
IMPLEMENTATION OF *HALAL* TOURISM IN EAST
NUSA TENGGARA:
A CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

IMPLEMENTASI WISATA HALAL DI NUSA TENGGARA
TIMUR:
PERSPEKTIF PENDIDIKAN KRISTEN

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Abstract

The initiative to create halal tourism in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) was approved directly by the community and local government because it was considered antithetical to local customs. Indeed, the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia remarked that the concept of halal tourism is carried out in Indonesia in order to provide halal meals, suitable places of worship, and other halal services. In Indonesia, halal tourism is defined as the provision of friendly halal service facilities for tourists, also known as Muslim-friendly tourism. The rejection of halal tourist development in NTT prompted a study to ascertain the views of local governments, corporate actors, and the general public on halal tourism in East Nusa Tenggara. The findings from this study were examined utilizing social emotion methodologies and Christian religious education. The study's findings found that efforts are being made to maximize the potential of halal tourism in East Nusa Tenggara Province. For starters, social feelings can be leveraged to foster togetherness while enjoying local tourist attractions. Second, Christian education incorporates societal reform based on God's command and the love for God concept in welcoming others. It promotes acceptance of God's creatures and equitable treatment of them.

Keywords: *halal tourism, rejection, Christian education*

Abstrak

Rencana pengembangan wisata *halal* di Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) mendapat penolakan dari masyarakat dan pemerintah daerah secara langsung karena dianggap bertentangan dengan budaya wilayah setempat. Padahal, Wakil Presiden Republik Indonesia menyatakan bahwa konsep wisata *halal* di Indonesia dilakukan untuk menyediakan makanan *halal*, tempat ibadah memadai, dan fasilitas *halal* lainnya. Wisata *halal* di Indonesia diartikan sebagai penyediaan fasilitas pelayanan *halal* yang ramah bagi wisatawan atau pariwisata ramah muslim. Penolakan pengembangan wisata *halal* di NTT menginspirasi untuk dilakukannya kajian yang bertujuan untuk mengetahui pendapat pemerintah daerah, pelaku usaha, dan masyarakat terhadap wisata *halal* di Nusa Tenggara Timur. Penelitian ini menggunakan metoda kualitatif yang datanya dianalisis dengan menggunakan metoda social feeling dan Pendidikan agama Kristen. Hasil penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa terdapat upaya dalam memaksimalkan potensi wisata *halal* di Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur, *pertama*, perasaan sosial dapat dimanfaatkan untuk membangun kebersamaan dalam menikmati atraksi wisata lokal. *Kedua*, pendidikan Kristiani yang mencakup transformasi sosial berdasarkan perintah Tuhan dan prinsip cinta kepada Tuhan dalam menerima orang lain. Hal ini menekankan penerimaan terhadap makhluk Tuhan dan memperlakukan mereka dengan adil.

Kata Kunci: Wisata Halal, penolakan, pendidikan Kristen

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism plays a strategic role in driving a country's economy. This sector provides considerable economic potential for people's income. Tourism has contributed greatly to opening new jobs, creating creativity and innovation, and expanding other productivity sectors. Lately, the tourism business niche has begun to develop in attracting tourists, specifically from Muslim countries. One of the segments in the world tourism business experiencing the fastest growth is *halal* tourism (Battour et al., 2022).

This growth aligns with the increasing number of tourists from Muslim countries who wish to spend their holidays abroad. The high potential of the *halal* tourism segment can be seen from the increasing number of tourists. Data compiled by the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) shows that the number of Muslim tourists is estimated to reach 158 million in 2020. This figure grew by 21 percent compared to the number of tourists in 2017. This number excludes the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages (Yudhistira, 2019).

The data presented above explains that there is considerable economic potential in the *halal* tourism sector that the government can work on to attract world Muslim tourists. Of course, Indonesia can develop this business as a country with leading tourist destinations, such as Bali, Lombok, and Labuan Bajo.

GMTI data released in 2019 shows that Indonesia has occupied the top-ranking country as a world *halal* tourist destination alongside Malaysia (Khullar, 2019). In its development, the concept of *halal* tourism is still facing quite complicated dynamics when non-Muslim countries such as Japan, Korea, and Thailand compete to offer *halal* tourism. In countries where most of the population is Muslim, like Indonesia, they encounter not only positive responses but also negative ones from some local communities.

Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia Kiyai Ma'ruf Amin explained the concept of *halal* tourism in Indonesia during the 2021 Global Tourism Forum virtual meeting, including providing accommodation with *halal* food, adequate places of worship, and other *halal* facilities. *Halal* tourism in Indonesia is defined as providing *halal* service facilities that are friendly to Muslim tourists or Muslim-friendly tourism. Zainut Tauhid, Deputy Minister of Religion, also explained the concept of *halal* tourism. He believes that the negative perception of *halal* tourism must be changed.

According to Zainut, Sharia tourism or *halal* tourism is not an attempt to Islamize tourism by adjusting everything in the tourism environment to Sharia values. However, *halal* tourism entails providing facilities that allow Muslim

tourists to fulfill Sharia obligations while visiting tourist destinations. For example, the availability of *halal* food and beverages, the presence of worship facilities, the ease of sharia financial transactions, hotel facilities, and entrepreneurs' positive attitude toward tourists (Anwar, 2021).

Halal tourism was defined by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism in 2012 as activities supported by various facilities and services provided by the community, entrepreneurs, government, and local governments in accordance with Sharia principles. This *halal* tourism is only meant to supplement the existing conventional tourism. *Halal* tourism has emerged as a viable option for Muslim tourists seeking to meet not only their physical but also their spiritual needs. The context of *Halal* Tourism is services that do not alter other tourist or natural objects.

Many people are misinformed about *halal* travel due to a lack of literacy. *Halal* tourism is closely associated with Islamic symbols and beliefs in some regions. Some may question whether a *halal* tour can deliver an experience that is as free and enjoyable as regular tourism. They are concerned about the limitations on food, entertainment, and amenities. A hazy understanding of this notion can generate concerns.

The plan to develop *halal* tourism in Lake Toba, North Sumatra, for example, has

been rejected by many residents. They suspect that *halal* tourism will disrupt Batak culture, which is familiar with non-*halal* things, such as dogs and porks (CNN, 2019), likewise, in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), where Muslims are the minority (Egeham, 2019). Even statements of rejection of *halal* tourism were conveyed by regional leaders directly. The Provincial Government of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) has firmly rejected the concept of *halal* tourism in the region. This assertion was conveyed by the deputy governor of NTT, Josef A Nae Soi, at the opening of the 2019 NTT Province Musrembang or development meeting activities in Kupang (Bere & Budi, 2019).

Previous related studies show various trends, a study conducted by Adinugraha, Sartika, and Kadarningsih (2018) highlights the practice of *halal* tourism from a Sharia perspective, based on the realization of public goodness (*maslahah*), both benefits in the world and the hereafter (*fi ad-daraini*) in aggregate and simultaneously. The *Halal* Tourism Village is expected to be proof of sharia's flexibility at the practical level of the current lifestyle through the integration of *halal* and good (*tayyib*) values in the tourism sector to support better regional economic development.

Satriana & Faridah (2018) explore the development of *halal* tourism in several countries, review the concepts and

principles of *halal* tourism, and discuss the opportunities and challenges. This study explains that increasing the number of Muslim tourists from year to year is an opportunity and a challenge for the tourism sector to develop *halal* tourism. Many countries (both Muslim and non-Muslim majority) are trying to develop *halal* tourism. However, judging from the existing concepts and principles of *halal* tourism, these countries are generally only trying to create a Muslim-friendly atmosphere.

Next, the research by Subarkah (2018) shows that Indonesia's public diplomacy by presenting itself as a *halal* tourist destination is considered successful in attracting foreign tourists, especially Muslim tourists, and attracting investment. Moreover, the development of *halal* tourism has also experienced a positive increase. The increasing tourist visits and investment can boost the economy in areas such as West Nusa Tenggara as *halal* tourist destinations. Karoui and Khemakhem (2019) are the first to clearly define the Islamic consumer and the '*halal*' market, distinguishing between the Islamic and Muslim consumers. Then, Mahardika (2020) highlighted the *halal* tourism marketing strategy, revealing that the marketing communication strategy should be adapted to the age of the consumers and their motivations to travel. Through the use of E-marketing technology, product information should

be provided in line with the interests of potential tourists; this information is intended not only for Middle Eastern tourists but also for tourists worldwide.

