Halal Tourism: A Proposed Sharia Model for Implementation

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored the proper and feasible Halal Tourism (HT) model regarding the implementation of Sharia law in Aceh Province, Indonesia. Observation, questionnaire, and interview were conducted at three important tourist cities in Aceh: Banda Aceh, Sabang, and Takengon. Three hundred twenty-five respondents participated in this research, and convenience sampling was used to select them. The results were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's qualitative analysis method and the SWOT analysis to construct the expected model. The result indicated that the HT model must be arranged under the following six principles: ease, reliability, safety, trust, openness, and continual improvement. Those principles can be implemented in every aspect of tourism: policies and regulations, facilities, hotels, other accommodations, transportation, and human resources. Also, progress in the HT management must focus on implementing Sharia in the plenary (kaffah) and improving the locals' prosperity. Besides, the HT model consists of planning, decision-making, providing support, socializing, implementing, and supervising, considering its principles toward tourism and local cultures and values. The implementation of the model is expected to ensure the communities' life and integrate their inextricable foundation, Sharia while stimulating their socio-economic through the possibility of investment and employment in the future.

Keywords: *Halal Tourism; Aceh; Tourism Development and Planning.*

A. Introduction

In every aspect of their life, the revived, legal implementation of Sharia ratified by the local government of Aceh in Regulation No. 5 of 2000 by the Acehnese people makes the province unique in Indonesia. One aspect of Aceh's life heavily influenced by Islam, which has also become a Sharia regulation, is culture, including its traditional rituals and daily habits, even during the pandemic (Manan et al., 2021). The acculturation of Islamic teachings with local wisdom from the last millennium makes the customs and culture of Aceh unique and exciting. This condition has led to Aceh becoming one of Indonesia's favorite cultural tourist destinations for both local and foreign travelers.

The existence of Sharia brought the notion of Halal Tourism (HT). Through management based on Islamic jurisprudence, tourism in Aceh is expected to attract visitors from countries with other dominant Islamic populations. In addition, the challenges of managing the HT also become urgent for review. The Acehnese people apply Sharia, which includes *uqubat* (whip punishment) as a consequence. Various polemics still overshadow the execution of this penalty, followed by the pros and cons of different circles of society, including the foreign communities visiting Aceh. Based on multiple media reports, most foreign visitors to Aceh, especially those from Western countries, are likely to reject the applicability of this law (Afif, 2018). It informs the change implementation of this punishment; at first, the execution was carried out in the public space, but based on Regulation No. 5 of 2018 issued by the Governor of Aceh Province, the implementation is shifted to a correctional facility (ABC, 2018).

The issue of organizing tourism with Islamic nuances, known as HT, is overgrowing in countries with a sizeable Muslim population. Battour and Ismail (2016) assert that the concept of HT is any tourism activity or attraction acceptable in the light of Islamic teachings, primarily when it is directed to increase religious knowledge. Then, the implementation of HT is based on three characteristics: the assurance of halal, the priority of prayer as a daily routine, and the spirit of unity and peace (Widawati & Setiyorini, 2014). Meanwhile, Hakim et.al (2017) added four elements to the organization of HT: location, transport, consumption, and accommodation.

Kementerian Pariwisata (2015), the authority in the Indonesian tourism sector, has done a related study on HT, which reports that two cities, Banda Aceh and Manado, have tried implementing it. Nevertheless, Manado still faces difficulty formulating an appropriate model, while Banda Aceh is still handling it by attempting a suitable model to grow the economy (Yusuf et al., 2021). Another study discusses HT's concepts, practices, challenges, and future in Malaysia (Battour & Ismail, 2016). Hakim et al. (2017) have also conducted a study to promote HT in Indonesia. While their articles try to propose suitable characteristics for HT in Indonesia, they are still being made based on a deep analysis of the foreignness's perspectives upon implementing Sharia within tourism. Most data in this would explore these views, including others' related perspectives, in filling the gap.

To speak the context of Aceh, its locals believe that they have potential, possessions, health, and blessings in their life as their land is God's gift. No wonder the administration of tourism in Aceh must reflect faith in Islam, comfort, justice, society, togetherness, sustainability, openness, customs, culture, and local wisdom. The implementation of tourism in Aceh is an effort to share the blessings from Allah with the Acehnese people. It also may improve their welfare through the expansion and equitable distribution of business and employment opportunities, encouraging development, thus increasing Aceh's income, fostering patriotism, and preserving Aceh's history and culture. Socio-economically, the religious atmosphere in Aceh may lead the community to a new level of prosperity if it is maintained based on the teachings of Islam and local wisdom. This situation can be found on the island of Tinos, Greece, where co-existing Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic communities positively impacted their socio-economy from their holy locations (Terzidou et al., 2008).

