

PROSPECTS AND POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPING HALAL  
TOURISM IN SAMBAS DISTRICT AS A BORDER AREA OF  
INDONESIA – MALAYSIA

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*ABSTRACT*

This study aims to identify the potential and prospects for halal tourism development in Sambas Regency, which is a strategic border area between Indonesia and Malaysia. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with a case study approach. Data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with stakeholders, such as local governments, tourism business actors, community leaders, and tourists. In addition, direct observation in several potential halal tourism locations was also carried out to obtain a picture of the factual conditions in the field. Data collection techniques include semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and documentation of government policies and tourism statistics data from the Sambas Regency Tourism Office. Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis techniques through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions to identify patterns of findings that are relevant to the development of halal tourism. The results of the study indicate that Sambas Regency has great potential to be developed into a leading halal tourism destination because it has a diversity of Islamic culture, a strategic geographical position, and commitment from the local government. However, this study also revealed obstacles in the form of limited infrastructure and human resources that need to be improved. This study implies the need for integrated and innovative policies in developing halal tourism in Sambas Regency, including improving supporting infrastructure, training for tourism actors, and more massive promotions to increase competitiveness at the national and international levels and encourage regional economic growth.

*Keywords:* Potential, Border Areas, Halal Tourism

A. INTRODUCTION

The halal tourism industry has now become a strategic sector that continues to show its potential in boosting the global economy, including in Indonesia. Based on the report from The Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2022, Indonesia successfully secured the second position as the best halal tourism destination in the world. This ranking reflects global recognition of the appeal of halal tourism in Indonesia, supported by the largest Muslim population in the world and various government initiatives to develop this sector (Hendriyani, 2022). However, despite the significant progress, border areas such as Sambas Regency in West Kalimantan still require special attention to optimize their potential. As one of the border regions between Indonesia and Malaysia, Sambas Regency has unique characteristics that can support the development of halal tourism. With its strategic geographical position, Sambas not only serves as an international gateway but also has the potential for culture and religious-based tourism. Various destinations, such as the Sambas Sultanate Palace, Jami' Mosque, and

Temajuk Beach, provide added value for Muslim tourists seeking travel experiences that align with Sharia principles (Napitupulu, 2020).

The importance of developing halal tourism in this region is also driven by the high percentage of Muslim residents, which is around 84.82% of the total population of Sambas Regency (Central Statistics Agency of Sambas, 2020). This provides a great opportunity to create a tourism ecosystem that not only supports the religious needs of tourists but also has a significant economic impact on the local community. In addition, the development of halal tourism can serve as a tool to reduce practices that are not in accordance with Islamic principles, such as the consumption of non-halal food and non-Sharia-compliant tourism activities (al-Shallabi, 2010).

On the other hand, the halal tourism industry is not only relevant domestically but also in a global context. Data shows that Muslims around the world spent approximately 2.02 trillion USD in the food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, fashion, travel, and recreation sectors in 2019, and this figure is predicted to increase to 2.4 trillion USD by 2024 (Mutia, 2022). With that potential, the development of halal tourism in border regions can significantly contribute to national economic growth. However, the development of halal tourism in Sambas Regency faces several challenges. One of them is the lack of supporting infrastructure, such as transportation access, communication facilities, and sharia-based services. In addition, integrated promotion highlighting the potential of halal tourism in this border region is still very limited. The lack of attention to halal certification aspects also poses a challenge in attracting international Muslim tourists (Sofyan et al., 2020).

Amidst these challenges, the development of halal tourism in border areas has great potential for growth with government policy support. As a strategic area, border regions such as Sambas have received attention in various economic and social development programs. One example is the existence of the Aruk Cross-Border Post (PLBN) which serves as the main route for the mobility of tourists from Malaysia to Indonesia (Border Area Management Agency, 2013). In addition, the development of halal tourism in Sambas can also enhance Indonesia's competitiveness at the regional and global levels. By utilizing the halal concept that encompasses various aspects, such as accommodation services, food, transportation, and tourist attractions, Sambas can become a premier destination for Muslim tourists, both domestic and international. This can also strengthen diplomatic relations and economic cooperation between Indonesia and Malaysia (KNEKS, 2020). From a social perspective, halal tourism can serve as an instrument to encourage behavioral changes in society towards a more Islamic way of life. By integrating Islamic values into tourism activities, local communities can enjoy economic benefits while preserving their cultural and religious identity. This approach is also in line with Islamic principles that encourage humans to enjoy the beauty of nature and reflect on Allah's creation, as mentioned in QS al-Ankabut: 29/20 (the Qur'an and its Translation, 2002).

