

# Islamic Branding:

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## Islamic Branding: Measuring Halal Tourism Policy in West Nusa Tenggara Province Indonesia

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the consideration of halal tourism branding as a policy of increasing tourist visits in the West Nusa Tenggara Province which has lack of support from stakeholders by *Rational Choice Theory*. This research used qualitative data collected by in-depth interviews using interview guide with key informants which is determined by the *purposive sampling technique*. Complementing the data requirements, a documentation study and non-participant observation were conducted. Each data found was analyzed using interactive model approach and the validity was tested using data credibility criterion. The study found that the reason of the halal tourism policy implementation in West Nusa Tenggara Province is that halal terminology is a set of values sourced from muslim tourists' belief, Indonesia's willingness to be the halal tourism center, the increase of world muslims population, and further motivation from the award as the world best halal destination. The reason is rational choice because of increasing tourist visits. This study was conducted in an area with a major Muslim population. Therefore, this implies that is possible to have a different rationality assessment if it is conducted in different areas with different theological beliefs of majority society and superior tourism attraction characteristics of a region. Given the size of Muslim population globally, local governments need to be affirmative towards the Islamic branding through halal tourism policies to increase Muslim tourist visits because Islam as a system of beliefs is one of the factors that influences Muslim tourist behavior in choosing tourism destinations and products. Although studies on Islamic branding and halal tourism have been carried out by many researchers, this paper provides a new study of the rationality of the choice of Islamic branding in local tourism policy for the interests of regional tourism attractions. Halal tourism can be a medium for the moderation of economic and religious value interests.

### Keywords

Islamic Branding, Rational Choice, Policy Formulation, Halal Tourism, Muslim

### A. Introduction

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It is recognized that tourism industry is playing a vital role in contributing to economic development and sustained employment, in both advanced and developing economies (Sriprasert et al, 2014). Tourism triggers more and more rapid growth in employment,

income, and ancillary production in the tourist destinations (Battor & Ismail, 2015). According to The *World Tourism Travel Council* prediction, tourism contributes around 11% of the world's gross domestic product in 2014 (Kreishan, 2010).

In Indonesia, tourism generates 13% of the national economy, earning foreign exchange of Rp. 200 trillion and employing 12 million people in 2017. To increase Indonesia's competitiveness index from level 50 to 40 in the world of tourism, international visits are targeted to reach 15 million people, and domestic tourists to reach 265 million (Lombok Post, 26<sup>th</sup> November 2016: 12). This expectation is rational because according to Trip Advisor, Indonesia is one of the world's favourite tourism destinations (Antara News, 27<sup>th</sup> Mei 2015: 1).

The tourism sector as 15% of gross domestic product in 2019 may exceed the oil and gas sector as the biggest source of foreign exchange with the value of US \$ 24 billion (Susanti, 2017, Subarkah, 2018). With the highest Muslim population in the world and with 12 entrance already in the *World Tourism Halal Awards* (Awalia, 2017, Jaelani, 2017), Indonesia is well-placed to enhance its competitiveness, where in 2015, according to Global Muslim Travel Index, Malaysia received 6.1 million, Thailand received 4.8 million, and Singapore received 3.6 million, whereas Indonesia received only 2.2 million (Lombok Post, 12<sup>th</sup> Maret 2016: 4).

According to the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia, one of the regions that Indonesia relied on to be a barometer of halal tourism management is West Nusa Tenggara Province with Lombok Island as its main destination (Firdausi et al, 2017). The reason is because it has successfully got an increased from of muslim tourist visits and crowned as a world-class halal tourism destination (Asdhiana, 2017). In addition, the majority of the population of West Nusa Tenggara is likewise Muslim (MUI NTB, 2017: 4). Therefore, it is not difficult to provide of halal tourism products and facilities for muslim tourists (Lombok Post, 14<sup>th</sup> Maret 2015: 6; Satriana & Faridah, 2018). According to the Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia, the target for visits to West Nusa Tenggara in 2019 is 4 million (Lyn & Oni, 2019; Saputra, 2017: 6).

However, the policy gets a variety of responses. According to the Association of Indonesian Tourists (HPI), the policy is difficult to implement without any region to be used as a reference (Suara NTB, 12<sup>th</sup> October 2016: 1). The Association of Islamic Tourism Actors (APPI) considers that halal tourism destinations in West Nusa Tenggara are still confusing (Suara NTB, 10<sup>th</sup> Februari 2017: 3). A study by the ASEAN Studies Center of Gadjah Mada University in 2016 maintains that the policies are still unclear (Suharko, 2016).

