Revealing Halal Tourist Destinations in Banjarmasin, Indonesia: Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract

The growth of halal tourism industry in South Kalimantan seems to be left behind other provinces in Indonesia whereas this province is considered to have many potentials to develop the industry. This situation is exacerbated by the exclusion of this province as one of the mainstays of halal tourist destinations set by the Ministry of Tourism in 2015. This study attempts to reveal the potential of halal tourism in South Kalimantan, especially Banjarmasin as the capital of the province. The study is intended to explore the various halal tourist destinations available in Banjarmasin and to examine the prospects and challenges of developing the halal tourism industry in the city. The study was conducted with a qualitative approach and analyzed using the descriptive-analytic method. It is found that Banjarmasin has the splendor of religious, natural, historical as well as shopping and culinary tourist destinations. All this provide a big opportunity to attract both domestic and overseas visitors. Given this exceptional opportunity, a number of strategic and technical efforts are required to further increase the growth of this industry in Banjarmasin.

Keywords: halal tourism, tourist destination, Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan

INTRODUCTION

Tourism today has become one of the mainstay industries producing foreign exchange in various countries. Amid the sluggishness of global economic conditions, tourism remains able to show a positive trend. The number of international travelers is increasing steadily over time, from 25 million tourists (1950), 278 million (1980), 528 million (1995), and 1,138 million (2014) (Kementerian-Pariwisata, 2015). The tourism industry is one of the largest and most rapidly growing economic sectors in the world. Tourism is seen as a key sector capable of creating jobs and generating income for industry and government (Chanin, Sripasert, Rahman, & Don, 2015).

Indonesia certainly does not want to be left behind by other countries in utilizing this tourism sector. Moreover, Indonesia is a country with the largest Muslim population in the world. Therefore, in 2015, Indonesian government through the Ministry of Tourism has appointed 13 provinces as prospective halal tourist destinations which involve Nusa Tenggara Barat, Nangroe Aceh Darussalam,

Unfortunately, the province of South Kalimantan is not included in the above list. This shows that the Ministry of Tourism assessed that this province has not yet the necessary readiness to develop halal tourism compared to above 13 provinces. This obliges the local government to give more attention in order to improve the tourism industry. This study attempts to reveal the potential of halal tourism in the province of South Kalimantan, especially in Banjarmasin as the capital of the province. The study is intended to explore the various halal tourist destinations available in Banjarmasin and to examine the prospects and challenges of the halal tourism industry in the city.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

*Halal* tourism is one form of tourism that puts forward the values and norms of Islamic teaching as its basic foundation. Therefore, the compliance with the Shariah is highly important as a guide in all aspects of tourism activities (Widagdyo, 2015). The concept of *halal*, derived from an Arabic word meaning ‘allowed’, is very important for Muslims. *Halal* tourism is part of the actualization of Islamic teaching in tourism activities where the values of *halal* and *haram* must be the fundamental reference for every actor in the tourism industry. This concept is applied not only in food but also in other products such as cosmetics, medicines, vaccines, financial products (banking, insurance, etc.), including tourism (Chanin et al., 2015).

The use of term *halal* tourism still has not reached the consensus among academics, practitioners, and regulators. There are various terms to name this activity, among others Islamic tourism, *halal* tourism, *halal* travel, Muslim-friendly travel destinations, *halal* lifestyle, and others. Battour and Ismail (2015) mention there are two terms that have been used most, namely Islamic tourism and *halal* tourism. Both are often considered the same and used interchangeably with each other.

Traveling to various places on earth is one of the recommended activities in Islam. In the Quran, there are many verses that encourage Muslims to do travel (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). The main objective of traveling in Islam is to admire the greatness of the Creator and realize how humble man is before the Lord of the universe. Besides that, by traveling to various sites of ancient peoples, many things can be learned to improve the level of faith (Mohsin, Ramli, & Alkhulayf, 2016). Meanwhile, traveling provides many benefits for the human body because it can reduce stress and improve health and fitness. It can also increase knowledge and broaden insight and train patience and endurance (Mohsin et al., 2016; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010).
The tourism industry in various regions has proven to provide a broad economic impact for the community in the form of increasing income, providing employment, and increasing local revenue, especially from a trade, hotel, and restaurant sector (Aryunda, 2011). In addition, the tourism industry is also able to encourage the empowerment of the people's economy (Rosyid, 2014).