Overall, this research is important to provide comprehensive solutions in developing halal tourism in the Indonesia-Malaysia border region, particularly in Sambas Regency. With an approach that involves the analysis of potential, opportunities, and challenges, this research is expected to provide strategic recommendations for the development of halal tourism in the border area. This effort will not only enhance the competitiveness of Indonesian tourism but also contribute to the welfare of the local community in the region.

## B. METODE

This research method uses an analytical descriptive qualitative approach, aimed at deeply exploring the potential, opportunities, challenges, and models of halal tourism development in Sambas Regency. This research is field-based and supported by library research. Primary data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with stakeholders (such as local government, business actors, tourists, and community leaders), as well as focus group discussions (FGD). Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained

from official government documents, statistical reports, scientific journals, and related literature. Observations were conducted at strategic locations such as Pantai Temajuk, Riam Merasap, Danau Sebedang, and the Sambas Sultanate Palace Complex, which have great potential to be developed as halal tourist destinations. The research instruments used were semi-structured interview guides and observation checklists to ensure that the data collected were relevant to the research objectives.

Data analysis is conducted descriptively, with the stages of analysis including data reduction, presentation of data in the form of narratives or tables, and drawing conclusions supported by theory and literature review. Data validity is maintained through source triangulation, member checking, and audit trails. In addition, consultations with experts in the field of halal tourism were conducted to strengthen the validity of the findings. This method is designed to provide comprehensive and applicable results, thereby generating strategic recommendations for the sustainable development of halal tourism in Sambas Regency.

### **C. DISCUSSION**

#### **Potential and Prospects for Developing Halal Tourism in Sambas Regency**

The halal tourism sector has been rapidly growing in recent years, in line with the increasing demand from international Muslim tourists. Sambas Regency, which borders the state of Sarawak in Malaysia, has great potential in developing halal tourism. Geographically, Sambas is located on a strategic route connecting Indonesia with Malaysia, making it a potential transit point for international tourists, especially from Malaysia.

According to a series of previous studies, there are several driving factors that increase the demand for halal tourism, including:

- 1) **Increased Awareness Among the Muslim Community:** More and more Muslim travelers are seeking destinations that meet their spiritual and halal needs.
- 2) **Halal Service Innovations:** Facilities such as halal restaurants, Sharia-based accommodations, and easily accessible places of worship are increasingly emerging, especially in countries with large Muslim populations.
- 3) **Changes in Tourist Preferences:** Tourists today pay more attention to sustainability and social responsibility when choosing travel destinations, which align with Islamic values.

In addition, in line with Bastian (2021), the Muslims of Sambas also possess natural, cultural, and historical wealth that can serve as an attractive tourist draw for Muslim travelers. Therefore, the potential and prospects for the development of halal tourism in the border region of Sambas Regency can be mapped as follows:

#### **a. Natural and Cultural Potential of Sambas Regency.**

Sambas Regency is located in West Kalimantan Province and directly borders the state of Sarawak, Malaysia. This geographical position provides a strategic advantage as a border area that serves as a gateway for international trade and tourism. The existence of the Aruk Cross-Border Post (PLBN) serves as the main route for Malaysian tourists and other international tourists to visit Sambas Regency. In addition, Sambas Regency also has direct access to unique and interesting natural tourist destinations, such as:

- 1) **Temajuk Beach:** Located in Paloh District, this beach has white sand and clear sea water, and is often a destination for tourists for marine activities.
- 2) **Riam Merasap:** This waterfall is located near PLBN Aruk and offers an exotic nature tourism experience.
- 3) **Danau Sebedang:** This destination has great potential to be developed into a family and ecotourism site.