As a result, promotions carried out directly by the provincial government and various annual events with high budgets are called “a misuse of funds” (Rahim, 2016). On the other hand, the Cultural and Tourism Office of Mataram City says that despite there is not any specific destination yet, halal tourism already exists, because the major religion in West Nusa Tenggara Province is Islam.

The lack of halal tourism promotion means that overseas tourists mostly come from Europe, where the majority of the population are not Muslim (Lombok Post, 26<sup>th</sup> November 2016: 12). Based on 2016 data, the number of foreign tourists visiting NTB has reached 858.154 people (Tourism Office of West Nusa Tenggara Province, 2017).

**Table 1**  
**Number of Foreign Tourists in West Nusa Tenggara Province**

No	Country of Origin	Number of Tourist (People)
1	Australia	256.744
2	Germany	110.154
3	Netherlands	104.714
4	The United Kingdom	100.522
5	Italy	79.525
6	France	79.521
7	The United States	54.788
8	The Switzerland	37.955
9	Canada	34.231

Addressing these matters, we intend to study the basis and reasons for the halal tourism policy implementation using the *Theory of Rational Choice* because the policy earns profits and benefits for its stakeholders (Lester & Stewart, 2000). This research has urgency because there has been a phenomenon of the rise of Islamic branding that leads to pragmatic interests, given the size of Muslim populations globally (Wilson et al, 2013). It involves many stakeholders, and there are many possible effects of each available option (Jordan & Turmpenny, 2015). The rationality of a policy choice when it was born from a formulation process that was based on comprehensive information with the ratio between the value to be achieved higher with the value that was sacrificed economically (Frederickson and Smith, 2003: 161).

## B. Literature Review

Religion is one of the factors that influence tourist behavior in choosing tourism destinations and products (Weidenfeld and Ron, 2008). The phenomenon of Islamic branding has attracted the attention of both academics and practitioners – from within and outside of the Muslim world. Islam is a code of conduct, a way of life and an explanation of existence as defined by Allah swt. This is elucidated and preserved within the Qur'an, and the documented sayings and practices of the prophets from Adam to Muhammad saw (Wilson and Liu, 2011).

Islam – as a way of life, a system of beliefs and practices, and religious and social imperatives – is amply explored. Muslims' core belief system is derived from religious texts, which nourish and reshape cultural norms and values (Wilson et al, 2013). Even during traveling, Muslims are requested to respect fundamental Islamic precepts. The concept of halal is not only applied to food, but also including any Shari'ah compliant products ranging from bank dealings to cosmetics, vaccines and in this case, tourism (Farahani and Henderson, 2010).

Halal means permissible, according to the teachings of Islam (Wilson, 2014). Halal tourism is a new product in the tourism industry market and of a great prospective because The world Muslim population has been growing swiftly across the world. Thus, there is a need to develop customized halal tourism products and services to cater to this vigorous sector. Though Muslims contributes to one of the largest tourist markets in the world, halal focused tourism professed significance has not been cleared to (Chandra, 2014).

Muslim tourist is the large niche market for tourism industry. Thus, the knowledge about Muslim tourist' behavior and needs are highly needed for tourism business sectors to develop, promote and sell tourism products that suit to the unique needs of this new market (Sriprasert et al, 2014). Meanwhile, halal tourism is deeply rooted within the Islamic Shari'ah as every Muslim is required to travel for many reasons, some directly related to Islamic Shari'ah itself (El-Gohary, 2016). In Morocco, although tourism halal practices as an idea exploiting a potentially promising market, in their view the adoption of such a label should not imply restrictions on tourists' nationalities above all faiths (Carboni and Janati, 2016).

Halal tourism, as a result of the tourism industry's development strategy innovation in the millennial era, turns out to have a variety of meanings and understandings in Indonesia (Batt et al., 2010). One meaning of halal tourism is synonymous with the word religious tourism, namely the activity of visiting places of worship for pilgrimages or for other worship (Andriani et al., 2015). Another synonym is Shari'ah tourism, namely tourism that does not focus only on objects, but on travel and other new experiences (Chookaew, 2015).