Some studies above highlight *halal* tourism from sharia perspectives, opportunities and challenges, public diplomacy, and marketing strategies for *halal* tourism. In contrast, this particular study examines challenges in implementing *halal* tourism in East Nusa Tenggara from a social feeling perspective and Christian education while facing rejection. The research aims to understand the opinions of the regional government, business actors, and the community towards *halal* tourism in East Nusa Tenggara. This is comparable with Thailand's thriving tourism industry, illustrating what it has accomplished as a non-Muslim country. Further, it shows the country's seriousness in responding to the global *halal* market, as evidenced by its consistent definitions and standards, *halal* branding, and effective assistance for local SMEs (Mohd Nawawi et al., 2020).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach. Jary and Jary define qualitative research techniques as any research in which the social scientist devotes his skills as an interviewer or empathic observer to gather unique data about the problem he is investigating. In

addition, the data were extracted using literature review and observation. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants such as the Head of the Provincial Religious Office, the Tourism Office, tourism business actors, and related parties. In-depth interviews allow researchers to learn about the perspectives, experiences, and issues that diverse industry actors encounter. The data collection instrument is structured based on the needs. This research was conducted in Kupang City, East Nusa Tenggara Province (NTT) in 2019. Social feeling and Christian education are used to analyze the data.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An increase in the "*halal*-awareness" culture has become a phenomenon in Indonesia, especially before and since the enactment of Law No. 33 of 2014 concerning Guarantees for *Halal* Products in mid-October 2019. The public and business actors are increasingly aware of and paying attention to the issue of *halal* products. According to the Center for Research and Development for Religious Guidance and Religious Services (2018), people's intention towards *halal* products is increasing along with increased information and availability. Likewise, according to a national survey by the Center for Research and Development for Religious Guidance and Religious Services (2019), the readiness of business

actors regarding the implementation of mandatory *halal* is quite high. Likewise, in the tourism sector, the intention for *halal* food and service products, including tourism, is also increasing along with the establishment of Sharia hotels and *halal* culinary zones.

The development of Indonesian *halal* tourism is one of the priority programs of the Ministry of Tourism, which has been carried out in the last five years. GMTI 2019 data shows that by 2030, the number of Muslim tourists is projected to exceed 230 million worldwide. In addition, the growth of Indonesia's *halal* tourism market in 2018 reached 18%, with the number of foreign Muslim tourists visiting Indonesia's priority *halal* tourist destinations reaching 2.8 million with foreign exchange reaching more than IDR 40 trillion. Referring to the target of achieving 20 million foreign tourist visits in 2019, the Ministry of Tourism targets 25% or the equivalent of 5 million out of 20 million foreign tourists as Muslim tourists (Kementerian Pariwisata RI, 2019).

Crescent Rating recently released the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI). Indonesia finished second in the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2022. This means Indonesia climbed two spots from the previous year. This achievement demonstrates Indonesia's *halal* tourism's enormous potential and competitiveness on the global stage. Meanwhile, Malaysia

was ranked first, Saudi Arabia was ranked third, Turkey was ranked fourth, and the United Arab Emirates was ranked fifth. The achievement of Indonesian *halal* tourism in second place in the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2022 demonstrates global tourists' growing confidence. Of course, this accomplishment must be celebrated by maintaining the global community's trust and continuing to improve the various obstacles encountered. the potential to compete with Malaysia in developing *halal* tourism. In this context, various parties must support the development of *halal* tourism. The government, business actors, and society should work together to explore the potential of *halal* tourism, which has potential for the future.

So far, many terms have been used to describe this *halal* tourism concept. Among others are sharia tourism, Islamic tourism, *halal* tourism, *halal* travel, and Muslim-friendly destinations. The term sharia tourism in Indonesia is not approved by Arief Yahya (Minister of Tourism 2015) because it is considered exclusive and has the impression that some elements are religiously prohibited. As for Islamic tourism *halal* tourism, family, and religious tourism are also considered inappropriate. "Unmarketable in the Indonesian tourism market," according to Arief (Andriani et al., 2015).

The criteria for *halal* tourism are also quite diverse. According to the Secretary General of the Indonesian *Halal* Travel Association (ATHIN), Cheriatna, the criteria are *halal* food/culinary availability, places of worship, and information on prayer times (Kusuma & Frizona, 2019). As for the 2016 Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), three *halal* tourism criteria are reviewed, as shown in the following table (Pratiwi & Alamsyah, 2016).