Tourism development in Aceh should aim to preserve, promote, utilize, and improve the quality of tourist objects and attractions. It also may enable Aceh's historical and cultural values as a tourist attraction, increase employment, encourage business opportunities, and increase Aceh's domestic product and the prosperity of the people. This fact is ideal by

highlighting the distinctive selling point of Aceh, Islamic communities, and sites. Rebranding and re-promoting HT in Aceh may differentiate the province's domain from another.

The result of this study helps formulate concepts for the management of HT. In detail, the research aims to explore the views of tourists, especially foreign tourists, regarding the application of Sharia, particularly its impact on their comfort and conditions during their stay in Aceh. The study also aims to prepare concepts for better management of HT based on the results. Finally, the study also proposed a proper model of HT for organizing tourism embedding Islamic values.

B. Method

This study applied a qualitative approach using descriptive study. The area of study for this research covers the three main tourist destinations in Aceh, viz: Banda Aceh, the capital city of Aceh Province; Sabang, a district capital located in Weh Island, which is offshore from Banda Aceh; and Takengon, the district capital of Central Aceh Regency known as the highlands of Aceh; those areas were taken considering the existence of tourist attractions and destinations in Aceh. The data sources covered three parties: tourists, and tourist operators, along with stakeholders such as lodging management, restaurant owner, tourism attractions management, and transportation management. The respondents were taken using nonprobability sampling through accidental and snowball sampling, as noted by Etikan (2016). This method was based on considering conveniences and the subjects' willingness to join the research. Here, 325 local and international respondents participated in fulfilling the questionnaires.

Three instruments were used to collect data: an observation checklist, questionnaires, and interviews. Observations were made at the facilities for tourism, including, based on the data from Seksi Statistik Niaga dan Jasa (2018), five five-starred-hotel, five three-starred hotels, and 50 lodges and homestays. For the restaurants and catering, 28 of which were covered in the same source. All of them, plus 30 unregistered businesses, were observed in

this study. Eighteen registered bus companies also became subjects in this study. Their management was observed to see if they followed the precepts of Sharia law and looked at the effect of tourism on the surrounding environment. Then, foreign tourists at these sites were asked to complete the questionnaire prepared for this study. Besides, the tour operators completed the questionnaire and acted as the interviewees regarding the HT implementation in their site management.

The data analysis followed guidelines for the three stages in qualitative data analysis – data reduction, data display, and concluding, as stated by Miles and Huberman (1994). In the second stage, the problems, challenges, and strengths of the sample tourism areas chosen were looked into and displayed in a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) matrix, which was prepared following what was done by Yusrizal and Suparmin (2018).

C. Result and Discussion
1. Result
a. Conditions of Tourist Attractions

Data were collected from 73 tourism attractions using a checklist for observation. Two aspects were observed: facilities and accessibilities. Facilities included prayer rooms with adjoining washrooms and toilets, places to sit and relax, and cafes providing halal food and beverages and stalls selling souvenirs. The result of the observation is shown in the following diagram.
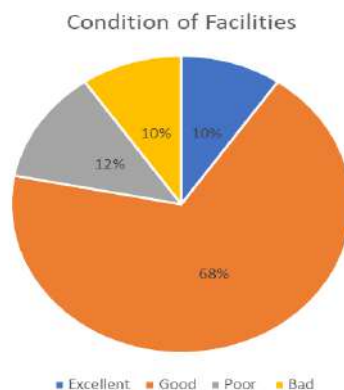
Diagram 1. The result of the observation from 73 tourism

The majority of facilities were in good condition. However, some problems were found, the availability of clean water in bathrooms and washrooms at almost all tourist attractions at Sabang and other attractions on Weh Island.

