growing rapidly there. The majority of Muslims in Thailand are centered in the south such as in the provinces of Phuket and Krabi. According to a report from the MasterCard-Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel Index 2016,

Thailand is in second place after Singapore, a non-OIC country visited by Muslim tourists. In addition, Thailand is also ranked fourth in The State of The Global Islamic Economy 2015/16 Report's Halal Travel indicator which assesses based on the health of the Muslim-friendly travel ecosystem within a country.

For example, Thailand has 3600 mosques and shopping malls that provide worship spaces for Muslims. There are many halal restaurants listed in the Muslim Friendly app and guidebooks for Muslim travelers, such as Muslim-friendly hotels that provide halal food, prayer rooms and Qibla directions, Muslim-friendly spas that separate men and women, Muslim friendly beach resorts, Muslim friendly medical facilities and Muslim friendly airports. The Thai government began seriously implementing a sustainable halal tourism strategy in 2015, which was caused by the large demand from Muslim tourists in 2014, which was 4.9 trillion Thai Bath or 10% of the overall value of the industry. (karjaya, 2020)

The common problems most commonly experienced by Muslim tourists when visiting non-Muslim countries are often related to the difficulty of finding halal food, the unavailability of a place to do five-time prayers, and the difficulty of finding Muslim-friendly lodging. Thus, if a service provider offers halal tourism services, then they must at least provide halal food and beverage products, appropriate lodging facilities, and facilities for conducting prayer services.

In meeting the needs of Muslim tourists, every country must pay attention to several things to be visited by Muslim tourists, namely: a friendly environment for Muslim tourists, easy access to tourist destinations, communication while in tourist attractions is easy to obtain, and good service when traveling. Comfort and security are the main things in developing halal tourism. Thailand has developed the concept of halal tourism even though its Muslim population is a minority, as can be seen from the data on Muslim tourist visits in 2018 reaching 3.6 million tourists or equivalent to 10% of all Muslim tourist arrivals globally. (Republic, 2021)

The research institute describes projections of a growing population of Muslims in Thailand from 2010 to 2050. There are basically three majority religions in Thailand, namely Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. Buddhism gets the highest percentage of 93.2 or equivalent to 64,420,000 people. Islam as a minority in Thailand is 5.5% or equivalent to 3,770,000 people and under one percent of others are Christians, Hindus, Jews and others. Muslims are projected to continue to experience growth in Thailand. This is in line with the number of Muslim tourist arrivals which reaches 3.6 million people per year.

In response to the above phenomenon, the tourism and sport ministry of Thailand launched a project to develop halal tourism and services aimed at increasing the potential of the halal tourism market in Thailand. The Ministry of Tourism and Sports in collaboration with Chulalongkorn University carried out halal tourism development projects, including conducting in-depth research related to the characteristics of Muslim tourist demand and their behavior to design tourism products and services to suit the needs of Muslim tourists and meet halal criteria. Tourism authority of Thailand created an application called Muslim-friendly destination in Arabic and Indonesian versions with the aim of making it easier for Muslim tourists to find halal restaurants, mosques, and various other halal facilities and services.

In addition, the Thai government also established a halal industrial center on the southern border of Patani province. The Thailand halal food market is growing 20% every year and making it the sixth-ranked country as a halal food exporting country. Of the 30,000 factories in Thailand, 8,000 of them are halal food factories. There are 1,800 factories that are entitled to halal label accreditation, not only food, *pariwisata*, hotel businesses, and health services also received halal certification. With this sufficient support, Thailand has great potential in competing with other countries to develop halal tourism.

The Thai government's efforts to develop halal tourism are actually also part of efforts to address the disparities of the northern and southern regions of Thailand. The southern region of Thailand is heavily populated by poor Muslim communities. To empower Muslim communities that are still poor and disadvantaged, the government launched three policies. First, it runs Islamic banks such as Government Savings Bank, Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives, and Islamic Bank of Thailand. Second, the government financed a halal industry linking program (including halal tourism) to create new jobs for the Muslim population in Thailand, even by developing Arabic in their communities to serve Middle Eastern tourists. Third, the government has implemented zakat services for the Muslim community in Thailand. This means that the Thai government runs a dual approach to tourism with a regional focus division, namely the southern region which is more directed to halal tourism and the northern region which is more towards conventional tourism while still paying attention to the needs of Muslim tourists. (Karjaya, 2020)

Here are some of the initiatives that have been carried out by the Thai government to make it a halal tourist destination, as reported by the standing committee for economic and commercial cooperation of the organization of Islamic cooperation (COMCEC)

1. Muslim-friendly tourism app

The app was launched in 2015 with the aim of luring foreign Muslim tourists. This application helps tourists to find mosques, halal restaurants, hotels, and shopping centers with worship space facilities. The app was developed by the support of Chulalongkorn University's Halal Science Center, the Thai Islamic Center Foundation, the Thai Halal Standards Institute, and the Tourism Council of Thailand.

2. Thailand Diamond Halal Brand

This is an integrated halal branding aimed at marketing its products to Muslim tourists. Through this branding, all halal products and services originating from Thailand will be marketed, including halal tourism. The branding was developed by The Chulalongkorn Bangkok University Halal Science Center, the Islamic Central Council of Thailand, and the Halal Standards Institute of Thailand.

3. Handbooks and brochures such as "halal check-in Thailand"

Halal Check-in Thailand is one of the guidebooks that contains a list of mosques, halal-certified restaurants, Muslim-friendly hotels, shopping malls and performance venues that provide worship facilities. (Rasyid, 2017)

As a country with a Buddhist majority, it is certainly not easy for Thailand to promote its Muslim-friendly tourism. However, several initiatives from the government have helped make it easier for Thailand to promote Muslim-friendly halal tourism in the country.

C. Conclusion

The massive increase in the number of Muslim tourists does make an opportunity for muslim-majority countries to make their tourism sector and be able to increase foreign investment in their respective countries. However, this does not rule out the possibility of also being done by countries whose Muslim population is a minority, as is the case with Thailand. With the combination of halal tourism models and conventional tourism carried out, Thailand is ranked second out of non-OIC countries that are in demand by foreign tourists.

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