Table 1.
Halal Tourism Criteria GMTI Version

Destinations Family Friendly	Services & Facilities in Muslim-Friendly Destinations	<i>Halal</i> Awareness and Destination Marketing
1. Travel destinations must be family-friendly.	1. Choice of food and <i>halal</i> guarantee	1. Ease of communication.
2. General security for Muslim tourists.	2. Easy and good access to worship	2. Outreach and awareness of the needs of Muslim tourists.
3. The number of arrivals of Muslim tourists is quite busy.	3. Muslim-friendly facilities at the airport.	3. Air transport connectivity
	4. Adequate accommodation options	4. As well as visa requirements.

The table above illustrates that the main point of *halal* tourism is not changing the culture and traditions where the tourist destinations are located, but rather the tourism services that need to be adapted to the comfort of Muslim tourists. These include choices of family-friendly destinations, choices of food and drinks that are guaranteed to be *halal*, and access to worship facilities that are easy to reach. *Halal* products, both in the form of consumer products and services, of course, can also be enjoyed by non-Muslim tourists.

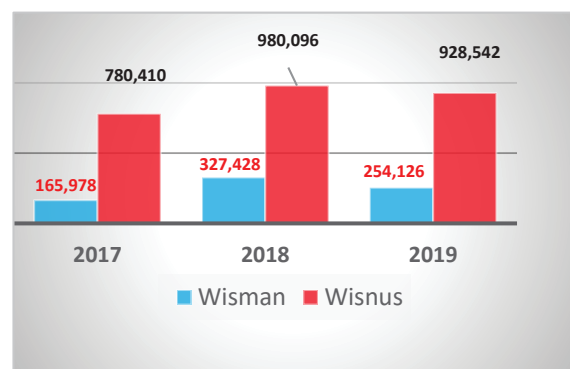
Comparison of the implementation of halal tourism in South East Asia, Malaysia is the leading halal tourism-supporting country in Southeast Asia, having been the first to establish a dedicated institution for halal tourism matters. The Islamic Tourism Center (ITC) was established on March 16, 2009, to assist Malaysia's Ministry of Tourism in conducting strategic tourism research and market intelligence, as well as providing training and capacity-building services related to Islamic tourism (Islamic Tourism Centre, 2019). Later in 2012, Malaysia began to develop a standard for Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services (MFHS), and in 2014, a document titled "Draft Malaysian Standard: Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services - Requirements" was released for public comment for a two-month period getting started on. This standard was Southeast Asia's first national standard to be published.

Singapore does not have a Halal tourism industry. The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) is known for their strict halal certification, and thus the existence of numerous halal certified restaurants and prayer rooms in public areas flourish, and the country's halal tourism development is also supported by the country's small Muslim Singaporeans. Thailand, which already has a large tourism industry, has also joined the effort to tap into the Muslim

market, in 2015 Thailand opening its first halal hotel, Al Meroz (Al awad, 2018).

Halal Tourism in East Nusa Tenggara

The tourism sector is used as the main economic driver (prime mover) in the Province of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), as mentioned in the Regional Mid-term Development Plan (RPJMD) of the Province of NTT for 2018-2023. This province has attractive natural resources to support and build the tourism sector. World-famous tourist destinations include Komodo National Park, Labuan Bajo, and Kelimutu National Park. In addition to other natural and cultural destinations, many remain to be explored. The following is data on the number of tourists arriving in NTT Province in the last 3 (three) years, as shown in the comparison chart.



Comparison Chart of Number of Tourists to NTT 2017-2019
(Source: Tourism Office of NTT Province)

The chart above explains that from 2017-2019, there were fluctuations in domestic (red chart) and foreign tourist

(blue chart) arrivals to the NTT Province area. In 2018, tourist arrivals experienced a significant increase. Whereas in 2019, tourist arrivals decreased significantly, especially in the number of foreign tourists. Labuan Bajo, which is in West Manggarai Regency, is one of the super-priority tourist destinations set by the Ministry of Tourism through the Tourism Authority Agency (BOP) Labuan Bajo-Flores in NTT (Florespedia, 2019). The Labuan Bajo Flores Tourism Authority Agency (BOP-LBF) is a cross-ministry agency directly controlled by the President to make tourism investment successful in Flores based on Presidential Decree 32/2018. This agency was then asked to facilitate and explain the concept of *halal* tourism, which has experienced an upward trend in recent years.