The next feature considered is accessibility. The considerations for access include the availability of signs regarding the facilities and pathways to them, plus special permits for the less abled. The following diagrams show the result of the observation for accessibilities.
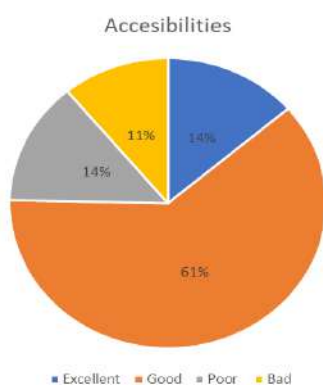
Accesibilities

Diagram 2. The result of the observation for accessibilities

The sanitary aspects, including the availability of toilets and facilities for washing before praying, were in good condition; however, in some cases, there were problems with water availability. Although the fares collection is generally satisfactory, there are also problems with scalpers at the ferry terminals and the bus stations. The passengers are asked for extra payments, which are illegal. Moreover, the scalpers appear to operate freely without officers in control.

1) Accommodation and lodging

The study finds that the provision and conditions of hotels and lodgings in Sabang are relatively good. Furthermore, the interview results indicated that the local government has made it easy for homeowners to open their homes as homestays. As a result, Sabang had the most lodgings and hotels in Aceh. Similarly, in the highlands of Central Aceh, the local

government has encouraged people to open homestays for tourists. At the time of the survey, it was evident that almost all rooms available in Takengon were full.

Although the facilities in such lodging were usually minimal, tourists were satisfied due to the low price. In addition, the observed lodging complied with the Islamic Sharia in terms of services such as alcohol-free beverages, Halal food, a prayer room with the direction of Mecca (Qibla), and appropriate entertainment (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Henderson, 2003; Saad et al., 2014). In addition, to be considered fully Sharia, the hotels' design, operation, and financial system have to meet the terms of sharia principles (Che Ahmat et al., 2015; Saad et al., 2014).

2) *Cuisine*

The availability of food and beverage vendors varied across areas of study. Restaurants, cafes, street hawkers, *and warung* (places selling traditional food), along with fast food chains such as KFC, Pizza Hut, and Dunkin' Donuts, existed in the area of study. Regarding the implementation of Sharia, the main issue is Halal registration and health registration for cafés, restaurants, and other businesses providing food and beverages.

Based on the observation, only 28 food and beverage outlets in Aceh are registered and certified as Halal vendors (LPPOM MUI Aceh, 2019). Self-claiming of Halal occurs among food and beverage vendors, which becomes dubious. In addition, the food is considered Halal if its concept is fully applied to the whole food chain. For example, the utensils and equipment for food processing must be purified according to Islamic teachings (Henderson, 2016). Halal certification has a positive relationship with the intention to purchase the products by both Muslim and non-Muslim customers (Aziz & Chok, 2013). It implies that Halal-certified product is compulsory for Muslim customers and well accepted by non-Muslim customers (Hassan, 2010).

Another problem relating to registration is matters concerned with hygiene and ingredients. No Halal or hygiene registration is required for processing food and beverages, particularly for small culinary businesses such as *warung*, street vendors, and food hawkers. Another issue noted is

food and drink prices. The data collection showed that only a few of the restaurants & hotels had prices on their menus. This condition can be inconvenient for tourists, as they need to know how much things will cost.

3) Transportation

During the data collection, there were 18 bus companies registered in Aceh (Keumala, 2018). Although there are no special sharia regulations concerning transport, the providers were aware of the implementation of Sharia. They constantly endeavor to seat male and female passengers separately unless they are family members traveling together. During the interview, one of the bus operators admitted, "*Kami pisah bang cewek sama cowok, kecuali keluarga yang kita liat dulu KTP sama KK nya*" (we separated males and females, except marriage couples after we check their ID and family card). This policy improves the comfort and convenience of transport and single female passengers. It makes them feel safer and more comfortable when traveling in Aceh.

The implementation of Sharia has also reached into air transport. Since the beginning of 2019, a policy has required female flight attendants to wear a sharia-compliant dress, i.e., Muslim flight attendants must wear a hijab or headscarves (CNN Indonesia, 2018). Also, there can be no plunging necklines, short dresses, or short sleeves. Moreover, in 2019 for Eid al-Adha, i.e., the day of sacrifice, and for Eid al-Fitr, the prayers to end the fasting month, the government of Great Aceh, where the airport is, passed regulations to stop all activity at the airport during these times of prayer (Setyadi, 2019).

