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**STRATEGY FOR STRENGTHENING LOCAL WISDOM-BASED COMMUNITY  
EMPOWERMENT IN IMPROVING WELFARE THROUGH THE HALAL TOURISM  
PROGRAM IN NORTH SUMATRA PROVINCE**

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**ABSTRACT**

Values in local wisdom are the main capital in building the community's economy without destroying the social order with the natural environment. Empowerment of local communities is an important emphasis in the principles of contemporary tourism. Empowerment of local communities in tourism activities is seen as an absolute requirement as a form of effort to prevent the environmental, social and economic impacts of tourism. Discourse on Islamic tourism (halal tourism) is a discourse worthy of further development. Halal tourism is based on sharia principles, with the aim of providing friendly facilities and services to Muslim tourists. North Sumatra Province has several tourist destinations that have great potential but are still constrained in implementing the halal tourism concept for domestic and foreign Muslim tourists. This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive approach. Data was obtained by distributing questionnaires and interviewing stakeholders in the tourism sector in North Sumatra. Community empowerment strategies in halal tourist destinations can be carried out by increasing local cultural potential which is supported by cultural craft centers and the participation of the local community. This form of cultural behavior and cultural products has an impact on the income and welfare of the community around tourist destinations in North Sumatra.

**Keywords:** Community empowerment; Public welfare; Halal Tourism

**INTRODUCTION**

Values in local wisdom are the main capital in building the community's economy without destroying the social order with the natural environment. This is in accordance with the mandate contained in Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Local Wisdom, namely the noble values that apply in the governance of people's lives to protect and manage the environment in a sustainable manner.

The development of the local community's economic environment is inseparable from non-governmental social institutions that directly intersect with their productive economic activities. The growth strategy in development economics is defined as a country's efforts to form capital and how to invest it in a balanced, directed and centralized manner. The Tourism Village Program is now a model for local governments in improving the economy of rural communities in an effort to alleviate poverty.

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The definition of a tourist village popularizes the village so that it has profit potential and can drive the economy of the village community<sup>1</sup>.

One of the concrete steps taken by the government was marked by the birth of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy based on Presidential Instruction number 6 of 2009 and Presidential Decree number 92 of 2011, with the formation of these ministries it is hoped that Indonesia's tourism and creative economy potential will be more optimal.

Empowerment of local communities is an important emphasis in the principles of contemporary tourism. Community empowerment is an effort to make the community self-sufficient by realizing the potential of the community itself so that it is oriented towards tourism, while at the same time carrying out a consultancy function so that tourism results can benefit the community<sup>23</sup>. Empowerment of local communities in tourism activities is seen as an absolute requirement as a form of effort to prevent the environmental, social and economic impacts of tourism<sup>4</sup>. This will have a long-term impact, thus becoming an important element of sustainable tourism.

Discourse on Islamic tourism (halal tourism) is a discourse worthy of further development. The tourism sector is seen as a hedonic sector that is not in line with religious views that are more self-limiting. Tourism is often presented as a form of activity that is not religious in nature and often contradicts Islamic teachings, for example through drinking, clubbing, bikinis, or activities that ignore certain religious holy times.

The latest Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2022 survey data from Mastercard and CrescentRating reveals data that halal tourism is an important asset for a destination to present and display Muslim-friendly services in that destination. The data shows that Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey are the three best countries for Muslim destinations<sup>5</sup>.

Sharia tourist destinations are considered successful in attracting foreign tourists, especially Muslim tourists and attracting investment, as well as the development of sharia tourism has also experienced a positive increase, so that with an increase in tourist visits and investment it can be utilized for the regional economy<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Adrianus P Wangge et al., "Oa'ana Cave Optimization As A New And Potential Local Tourism Destination as Part Of Community Empowerment In Kuanheun Village - West Kupang, NTT," *E-Amal Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 02, no. 02 (2022): 1207–12.

<sup>2</sup> Magisty P Priambodo, "Implementasi Kebijakan Ekonomi Pariwisata Dan Perwujudan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Di Kota Batu," *Jurnal Ekonomi Studi Pembangunan* 7, no. 2 (2015): 27–34.