The meaning of the phrase “halal tourism” is actually ambiguous, not standardized, and even confusing because there is no interpretation of meaning that can be the main basis of it. People define it differently based on their own basic understanding (Awalia, 2017). To involve Muslims as the guides means there will be no obstacles for Muslim tourists to worship daily (Sofyan, 2012; Battour & Ismail, 2015). Halal tourism as religious tourism is still very much under-represented in the literature. In fact, it is distressing to find that little is known about religious tourism in many developed and developing economies (El-Gohary, 2016).

Halal tourism is also defined as tourism following procedures of Islamic Shari’ah, in which the Islamic values are implemented as the basis for performing the tour. Furthermore, Islamic values do not need to discriminate against non-Muslim tourists (Wuryasti, 2013; Jaelani, 2017). For a reference, a set of general criteria of halal tourism has been developed by the Halal Tourism Development Acceleration Team of the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia. The criteria are in the following table (Subarkah, 2018):

**Table 2**  
**General Criteria of Halal Tourism**

Category of Tourism Element	Indicator
Tourism Destination	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Availability of tourist activities, art, and culture which does not lead to pornography and polytheism</li> <li>2. If it is possible, organizing at least one halal life style festival</li> <li>3. Tour guides must dress up with dignity</li> <li>4. Options of separate tourist attractions of beach and bathing for men and women, with guidelines for tourists not to dress impolitely</li> </ol>
Hotel	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Availability of halal food</li> <li>2. Availability of facilities for worship, like a place to wash and directions to a Mosque</li> <li>3. Availability of Ramadan services for sahur and iftar.</li> <li>4. There is no non-halal misbehaviour like gambling, alcoholic beverages, sexual immorality, and disco-tech dancing</li> <li>5. Availability of separate recreational facilities like swimming pools and gyms for men and women</li> <li>6. In spa facilities, female therapists are only for women and male therapists are only for men. Therapy does not use substance containing por, alcohol or derivatives.</li> </ol>

Travel Agents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Providing tours which conform with the general criteria of halal tourism</li> <li>2. No offers of non-halal activities</li> <li>3. Up-to-date list of halal food and beverage providers</li> <li>4. The tour guides understand and are able to apply Shari'ah values in their duties.</li> <li>5. Guides dress politely and attractively in Islamic dignity</li> </ol>
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The Global Muslim Travel Index (an institution that focuses on developing halal tourism), emphasises that halal tourism running in accordance with Islamic principles will provide friendly facilities and services to Muslim tourists (Komalasari, 2017). Halal tourism is a tourism segment that wants to provide tourism services and facilities to Muslim tourists by carrying out principles of Islamic Shari'ah (Wuryasti, 2013). Halal branding is used as a soft power to attract Muslim tourists (Kusumaningrum et al, 2017). In summary, the basic needs of Muslim tourists are:

- the existence of adequate facilities and services of worship, and
- Friendly accommodation to Muslim tourists, in terms of Shari'a hotels, and
- food and beverages with halal certification (Subarkah, 2018).

The halal tourism industry in Indonesia is very potential and prospective, because with the majority of Muslims as theological models of society, Indonesia will easily develop halal tourism and can become a world center for halal tourism. In addition, Indonesia shows a commitment in the development of tourism that is friendly to Muslim tourists by allocating a budget specifically for the development of halal tourism (Komalasari, 2017; Subarkah, 2018), while Malaysia is attempting to be a popular Islamic tourist destination in the world owing to its Islamic environment. It is already noted as an Islamic country serious in establishing a halal hub for financial products as well as services. As a further step forward it is embracing novel concepts such as Islamic and halal tourism in recent years (Shafaei and Mohamed, 2015).

Halal tourism referring to islamic or Shari'ah tourism, has implications for both the consumption and production of tourism and hospitality products (Razzaq et al, 2016). Historically there has been Muslim regions on the territory of Russia, nevertheless halal tourism is just beginning to develop, and a long period of time is needed for its dynamic growth. Citizens of Muslim countries rarely get engaged in international tourism, making the demand of halal tourism did not spread over yet. . Only at a alter stage, the consumption of this product is growing among the population of non-Muslim countries. Hence, halal industry is relatively recent phenomenon in the Russian Federation (Gabdrakhmanov et al, 2016).