- 8) Natural Tourism Potential in Subah District: Sambas Botanical Garden, Stone House
- 9) The Natural Tourism Potential of Selakau Tua Village: Blue Lake
- 10) The Agro-Tourism Potential of Serindang Village: Matang Nangka Agro-Tourism
- 11) Potential natural tourism in Batu Mak Jage village: Matu Mak Jage recreation park
- 12) The natural tourism potential of Parit Baru Village, Mount Selindung waterfall
- 13) Potential for natural, religious, and historical building tourism Sebawi District, Sebedang Lake, Princess Palace Park Sebedang Lake, Bujang Nadi Dare Nandung Tomb, Raden Sulaiman's Surau
- 14) The Potential of Beach and Cultural Tourism in Semelagi Besar Village: Saadi/terigas Beach, Tomb of Ratu Anom Kesuma Yuda, Tomb of Pangeran Timba Bayi.
- 15) Tourism Potential of Sei Rusa Village: POLaria Beach
- 16) The natural tourism potential of Parit Baru Village: Selindung Waterfall
- 17) Beach tourism potential, Historical and Religious Buildings Pemangkat City: Tanjung Batu Beach, Sinam Beach, Toa Pekong Ular Putih, Toa Pekong Dewi Kwan Im, Dutch Police Headquarters, Dutch Prison, F.J Song's Grave, Fascism Monument
- 18) Potential Beach Tourism and Agro Tourism in Jawai Selatan Village: Pantai Putri Serai, Pantai Kalang Bau, Dragon Fruit Agro Tourism.
- 19) Dungun Laut Tourism Beach and Agro-Tourism: Dato Bundar Beach, dragon fruit agro-tourism
- 20) Potential Beach and Agro Tourism in Sentebang Village: Natuna Indah Beach, Dragon Fruit Agro Tourism
- 21) Potential of Agro-tourism and Religious Tourism in Teluk Keramat District: Salak Plantations, Sacred Tomb of the Kumpai River.

Based on its mapping, the tourism potential in Sambas Regency is divided into Agro-tourism Potential, Religious Tourism Potential, Beach Tourism Potential, Nature Tourism Potential, Cultural Tourism Potential, and Historical Tourism Potential. Therefore, the opportunity for developing Halal Tourism in Sambas Regency is wide open. With the potential for religious tourism, cultural tourism, and historical tourism closely tied to Malay culture and Islamic nuances. Therefore, there is a great opportunity for the development of halal tourism in Sambas. The natural and cultural potential is rich in religious values that can be developed.

The majority of the population in Sambas Regency is Muslim, accounting for 84.82% of the total population. This condition supports a religious atmosphere that aligns with the concept of halal tourism. In addition, Sambas has a strong Islamic and Malay cultural heritage, such as:

- 1) Alwatzikoebillah Palace Complex: This palace is a relic of the Sambas Sultanate, symbolizing history and the center of Malay Islamic culture.
- 2) Masjid Jami' Sambas: As one of the oldest mosques in West Kalimantan, this mosque has unique historical and architectural appeal.
- 3) Islamic Cultural Traditions and Festivals: Sambas has local traditions such as syair gulung, grand recitations, and other religious events that can attract Muslim tourists.

This cultural and religious potential supports the development of heritage and religious-based halal tourism, which can strengthen the appeal of Sambas Regency as a halal tourist destination. As a border region, Sambas Regency has direct access to Malaysia, which can increase the number of Muslim tourists from the neighboring country. This potential can also be used as a means of cultural diplomacy between countries (Hidayati, 2020). The development of tourism in the border area of Sambas Regency becomes strategic due to the diversity of culture, nature, and history that can attract tourists. And as a region bordering neighboring countries, it certainly has opportunities for foreign tourists who share similar characteristics with the people of Sambas Regency.