The development of halal tourism, in general, must be guided by the provisions of the Shariah as regulated in the Quran and As-Sunnah. Technically, the management of the halal tourism industry should be aware of the following: (1) the performing arts for tourists should not be contrary to the Shariah; (2) a prayer room should be provided, including with a washing facility and a Qibla direction bookmark; (3) a separate bathroom or toilet for men and women should be provided in a clean condition; (4) halal restaurants should be available at tourist destinations; (5) Signposts and information on tour performances should be provided, both in English and Arabic; (6) Security and order in every show and tourist destination must be guaranteed; (7) Special therapists for men and women should be available at each spa; (8) Motorists must carry out their duties in an orderly and cautious manner (Chanin et al., 2015; Kelompok-Kerja, 2015).

**METHODS**

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach. The data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were gathered through interview and observation while the secondary data were obtained from government regulation, media reports, and prior studies. Data collected were analyzed using the descriptive-analytic method.

**RESULTS**

**The Fascination of Banjarmasin**

1. *City of Thousand Rivers*

Banjarmasin is the capital of the province of South Kalimantan. It is a unique city and well known as the City of Thousand Rivers (*Kota Seribu Sungai*) owing to many rivers it has (Sugianti, 2016). Banjarmasin has two great rivers which flow through the city, i.e. Sungai Barito and Sungai Martapura. These two rivers are interconnected to many other rivers, brooks and small streams throughout the city such as Sungai Kuin, Sungai Alalak, Sungai Pangeran, Sungai Mulawarman, Sungai Pelambuan and others.

In Banjarmasin, rivers possess an important role particularly for those whose houses are on its banks. The river supplies water for the people needs including for bathing and washing. It is also used for transportation and a source of livelihood for many
people (Rochgiyanti, 2011). Business and economic activities are partly also taken place on the river which then becomes famous until now as floating markets (Pasar Terapung). All this forms a river culture for Banjarese people since centuries. In addition to natural rivers and streams, Banjarese people also recognize three types of canals, i.e. anjir, handil, and saka (Subiyakto, 2005). Anjir is a primary water channel that connects between two rivers constructed for transportation and irrigation. Handil is a smaller water channel that originates from anjir constructed for irrigation. Meanwhile, saka is a tertiary water channel that originates from handil and commonly owned by certain family or individuals.

Nevertheless, with the passage of time, the importance of the river and its culture becomes less and misses its uniqueness. Development, unfortunately, has changed the course from river-oriented activities towards land-oriented activities (Goenmiandari, 2010). Banjarmasin does not any longer follow the peculiar concept of water city (Hadinata, 2010). Roads and bridges were constructed massively replacing the water transportation. Local wisdom in the construction is ignored by emerging new buildings that infringe the local identity (Jaya, 2009). Many houses and offices have been built excessively at the expense of small streams and rivers which then become disappeared or shrink. As a result, the environmental balance is disturbed and becomes a serious problem especially in the rainy season when the water cannot be channeled due to the disappearance of many streams around the city.

2. Religiosity of the Society

Historically, Islam is estimated to come to South Kalimantan in the early of 15th century. The spread of Islamic in this region was further intensified by the establishment of the Sultanate Banjar by Pangeran Samudera approximately in 1540. He was previously a Hindu prince but converted to Islam and changed his name to Sultan Suriansyah. He then declared Islam as an official religion of the sultanate (Buseri, 2011).

Islam and Banjar become like two sides of a single coin. Being a Muslim means becoming an Urang Banjar/Banjarese (the people of Banjar) (Bustamam, 2012; Mubarok, 2014). There were many cases in which people from different ethnicities and races, such as Dayak and Chinese, converted to Islam and subsequently considered a Banjarese (the people of Banjar) (Daud, 1997). Therefore, Banjar at the outset is not a name of particular ethnic, but a religious, social, political and cultural entity. Islam and Banjar in South Kalimantan are indeed closely related and cannot be separated from each other. For Banjarese people, Islam is the spirit and the identity that forms and influences many aspects of their life (Daud, 1997). Based on the 2010 census, 96% of South Kalimantan people are Muslim.
In terms of religiosity, Banjarese people are considered devout or practicing Muslims (Daud, 1997; Bustamam, 2012). Thousands of mosques and langgar (small mosque) have been built all over the province showing the spiritual enthusiasm of the people to perform religious practices. Many of these holy places have regular religious instructions (majlis taklim) and the Quran kindergartens (Taman Pendidikan Al-Quran). These holy places are mainly self-financed by the Muslim society through waqf and infaq.