In the Andaman Sea Coast of Thailand, the halal tourism does not provide prayer rooms yet for Muslim tourists nor the direction signs written in English or Arabic to the mosque and separate restrooms for men and women. This completes the suggestion that halal restaurants should be provided in tourist attraction areas (Chainin et al., 2015). Although halal tourism is a field of study still in very early stage, the number of halal products and services is starting to increase worldwide on its practical level (Sanchez and Moral, 2019). In addition, regulations on halal food certification are considered to be very needed in the promotion of halal tourism, both in majority countries and Muslim minorities (Henderson, 2016). Muslim tourists will feel comfortable and safe because their needs for food, drinks and facilities are guaranteed in Indonesia (Subarkah, 2018). In the future, interest in halal tourism will undoubtedly grow (Battor & Ismail, 2016) perhaps by 20% each year (Battor et al., 2010).

### C. Research Methods

This is field research in the realm of policy research using qualitative method. The main consideration in the use of qualitative methods in the context of this study is due to the passion to explore, understand and interpret the reasons for the choice of halal tourism policies developed in West Nusa Tenggara of which the support of tourism stakeholders is still lacking. The use of qualitative methods in this research is considered more relevant because the policy case can only be understood in depth if the data obtained are rigorously and comprehensively collected through various data sources and methods.

Socio-religiously, the characteristic of this research setting is the area that is inhabited by a majority of the Muslim population which accounts for 90%, but flanked by two regions with a Hindu majority in the west, that is Bali Province and a Christian majority in the east, that is East Nusa Tenggara Province. The research data collection process was carried out through three stages, namely; *First*, the stage of entering the research area (getting in), where researchers begin to enter the study site and meet, building good rapport, and reduce the distance with the informants so as to create social trusts. *Second*, the stage is in the research area (getting-along), where researchers develop relationships with informants to understand their typical behavior at each research site. This effort was carried out as a research strategy to establish communication and facilitate the process of extracting data (finding out) research in accordance with the problems and research focus. *Third*, the stage of collecting and developing data (logging the data), this step is carried out to ensure the availability of research data needed and to record every data that has been collected.



Data collected by in-depth interviews using interview guide with key informants, determined by the *purposive sampling technique*, namely the determination of informants based on the significance of the role (capacity) and involvement (intensity) of the informant in the initial process of halal tourism branding as a policy to increase tourist visits in West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. Complementing the data requirements, a documentation study and non-participant observation were conducted.

To get data through in-depth interview methods, the criteria in determining the informants are those who are involved as a team for the formulation of halal tourism policies. They are all civil servants who work in the tourism office of West Nusa Tenggara Province and all are Muslim. Among them are The Regional Secretary (Rosiady Sayuti), The Head of Tourism Office (Lalu Mohammad Faozal), The Head of Attractions Section of Tourism Office (Baiq Rahmayati), The Head of Promotion Section of Tourism Office (Suaidi), The Head of Marketing Section of Tourism Office Irma (Sinarah Wulan), and The Head of Halal Product Section of Tourism Office (Alfiah) in the scope of the government of West Nusa Tenggara Province.

The informants were interviewed directly one by one at different times and places. The data collected from the informants included; the basis of interests in the phenomenon of halal tourism, the process of policy formulation, the parties involved in the process of policy formulation, the reasons considered in implementing halal tourism policy, the regional potentials that are favored for the development of halal tourism, promotion efforts that have been made to attract Muslim tourist interests and the level of Muslim tourist visits after the application of halal tourism.

In terms of document studies, In-depth analysis is conducted on research reports on halal tourism in West Nusa Tenggara Province that has been done by researchers before. To complete it, data sources which include performance reports of the Tourism Office of West Nusa Tenggara Province relevant to tourism promotion activities, statistics on the number of tourist visits, data on tourist origins, data on the number of halal products as well as hotel and restaurant data with halal certificates every year in West Nusa Tenggara are used. While observations were made to check the implementation of halal tourism in each hotel, restaurant and tourist destination, especially those related to the provision of facilities for Muslim tourists.

In order to ensure that the data collected are the ones needed to answer the research, the process of analyzing the data in this study has been carried out since the process of collecting the data. Each time the researcher has obtained research data, analysis is done

without having to wait for complete data collection. This step is carried out in order to ensure that incomplete data is collected again, thus assisting researchers in improving the data analysis process. So, in its operation, between data completion and data analysis activities are running simultaneously.

