

Halal tourism potential in North Maluku: Synergy between culture, religion, and economy

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ABSTRAK

Introduction

North Maluku, a culturally rich province with deep Islamic roots, possesses significant potential for developing halal tourism. Despite its historical Islamic sites and vibrant religious traditions, this potential remains underutilized due to infrastructural limitations and fragmented policy support.

Objectives

This study aims to analyze the development of halal tourism in North Maluku by examining the synergy between culture, religion, and economy. It further explores the roles of local stakeholders, assesses the empowerment of micro, small, and medium enterprises, and evaluates how global halal tourism trends influence strategic regional planning.

Method

Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research involved in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation across selected sites in North Maluku. Participants included religious leaders, government officials, tourism business actors, MSMEs, and local communities engaged in Islamic cultural practices.

Results

Findings reveal that the integration of local Islamic traditions into tourism offerings enhances destination authenticity and appeal. Government interventions remain partial but show commitment through the establishment of sharia-compliant facilities. Halal tourism has empowered MSMEs, yet challenges persist in aligning community-based models with halal standards due to knowledge gaps, resource constraints, and regulatory inconsistency. Global trends in Muslim

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travel offer strategic opportunities for North Maluku to position itself competitively within the halal tourism market.

Implications

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of halal tourism as a culturally embedded, community-driven development model. Practically, it underscores the need for regulatory clarity, investment in training, and strategic marketing. For policymakers, it offers evidence-based recommendations for developing inclusive, sustainable, and globally oriented halal tourism strategies in underdeveloped regions.

Originality/Novelty

Unlike previous studies that generalize halal tourism within urban or international contexts, this research offers a region-specific perspective that highlights the importance of cultural-religious synergy. It introduces a multidimensional framework where halal tourism functions as a tool for local empowerment, identity preservation, and regional economic development.

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INTRODUCTION

Halal tourism has evolved into a prominent sector in the global travel industry, driven by the increasing demand for travel experiences that align with Islamic principles. This sector has not only catered to Muslim travelers but has also broadened its appeal to non-Muslims seeking ethical and culturally sensitive tourism experiences. The global halal tourism market, valued at approximately \$245.78 billion in 2022, is expected to reach \$324.96 billion by 2030, illustrating the growing recognition of its economic potential (Muharis et al., 2023). Southeast Asia, with its large Muslim population, has become a key player in this sector. Countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand have implemented strategies to promote halal tourism, leveraging their rich cultural and religious heritage to attract Muslim tourists and boost their local economies (Madnasir & Cahyani, 2024; Yuniningsih et al., 2024). Indonesia, for example, has classified halal tourism as a strategic national program, offering facilities tailored to Muslim travelers, including halal food and prayer spaces, contributing significantly to its tourism industry (Jaelani, 2017; Pasarela et al., 2022). Despite this, challenges remain, particularly in lesser-developed regions like North Maluku, which, while rich in Islamic heritage, has yet to fully capitalize on the potential of halal tourism.

North Maluku, an archipelago in eastern Indonesia, holds significant untapped potential for halal tourism due to its Islamic history and cultural richness (Latif et al., 2023; Limpas, 2023; Usman et al., 2023). The region is home to historic Islamic sites, such as the Al-Munawar Grand Mosque in Ternate and the Tidore Sultanate, which can serve as key attractions for Muslim tourists. Despite these advantages, the development of halal tourism in North Maluku faces significant barriers, including inadequate



infrastructure, a lack of halal certification, and limited awareness among local businesses and stakeholders. These challenges prevent the region from fully leveraging its cultural and religious assets to attract Muslim travelers. Furthermore, competition from more established halal tourism destinations such as Bali and Lombok, which have well-developed halal tourism infrastructure, complicates North Maluku's position in the Southeast Asian halal tourism market. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the potential of halal tourism in North Maluku, focusing on the integration of cultural, religious, and economic elements to overcome the region's development challenges.

The main research problem addressed in this study is the underdevelopment of halal tourism in North Maluku, despite the region's wealth of Islamic cultural heritage. Inadequate infrastructure, including transportation networks and halal-compliant accommodations, hinders the region's ability to attract Muslim tourists. Additionally, many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism sector lack the knowledge and resources to obtain halal certification, which limits their participation in the halal tourism market. Another challenge is the lack of collaboration among stakeholders, including local governments, religious leaders, tourism operators, and local communities, which is crucial for creating a unified strategy for halal tourism development. To address these issues, this study proposes a multi-faceted solution that includes infrastructure development, capacity-building for local businesses, and a more integrated approach to promoting North Maluku's halal tourism offerings. The integration of local culture, religious practices, and community-based tourism is essential for creating a sustainable halal tourism model that benefits both the local economy and the tourism sector.