In addition, the implementation of Sharia is also found in ferries used for sea transportation. Even though there are no separate seating areas for male and female passengers, a small room for prayer is available, which is quite comfortable with good prayer mats, prayer books, and even air conditioning.

b. Constraints on Tourism Development

1) Foreign Tourists' Perspectives

Amongst the foreign tourists, some agree and disagree with the introduction and implementation of sharia law. Those who agree primarily come from other Asian countries with large Muslim populations, particularly

Malaysia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, and Middle Eastern countries. These tourists find that the implementation of Sharia is unique and makes them feel comfortable, safe, and at home during their visit to Aceh. On the other hand, tourists from non-Muslim countries admit that they need some help with the Sharia implementation in their different socio-cultural backgrounds.

The major problem is the need for more information about the implementation of Sharia. Even though Aceh is widely known as a province with sharia-based laws and regulations, some foreign tourists still need help adjusting to Sharia's effects on tourism. One of its applications for women is covering up their bodies in public and prohibiting wearing bikinis or shorts.

In tourism, service is a primary component of tourism products. It is integrated into various tourism components, namely accessibility, tourist facilities, tourist activities, tourist objectives, and attractions and tourist services. Service plays a critical role in the success of every tourism product. In analyzing the aspects of service, five indicators are used, viz: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The data collected showed that the services provided to foreign tourists still need to be improved. However, most of the service was done under Sharia. Islam puts respect for guests as a part of faith in God. Thus, the service aspect of tourism can be regulated by the Qanoons or the Laws of Sharia. Nevertheless, regardless of their backgrounds, both Muslims and non-Muslims feel the traditional ways of life, natural conditions, and non-technological infrastructures in Aceh, which persuade them to revisit the location as they experience a tourism novelty, the HT.

2) Local Tourists' Perspectives

Local Indonesian tourists experience fewer problems than foreign tourists do. The similarity of their background means that the local tourists can more easily adapt to the local Acehnese environment and culture. However, some local tourists also need help regarding tourism in Aceh. The first problem, pricing, is similar to the situation detailed above. Most food vendors do not list prices. Therefore, in some cases, vendors attempt to increase the cost of their products. However, since it is common throughout Indonesia to haggle for a lower price, this is usually a manageable problem.

The second problem, noted in some tourist areas, is the locals, especially youths, who seem to mock visiting tourists outside Aceh. These locals ask for many payments, including parking tickets and tickets to enter the public beach. No local government legalized these payments, and no 'legal' tickets are given to the tourists.

3) Tourism Stakeholders' Perspectives

From the stakeholders' perspective, the biggest problem is the requirements for certification and regulation. In the context of tourism, there is no specific regulation governing HT in Aceh. Still, Islamic tourism programs and activities have already been developed, such as Eid al-Aid tour packages, Ramadan tour packages, pilgrimage packages to visit historic mosques and, tombs, and other sites. To date, the only special requirements for Halal tourism in Aceh are in the context of food and medicine. During the data collection, the study revealed that none of the restaurants, canteens, hotels, or similar places visited is Halal-certified by the Islamic Scholars Assembly or health-certified by the Department of Health.

The following constraint is accessibility. Some stakeholders, particularly in areas distant from Banda Aceh and Sabang, complain that access to their sites is inappropriate; some roads are still unpaved, and some bridges are still in poor condition.

2. Discussion

a. Problems, Challenges, Opportunities, and Strengths of Tourism in Aceh

Our research results illustrate that Aceh tourism still faces many challenges and constraints, as shown in table 1.

Table 1. The SWOT analysis matrix

Internal Factors		
Strengths (S)		**Weaknesses (W)**
1	Aceh has a variety of tourist destinations, including natural, cultural, and artificial ones, which most likely engage Muslims' interests.	1 Only a few vendors, particularly food vendors, have Halal certifications from the Ulama Association of Indonesia.