The data analysis process model referred to above refers to the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014: 33) which consists of three channels, namely data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions and verification, which the process does not always run systematically from one flow to the next, but is carried out simultaneously, thus making researchers more dynamic and interactive. The operationalization of the research data analysis process is carried out through the following steps:

*First*, data condensation. This step is carried out by researchers when the state of data collected is still too broad, biased, and difficult to understand, so it does not provide clear information to support answers to research questions.

*Second*, data display. This step is carried out after the researcher has obtained data in which the situation has provided clear information to support the answers to the research questions raised. Presentation of research data is done by interweaving one data group with another data group so that all analyzed data is involved in one unit.

*Third*, drawing conclusions and verification. At this stage the researcher basically implements the principle of inductive-abstractive inference as one of the characteristics of qualitative research used. But before making a final conclusion on the results of the study, the researcher verifies in order to sharpen or perhaps revise the conclusions.

To ensure the validity of the data as a basis for drawing conclusions, a data validity test was carried out using credibility criteria conducted by triangulation based on sources and methods. Triangulation of sources is done by comparing data findings from one informant and documents with others against the same question. Triangulation of methods is done by comparing the results of interviews with documentation and observation of the answers to the same questions related to the basis and birth process of halal tourism branding as a policy of increasing tourist visits in West Nusa Tenggara. While the involvement of colleagues is done by presenting this paper in an international conference to get suggestions to improve writing. and ensuring the adequacy of references related to the study of halal tourism. The application of this degree of trust criteria serves to guarantee the validity of the results data as a basis for making conclusions from the results of research studies that can be justified.

#### **D. Results and Discussions**

### Primary Initiation of the Halal Tourism Policy

West Nusa Tenggara in Indonesia attracts overseas tourists (Awalia, 2017). According to the Head of Tourism Office of West Nusa Tenggara Province, the provincial government focuses on destinations, marketing, industry promotion, and tourism institutions (Faozal, 2017). Halal tourism policy developed in West Nusa Tenggara Province since 2006 is a tourism activity management system which is regulated with the basis of Islamic principles without disadvantaging non-Muslim tourists (Tourism Office, 2016). According to the Head of Promotion Section, the typology of tourism industry development policy with the values of Islamic theology was created by the Provincial Government of West Nusa Tenggara to create a comfortable, secure feeling, and ease of service for Muslim tourists, attracting more and more tourists to West Nusa Tenggara (Suaidi, 2017).

According to the Regional Secretary of West Nusa Tenggara Province (Sayuti, 2017), the unique tourism identity of West Nusa Tenggara distinguishes it from other regions. These aspects predominate:

*First*, the Tourism Destinations, which include natural and cultural attractions, require the provision in public places of equipment for Muslim tourist worship and purification facilities that fulfill Shari'ah standards.

*Second*, tourism infrastructure including accommodation, travel agencies, restaurants, and Solus Per Aqua (SPA) must meet Shari'ah standards set by the National Shari'ah Council of the Indonesian Ulema Council (DSN-MUI) as Indonesia's top Muslim clerical body. An important function of MUI is to provide halal certification for products (including but not limited to foods, cosmetics, pharmaceutical and clothing), in terms of products, services, and management.

According to the Head of Tourism Office of West Nusa Tenggara Province, in the conventional tourism industry, it is obligatory to provide direction for praying in hotel rooms, information on nearby mosques, places of worship for Muslim tourists and employees, supporting facilities for prayer, information on halal and non-halal products, and separate places of ablution (and separate toilets and urinals) for men and women, making them easy to purify (Faozal, 2017).

Paying attention to the contents of the halal tourism policy developed in West Nusa Tenggara Province, it can be seen that the emphasis on halal design in the formulation of halal tourism policies can be the way to create comfort by adding the service facilities needed for Muslim tourists to enjoy tourism destinations without discriminating against non-Muslim tourists (Battor & Ismail, 2015). Indeed, it increases the attractiveness of West Nusa

Tenggara Province for tourists of all faiths (Subarkah, 2018). But because there are some aspects have not been specifically and concretely described, such as the "Shari'ah standard" statement, so it is reasonable to expect differences in understanding and therefore require one destination as a pilot example (Wahab, 2011).