Drawing from the literature on successful halal tourism destinations, several strategies have been identified to overcome the challenges facing North Maluku. One key success factor is the integration of local culture and religious practices into tourism offerings. Research has shown that regions that emphasize the authenticity of their cultural and religious heritage attract more Muslim tourists ([M. Alam & Ali, 2022](#); [Ismanto & Devy, 2022](#); [Santoso, 2022](#)). In regions like Aceh ([Abidin et al., 2024](#); [Ningsih et al., 2022](#); [Saleh et al., 2022](#)) and West Sumatra ([Ghafur Wibowo & Yusuf Khoiruddin, 2020](#); [Koeswara et al., 2024](#); [Nanda et al., 2023](#)), the government has worked closely with local communities and businesses to integrate halal tourism into their tourism offerings. These regions have developed halal-friendly infrastructure, including halal restaurants, prayer spaces, and halal-certified accommodations, which has helped to create a welcoming environment for Muslim travelers ([Huda et al., 2022](#)). Furthermore, training programs for local business owners have been instrumental in ensuring that tourism services align with halal standards. For North Maluku, a similar approach that integrates local culture, Islamic traditions, and community engagement is crucial for creating an authentic and sustainable halal tourism destination.

Another key strategy highlighted in the literature is the importance of stakeholder collaboration in developing halal tourism. Successful halal tourism destinations have fostered partnerships between local governments, business owners, and communities to ensure that tourism initiatives align with both market demands and cultural values.



This collaboration is especially important in less-developed regions like North Maluku, where limited resources and knowledge may hinder the development of halal tourism. Stakeholder engagement not only helps to address infrastructural and operational challenges but also ensures that local communities benefit from the economic opportunities created by tourism. By fostering collaborations with religious leaders, tourism businesses, and local government agencies, North Maluku can develop a comprehensive halal tourism strategy that addresses its unique challenges and capitalizes on its Islamic heritage.

While the literature provides valuable insights into the development of halal tourism, there remains a gap in the research regarding the specific challenges and opportunities faced by regions like North Maluku, which are still in the early stages of halal tourism development. Most studies on halal tourism have focused on more established destinations, such as Malaysia and Indonesia's popular tourist islands, and have not fully explored the potential of lesser-known regions. Additionally, while the role of local culture and religious practices in tourism has been well-documented, there is limited research on how these elements can be integrated into a cohesive tourism strategy that promotes both cultural preservation and economic development. This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on North Maluku and providing actionable recommendations for halal tourism development in less-developed regions with rich cultural and religious assets.

The primary objective of this study is to explore the potential for halal tourism in North Maluku and to develop a comprehensive strategy for its growth. The research aims to identify the key challenges facing the region, including infrastructural deficiencies, a lack of halal certification, and limited stakeholder collaboration. By examining successful case studies from other regions, the study will propose strategies that North Maluku can adopt to overcome these challenges. The hypothesis is that by integrating local cultural heritage, religious practices, and economic activities, particularly through the involvement of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), North Maluku can develop a sustainable halal tourism model that benefits the local economy and strengthens its position as a halal tourism destination. The study's findings will contribute to the broader literature on halal tourism by offering a localized perspective on how peripheral regions can develop this sector, providing insights for policymakers and tourism developers in similar contexts. Additionally, this study will highlight the importance of community engagement, infrastructure development, and capacity-building for MSMEs as critical elements of successful halal tourism strategies in emerging destinations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Key Success Factors for Developing Halal Tourism in Emerging Regions

The success of halal tourism in emerging regions depends heavily on several factors, including government support, community engagement, workforce development, and the establishment of halal certification standards. Government policies are particularly

critical in providing the regulatory framework necessary to develop halal tourism. Research shows that effective government policies, including halal tourism regulations, local business promotions, and halal certification programs, significantly influence the sector's success ([Pratama et al., 2023](#)). In regions with limited infrastructure, such as North Maluku, government-led initiatives are essential to stimulate investment and build tourism infrastructure, which would otherwise be difficult to fund privately.

Another key factor for success is community involvement. In less-developed regions, community engagement in tourism planning and implementation has proven to foster a sense of ownership and ensures that tourism development aligns with local culture and traditions. Studies have shown that community-based tourism initiatives in regions like Aceh, Indonesia, have enhanced the authenticity and sustainability of halal tourism by involving locals in decision-making processes ([Adel et al., 2021](#)). Conversely, in more developed regions, tourism stakeholders tend to be more centralized, and while this can provide efficiency, it sometimes overlooks local nuances that contribute to a region's distinct cultural identity.

Integration of Local Culture and Religious Practices

In Southeast Asia, the integration of local culture and religious practices into tourism offerings is central to enhancing the appeal of halal tourism destinations. Halal tourism in regions like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei successfully combines Islamic cultural practices with local traditions to create authentic experiences for Muslim travelers. For instance, the promotion of halal food festivals that highlight regional culinary traditions helps preserve cultural heritage while catering to the dietary preferences of Muslim tourists ([Madnasir & Cahyani, 2024](#)). In Aceh, cultural elements like traditional crafts and indigenous practices are showcased alongside halal tourism offerings, which strengthens the destination's appeal and fosters greater cultural pride among local communities ([Aksamawanti & Ridwan, 2022](#)).