**b. Economic Potential**

Sambas Regency has great potential in developing the halal tourism-based economic sector. Halal tourism can become the main driver of the regional economy, especially with the increasing number of Muslim tourists seeking halal-friendly destinations. One of the main contributions of halal tourism to the local economy is the increase in Local Original Revenue (PAD) through tourism retribution, sharia accommodation taxes, and the management of local tourism assets. In addition, the presence of the Aruk PLBN as a cross-border gateway provides direct accessibility for tourists from Malaysia, which has the potential to significantly impact the trade and services sectors.

The halal tourism industry also has a direct impact on the development of local SMEs. Typical culinary products from Sambas, such as fish-based dishes, local honey, and sago, have great potential to be marketed within the halal tourism ecosystem. UMKM actors can enhance the competitiveness of their products by obtaining halal certification, which is an important factor in attracting Muslim tourists. In addition, handicrafts and souvenirs based on Malay culture can become one of the flagship commodities supporting this sector.

Halal tourism also creates new job opportunities that directly improve the welfare of the local community. The demand for halal tour guides, sharia hotel staff, and halal tour operators provides career opportunities for the local residents. This creates a positive ripple effect on reducing unemployment in Sambas Regency. A study by Susie Suryani and Nawarti Bustaman (2021) in Riau Province shows that the development of halal tourism has a significant impact on regional economic development, including the creation of new jobs, the emergence of various businesses around tourist attractions, and an increase in local revenue (PAD). Similar results can be anticipated in Sambas Regency if halal tourism is managed optimally.

**c. Government Support**

Adequate infrastructure is one of the key factors in supporting the development of halal tourism in Sambas Regency. One of the strategic infrastructures is the presence of the Aruk PLBN, which serves as the main gateway for international tourists, especially from Malaysia. With the modern facilities available at this PLBN, tourist accessibility to Sambas Regency has become easier, thereby providing opportunities for the development of the halal-based tourism sector. In addition, the road access to main tourist destinations such as Pantai Temajuk and Riam Merasap is also quite good, although road quality improvements are still needed to support tourist comfort.

Other supporting facilities, such as sharia hotels and halal restaurants, have become an urgent need in supporting halal tourism. Currently, there are not many accommodations that meet Sharia standards, so local governments need to encourage investment in this sector. The availability of prayer facilities in tourist areas is also an

important concern, where destinations like Masjid Jami' Sambas can serve as examples for the development of similar facilities in other locations.

Support from the local government is very important in promoting the development of halal tourism. The RTRW of Sambas Regency 2016-2035 has designated strategic areas that integrate local culture, natural destinations, and sharia-based facilities. The Sambas Regent's Decree No. 743/BAPPEDA/2021 also demonstrates the local government's commitment to making the tourism sector one of the leading sectors in development. The research results by Dian Wardiana Sjuchro et al. (2023) reveal that the presence of supporting infrastructure such as sharia hotels, accessibility, and worship facilities are the main components in the development of sustainable halal tourism. A similar experience can be applied in Sambas Regency to enhance its competitiveness as a halal tourism destination.

The commitment to developing the tourism sector by the government, both the central and regional governments, has become one of the important factors in the effort to develop the border area in Sambas Regency. The central government, through the establishment of PKS N Palsa, has made Sambas Regency one of the centers of national strategic activities. The existence of the Aruk PLBN has become a unique attraction for both domestic and international tourists. Various international-standard Cross Border Tourism activities have been held since 2017 to increase the number of foreign tourist visits. In addition, the same was stated by Hikmah (2021) that the local government of Sambas Regency, through the Tourism Office, also has a commitment to developing the tourism sector, including halal tourism, by formulating various supporting programs and policies.

Based on the results of the interview with the Secretary of the Regional Development Agency of Sambas Regency (2023), it is known that: "

*“Although up to now there is no regional regulation related to halal tourism development policies in Sambas Regency, several studies on halal development policies in Sambas Regency have been conducted in collaboration with higher education institutions”*

Another support from the Sambas Regency Government in the development of halal tourism is the organization of festivals that promote halal tourism, including the Sambas Islamic Tourism Expo, and so on. Not only that, in order to improve the achievement of halal tourism indicators, efforts have been made by the Sambas Regency government to ensure the quality of MSME industries for processed products and restaurants to obtain halal certification.