The polemic about the term *halal* tourism surfaced in NTT when it started with President Director of the Labuan Bajo Tourism Authority (BOP) Shana Fatina, speaking at a *halal* tour package socialization event on April 30, 2019. Fatina hopes *halal* tourism can help increase the number of tourist visits to the area. This *halal* tourism is expected to expand Labuan Bajo's market share, especially for Muslim tourists. Responses emerged from various elements of the NTT community regarding this matter, including the NTT Provincial government.

The Governor of NTT Province, Viktor Laiskodat, in several of his statements to the media, tends to reject this concept. According to him, the *halal* tourism label will become a negative reputation for tourism in NTT. People will question *halal* tourism, while there are aspects considered not *halal* (Moa, 2019). The rejection of *halal* tourism is also supported by the statement by Yunus Takandewa, deputy chairman of the NTT Regional People's Representative Assembly (DPRD). Takandewa stated that the concept of *halal* tourism will harm NTT as a leading destination. According to him, tourism authorities will immediately restore the concept of inclusive, open, and community-based tourism development. This must be done so that the goal of tourism development is really for acceleration and the fulfillment of people's welfare (Dwinanda, 2019). Tourism is about more than just the exchange of money; it is also about the exchange of ideals and cultures. Based on this logic, the public is split on whether the concept of *halal* tourism, which has been supported by structures of a specific value, may be used as a tourism label in Labuan Bajo. The sociocultural conditions of the people of Labuan Bajo in particular, and Flores in general, differ from other *halal* tourist destinations in Indonesia such as Aceh, Lombok, West Java, and South

Sulawesi, making this *halal* tourism idea difficult to implement.

Based on the 2018 population projection, the data shows that NTT consisted of 5,371,519 people. Based on religions, this number consisted of 9.28% Muslims, 38.68% Christians, 51.83% Catholics, 0.20% Hindus, and 0.01% Buddhists (BPS, 2019). This data shows that most religious adherents in the Province of NTT are Catholics and Christians. Hence, it is understandable if the term *halal* tourism, which is intended for Muslim tourists, is not fully understood by most people.

On the other hand, there are several opinions from people who are more moderate in responding to this *halal* tourism polemic, one of which came from the opinion of a senior Christian religious figure at GMIT Kupang, Rev. Loedwik Netti. In his opinion, the people of NTT do not need to be reactive with this concept and respect it as an immanent difference of view. Furthermore, as non-Muslim hosts, they are supposed to entertain Muslim guests with treats that are not prohibited by their beliefs. Netti emphasized that this banquet was a form of tolerance. He suggested that the public not be trapped in unnecessary suspicion with the polemic on the concept of *halal* tourism and even suggested the church view *halal* tourism as not in the framework of Islamization.

Next, Ahmad Atang, an academic who is also an expert staff of the NTT Provincial House Representative, conveyed a similar response. He argued that the provincial government should position *halal* tourism in the context of increasing tourism potential in the NTT area in general, not being reactive with rejection because of the connotations with certain religious terms. This concept must be explained properly by the provincial government because they are an extension of the central government's mission. This *halal* tourism movement is carried out in Indonesia and has become a world tourism trend. It is also carried out by non-Muslim countries.

Safrudin Alfian Mansur, a native of the Labuan Bajo and the Executive Board of the DPD ALPEKSI, has a similar opinion. He tends to see that the people and governors who reject it seem not to understand *halal* tourism, its management and mechanism. There is a need for agencies involved in the promotion of *halal* tourism to explain its purpose and management.

The Governor posed a more extreme argument. He suspects this refusal was based on the dislike of 'Islamic' terminology such as *Halal* and Sharia. The socio-political conditions support this reason after the 2019 presidential election, which often intersects with the use of political identity. The point is that

coordination, communication, and socialization must be carried out properly. This is where the role of the NTT Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) is needed by involving its stakeholders (religious leaders). Countries with Muslims as the minority have launched *halal* tourism, and this is not a problem. However, if we go any further, the idea of *halal* tourism will have a tremendous impact on well-being. According to Satriana and Faridah (2018), rather than judging the concept one-sidedly, both Muslim and non-Muslim majority countries race to develop a Muslim-friendly tourism culture.

The Head of the NTT Province Tourism and Culture Office, Wayan Darmawa, highlighted the polemic on *halal* tourism in his area as normal. According to him, the majority of NTT residents are non-Muslims, so caution is needed in its application. He added, *halal tourism* is not the opposite of the policy taken by the Governor of NTT that the Labuan Bajo and Komodo Island regions will be made premium tourist destinations. Wayan further reminded that the concept of *halal* tourism is still controversial. Thus, it has the potential for religious sentiment that may influence well-established religious harmony.