The integration of local culture not only appeals to Muslim travelers but also enriches the travel experience for non-Muslims, thus broadening the tourist base. Additionally, incorporating religious practices into the tourism experience, such as providing prayer facilities and halal food options, is fundamental in ensuring that Muslim tourists feel welcomed and respected. This approach encourages intercultural exchange and understanding, as seen in Lombok, where community-based tourism initiatives, including local ceremonies and handicrafts, have created a unique environment for tourists to engage with the local culture while adhering to Islamic values ([Prawiro, 2022](#)).

Government Policies and Regulations

Government policies and regulations play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of halal tourism, especially in regions with limited tourism infrastructure. The establishment of a clear regulatory framework is necessary to guide the development of halal tourism in such areas. Policies that encourage investment in halal-friendly infrastructure, such as halal restaurants, prayer spaces, and



accommodation options, are essential for creating an environment that caters to the needs of Muslim tourists. In Indonesia, for example, the government has introduced a halal tourism certification system that provides businesses with clear guidelines to ensure their offerings align with halal standards (Effendi et al., 2021; Katuk et al., 2020; Musthofa et al., 2023; Suharko et al., 2018). Such frameworks are crucial in emerging regions, as they create consistency and build trust among tourists.

Moreover, government policies can incentivize investment in tourism infrastructure, particularly in less-developed regions. Regions like West Sumatra have benefited from local regulations that encourage investment in halal tourism facilities, boosting their appeal to domestic and international tourists (Nanda et al., 2023). The role of the government in supporting training and capacity-building programs for local businesses is also significant. In regions with limited experience in tourism, such training initiatives help raise the service quality to meet the expectations of halal-conscious travelers (Pulungan & Indra, 2024). Ultimately, effective government involvement can help create a conducive environment for halal tourism to flourish, especially in regions with limited resources.

Challenges in Halal Tourism Development

Developing halal tourism in regions like North Maluku is not without its challenges. Limited infrastructure, particularly in transportation and accommodation, is one of the primary obstacles to tourism growth (Berdenov et al., 2024; Galdolage B.S et al., 2024; Lim et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2025). The lack of accessible roads and reliable public transportation systems can deter potential visitors from traveling to halal tourism destinations, reducing the economic benefits of the tourism sector. Moreover, accommodation options that meet halal standards are scarce, making it difficult for Muslim tourists to find suitable places to stay. These infrastructural deficits must be addressed through strategic government investments to make halal tourism more accessible and attractive.

In addition to infrastructure challenges, the regulatory environment in regions like North Maluku may not yet be equipped to support halal tourism development. The lack of a clear framework for halal certification and the absence of specific regulations for halal tourism can hinder businesses from entering the market. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in particular may struggle to navigate the certification process, as many lack the resources and knowledge necessary to comply with halal standards. This creates a significant barrier to entry, limiting the growth potential of the halal tourism sector in emerging regions. Additionally, community awareness and engagement remain vital challenges, as some local residents may not fully understand the concept or benefits of halal tourism, which can slow the adoption of halal standards in the local tourism industry.

The Role of MSMEs in Halal Tourism Sustainability

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are integral to the sustainability of halal tourism in less-developed regions. These enterprises contribute significantly to local



economies by providing halal food, accommodation, and cultural experiences that cater to Muslim tourists (Hendijani & Sanny, 2021; Puspitaningrum et al., 2021; Rosli et al., 2024). MSMEs in North Maluku can play a vital role in enhancing the region's halal tourism offering by providing unique, locally sourced products and services that align with Islamic principles. Their involvement not only generates employment opportunities but also ensures that economic benefits from tourism remain within the community.

Furthermore, MSMEs are essential for maintaining the authenticity of the tourism experience. By integrating local culture and traditions into their offerings, MSMEs help preserve the region's cultural identity and provide visitors with authentic experiences. In community-based tourism models, MSMEs often collaborate with local communities to create sustainable tourism experiences (Aprilani et al., 2023; Fafurida et al., 2024; Oktavilia et al., 2024) that benefit both the economy and the local culture. However, for MSMEs to thrive in halal tourism, they must overcome barriers such as limited access to finance, a lack of capacity-building programs, and challenges related to halal certification. Addressing these issues through training, financing options, and simplified certification processes can empower MSMEs and ensure their long-term success in the halal tourism sector.

Research Gap and Significance of the Study

While substantial research has been conducted on halal tourism, much of it focuses on established tourism destinations like Indonesia's Bali and Malaysia, leaving emerging regions like North Maluku underexplored. There is a noticeable gap in the literature concerning the development of halal tourism in less-developed areas, particularly those with rich cultural and religious heritage but limited tourism infrastructure. Additionally, the integration of local culture, religious practices, and community-based tourism into halal tourism development remains insufficiently studied. North Maluku's specific challenges, such as infrastructure limitations, regulatory gaps, and stakeholder engagement, have not been adequately addressed, making this study crucial for bridging these gaps in the existing literature.