Internal Factors			
Strengths (S)		**Weaknesses (W)**	
2	Aceh has been a popular religious tourism destination since 2004 when the tsunami occurred.	2	Human resources in Aceh still need to be improved to manage HT properly.
3	Sharia Islamic values are embedded within the cultures of Aceh.	3	The amenities and facilities in Aceh only sometimes meet Halal standards for sanitation and hygiene.
4	Aceh has an international standard airport capable of handling the most significant aircraft with just a few direct links with nearby countries, likely increasing routes to other countries in the future.	4	Aceh needs its airline based in Banda Aceh to provide direct charter links with cities in areas with large Muslim populations, especially neighboring ones like Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Iran, and other Central Asia and Middle East countries.
5	Various events and rituals in the Islamic calendar are celebrated yearly in Aceh, including Eid al-Fitr and al-Aid.	5	New qanoons are needed for the complete implementation of Sharia.
External Factors			
Strategic Opportunities (SO)		**Strategic Threats (ST)**	
1	Indonesia has the most prominent national Muslim population in the world.	1	The management of HT in Indonesia, precisely in Aceh, still leaves much to be desired.
2	HT is expanding and, if promoted adequately with ease of access, can assuredly attract tourists from countries with other large Muslim populations.	2	The promotion and socialization of HT still need to be fully covered.
3	HT has an excellent potential to increase incomes in Aceh	3	Counseling and workshops are needed to help vendors certify their products and services.
4	Disaster history and mitigation-themed tourism attractions are promising areas for growth in Aceh.	4	Training and education must prepare human resources, who are required to manage HT's attractions.
5	Unique, local Islamic attractions indirectly promote the Acehnese culture and maintain the historical sites, such as the standing mosque that survived the tsunami.	5	Standardization and regular supervision are compulsory to boost the quality of HT services and facilities.
6	Having fixed schedules and better promotion of local events will help campaign HT.	6	A special board to accelerate the development of HT as an international tourism exhibition is indispensable.

In table 1, it is evident that the HT has excellent potential to provide employment, increase incomes and improve the prosperity of people in Aceh, even though there are still problems within the program. Two aspects are vital to further developing and enhancing HT in Aceh. The first is indeed standardization. Although Aceh has implemented Sharia, the implementation focuses on the legal and aesthetic aspects, such as dress and people's outward behavior. Sharia is still not deeply embedded in people's lives. The second is

empowerment to manage tourism properly. In this context, human resource training is essential.

b. Managing Tourism Using Halal Principles and Local Wisdom

1) The Government's Roles

The existing natural, cultural and historic potential is the foundation for tourism in Aceh. Furthermore, Aceh has introduced an Islamic model of management to implement HT. However, the government must introduce policies and regulations to manage HT as they still need to be created. Even though the general qanoon or law has been promulgated, there still needs guidance for implementing Sharia in tourism. Policies and regulations are required to determine and direct the management of HT in general. Several steps must be taken by the government of Aceh, such as guiding the establishment of HT, controlling each aspect of tourism, setting out standards, and designing guidebooks to offer HT products and services. The regulation for tourism management under the sharia law in Aceh is still vague. Paradoxically, establishing the rule on this site is still up in the air, which is vital in improving the quality of life of the Acehnese people. One of the most urgent needs is the provision of facilities for tourists with special needs and signage, including explanatory signage at tourism sites and objects. Too visitors are required to comply with the rules of Sharia for clothing and cover their *aurat* (viz: not excessively expose their bodies, meaning not wearing shorts, miniskirts, or halter-tops).

Regarding human capital, it is crucial to consider one of the valuable factors in developing the HT industry. As a strategy, HT-related employees need to increase their values by providing training about HT as another advantage (Palupi et al., 2017). It agrees with Atoyan (2015), who suggests that the quality of employees plays a significant role in the success of the tourism industry.

2) Stakeholders' Roles

Restaurants should provide people with special dietary needs to improve their service to tourists, specifically foreigners. Moreover, the government should accelerate the certification of Halal restaurants and food

and service providers in Aceh. Two principles can be the basis for improving products and services, accreditation, and standardization for HT: easy and reliable. In transportation, the stakeholders generally implemented Halal principles. They put unrelated, individual, male, and female passengers into separate rows of seats even though there is no precise regulation based on Sharia for this aspect of transportation. In Islam, as in all religions, safety is an essential aspect of every journey; all transportation modes must meet safety standards to ensure that passengers will have as little risk of harm during their journey as possible.

Moreover, accommodation services can be improved following two principles: standardization and providing culturally related services. The first principle is ensuring that every service and product available at the accommodation, including hotels, meets HT's criteria. This condition means that the water, the food, and the sanitary facilities must meet Halal standards. The second, culture-based service, relates to experiencing the local Acehnese culture. As Acehnese culture is embedded with Islamic tenets, providing culturally based services will also reflect the principles of Islam toward guests.