Wayan said that despite resistance, his party still encouraged tourism business

actors, especially hoteliers in NTT, to provide prayer support facilities for Muslim guests, such as Qibla direction indicators, and to serve food and drinks suitable for consumption by all groups. Several large hotels have implemented these facilities, encouraging tourism businesses to be able to adjust friendly services for Muslim guests. Indirectly, his party has encouraged efforts that lead to friendly tourism services for Muslim guests, even though there is no specific policy from the provincial government regarding this matter. Recognizing the potential of *halal* tourism in non-Muslim regions, local governments and companies should make an effort to understand the needs and preferences of Muslim tourists. Paying attention to these aspects may assist in helping the region to attract Muslim tourists while simultaneously fostering an inclusive tourist environment for all visitors.

Efforts towards serving Muslim tourists have also been partly carried out by hoteliers in Kupang City, one of which has been carried out by the management of Hotel Sylvia. According to Yani Luin, the representative, the hotel management admitted they did not understand the concept of *halal* tourism and had only heard of it. Socialization about this tourism concept seemed to be minimal by the government. However, there is indeed a recommendation from the hotel

association in Kupang to encourage existing hotels to provide Muslim-friendly rooms and restaurant facilities.

For example, Hotel Sylvia provides *Qibla* directions and facilities for borrowing prayer mats in each room. There is a policy from the owner that meals containing pork are not to be consumed in hotels, bearing in mind that some hotel workers are Muslim and hotel chefs also come from Muslims. During Ramadan, her party provides pre-dawn meals starting at 3 am with a menu that is according to *halal* even though the hotel has not yet received a *halal* certificate. Yani realizes that most of his hotel guests come from Muslim circles, so her party tries to serve them well.

Whether we realize it or not, the Sylvia Hotel has implemented the concept of *halal* tourism to some extent because they are aware that the number of Muslim guests who have come so far has been quite significant. Efforts to adapt services for Muslim guests will be more effective if they are accompanied by *halal* certification. In general, *halal* products are safe to consume and can be used by anyone. we can imagine that if the concept of *halal* tourism services can be implemented in NTT, more tourists may visit.

The Head of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion of the Province of NTT, Salman Marselinus, believes it is

an appropriate way to introduce the concept of *halal* tourism. This concept will be preceded by an approach to outreach to the community through educative and facilitative channels to convince all groups. It does not mean that '*halal*' is good according to Islamic law but also good according to other religions. More so, the public is not offended by the existence of the concept of *halal* tourism, as if there is a political mission in it that seems to aim at Islamization through *halal* tourism, even though this is not the case. The East Nusa Tenggara Ministry of Religion Office is pushing more towards the *halal* product certification program by forming a *halal* task force by coordinating with the agency Ministry of Religion Offices through the Islamic Community Guidance Organizer (zakat and waqf advisors). Therefore, *halal* certification can be served as expected (extending the validity period and obtaining the ones) to support *halal* business development.

Viewing the issue closely, the concept previously described above has a clear purpose: to provide Muslim's access to services that support travel during a tour and not to change the culture and habits of the existing community. The goal of applying the concept of *halal* tourism is to attract tourists from the Muslim population, which is too large to ignore. This is due to their enticing potential in the Indonesian tourism

sector and also to open employment opportunities.

The simple way of *halal* tourism is to provide a place for Muslims to worship, as well as a place to eat *halal* cuisine and non-alcoholic beverages. Almost all over Indonesia, except in non-Muslim areas, provides the services. Rules and regulations that benefit all parties are needed. The rejection response in NTT is common because the term *halal* concept tends to be attached to Muslim circles. Indonesia, which has so far been a country with the largest number of Muslims in the world, has only recently become a consumer. With the largest Muslim population, the application of the concept of *halal* tourism itself makes sense. As mentioned, the concept of *halal* tourism itself has been implemented in several developed countries, even with a non-Muslim majority population. In Japan, for example, the Japanese government provides a special website containing a guide for Muslim tourists: <https://muslimguide.jnto.go.jp>. This makes it very easy for Muslim tourists who will visit Japan.