Here is a summary of the potential and prospects for developing halal tourism in Sambas Regency

**Table 1. Potential and Prospects for Developing Halal Tourism in Sambas Regency**

POTENTIAL and PROSPECTS	
	<b>Natural and Cultural Potential of Sambas Regency</b>
a)	Religious Tourism: Jami' Mosque, Surau Left by Raden Sulaiman
b)	Cultural tourism: Alwatzikoebillah Palace, Songket Weaving Village
c)	Historical Tourism: Bukit Piantus, To' Kulub Tomb, Bantelan Sacred Tomb, Alwatzikoebillah Palace, Sambas Sultanate and Noble Tombs, Wedana Office (Demang Sambas), Asam Bridge (Gerattak), Batu Bridge (Gerattak), Sambas Museum, Putri Danau Sebedang Palace Garden, Bujang Nadi Dare Nandung Tomb, Ratu Anom Kesuma Yuda Tomb,

	<p>Pangeran Timba Bayi Tomb, Kumpai River Sacred Tomb.</p> <p>d) The majority of the people in Sambas Regency are Muslim, which enables the creation of an environment that supports Muslim tourists in terms of accommodation and cuisine.</p>
	<p><b>The Strategic Location of Sambas Regency</b></p> <p>a) Directly bordering Malaysia, thus providing opportunities for foreign tourists who share similar characteristics.</p> <p>b) Means of cultural diplomacy between countries</p>
	<p><b>Government Support</b></p> <p>a) Establishment of PKSN Paloh-Sajingan</p> <p>b) The existence of PLBN Aruk</p> <p>c) Determination of Natural and Religious Potential in Sambas Regency in the Spatial Planning of Sambas Regency</p> <p>d) Expo activities or festivals with the theme of halal tourism.</p> <p>e) Improvement in the quality of halal industry and MSME products, standardized halal restaurants, and so on.</p>

Source: Analysis results, 2024

#### d. Development Prospects

The prospects for developing halal tourism in Sambas Regency are very promising, both for the domestic and international markets. Based on the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) report, the global halal tourism market continues to grow with a projected value of USD 300 billion by 2026. Sambas Regency has a great opportunity to attract Muslim tourists from Malaysia and other ASEAN countries, considering the geographical proximity and cultural similarities.

One of the main strategies is to develop sustainable halal ecotourism, where destinations like Pantai Temajuk, Riam Merasap, and Danau Sebedang can be integrated with a sharia-based environmental conservation concept. This concept attracts Muslim tourists who care about sustainability and Islamic values. In addition, the government can introduce halal tourism branding through social media and international exhibitions to expand market reach.

Cross-border collaboration also presents a significant opportunity for Sambas Regency. Bilateral cooperation with Malaysia can include the organization of Malay-Islamic cultural festivals, promotion of cross-border travel packages, and the development of halal travel routes. At the local level, Sambas can develop an integrated tourism area that includes sharia-compliant accommodations, cultural centers, and halal natural destinations. Research by Rizky Ananda Putra and Suprihatma (2023) highlights the importance of branding, integrated tour packages, and regulatory policies as strategic components in accelerating the development of halal tourism. This strategy is relevant to be implemented in Sambas Regency to enhance its attractiveness and competitiveness as a halal tourism destination in the border area.

#### D. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that Sambas Regency has great potential to be developed as a leading halal tourist destination. This potential is supported by the diversity of natural resources and a strong Islamic culture, as well as a strategic geographical position as a border

area between Indonesia and Malaysia. This location facilitates access for cross-border tourists, especially from Malaysia, which contributes to the growth opportunities in the halal tourism sector. In addition, the government's commitment to supporting the promotion of halal tourism further strengthens the prospects for the development of this region. However, the main challenges faced include limited supporting infrastructure, a lack of trained human resources in the halal tourism sector, and competition with other tourist destinations. Therefore, an integrated and sustainable strategy is needed through strengthening infrastructure, enhancing human resource capacity, and policy innovation focused on halal tourism development. With these strategic measures, Sambas Regency has the potential to become a competitive halal tourism destination, not only at the national level but also at the international level.

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