This study is significant as it offers a localized perspective on halal tourism development, focusing on North Maluku, a region with untapped potential. By addressing the unique challenges faced by less-developed areas, this research contributes new insights into how local culture, religious values, and community engagement can be integrated into halal tourism. The study also highlights the importance of government policies, MSMEs, and infrastructure in fostering sustainable tourism. Its findings will inform policymakers, tourism developers, and local communities, providing practical recommendations for promoting halal tourism and contributing to regional economic growth and cultural preservation.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research method to explore the potential of halal tourism in North Maluku, focusing on the synergy between culture, religion, and the economy. The qualitative approach was chosen for its suitability in capturing in-



depth insights into the socio-cultural, religious, and economic dynamics of the region. By utilizing qualitative data, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the development of halal tourism in North Maluku, along with identifying the challenges and opportunities associated with this emerging sector.

Research Locations and Rationale

The research was conducted in several key locations within North Maluku, which are identified as having strong potential for halal tourism development. These locations include Ternate City, Tidore Islands City, and Central Halmahera Regency. Ternate and Tidore, both rich in Islamic history and culture, were selected due to their significance in the spread of Islam throughout Eastern Indonesia. These areas are home to several notable Islamic heritage sites, such as the Al-Munawar Grand Mosque in Ternate and the Tidore Sultanate, which are central to the region's cultural and religious identity. Central Halmahera was included due to its promising potential in natural and Muslim cultural tourism. These sites provide a blend of historical, cultural, and natural attractions that are essential for the growth of halal tourism in the region.

Sampling and Participants

The study used purposive sampling to select participants who could provide relevant insights into the development of halal tourism in North Maluku. The sample comprised various stakeholders directly involved in the region's tourism sector. These included religious leaders, such as mosque imams and traditional Islamic leaders, who play an influential role in shaping the cultural and religious dynamics of the region. In addition, tourism business actors, including managers of tourist destinations, halal restaurants, and sharia-compliant accommodations, were included for their direct involvement in halal tourism operations. Representatives from local government agencies, particularly those from the tourism office and related sectors, were also selected to provide perspectives on policy, infrastructure, and governmental support for halal tourism development.

The study further involved local communities engaged in cultural and religious activities, as their participation is crucial in understanding the local context and the community's role in promoting halal tourism. The sample also included Muslim tourists, both local and domestic, to gather insights into their preferences and expectations for halal tourism experiences in North Maluku. The diverse composition of the sample enabled the study to capture a wide range of perspectives, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the region's halal tourism potential.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study involved a combination of in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format with the selected stakeholders. These interviews allowed for open-ended questions, enabling the participants to share their experiences, opinions, and insights on the development of halal tourism. The interviews were designed to explore key themes such as the importance of religious and cultural values

in tourism, the role of local communities, challenges faced by tourism operators, and the policies needed to support the growth of halal tourism.

Participatory observation was another crucial data collection technique used in the study. Researchers visited key tourist sites, attended local cultural and religious events, and observed the interactions between tourists and tourism service providers. This approach allowed the researchers to gather firsthand data on how halal tourism services were being implemented in practice, including the availability of halal food, prayer facilities, and the integration of Islamic values into the tourism experience. Observations also provided insights into the behavior and preferences of Muslim tourists, helping to understand how the local culture and Islamic traditions shaped their travel experiences.

Additionally, document analysis was conducted to review relevant secondary sources such as government policies, reports, and previous research on halal tourism. These documents provided valuable background information on the policy landscape, infrastructure development, and previous efforts to promote halal tourism in the region. By combining these data collection techniques, the study ensured a comprehensive approach to understanding the multifaceted aspects of halal tourism in North Maluku.

Data Analysis

The data collected through interviews, observations, and documents were analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques. Thematic analysis was applied to identify key themes and patterns within the data. This involved coding the data into categories based on common topics or ideas, such as the importance of cultural heritage, the role of religious values, challenges related to infrastructure, and the economic impact of halal tourism. These themes were then analyzed to understand the relationships between culture, religion, and the economy in the development of halal tourism.

The data analysis process also included triangulation to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. By cross-referencing data from different sources—interviews, observations, and documents—the researchers were able to corroborate their findings and ensure a balanced interpretation of the data. This approach helped to minimize bias and provided a more comprehensive view of the halal tourism landscape in North Maluku.

Research Ethics

The study adhered to ethical standards in conducting research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that they were fully aware of the purpose of the research and their role in the study. Participants were assured that their responses would be treated with confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. The researchers also ensured that the data collected were used responsibly and in accordance with ethical guidelines.

Additionally, the study respected the cultural and religious sensitivities of the local communities. Researchers were mindful of the importance of respecting local traditions and beliefs while engaging with participants, particularly when discussing religious



practices and cultural heritage. This approach helped to establish trust with the participants and ensured that the study was conducted in a culturally sensitive manner.