Suppose the concept of *halal* tourism is objectively positioned by the NTT Provincial Government within the framework of increasing the number of Muslim tourist arrivals. In that case, this will help increase regional income from the tourism service sector. The

potential to reap income from local and foreign Muslim tourists is very tempting. Moreover, the NTT Province has potential tourism destinations such as Labuan Bajo and Komodo Island.

Regarding the pros and cons of this concept, it seems that due to overlapping interests related to policies in the Labuan Bajo and Komodo Island areas, the NTT Provincial Government is more inclined to promote these two areas as premium exclusive tourist destinations. This means that only rich consumers can enjoy them. Unfinished with the premium tourism program, the central government, through the Labuan Bajo-Flores, BOP offered a more segmented concept of *halal* tourism. Each concept seems to create a conflict of interest, ultimately leading to polarization and various responses among the people of NTT.

These responses emerged due to many people being misguided or misunderstanding the concept of *halal* tourism. The task of the central government is to socialize with various approaches to relevant parties in NTT that *halal* tourism is not a tour in which Islamic law is applied. Some elements of the NTT community want this *halal* tourism concept to be positioned more clearly, as conveyed by an academic and an expert staff of the NTT Local House of Representative (DPRD), Ahmad Atang and Safrudin Alfian Mansur. DPD

ALPEKSI NTT Province maintained that the provincial government should place the concept of *halal* tourism in the context of increasing tourism potential in the NTT area in general, not responding in a way that suggests rejection due to the associations with certain religious terminology.

Rev. Netti's viewpoint supports this. one of GMT's Christian religious leaders, who said the public should not be trapped in unnecessary suspicions about this polemic. The concept of *halal* tourism is not in the context of Islamization but rather the efforts to improve the community's economy from the tourism sector in NTT Province. As stated in Subarkah paper (2018), implementing *halal* tourism in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) successfully attracts foreign tourists, especially Muslim tourists, and attracts investment. The increasing tourist visits and investment can be used to boost the regional economy. By looking at the decreasing trend in local and foreign tourist arrivals to NTT, as shown by the previous table, implementation *halal* tourism can address the trend. In this case, a cross-sectoral approach is important to position halal tourism as a joint effort to increase awareness and understand the concept which is in line with the religious values believed in by the people of NTT. Apart from that, local community involvement can be carried out between the government, tourism

industry owner, and local communities in the context of providing Muslim-friendly tourism services.

Encouraging the Acceptance

The goal of applying the concept of *halal* tourism is to attract travelers from Muslim circles, who are in large numbers and have the ability to boost Indonesia's tourism sector. Nonetheless, the data collected by the researchers in this study showed that the NTT Provincial Government promotes the Labuan Bajo and Komodo Island areas as premium or exclusive tourism destinations. Meanwhile, the general population and lower classes continue to be underserved. This makes *halal* tourism implementation more difficult.

Related to these conditions, it is better to consider social feeling and Christian education regarding the implementation of *halal* tourism in this area. August Comte revealed that social feelings (social sympathy) are the basis for universalizing values in a pluralistic society (Gane, 2006). Only with social feelings can everyone accept the differences. Comte's idea can be considered in building social interaction, especially regarding the interaction and implementation of *halal* tourism in NTT.

Social feelings need to be used as the basis for various parties to build

togetherness and enjoy various tours in NTT. Social sympathy involves understanding and empathizing with others, especially those from diverse backgrounds. In a pluralistic society, people encounter various perspectives, cultures, and beliefs. Sympathy allows them to appreciate these differences and recognize shared humanity. Another use for social sympathy is breaks down barriers between different groups. When individuals genuinely care about each other's well-being, they transcend divisions based on religion, ethnicity, or ideology. This fosters a sense of unity and shared purpose.

This social feeling will be the basis for the parties to build solidarity in enjoying the diverse tourist attractions in NTT. Therefore, there are no exclusive tourist attractions that only certain groups can enjoy. The concept of social feeling can also strengthen the understanding of those who reject the implementation of *halal* tourism.

Christian education and the concept of *halal* tourism are not directly related to each other. However, several relationships can be explained when viewed from the perspective of the values espoused in both cases. Christian education teaches values related to faith and morality, such as compassion, humility, simplicity, integrity, and responsibility. The concept of *halal* tourism has more to do with ensuring

the *halalness* of food, drinks, and activities carried out during tourism trips, as well as paying attention to aspects of cleanliness and the sanctity of the surrounding environment.