Referring to the halal tourism phenomenon which begins to attract many Muslim tourists to Indonesia (Satriana & Faridah, 2018) and has a positive impact on the regional economy that provides halal tourism services (Chandra, 2014), the responsiveness of the attitude of the West Nusa Tenggara Provincial Government is shown by initiating the formulation of halal tourism policies to improve tourism services for Muslim tourists in the postulate "rational choice theory" is in fact very rational, because it considers all the benefits (Turner, 2012). It also shows that the branding of Islam that leads to the pragmatic interests of tourism - Islamic politicization - is the choice of rational action behind the size of muslim population globally (Wilson et al, 2013).

Islamic branding of the Government of West Nusa Tenggara Province as they respond to their increasing responsibility for Muslim tourists to Indonesia confirms that the issue of tourism development causing the trend of tourism's contribution to the country's economic sector becomes a strategic issue that must accelerate the realization of tourism as an important element of the public economic welfare (Wever et all, 2012). Tourism will transform the regional economy and public welfare (Jafari, 1977; Kreishan, 2010) and needs to be made a priority of development policies in various regions and countries (Delgado & Tores, 2010).

The increasing concern of Muslim tourists for products and services according to the Shari'ah when visiting a tourism destination (Jafari & Scott, 2014) needs government intervention as the holder of authority to responsiveness for initiating the formulation process of development of the tourism industry that accommodates interests of considering and accommodating theological values of tourists. Muslim tourist is the large niche market for tourism industry. Thus, the knowledge about Muslim tourist' behavior and needs are highly needed for tourism business sectors to develop, promote and sell tourism products that suit to the unique needs of this new market, because that muslim tourist' high needs towards the placement of direction for praying in hotel room, availability of halal food at restaurant, and availability of mosque (Sripraset, 2014).

### **The Rationality of Halal Tourism Policy**

The development of the halal tourism industry as a response to the increasing segment of Muslim tourists to Indonesia actually not only done in West Nusa Tenggara Province. Since 2015 there has been 12 other provinces ready to become halal tourism destinations: Aceh, Banten, West Sumatera, Riau, Lampung, Jakarta, West Java, Yogyakarta, East Java, South Sulawesi, Central Java, and Bali (Nirwandar, 2015: 10-11).

Aceh and West Nusa Tenggara has catered well for foreign Muslim tourists already. With a 90% Muslim population and 4,500 mosques spread over 598 villages and sub-districts in West Nusa Tenggara (MUI, 2017), it is very easy to find halal products and religious facilities (Satriana & Faridah, 2018). After the declaration of the halal tourism policy, the aura and charm of West Nusa Tenggara tourism increasingly attracts tourists. Visits increase on average 28.5% every year. The travel patterns include individuals 62%, groups 34%, and couples 4% with the majority of the tourists' main goal for leisure purposes (Tourism Office, 2017).

**Table 3**  
**The Purpose of Tourist Visit to West Nusa Tenggara Province**

No	Purpose of Visit	Percentage (%)
1	Leisure purposes	71%,
2	Business	12%,
3	Visit family and friends	5%,
4	Other reasons	11%

West Nusa Tenggara tourism is increasingly showing its charm as the province which wins numerous awards as the world's best halal destination. Furthermore, regarding the increasing trend of Muslim tourist arrivals to Indonesia, the West Nusa Tenggara Provincial Government confirms its intention to develop halal tourism as the regional tourism identity. According to the Head of Halal Product Section, the Indonesian Ulama Council, the Assessing Institute for Food, Drug and Cosmetics, the Culture and Tourism Office, and the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Office have already issued halal certificates for hotels and restaurants since 2016. Business units of all sizes have 644 halal certificates (Alfiah, 2017).

Furthermore, according to the Head of Attractions Section, the responsiveness of the West Nusa Tenggara Provincial Government to the increase of the segment of Muslim tourists to Indonesia, which underlies the formulation of halal tourism policy, is a strategic and rational step to realize their desire to make the tourism sector a main stay of their

regional development. But in West Nusa Tenggara Province many principals do not yet serve the needs of Muslim tourists (Rahmayati, 2019). According to the Regional Secretary of West Nusa Tenggara Province, this problem may reduce their interest in visiting West Nusa Tenggara region. Sayuti (2017) hence highlights that the provision of services in tourism destinations expected by Muslim tourists is a challenge in the ongoing development of the tourism industry in West Nusa Tenggara Province.