Limitations of the Methodology

While the qualitative descriptive method used in this study provided valuable insights into the halal tourism potential in North Maluku, there were certain limitations that should be acknowledged. One limitation was the relatively small sample size, which focused on selected stakeholders within specific locations in North Maluku. Although the purposive sampling method ensured that key participants were included, the findings may not be fully representative of the broader population. Future research could benefit from expanding the sample size to include a more diverse group of participants from other regions in North Maluku.

Another limitation was the reliance on qualitative data, which, while rich in detail, may not allow for generalization to other contexts. The study focused on understanding the specific dynamics of halal tourism in North Maluku, and its findings may not be directly applicable to other regions with different cultural, religious, and economic characteristics. Future studies could incorporate quantitative methods, such as surveys or economic modeling, to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the impact of halal tourism on local economies.

Despite these limitations, the research methodology employed in this study provided valuable insights into the potential for halal tourism development in North Maluku. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on halal tourism and offer practical recommendations for policymakers and tourism developers to foster the growth of this sector in the region.

RESULTS

Halal Tourism Potential in North Maluku

North Maluku has significant halal tourism potential, especially in the cities of Ternate and Tidore. Both cities are historical centers of the spread of Islam in Eastern Indonesia and have rich Islamic cultural sites, such as the Al-Munawar Grand Mosque in Ternate and the Tidore Sultanate. In addition, there are also interesting natural destinations, such as Nusa Ra Island and Sulamadaha Beach, which can be developed into halal tourist attractions that are friendly to Muslim tourists (Head of Tourism for Ternate City, personal communication, February 15, 2025).

"Our main focus is to utilize the richness of Islamic culture and history in North Maluku. We see great potential in historical sites such as the Al-Munawar Grand Mosque and the Tidore Sultanate. Of course, to support halal tourism, we are also working to provide halal accommodation and restaurant facilities, although currently they are still limited"

Synergy of Culture and Religion in Halal Tourism

Local culture in North Maluku is very thick with Islamic values. Traditions such as barazanji, grave pilgrimage, and the celebration of the Prophet's Birthday are an integral part of people's lives. Islamic historical sites, such as Amsterdam Fort and the Old Wapauwe Mosque in Hila Village, Central Maluku, also show great potential in developing halal tourism based on culture and religion. According to the Decree of the Owner of Sharia Hotels in Ternate 02/18/2025 "I hope that the government and tourism industry players can focus more on developing Muslim-friendly facilities, such as halal restaurants, ablution facilities in public places, and more training for local tourism business actors. In addition, halal tourism promotion must be carried out more intensively, both at the national and international levels."

And also according to Mr. AZ 02/22/2025 "The most important thing is the development of supporting facilities, such as halal hotels and restaurants. In addition, training for local communities on how to welcome and serve Muslim tourists is also very necessary. We are ready to work with the government and other tourism actors to develop this potential."

Economic Impact of Halal Tourism Development

The development of halal tourism villages, such as those carried out in Colo Tourism Village, has shown a positive impact on the community's economy. The community has experienced an increase in income through the MSME sector, such as halal culinary, handicrafts, and tour guide services. However, there are challenges related to increasing living needs and waste management that need to be addressed sustainably. According to the Decree of the Owner of a Sharia Hotel in Ternate 02/18/2025 "I see a great opportunity for halal tourism in North Maluku, especially considering that the majority of the population here is Muslim. Many tourists from outside are looking for accommodation in accordance with sharia principles. By opening a sharia hotel, we hope to be able to meet their needs and also contribute to the development of halal tourism in this area."

The Role of Government in Developing Halal Tourism

The Ternate City Government has shown its commitment to developing halal tourism by building a sharia market and a sharia credit bank (BPRS). However, to realize optimal halal tourism, clear regulations and support from various parties are needed, including business actors and the community. According to the Head of Tourism of Ternate City 02/15/2025 "The government plays an active role in building supporting facilities such as sharia markets and sharia banks. We also work with tourism industry players to improve human resource capacity, both through training for hotel managers, restaurants, and tour guides, so that they can understand and serve Muslim tourists well."

In line with the head of tourism, According to Mr. AZ 02/22/2025 "We believe that Tidore has great potential to become a halal tourism destination, considering the many

historical Islamic sites such as the Tidore Sultanate and the tombs of the sultans. The community here is also very supportive, because the majority of us are Muslim."

Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing Halal Tourism

Some of the challenges faced in implementing halal tourism in North Maluku include limited facilities that meet halal standards, lack of training for business actors, and minimal promotion of halal tourism destinations. However, with an inclusive and collaborative approach between the government, community, and private sector, halal tourism in North Maluku has great potential to develop and attract domestic and international tourists. According to the Head of Tourism of Ternate City 02/15/2025 "The biggest challenge is the limited infrastructure that supports the needs of Muslim tourists. We still lack hotels that meet sharia standards, and most restaurants are not fully halal. In addition, promotion of the potential for halal tourism in North Maluku also still needs to be improved."