<sup>3</sup> Sabriana Oktaviana Gintulangi, "Strategi Pengelolaan Wisata Religi Berkelanjutan Untuk Melestarikan Tradisi Masyarakat Islam Dan Meningkatkan Perekonomian Di Kabupaten Gorontalo" 5, no. 4 (2022): 563–78.

<sup>4</sup> Dwi Ariady Kusuma, Ridan Muhtadi, and Fitriyana Agustin, "STRATEGI PENGEMBANGAN DESA WISATA HALAL BERBASIS BUMDESA DI JAWA TIMUR; PELUANG DAN TANTANGAN," *Ulûmuna: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 8, no. 1 (2022): 156–85.

<sup>5</sup> CNN Indonesia, "Malaysia Peringkat 1 Wisata Halal GMTI, Indonesia Di Posisi 2," *CNN Indonesia*, 2022, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/gaya-hidup/20220602172817-269-804067/malaysia-peringkat-1-wisata-halal-gmti-indonesia-di-posisi-2>.

<sup>6</sup> Abrar Amri, Muhammad Yasir Yusuf, and Hafiih Maulana, "Model Pengembangan Wisata Halal Berbasis Masjid Di Provinsi Aceh," *Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Islam* 8, no. 8 (2022): 1115–23.

Halal tourism was first recognized by the general public in 2000, namely during activities organized by the OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation). This idea is a way to accommodate travel needs by adjusting to the needs of Muslim tourists when traveling<sup>7</sup>.

Halal tourism is tourism carried out with sharia principles, with the aim of providing friendly facilities and services to Muslim tourists. Several things that must be considered by the local government in serving halal tourism include: the availability of worship facilities, such as prayer rooms, prayer equipment, and faucets made for ablution. Availability of halal food, good public facilities and clean water. Availability of food during the month of Ramadan when breaking the fast and sahur, and not providing unclean food and drink, access to pornography and other things that are prohibited in Islamic law<sup>8</sup>.

Currently, the ministry of tourism and creative economy is developing a CHSE (Clean, Health, Safety & Environment) certificate or hygiene, health, safety and environmental sustainability in the tourism sector. The CHSE certification program is the process of granting certificates to tourism businesses, other related businesses / facilities, the community, and tourism destinations. The benefit of this CHSE certificate is a guarantee to the public that the products and services provided meet the hygiene, health, safety and environmental sustainability protocols<sup>9</sup>. The CHSE concept is a concept that is an important part of developing Muslim friendly tourism, because basically Muslim friendly tourism is tourism that emphasizes cleanliness, health, safety and environmental sustainability.

Tourism in North Sumatra has the uniqueness of one of the great apes that still survives in the Southeast Asian region, namely at Bukit Lawang. Bukit Lawang has very good forest conditions, because orangutans have a dependence on forest conditions that are still beautiful and the natural ecology is maintained, and are fruit-eating primates.

In addition, tourist attractions that are still preserved in nature include the Sidamanik tea garden and the Aek Manik Bath which are only crossing points for tourists visiting Lake Toba. The management of tourism at the Sidamanik Tea Plantation and Aek Manik Baths seems to be running without any integrated planning between the government and the managers in particular.

Then tour Tangkahan in North Sumatra Province which is known as a hidden paradise. The local wisdom contained in this hidden paradise is the interaction between humans and their elephants, where tourists can interact directly with the elephants, from feeding and bathing the elephants to taking forest tours with the elephants.

Empowerment of coastal communities in the development of tourist destinations is a process or strategy carried out to increase the power/capabilities of the people of West Nias Regency which is included in the North Sumatra region which has a myriad of mainstay marine tourism. by the

<sup>7</sup> Dede Adistira et al., "Konsepsi Wisata Halal Di Aceh: Kajian Terhadap Wisata Budaya Dan Sejarah Di Provinsi Aceh," *Community: Pengawas Dinamika Sosial* 8, no. 2 (2022): 125–36, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35308/jcpds.v8i2.5396>.

<sup>8</sup> Meri Lustianah and Dewi Rahmi Fauziah, "Pengaruh Produk Halal Dan Wisata Halal Dalam Meningkatkan Pendapatan Asli Daerah Di Provinsi Banten," *EKSI BANK (Ekonomi Syariah Dan Bisnis Perbankan)* 6, no. 2 (2022): 272–84, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37726/ee.v6i2.675>.