Therefore, the Head of Promotion Section, Tourism Office of West Nusa Tenggara Province, involving the Indonesian Ulama Council, the University of Mataram, the College of Tourism, the Regional Tourism Association, and respected religious figures, agrees to apply the concept halal tourism as a choice is seen as the most prospective and rational (Suaidi, 2017). The processes of halal tourism policy is run democratically, involving all stakeholders of which the end result, “*NTB Province Regional Regulation No.2 in 2016*” is rational and well-respected. Rationality of halal tourism policy in West Nusa Tenggara because the fact that the ratio between the interests to be achieved and those less prioritised is higher than in alternative policy formulations (Frederickson & Smith, 2003) in the politicization of the tourism industry (Subarkah, 2018; Jordan & Turnpenny, 2015).

The rationality of halal tourism as a branding of West Nusa Tenggara tourism development can be seen from the a comprehensive understanding of the problems in the policy formulation process, because there is active interaction among stakeholders shifts public interest from the individual to the community (Prasetyo, 2011). Tourism – either halal or not – inevitably triggers social, cultural, natural, environmental, and even religious changes in any society (Tsartas, 2003). The policy formulation process examines what they want to do, and also how to solve problems and guard the public interest from factionalism (Islamy, 2009).

If stakeholders do not understand each other the policies will therefore lose focus (Ricci et.al, 2015) or are not carried out properly. Based on comprehensive rational considerations, such situation will create inappropriate policies, even though the intention of the policy is to lessen the problem. Instead, it can trigger other problems (Subarsono, 2016). Hidden assumptions and contrasting views necessarily affect the initial process of policy formulation (Patton & Savicky, 1993). It is necessary to consider the complete network, not just fragmented policies (Farsari, 2011), because the development issues always run concurrent with other issues (Dodds, 2007).

Careful analysis on some considerations and the process of the establishment of halal tourism policy as the branding of the development of the tourism industry in West Nusa

Tenggarahave shown a rational choice due to three factors, *The first* is religious belief. Using the word "halal" in the formulation of policies for the development of the tourism industry in the province of West Nusa Tenggara is a terminology derived from Islamic values. Islamic values are the Muslim tourists' beliefs. The word halal means something that is permissible according to Islamic Shari'ah. The word "halal" is not just related to food, but encompasses all aspects of life (Satriana & Faridah, 2018). Thus, halal tourism has embedded values. It is a new phenomenon (Samori et al., 2016), which respects the knowledge and awareness of Muslim tourists about the importance of halal products (Hamdan et al, 2013), so that before going on a tour, they will consider halal product services and facilities at their destination (Battor & Ismail, 2012).

*The second* is regional potential. Indonesia's Central Government intends to make Indonesia the most sought-after of the world's halal tourism destinations (Lombok Post, 12 Oktober 2016: 1). The strength of Indonesia in conducting halal tourism programs to attract the visiting interest of Muslim tourists is supported by the existence of well-developed halal tourism facilities and attractions. Such facilities and attractions are generally and easily available in Indonesia.

It is also evident that West Nusa Tenggara Province, especially Lombok which is famous as the "island of a thousand mosques", has won many awards in halal tourism industry. In 2015, for example, Lombok as one of the tourism destinations in the West Nusa Tenggara Province received the titles of *Best Halal Tourism Destination* and *World Best Halal Honeymoon Destination*. In 2016, of the 12 awards won by Indonesia in the World Tourism Halal Award (WTHA). Three of them again went to West Nusa Tenggara Province, these are *World Best Halal Beach Resort*, *World Best Halal Honeymoon Destination*, and *World Best Halal Travel Website* (Lombok Post, 12 Maret 2016: 4). The effect of this award is that the world, especially Muslim tourists, begins to look at Indonesia, especially Lombok, as a tourism destination (Ilham, 2017).

*The third* is population growth. Muslims world-wide have a big middle class income. In 2015, the young adult Muslim with an average age of 24 years is the most frequent tourist (Subarkah, 2018). In 2017, the trend to Indonesia is from the Middle East. Saudi Arabia and Egypt send 222,362 tourists with an average stay of 11 days and an expenditure of around USD 1,800 each, and their most common destination is West Nusa Tenggara and West Sumatera (Rosana, 2018). The Middle East, like Indonesia, is 90% Muslim. They feel comfortable here because most areas have facilities for prayer as well as certified food (Widagdyo, 2015). According to *Crescent Rating* and *Dinar Standard*, the money spent

world-wide by Muslim tourists is roughly equivalent to the total Indonesian Budget (Sofyan, 2016).