Kalimantan Selatan is among the provinces having the longest waiting list of hajj applicants (above thirty-years-long). This indicates how great the intention to do pilgrimage in the hearts of Banjarese people. Similarly, umrah (small pilgrimage) and ziarah kubur (tomb visit) are frequently carried out by the society. There are many religious tourism destinations involving historic mosques, sacrosanct tombs, and others.

In addition, Banjarese people’s religiosity can also be seen in many forms as manifested in social and cultural life of the people such as maulid celebration (birth of the Prophet Muhammad), baayun maulid (swinging child ceremony) (Jamalie, 2014), basunat (circumcision procession) (Rusydi, 2011), batamat (completing the Quran recitation), marriage reception and many more.

**Government Roles on Developing Halal Tourism**

In 2015, the Indonesian government through the Ministry of Tourism (Kementerian Pariwisata) has appointed 13 provinces as prospective halal tourist destinations (Ardianto, 2015). These provinces have been selected for their readiness in developing halal tourism in terms of human resources, local culture, local tourism packages, as well as accommodation. South Kalimantan province is unfortunately not included in the above list which implies that the readiness level of this province to develop halal tourism was low.

However, just in the recent years, the local government of Banjarmasin indicated the seriousness to develop this halal tourism sector. It is encouraged mainly by the fact that the city has been recognized since long as a religious city and it actually possesses many potential halal tourist destinations. Having realized that the specific regulation concerning local tourism in Banjarmasin has never been issued before, the Mayor of Banjarmasin, Ibnu Sina, has then issued the Mayor Decree (Keputusan Walikota) No. 25 the Year 2016 about Management and Developing River Based Tourism (Pengelolaan dan Pengembangan Wisata Berbasis Sungai). Although this regulation does not mention anything about halal tourism, it provided a necessary legal basis for developing the halal tourism industry in the city. This regulation divides Banjarmasin city into three developing zones: (1) Northern zone with 18 points of destination; (2) Western zone with 5 points of destination; and (3) Southern zone with 12 points of destination.
Furthermore, in order to better manage this sector, a local regulation (peraturan daerah) for halal tourism has been drafting by the local government of Banjarmasin and it is expected to be issued in 2018 (Prokal.co, 2018).

**Halal Tourist Destinations in Banjarmasin**

Halal tourist destinations in Banjarmasin can be divided into four categories as follows: religious, natural, historical, and shopping and culinary tourist destinations. Each of which is described in the following part.

1. **Religious Tourist Destinations**

Banjarmasin has many religious tourist destinations which include great and historical mosques and sacrosanct tombs of respected figures. The biggest mosque in Banjarmasin and constitutes a famous landmark of the city is Masjid Raya Sabilal Muhtadin. The mosque was built in 1981 and situated in the center of the city, on the west bank of Sungai Martapura. The mosque building is magnificent, can accommodate around 15,000 people, equipped with 5 minarets, wide parking lot and city forest in its surroundings. The name of this mosque is taken from the eminent book composed by the great scholar of Sheikh Muhammad Arsyad Al-Banjari (1710-1812) as the appreciation for his outstanding service to spread and promote the teachings of Islam in the Sultanate of Banjar.

Furthermore, Masjid Sultan Suriansyah or Masjid Kuin is the oldest mosque in South Kalimantan located in the bank of Sungai Kuin, Kuin Utara, North Banjarmasin. The mosque was built at the time of Sultan Suriansyah (1526-1550), the first Sultan of Banjar who embraced Islam. It has an ancient architecture that is still solid until now. Inside the mosque, there is a typical Banjar ornament and a pulpit that is still used by the preacher for the sermon every Friday. About 400 meters from the mosque, there is a tomb complex of Sultan Suriansyah and his descendants which are frequently visited by many people along the year.

Another remarkable mosque in Banjarmasin is Masjid Jami' Banjarmasin or also known as Masjid Jami' Sungai Jingah constructed in 1777. Its building is dominated by Ironwood (ulin) with three layers of joglo architecture. The initial location of this mosque was on the bank of Sungai Martapura, but in 1934 it was moved to the present location with an area of ± 2 hectares.