<sup>9</sup> Sugeng Santoso et al., "Analysis of Muslim Friendly Tourism Development in Indonesia COVID-19," *Iqtishoduna* 10, no. 2 (2021): 17–32, <https://ejournal.iaisyarifuddin.ac.id/index.php/iqtishoduna/article/view/975>.

community and local government. This high potential can be put to good use for community empowerment with various businesses that can increase people's income thereby reducing poverty.

While sharia tourism offers tour packages that adhere to sharia principles, community empowerment with good local wisdom values will make tourists more interested, while at the same time encouraging wider community participation, because tourism is carried out with the cultural principles it adheres to. . for a long time and has become part of their identity.

Maimon Palace as an Icon of Medan City is a magnet that can bring tourists to North Sumatra, especially Medan City. The Maimon Palace Tour has gone well with the preservation of local cultural values every day to entertain tourists such as dance performances. By maintaining the Malay culture which is the hallmark of Deli's work.

In literature, sharia tourism is better known as halal tourism, Islamic tourism, or Muslim-friendly tourism. This concept is also a new concept which is in line with the new awareness about the need for Muslims to get special services in tourism <sup>10</sup>. There is a sharia economic concept as an alternative solution for togetherness and is carried out in a clear and fair legal manner that is relevant to the objectives of empowerment and economic institutions that are established, managed legally with the provisions of joint regulations and are prosperous for members together <sup>11</sup>.

This is the background for conducting this research with the hope that the output provided is a standard that can be applied in cities in Indonesia to analyze the potential for developing Muslim-friendly tourism. This paper discusses a model of strengthening community empowerment through local wisdom in increasing welfare through the Halal tourism program in North Sumatra.

## METHODS

This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive approach to determine the Strategies for Strengthening Community Empowerment Based on Local Wisdom in Improving Welfare through the Halal Tourism Program in North Sumatra Province in depth.

The research location was determined by several predetermined criteria. There are three dimensions that will be applied to the destination that will be selected as a tourist attraction. First, The time dimension, where the time dimension in this study shows destinations that have long been opened and recently opened. The long-standing destinations are Bukit Lawang, Tangkahan CPU, Maimun Palace and the Hinako Islands. Meanwhile, recently opened and popular destinations such as field trips (Pematang Johar) in Deli Serdang district and educational field tours (Sei Mencirim) in Deli Serdang district), and Sidamanik Tea Garden tours (Simalungun District).

Second, Geographical Dimension, in this dimension tourist destinations are selected based on the layout of the destination. For example, in mountainous areas the destinations chosen were Bukit Lawang and CPU Tangkahan, while the coastal areas selected were the Hinako Islands destinations, while the tourist destinations for artificial rice fields (Pematang Johar) for Deli Serdang district and educational field tours (Sei Mencirim). Deli Serdang Regency).

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<sup>10</sup> Santoso et al.

<sup>11</sup> Adhi Iman Sulaiman et al., "Community Empowerment in Culinary Tourism as Sustainable Rural Development," *Sustainable Development Research* 4, no. 1 (2022): p1, <https://doi.org/10.30560/sdr.v4n1p1>.

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Third, regional administration (ownership), where this dimension looks at destination ownership. Where are destinations managed by the government and owned by the government such as Bukit Lawang, CPU Tangkahan, Maimun Palace and the Hinako Islands, while tourist destinations are owned and managed by individuals such as rice field tours, educational fields and Sidamanki tea gardens. Because based on the criteria and observations of researchers that this destination is very appropriate to be used as halal tourism.

Data search was carried out by distributing direct online questionnaires and interviews with tour managers. Representatives from the Tourism Office of North Sumatra Province, representatives from FKUB (Religious Communication Forum), representatives from ASITA (Association of Indonesian Travel Bureaus). ) North Sumatra, representatives of PHRI North Sumatra (Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association), representatives of tourists visiting tourist destinations.