In line with the head of tourism of Ternate city, According to the Decree of the Owner of Sharia Hotels in Ternate 02/18/2025 "The challenge is the lack of understanding of sharia standards among most local tourism industry players. Many do not really know how to manage halal facilities, especially in terms of food and service. In addition, promotion is also a major problem. We still have difficulty attracting tourists from outside due to the lack of available information. The following is a table of existing results:

Table 1

Research Results

Aspect	Findings	Source / Location
Halal Tourism Potential	- The existence of Islamic historical and natural sites such as the Al-Munawar Mosque, Nusa Ra Island, Sulamadaha Beach	Ternate, Tidore, Halmahera
Synergy of Culture & Religion	- Local traditions rooted in Islam such as <i>barazanji</i> , Maulid Nabi, and grave pilgrimage - Local Islamic architecture in the sultanate and old mosques	Tidore Sultanate, Amsterdam Fort, Wapauwe Old Mosque
Economic Impact	- Increasing community income through halal MSMEs - Opening up job opportunities in the tourism sector	Comparative study: Colo Tourism Village (Reference: IAIN Kudus)
Role of Government	- Development of sharia markets and BPRS - Involvement of the Tourism Office in promotion and infrastructure	Ternate City Government
Implementation Challenges	- Lack of halal facilities (accommodation, transportation) - Lack of education and training - Promotion is not yet optimal	All research areas
Development Opportunities	- The global Muslim tourism market is growing	Potential destinations in North Maluku and the Eastern Indonesia region

-
- Local Islamic culture can be an attraction for spiritual and educational tourism
-

Source: Primary data. Authors' analysis.

DISCUSSION

Authenticity through the Synergy of Culture and Religion

This study found that the strength of North Maluku's halal tourism lies in the authentic synergy between Islamic religious values and local cultural traditions. Rituals such as *barazanji*, *maulid* celebrations, and grave pilgrimages reflect a living Islamic culture that is still preserved by local communities. Historical heritage sites like the Tidore Sultanate, the Al-Munawar Grand Mosque, and the Old Wapauwe Mosque serve not only as religious monuments but also as cultural signifiers that shape a unique identity for the region. By integrating these traditions into tourism, North Maluku presents itself not just as a destination, but as a living embodiment of Islamic heritage in Eastern Indonesia. This synergy reinforces the region's potential to attract tourists seeking spiritual and cultural depth in their travel experiences.

This finding aligns with previous studies (A. A. Abdullah et al., 2020; A. Alam et al., 2024; Prawiro, 2022; Wulansari & Candraningrat, 2024) arguing that halal tourism's authenticity is rooted in the fusion of Islamic principles with specific cultural expressions. Sarpini & Aziz (2023) support this by noting that halal tourism enhances visitor appreciation through cultural engagement, while Ismanto & Rofiq (2022) document how Islamic customs in Pekalongan similarly elevate tourist satisfaction. These findings suggest that authenticity is a vital asset in peripheral tourism development. Moreover, Hasan (2024) emphasizes that tourists form emotional bonds with destinations offering culturally rich experiences, which increases return visits. Thus, North Maluku's traditional religious practices are not only cultural treasures but also strategic assets in enhancing destination competitiveness.

Theoretically, these findings confirm the cultural embeddedness of tourism (Czernek-Marszałek, 2020, 2021; Higuchi & Yamanaka, 2017; Zhang et al., 2024), supporting earlier assertions about culture as a developmental engine. Practically, this underscores the need for tourism actors to design packages that emphasize religious ceremonies and heritage tours. On a policy level, governments should develop cultural preservation programs that support both spiritual traditions and tourism goals. Investing in the visibility and accessibility of these practices—through festivals, guided experiences, and educational materials—can help differentiate North Maluku as a halal destination with deep cultural authenticity. Additionally, involving local religious leaders as cultural ambassadors will strengthen both community participation and the visitor experience.

Government Intervention and Policy Support

The study revealed that while local authorities such as the Ternate City Government have taken important steps—such as establishing a sharia market and a sharia credit bank (BPRS)—policy support for halal tourism remains fragmented and lacks



standardization. Infrastructure deficiencies, inconsistent certification systems, and limited training programs for tourism actors hinder the scalability of halal tourism. Although the government's intent is evident, the mechanisms to translate vision into operational policy are underdeveloped. This gap is particularly evident in under-resourced areas where tourism development must align with religious, environmental, and social considerations.

This situation mirrors the findings of Aksamawanti & Ridwan (2022), who emphasize the importance of structured halal ecosystems, including legal guidelines and certification mechanisms. Similarly, Payumi et al. (2024) underscore the need for local policy engagement with religious and community organizations to ensure that development plans align with Islamic values. Other scholars (Hariani & Hanafiah, 2024; Mohamed et al., 2020; Perwira & Almira, 2024; Sofyan et al., 2022), point to the vital role of infrastructure and capacity-building in halal tourism growth. These perspectives highlight the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships and strategic planning to institutionalize halal tourism policies, especially in peripheral and low-income regions.