Habib Basirih Dome is a sacrosanct tomb of Habib Hamid bin Abbas Bahasyim that becomes a popular object of pilgrimage tour in Banjarmasin. The dome which is located not far from the toll bridge to the Port of Trisakti, Banjarmasin is frequented by pilgrims not only from South Kalimantan but also from abroad such as Egypt, China, Canada, Spain, Bosnia, and Germany.
2. **Natural Tourist Destinations**

Rivers are the advantage of Banjarmasin that really beautify this city. Many tourist spots lie around those rivers. The Menara Pandang is a four floor-tower that was built on the side of Sungai Martapura. It offers beautiful views around Sungai Martapura and the whole city. The Tower was inaugurated in June 2014 and expected to be a landmark of Banjarmasin City. The development of the tower along with Siring Park was meant to strengthen the nickname of Banjarmasin as the “City of Thousand Rivers”. The Menara Pandang is a 21 meter-high building that is able to accommodate up to 200 visitors in a sitting position or 600 visitors in a standing position.

In 2016, the local government developed Taman Siring 0 KM as part of the city revitalization programs. It is a particular location in Banjarmasin from which its zero kilometer distance is traditionally measured and marked. Banjarmasin marks Kilometer Zero with a monolith in the area of Siring Park that is furnished with various facilities such as sport, relax, food and drink stalls. Taman Siring 0 KM is located on Sudirman Street at the opposite to the former office of Governor of South Kalimantan.

Banjarmasin also has Taman Maskot Bekantan, a park along Siring Sungai Martapura installed with a Long Nose Monkey (Bekantan) statue. It reaches almost 7 meters high and was built since 2014. The Maskot is part of City of Thousand Rivers Program. Taman Maskot Bekantan is the pleasant and interesting place to be visited. It is loaded by visitors in the weekend and holidays.

Meanwhile, Taman Satwa Jahri Saleh is a park zoo and home to a number of creatures from poultry, reptiles, primate and other species. Located on Jahri Saleh Street, Surgi Mufti, North Banjarmasin, it was developed in 1999. Since it is quite far from the center of Banjarmasin and due to lack of public transportation, visitors need to use private transportation to reach this zoo. Taman Satwa Jahri Saleh is a safe and pleasant place for visitors including children. It is kind of education park as well.

3. **Historical Tourist Destinations**

Several historical tourist destinations are also available in Banjarmasin, for instance, Rumah Anno 1925, Museum Wasaka, and Prince Antasari’s memorial park. Rumah Anno was built in 1925 AD, located on Tendean Street, and has a characteristic in its ornament. This house is one of house building of Palimasan, two-floor type of house that still exists in Banjarmasin. Along with Tendean floating market which is located in the same area, Rumah Anno has good facilities such as parking area, prayer room, halal food and clean toilet.
Museum Wasaka is a museum of the struggle of South Borneo people. Wasaka stands for Waja Sampai Kaputing which is the motto of South Kalimantan people. It was inaugurated in 1991, housed in Rumah Banjar Bubungan Tinggi which was later transformed from a residential building to a museum. Museum Wasaka is one of the traditional building conservation efforts located on H. Andir Alley, Kampung Kenanga Ulu, Banjarmasin.

Another historical tourism destination is Prince Antasari’s memorial park. Prince Antasari is a local warrior who has been conferred an honor as a National Hero of Indonesia. He is buried in a funeral complex located on Malkon Temon Street, North Banjarmasin. Many people visit Prince Antasari’s memorial park to respect his struggle for the country. On Heroes Day, special visits by government officials and various elements of the society are usually performed to commemorate such a historic day.

4. Shopping and Culinary Tourist Destinations

Like any other major city in the country, Banjarmasin has numerous shopping centers and modern markets. What is different from Banjarmasin is the existence of traditional river markets which provides a unique experience for visitors. There are two river markets in Banjarmasin area, i.e. Kuin floating market and Tendean floating market.

Kuin Floating Market is a natural floating market, located on the estuary of Sungai Barito, Kuin Utara, Banjarmasin. This market is estimated to have existed about 400 years ago. In this market, traders and buyers using boats called jukung to conduct sale and purchase transactions. It surely offers a wonderful experience since all tourists must use a boat to get to the place. Kuin floating market attracts many visitors both from domestic and foreign. However, this market takes place only in a short time starting after Fajr prayer until about seven o’clock in the morning.

In order to conserve floating market tradition, Government of Banjarmasin initiated a new floating market at the Siring of Sungai Martapura on Pierre Tendean Street. In contrast to Kuin floating market, Tendean floating market is located in the city center and facilitated with some conveniences such as adequate parking area, langgar, and toilets. In addition, the government provides this area with dock for kelotok (boat) that can be used for river tour around Banjarmasin.