Data analysis in this study was in the form of general qualitative analysis and SWOT analysis. Qualitative analysis is generally directed at data from focus questionnaires, observations, and interviews.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Strategy for Strengthening Community Empowerment Based on Local Wisdom to Improve Community Welfare Through the Halal Tourism Program in North Sumatra Province**

The results of the study show that several tourist objects in North Sumatra have different conditions and findings. The author discusses them specifically one by one:

#### **A. Bukit Lawang Tourism**

Bukit Lawang tourism is included in the focus and must be able to increase and concentrate on the great strengths possessed by Bukit Lawang tourism to be able to seize the opportunities that exist in increasing tourist visits. For this reason, it is necessary to take the opportunity to make Bukit Lawang halal tourism based on local wisdom. The most suitable strategy recommendations for the development of Bukit Lawang halal tourism in Langkat Regency are opportunities to continue to grow.

Halal food consumption is the main strategy to increase the cultural potential of local communities. Access to halal food that is easy to reach and close to tourist sites is the tourism strength of Bukit Lawang. When viewed from the people who live around Bukit Lawang tourism, the majority of the population is Muslim, food providers or sellers in tourist areas where the majority of tourists are halal. This will result in visitors who come to visit not too worried about the food that will be consumed.

Provision of places of worship for Muslims that are close to tourism, such as mosques that provide separate ablution areas for men and women, provision of mukenas for women who will perform prayers, places of worship that are clean and comfortable. Then this will become the strength of the local community to make Bukit Lawang tourist attractions halal tourism. The use of places of worship for the surrounding community and the construction of places of worship in Bukit Lawang tourism is a huge opportunity for Bukit Lawang tourism to be used as halal tourism.

The existence of Islamic banks will facilitate the surrounding community, especially in implementing halal culture. The existence of Islamic financial institutions around halal tourist

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attractions supports the activities and understanding of the surrounding community to use Islamic financial institutions.

#### B. Maimun Palace Tourism

Maimun Palace tourism can be used as halal tourism in North Sumatra by utilizing the existing components of opportunity in the form of food consumption, the existence of Muslim places of worship, access to halal culinary, the habit of praying on time, and Islam. bank. Malay culture which is still closely related to Islamic culture makes Istana Maimoen have a strong potential to become local wisdom which becomes halal tourism.

Lodging in hotels with sharia nuances such as madani hotels allows foreign tourists to experience tourism that has many accesses, starting from the culinary field, houses of worship and even places to stay that are comfortable and also have Islamic nuances. If foreign tourists visit the Maimun palace, there will be many religious tours that will be visited and obtained because around the Maimun palace there are inns with Islamic nuances and the grand mosque in the city of Medan.

The advantages of Maimun Palace aside from being a popular historical tourist spot in Medan, on the other hand, it is also an educative family tourist spot. Inside the palace there are many historical objects, from thrones to photographs of historical figures. Maimun Palace is still standing strong, orderly and well maintained.

Maimun Palace is a tourist destination not only because of its old age, but also because of its tourist attraction, Maimun Palace combines elements of Malay cultural heritage. The condition of the buildings in the Maimun palace are quite well maintained and the authenticity of the buildings is maintained both in terms of shape, material and color. Maintenance is still maintained until now. Thus the efforts to preserve the Maimun palace can be maintained today.

Maimun Palace cannot be seen from only one cultural side, Maimun Palace holds so many mysteries that perhaps not a few people want to know about, including its closeness to science and people's culture. The cultural value of the Maimun palace does not only come from the beauty of its architecture, for student visitors they can study the architecture of the palace buildings but also their layout. The layout of the palace merges with the mosque and open fields.

At certain times, traditional Malay music performances are held at the Maimun palace. This performance was held in order to enliven the Medan cultural festival, weddings and other festive activities. In addition, twice a year the Sultan of Deli holds social gatherings between the royal families. This is strongly supported by the Tourism Office of North Sumatra Province. Highly support and appreciate if North Sumatra Province becomes a city or halal tourism area that can increase economic growth for all religious people which will improve the economy of a more independent society.