From a theoretical perspective, the integration of halal tourism with public administration reflects the relevance of Edwards' (1980) policy implementation theory (Kania et al., 2018), especially regarding communication, resources, and bureaucratic alignment. Practically, this calls for regulatory clarity, investment incentives, and certification frameworks tailored to the local context. Policy-wise, a regional halal tourism master plan—backed by tourism law, budget allocations, and private-sector partnerships—is necessary. Furthermore, marketing strategies targeting Muslim travelers should be supported through digital campaigns and participation in global halal travel fairs. Government-led collaboration platforms among religious leaders, MSMEs, and tourism bureaus can also provide coherence and accountability in the sector.

Economic Empowerment through Halal Tourism

This research indicates that halal tourism in North Maluku provides significant economic opportunities for local communities, particularly through MSMEs in the culinary, handicraft, and accommodation sectors. The development of halal tourism villages—such as Colo Village—demonstrates a positive income effect, as locals benefit from increased demand for halal-compliant services. These initiatives have created employment, diversified rural economies, and stimulated community entrepreneurship. However, the study also notes that economic benefits are uneven, due to weak support systems for waste management, market linkages, and financial access.

These findings resonate with previous studies (Y. Hidayat et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2024; Yazid et al., 2025) identifying MSMEs as central to halal tourism's economic ecosystem. Other studies (Destiana & Kismartini, 2020; H. Hidayat, 2023; Ma et al., 2021; Yasin et al., 2024) affirm that investments in tourism infrastructure and cultural preservation improve both tourist experience and local livelihoods. Pratama et al. (2023) emphasize the role of vocational education in empowering communities, while Mujiatun et al.

(2023) document the effectiveness of micro-financing and halal certification in increasing MSME performance. Digital tools, as suggested by Abdullah (2021), further broaden MSMEs' market reach and visibility. Collectively, these studies show that halal tourism can stimulate inclusive growth, provided there is institutional support for MSME development.

Theoretically, this supports the view that tourism, particularly halal tourism, can act as a catalyst for endogenous development in peripheral regions. Practically, empowering MSMEs requires accessible halal certification, training in hospitality and e-commerce, and promotion of local halal brands. Policy-wise, the government should create MSME incubator programs linked to halal tourism, and provide access to business mentoring, digital platforms, and halal-compliant financing. Creating cooperative structures among MSMEs for resource pooling and joint marketing can also strengthen local economic resilience. This localized, inclusive economic model underscores halal tourism not only as a religious practice, but also as a viable rural development strategy.

Stakeholder Challenges in Aligning Halal and Community-Based Tourism

The study identified several challenges in aligning halal tourism standards with community-based tourism development in North Maluku. Many local tourism actors lack awareness of halal principles, resulting in inconsistencies in services and facilities. Additionally, the absence of harmonized certification and operational standards creates confusion among businesses and limits tourist confidence. Efforts to integrate local cultural expressions into a formalized halal framework are often hindered by limited resources, insufficient dialogue among stakeholders, and asymmetrical power dynamics between government agencies, businesses, and communities.

These challenges reflect similar findings in other regions. Zarkasyi et al. (2022) and Zulvianti et al. (2022) highlight the importance of regulatory alignment and stakeholder education in building community-based halal tourism. Layali & Suriani (2022) stress the need for participatory planning to avoid exclusion and community resistance, while Al-Ansi et al. (2023) note that tensions often arise when global halal standards are imposed without sensitivity to local cultures. Resource scarcity, technological illiteracy, and fragmented governance—as discussed by Yusuf et al. (2021) and Rachmiatie et al. (2023, 2024)—further complicate these efforts. These studies confirm that operationalizing halal tourism within community-based models requires both inclusivity and adaptability.

Theoretically, this supports the proposition that halal tourism must adopt a community-engaged model to achieve sustainability. Practically, this means that tourism developers and regulators must prioritize stakeholder alignment through multi-level communication, shared decision-making forums, and joint training programs. From a policy perspective, governments need to simplify halal certification processes for small operators, introduce modular halal standards adaptable to different contexts, and fund collaborative capacity-building workshops. Encouraging co-creation of



tourism products that respect both Islamic values and local cultural identity will help reduce friction and build shared ownership of halal tourism goals.

Strategic Implications of the Global Muslim Travel Market

This study finds that North Maluku's strategic pursuit of halal tourism aligns with broader global trends in Muslim travel, which have positioned halal tourism as one of the fastest-growing segments in the global tourism industry. The region's cultural richness and Islamic heritage provide it with a unique comparative advantage, particularly as the global Muslim population—estimated at over 1.9 billion—generates growing demand for halal-compliant travel experiences. By leveraging this market, North Maluku has an opportunity to transform from a peripheral region into a niche international destination for spiritual and cultural tourism.