There is another distinctive shopping area whose location is close to Tendean floating market called Kampung Sasirangan. It is a small village where Banjarmasin typical fabrics namely sasirangan is widely produced by its residents. Kampung Sasirangan is located on Seberang Mesjid Street and easily accessible by public transport. In this area, visitors can see the process of making sasirangan from the
beginning of manufacture to become a variety of design and color fabrics. Visitors can also buy *sasirangan* both in form of cloth and clothing.

Meanwhile, culinary destinations are available in many spots throughout Banjarmasin, but the most notable of those culinary spots are apparently Soto Banjar Bawah Jembatan and Soto Banjar Bang Amat. Soto Banjar is a typical food of South Kalimantan with a special taste which is different from other types of Soto. These two Soto Banjar restaurants are located on Banua Anyar Street alongside Sungai Martapura. Here, visitors can enjoy not only a delicious meal but also beautiful river sights.

**PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES**

Based on the observation, interview and documentation concerning *halal* tourist destinations in Banjarmasin, some notes about the prospects and challenges for developing the *halal* tourism industry in this city are given in the subsequent part.

In Banjarmasin, places of worship for Muslim visitors, in general, are not difficult to obtain because there are a lot of mosques and small mosques (*langgar*) in various places. Information about the time of prayers is therefore available all the time because *adzan* (a call to prayer) can be heard from those holy places. Clean water for purification and ablution is also generally available sufficiently; moreover, many tourist destinations lie around the river so it is very easy to get water. However, the existence of a separate toilet for men and women is still not widely available in most of the tourist destinations.

*Halal* food with a variety of menus can be found very easily in Banjarmasin because the majority of tourist service providers and residents of Banjarmasin are Muslims. However, the lack of restaurants and food providers having *halal* certification from MUI is still a big challenge for this city. The people awareness about the urgency of *halal* certification still needs to be improved. In addition, all restaurants and food stalls should provide a menu list with their prices for ease for travelers.

Rules concerning the obligation to close *aurat* and banning seclusion for a non-*mahram* couple in public places are not yet available. The government needs to regulate it so that the rules of *Shari‘ah* can be enforced well for the common comfort and orderliness.

Considering that the public transportation route in Banjarmasin is limited, the government needs to provide a special transportation for tourists to access the *halal* tourist places more easily. In this case, water transportation becomes an appropriate choice because it is in accordance with the image of Banjarmasin as the city of Thousand Rivers. Besides, the difficulty of obtaining parking space in some tourist sites can also be reduced by river transportation routes.
The cleanliness of the river area is one of the biggest challenges for Banjarmasin. Among the biggest problems is the amount of garbage coming from upstream areas. The garbage should be cleaned up before entering into the city so that the view of the river which constitutes the mainstay of the city river tour is maintained. The safety and security factors of river transportation should be enhanced with routine inspections for all ships and the obligation to use buoys for all passengers. In addition, the design of the ship or kelotok needs to be changed so that passengers no longer climb to the roof to enjoy the beauty of the river panorama.

In addition, the promotion of halal tourism must also continue to be improved by using any means and media. Government websites should always be updated and enriched. Meanwhile, tour guides need to be prepared at various tourist destinations to help visitors in their journey in Banjarmasin. Additionally, river tour packages should also be provided not only for people who stay in the hotel but also for the wider community.

Based on the above notes, the prospects of halal tourism in Banjarmasin is very promising given the resources available. Nonetheless, the city still faces some challenges that need to be addressed with collaborative and coordinative actions from all stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

Banjarmasin is bestowed with the splendor of religious, natural, historical as well as shopping and culinary tourism destinations. All these provide a big opportunity to attract both domestic and overseas visitors. Given this exceptional opportunity, a number of strategic and technical efforts are required to further improve this industry in Banjarmasin. All stakeholders of this industry ranging from government, business operators and owners as well as the public at large need to work hand in hand to provide better service and to offer unforgettable moments for those who come to this city. The government needs to strengthen the regulation and provide supporting policy and programs that can better manage and encourage the industry to grow. Business operators and owners need to improve their business capacity and provide professional services to visitors as well as to make the necessary investment to boost the industry. Finally, the public at large are expected to support this growing industry by their hospitality and maintaining the cleanliness and orderliness of the city.
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