#### C. Sidamanik Tea Garden

Sidamanik Tea Garden Tourism has the opportunity to become a halal tourism in North Sumatra because the community is dominated by non-Muslims which is one of the threats that will arise. Likewise with the behavior of the community where at the time of prayer there are no prayer facilities available. Ownership of land still controlled by companies is also an emerging threat.

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Community economic empowerment carried out by tea gardens in empowering the community's economy which has been proven by individuals or groups has had many positive impacts, namely the opening of business or employment fields, such as culinary business groups and cooking classes, by producing tea plantations typical of food and drinks, business groups homestays by providing their homes for rent to tourists who stay overnight, as well as other business groups that provide individual expertise such as providing photo spots. This is also a form of concern for the welfare of the poor people around the Sidamanik Tea Plantation.

With the opening of plantations to the public, many people have migrated out of town in search of a decent living. However, after the emergence of tea plantations, the rate of urbanization slowed down. Today's sense of community solidarity is also increasing with one another so that it can indirectly have an impact on environmental and cultural improvements. Thus the tea plantations have carried out economic empowerment as they should because the surrounding community has become empowered.

The Bah Butong tea plantation in Sidamanik District or the Sidamanik Tea Plantation is not only known as the largest tea plantation in North Sumatra but also has other tourist attractions. This tourist attraction is in the form of ponds and waterfalls as well as beautiful natural scenery. In addition to the community as an economic actor in the Bukit Lawang destination area, the community also plays an active role in creating a community to increase natural and human resources which can increase people's income and can also play an active role in preserving tourist destinations. The active role of the community apart from economic actors is to introduce tea to the public and visitors, as happened at the Indonesian tea festival held by a community of tea lovers.

#### D. Centra Rehabilitation Unit (CRU) Tangkahan

CRU tourism or what is known as the Tangkahan tourist area is one of the tours in North Sumatra province which is known for its hidden paradise. Its location far from urban areas makes ecotourism areas in great demand by tourists, both local and foreign. Located in the Gunung Leuser national park area, almost every corner of the ecotourism area presents stunning natural panoramas. One of CRU's tourism icons is elephants, where tourists can interact directly with elephants starting from feeding, bathing elephants and doing forest tours with elephants.

Tangkahan CRU tourism (elephant tourism) has the potential to become Halal tourism in North Sumatra by utilizing a number of facilities, infrastructure, sharia practices. The dominant strengths are access to halal culinary for people's food consumption, the existence of houses of worship, and the existence of Islamic banks.

The model of strengthening community empowerment for CRU tourist sites is carried out by providing education and outreach to industry players regarding cleanliness and also additional services for places of worship such as prayer rooms and also providing alternatives not to provide alcoholic beverages.

The process of developing a tourist village is very closely related to the concept of sustainable tourism development which is one of the new role models in the development of community and

environment-based tourism<sup>12</sup>. The cultural value of respecting guests and also serving guests is very important. Strengthening these cultural values provides capital for empowering the surrounding community. To increase income in the area, various efforts have been made by the community. One of them is by consistently maintaining halal food consumption, the existence of places of worship, and people's behavior at prayer times, especially Friday prayers.

Then CPU Tourism cooperates with PHRI and the Tourism Office to get support and be able to develop CPU Tourism and establish sharia hotels in tourist sites.

Planning for community-based ecotourism development in the Tangkahan area must be able to provide a new nuance for efforts to educate the lives of local communities in the future. Therefore, the planned development of the tourism industry must be a means of creating jobs and being able to create structural equity of income.

## CONCLUSION

The strategy to strengthen community empowerment based on local wisdom in increasing welfare through the halal tourism program begins with increasing community participation through the principle of partnership with tourist destination managers. Community participation in tourist destinations can contribute in the form of cultural behavior and cultural products based on local wisdom such as the values of mutual cooperation, maintaining cleanliness, values of tolerance and protecting the environment. This form of cultural behavior and cultural products has an impact on the income and welfare of the community around tourist destinations in North Sumatra.

Tourism development is an activity that must be community-based, with the main factors being resources and the uniqueness of the local community, both physical and non-physical elements (tradition and culture) attached to the community as the main drivers in tourism development. Community empowerment strategies in halal tourist destinations can be achieved by increasing local cultural potential which is supported by cultural craft centers and the participation of the local community.

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