In the Christian view, purity and cleanliness are important values. They are part of the human responsibility to protect the environment in which they live and to impact the life around them positively. Christian education plays an important role in advancing the congregation of religious people. Through this education, Christians are taught to appreciate differences, non-discrimination, and tolerance. They learn to live in understanding, and to give one another understanding among the faithful.

This is, of course, related to efforts to maintain environmental cleanliness and pay attention to health in the context of *halal* tourism. In addition, the values taught in Christian education also emphasize the importance of maintaining politeness and manners in relationships. This can be applied in the development of the concept of *halal* tourism, which focuses on respect and politeness in interacting with others, including when visiting places of worship attended by adherents of different religions.

In this case, Christian education and the concept of *halal* tourism have similarities in the values they adhere to,

namely the values of morality, responsibility, cleanliness, and respect for others. In *halal* tourism, applying these values will help Muslim tourists enjoy their holidays safely and comfortably while still paying attention to the religious values and morality they adhere to.

Christian education's values include social transformation in the light of God's commands (Christiani, 2006). Then, human wisdom depends on God (Siahaan, 2016) and the principle of love for God in accepting others, where accepting others does not see differences (Hutapea, 2022). The value of social transformation in the light of God's commandment emphasizes the importance of human life in God's truth. God's truth will bring people to changes in a dignified social order that treats others fairly. Regarding *halal* tourism, humans, as God's creation, should respect all the differences and the existing pluralism in Indonesia. God is present in the universe to make everything evident and perfect, including the relationship between God and humans (Parihala, 2022).

Christian education can provide insight people perceive the concept of *halal* tourism, at the same time respecting religious values and cultural diversity. Christian education frequently emphasizes the necessity of respect for religious values, including tolerance for

other religious principles, which can serve as a foundation for recognizing the relevance of religious diversity, including the requirement for *halal* tourism for Muslim tourists.

Christian education helps foster tolerance for cultural variety. It can assist to understand that *halal* tourism is about more than simply religious features; it is also about respect for diverse groups' beliefs, customs, and requirements. One of the traits emphasized in Christian education is the concept of hospitality and welcoming guest and other. It also allows individuals to recognize that supporting Muslim tourist with religious services represent one of the main ideals of hostility.

Besides that, people can be encouraged to engage in interreligious discourse through open Christian education. It might help to grasp the similarities and variations between religious practices as well as Muslim tourists' demands and expectations for *halal* tourism. Christian education can serve as a bridge of understanding that grows appreciation of cultural and religious diversity in the context of *halal* tourism. Especially addressed in an open and complete manner, could help to create a more accepted and inclusive atmosphere for tourists of various religious backgrounds.

Furthermore, it is also a great strength

to respect group differences and learn to celebrate this diversity (Regenstein, 2020). Policies implementation *halal* tourism should not encounter obstacles if all parties understand the truth and God's commands well in their lives, likewise, with the value of wisdom from God and the principle of love for God. Both emphasize being wise in treating fellow creatures of God. For this reason, the values of existing Christian education can educate every human being, especially the people in NTT, to consider the implementation of *halal* tourism. The tourism assets in NTT are intended to be enjoyed by people and groups from all over the world.

CONCLUSION

This study finds out that in a non-Muslim majority region, the implementation of *halal* tourism potentially faces challenges, such as rejection. To maximize the potential of *halal* tourism in East Nusa Tenggara, this study reveals several aspects to be utilized. The first is social feelings that can be used to build togetherness in enjoying the local tourist attractions. The second is Christian education, consisting of social transformation in the light of God's commands and the principle of love for God in accepting others. This emphasizes the acceptance of God's creatures and treats them fairly. The values of Christian education are expected to educate the people in

East Nusa Tenggara. Therefore, tourism is not only seen as a form of fulfilling the basic needs of certain groups but also as an emphasis on efforts to improve the welfare of the people. *Halal* tourism does not eliminate the existing habits or local wisdom of the local East Nusa Tenggara people. What is needed is basic service adjustments for Muslim tourists.

If the concept of *halal* tourism is positioned as a positive, those who reject it should be able to learn more about the benefits of its implementation. Such as economic growth and job opportunity, *halal* tourism attracts Muslim travelers, contributing to the local economy. *Halal* tourism promotes cultural exchange between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. It encourages dialogue, understanding, and appreciation of diverse traditions.

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