This is reinforced by Yuliaty et al. (2021), who argue that economically marginal areas can achieve growth through halal tourism if supported by infrastructure and regulation. Hajar (2022) and Nahidloh & Qadariyah (2021) highlight that inclusive planning and community involvement enhance both service quality and sustainability. Randeree (2020) notes that demographic awareness and tailored marketing are essential for capturing this global market, while Abdulraof (2024) underscores the role of national certification policies. Moreover, Abror et al. (2021) and Mandalia & Hidayat (2022) demonstrate that integrating sustainable practices with digital marketing improves competitiveness in the halal sector. These studies validate North Maluku's potential if developed in alignment with these strategic considerations.

Theoretically, the global halal tourism trend reflects the shift toward identity-based and values-driven travel. Practically, it emphasizes the need for North Maluku to develop products, services, and narratives that resonate with global Muslim travelers. From a policy standpoint, alignment with the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) criteria—such as access, communication, environment, and service—is crucial. Regional governments must also institutionalize destination branding, form alliances with Muslim-majority countries, and adopt global best practices in halal hospitality. In doing so, North Maluku can assert itself as a model for culturally grounded, economically inclusive, and globally competitive halal tourism.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the potential of halal tourism in North Maluku by exploring the interplay between Islamic religious values, local cultural traditions, and community-based economic activities. The findings highlight that the region's unique cultural identity, marked by Islamic rituals and historical heritage, holds substantial promise for authentic halal tourism development. However, despite its rich Islamic legacy and natural attractions, North Maluku continues to face limitations in infrastructure, service quality, and halal-compliant amenities, which hinder its appeal to Muslim travelers.

The analysis reveals that integrating local Islamic traditions into tourism can enhance the authenticity of visitor experiences while strengthening community identity. Government involvement, though present, remains partial and requires stronger policy

frameworks, inclusive planning, and investment in human capital. Moreover, halal tourism has shown its ability to empower micro, small, and medium enterprises, though challenges in certification, training, and marketing persist. The global growth of Muslim travel presents a strategic opportunity for regions like North Maluku to build competitive, culturally grounded tourism destinations with inclusive economic impact.

This research contributes to the existing literature by shifting the focus from mainstream urban halal tourism models to a peripheral, culturally distinct context. It proposes a multidimensional framework that bridges religious values, cultural heritage, and local economic empowerment. The study advances the discourse on halal tourism by demonstrating that peripheral regions can achieve both cultural preservation and economic development when supported by collaborative governance and context-sensitive strategies. Its findings are particularly significant for policymakers, development practitioners, and tourism planners seeking to harness tourism for sustainable and inclusive regional transformation.

Limitation of the Study

While this research offers valuable insights into halal tourism in North Maluku, it is not without limitations. First, the study employed a qualitative approach focused on purposively selected stakeholders, which, while rich in depth, limits the generalizability of findings across the broader population. Interviews and observations were conducted in selected districts with known tourism potential, which may not fully capture the diversity of conditions or perspectives across the entire province. Additionally, the study did not include quantitative metrics such as tourist satisfaction scores, economic impact data, or statistical comparisons with other halal tourism destinations.

Second, the research timeframe was relatively short and did not allow for longitudinal observation of changes over time or seasonal variations in tourist activity. As a result, the findings are more reflective of static snapshots than evolving dynamics. The absence of data on visitor experiences and feedback also limits the study's ability to assess the effectiveness of current halal tourism offerings from the demand side. These constraints suggest that while the study is valuable in highlighting strategic issues and community perspectives, further empirical validation and broader stakeholder engagement are needed to strengthen its conclusions.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should adopt a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative insights with quantitative analysis to better assess the economic, social, and cultural impact of halal tourism development. Surveys capturing the experiences and expectations of Muslim and non-Muslim visitors can enrich understanding of demand-side dynamics. Economic modeling could also measure the contribution of halal tourism to local income, employment, and MSME growth. Comparative studies with other culturally similar but more developed halal destinations—such as Aceh or Lombok—could identify transferable best practices and contextual gaps.

Longitudinal research would be valuable in tracking the evolution of halal tourism initiatives, including infrastructure development, policy implementation, and shifts in community participation. Future studies could also explore the role of digital technology, such as social media marketing and halal tourism platforms, in enhancing visibility and competitiveness. Examining the effectiveness of certification systems, community training programs, and stakeholder collaboration models would also deepen practical insights. Ultimately, research should continue to explore how halal tourism can serve not only religious needs but also function as a strategic vehicle for inclusive and sustainable regional development.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization	I.K. & S.K.	Resources	I.K. & S.K.
Data curation	I.K. & S.K.	Software	I.K. & S.K.
Formal analysis	I.K. & S.K.	Supervision	I.K. & S.K.
Funding acquisition	I.K. & S.K.	Validation	I.K. & S.K.
Investigation	I.K. & S.K.	Visualization	I.K. & S.K.
Methodology	I.K. & S.K.	Writing – original draft	I.K. & S.K.
Project administration	I.K. & S.K.	Writing – review & editing	I.K. & S.K.

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Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained before respondents answered the interview for this study.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work, the author used ChatGPT to improve the clarity of language and readability of the article. After using this tool, the author reviews and edits the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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