Ultimately, it is undeniable that improvement in the availability and standard of human resources for tourism must become the key to advancing tourism in Aceh. Nevertheless, foreign tourists have complained about poor experiences as tourists in Aceh. The key is the training and education of personnel involved in tourism to improve the situation.

c. Cultures within the Management of HT

The last World Halal Tourism Award in 2016 confirmed that Aceh, Indonesia, is the world's best Halal cultural destination (Wonderful Indonesia, 2018). Culture has a significant role in every aspect of Acehnese life, including tourism. On the other hand, the culture also challenges tourism development. The long war between Aceh and the Dutch colonial government undeniably turned into a wound within the Acehnese people's memory. Then, it leads to the rejection of foreigners, as the Acehnese people

tend to distrust foreigners; this condition still occurs in remote areas in Aceh. Furthermore, Henderson (2003) reported that misunderstandings relating to a different faith are common in some tourist destinations. Battour and his colleagues (2017), in their study, found that non-Muslims are not very welcomed by the community in Muslim countries based on various considerations like promiscuous sex.

Then, several issues emerged relating to the role of culture in the management of HT. The first, based on challenges, is the urgency to make socialization about the local cultural law for the foreigner. The second is related to the potencies of local cultures in tourism development. The government should create a map of existing Islamic local cultures and provide proper notification about their meaning to the tourist. It will, in turn, build the understanding and awareness of the tourist upon the existing local values. At last, the role of cultures in managing tourism under the frame of HT is clear: it becomes a consideration for the administration to provide the opportunity for developing tourism, and then the key here is socialization, as illustrated in figure 1.

d. Managing HT: From the Preparation toward the Implementation

Here, the critical point is to formulate the stages and phases in managing tourism under the HT corridor, as shown in figure 2. As for many programs, the first stage is planning. The planning stage involves mapping and evaluating the potency of particular tourist objects as a tourist site, event, or other related tourist attraction. Technically, cluster analysis based on the surrounding landforms, natural places, and anthropic touristic objectives can be deployed in Gorj County, Romania, for a better tourism campaign and valorization (Dona & Popa, 2013). In detail, the seven-factor model – sun and chill-out; knowledge and travel; independence and history; culture and indulgence; social and sports; action and fun; and nature and recreation (Neidhardt & Wörndl, 2020) – is applicable to be directed to tourists and tourism destinations. Then, to characterize HT, K-Means clustering can alternate the level (Aini & Khudzaeva, 2019).
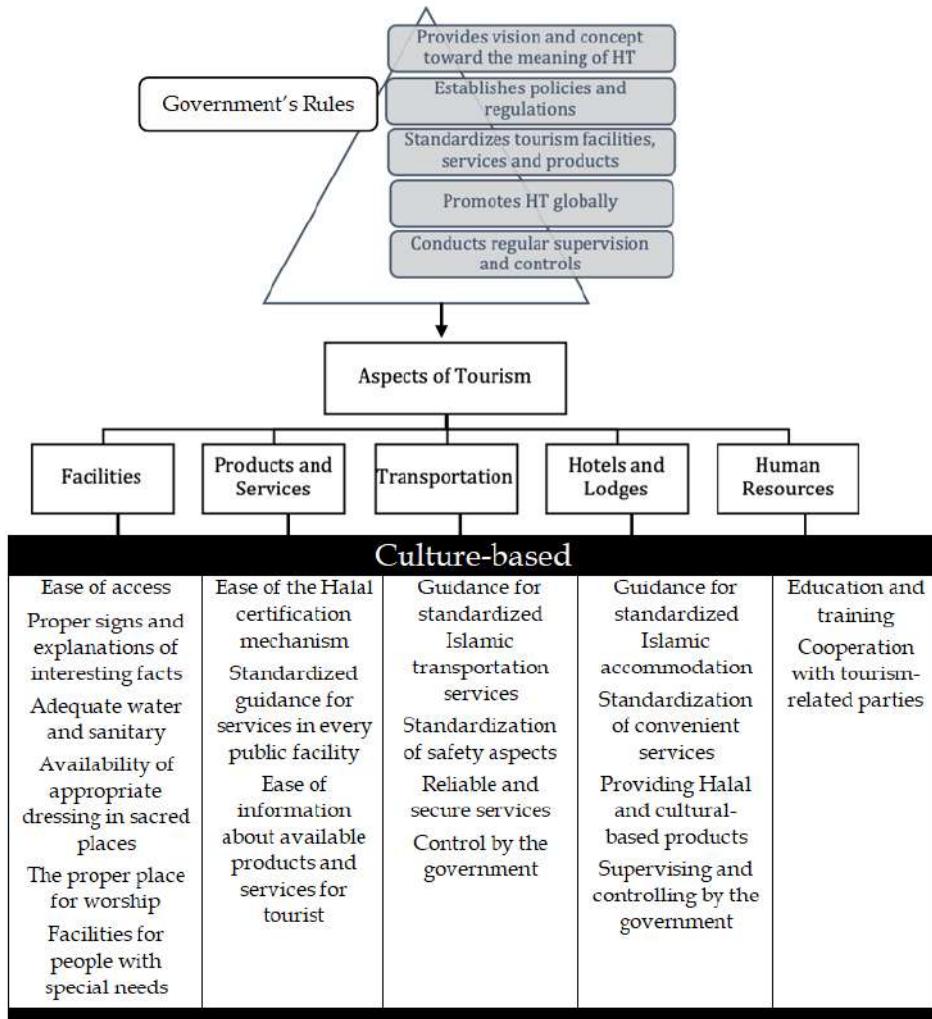
Figure 1: Role of each relating aspect within the management of HT