The *Pew Research Center Forum on Religion and Public Life* looks at the world's Muslims, 1.6 billion in 2010 and projected to be 2.2 billion in 2030 (Antique, 2016). In the same way, a Thomson Reuters survey of 55 countries shows that in 2013 tourists spend USD 1.292 billion on halal food and beverages, equivalent to 10.8 percent of all food and drink expenditure and projected to reach USD 2.537 billion or 21.2 percent in 2019 (Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015).

*The Fourth* is the impact on tourist visits. According to the Head of Marketing Section of the Tourism Office of West Nusa Tenggara Province, tourist visits in 2016 reach 3,094,437 – made up of 1,690,109 domestic tourists and 1,404,328 foreign tourists (Wulan, 2017). According to the Head of Tourism Office, in 2016, tourist visits to West Nusa Tenggara reach the target of 3 million. In 2017, 3.5 million, and by 2018 the target is 4 million tourists (Faozal, 2017). This increase can be maintained by utilizing various tourism promotion and packaging appeal strategies to the public through the social media and the tourism official website (Firdausi et.al, 2017), including among them the role of new technologies and the digital economy (Sanchez and Moral, 2019).

As mentioned above, the policy brings agreement on Islamic values. It harmonizes the effect of tourism on social changes and changes in the policy itself (Tsartas, 2003) and lists expected benefits to the economy, society, politics, culture, and even religion (Fischer, 2011; Awalia, 2017), because in every hotel, restaurant and tourist destination, there is a need for services for muslim tourists who are the main intention of implementing the halal tourism policy. This halal tourism policy confirms that the terminology of halal which is a variant of values in Islamic Shari'ah is not just a label of esoteric expression of production, trade, and consumption, but is the key to expansion of global markets in the modern era (Fischer, 2011).

As well as increasing the attractiveness of West Nusa Tenggara Province, the policy protects the value of local wisdom from the potentially overwhelming secular culture brought by non-religious tourists, while moderating the negative image of tourism which mocks cultural and religious values (Dinata, 2016). This halal tourism can also be a medium of diplomacy to build awareness of regional tourism actors that all tourists, both Muslim and non-Muslim, appreciate polite and friendly service and dignified behaviour in the surrounding environment (Saputra, 2017).

The impact of halal tourism branding in West Nusa Tenggara Province shows that Islam is no longer merely seen as a doctrines about human relations with God, but



functionally pragmatic because the internalization of Islamic Shari'ah in tourism industry development policies formulated in halal tourism branding is a rational choice as an innovation strategy for increase Muslim tourist visits to an area or country of destination. The presence of halal concepts in Islamic shari'ah as a new paradigm in the post modern or global era (Wilson and Grant, 2013) could therefore be a rational choice to brand to capture the raising muslim tourists. This phenomenon confirms that religion is one of the factors that influences tourist behavior in choosing tourism destinations and products (Weidenfeld and Ron, 2008).

### **E. Conclusion**

Halal tourism as development policy of a new tourism segment accommodating the Islamic Shari'ah in various components of tourism has a positive effect on increasing tourism. Not only Muslim but also non-Muslim tourists benefit from the comfort, security, and friendly atmosphere of a well-regulated tour experience.

Our conclusions rely on qualitative data from informants who represent the initiators of the policy. What is more, we study an area inhabited by a Muslim majority, so that provisions for halal tourism are not difficult to find. Further study, is needed, we suggest, in different areas with different religious majorities. With some of the limitations of this study, it is possible to have a different rationality assessment if it is conducted in different areas with different theological belief of its major society and superior tourism attractions characteristic of a region.

Development aimed at advancing regional economy by encouraging tourism cannot be done in a haphazard manner, but must be done by considering various aspects relating to the tourism system rationally and comprehensively, especially the tourists' needs for comfort and security. The results of this study re-emphasize that tourism industry development must be done by considering various aspects relating to the tourism system rationally and comprehensively, especially the potential of regional tourism, the tourists' needs for comfort and security in the perspective of tourists' religious beliefs.

In providing services whose lack is often complained by Muslim tourists, local government intervention through policy instruments is rational when the regions expect an increase in the flow of tourist visits to their region. In addition, every process of formulation of regional tourism development policy must be participatory. It includes the involvement of various tourism stakeholders, an analysis of costs, benefits, and impacts so that the

possibilities of the presence of policy formulation can moderate the problems, as well as not cause problems in society's life in the region.

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