The second stage is decision-making. Decision-making undeniably requires to be incorporated into an organized planning procedure based on inputs collected (Hanlan et al., 2006). In this case, the government can decide on the possible management after relating data about tourist objects has been gathered. The decision-making should consider the local wisdom related to Sharia law and the feasibility and convenience of the tourist. During it, the government is also expected to cooperate with related parties to manage a specific tourist object.
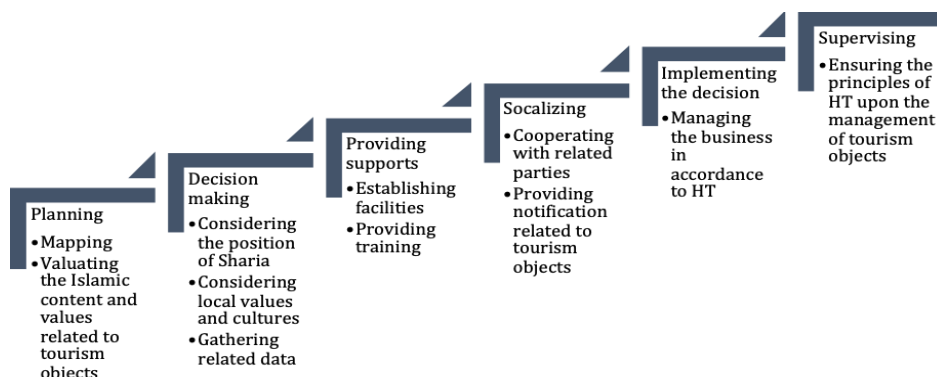
Figure 2: Model of the implementation of HT

Then the next stage is the socialization stage. The key here is to build understanding for people about the related tourist object, including its do's and don'ts. Transparency also must be promoted upon socialization, especially for aspects relating to legalization. The associated parties, particularly those who need legal documents, must be eased in legalizing their business; moreover, the legal document for Halal certification. Not only should the tourism stakeholders and providers work on offline Halal certification, but the online version should also be stamped all over tourism websites, exclusively on the providers' web pages. For instance, the case of Malaysia, which promotes itself as a global Halal tourism destination, is inversely proportional to the low Halal information listed on the internet pages of the tourism providers (Razak et al., 2019). Thus, marketing the Halal attributes should be fully considered for HT socialization.

The next stage is implementing the decision. Halal regulatory schemes, reassurances, and provisions should be routinely reviewed for better HT development (Henderson, 2016). Here, related parties can run their business following rules and regulations which have been made due to the implementation of HT in the management of tourism. Last, the stage is supervision and evaluation. The government should supervise the implementation of the decision and the supervision of the performance of HT. Supervision is also the most critical part of implementing HT to ensure that every party follows the guidance of HT standardization.

D. Conclusion

Aceh can become a benchmark for establishing HT in Indonesia or other Muslim countries. However, the implementation of Sharia in the form of HT management required profound and comprehensive policy and action toward the model of implementation encompassing planning, decision-making, providing support, socializing, implementing the policy, and supervising. Then, the ease of bureaucracy, particularly in halal certification, is a must to ensure that every part of tourism in Aceh has the halal certification.

Acknowledgment

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