

## Communications:

# Tourism as an Islamic Media for Water Conservation: Challenges and Opportunities

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**Abstract:** The aim of the paper is to provide conceptual framework on tourism, Islam and water conservation in modern world. Prior to the modern concept of tourism and environmental conservation, Islamic scholars in the past have discussed such themes in Islamic perspectives. Principally, traveling in the perspectives of Islamic scholars has several benefits, including worship, improving knowledge, learning lessons and receiving reminders. Islam also argues that nature conservation is one of the human obligations on the earth. The important point for linking tourism and water conservation in muslim community therefore requires contemporary Islamic guidelines which is able to link and manage such issues in a sustainable manner. In the context of global conservation strategies, such approach will provide alternative model to maximize economic benefits from tourism in conservation and enhance human awareness to conservation through their spirituality.

Keywords: *Islam, Tourism, Water conservation*

## 1. Introduction

Tourism nowadays is considered as a crucial sector for development. As many authors argue, tourism is an important factor to support developmental growth. The benefits of tourism have been widely studied, and in many countries tourism has become one of the prime sectors that support development due to its economic benefits. The works to link and meet development and conservation argues that tourism in specific ways can contribute to the harmonious relationship between development needs and biodiversity conservation, including water (Gunn and Var 2002, Swarbrooke 2002, Fyall *et al.* 2005).

Recently, traveling to natural destinations has become the new phenomenon among world travelers. The travelers not only enjoy new experiences with nature, but also contribute to the conservation of nature. There are some terms to refer such travel, including ecotourism, wildlife tourism, adventure tourism and others words to express a new more responsible travels. Nature based tourism is a tourism which its activities depend on the uses of natural resources which remain in a relatively undeveloped state or developing countries, including scenery, topography, waterways, vegetation, wildlife and cultural heritage. This is emerging after many western society travels to tropical countries to enjoy nature and its luxurious landscape (Mawforth and Munt 2003, Hakim *et al.* 2012).

Water is a fundamental resource for human beings. Nevertheless, recent status of water in many part of the world seriously threatened due to several factors. For instance, a survey to assess the quality of Indonesian water quality in

2004 confirms that laboratory assessment based on the several parameters such as DO, BOD, COD, fecal coli and total coliform indicate that many Indonesian water sources are highly polluted. It is often a result of uncontrolled development activities, pollution, over exploitation, and little regards for the overall integrity of the environment which are fundamental in water quality. In other words, Indonesia is facing water crisis. Such situation leads government to accept the concept of sustainable development to become a new paradigm for development in Indonesia. The sustainable development is a kind of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It has been promoted intensively with the aims of promoting harmonious relationship between humanity and nature (Ministry of Environment 2005).

Indonesia is home of the biggest Muslim community in the world (Table 1). According to Islamic concept, water is crucial factor in living systems. Allah (*Subhana wa Taala*) has made water as basis and origin of life; as stated in Holy Qur'an (21:30):

“We made from water every living thing...”.

The obligation to appreciate water as an essential resource for life and Islam was stated in several *surah* and *ayah*, *i.e.*

“Have you seen the water which you drink? Was it you who sent it down from the rain cloud, or did We send it? Were it Our will, We could have made it bitter; why then do you not give thanks?” (Qur'an 56:68-70).

Many *surah* and *ayah* discuss and provide guideline for human to conserve nature, indicates the potential Islamic

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Table 1. Top five countries with large number of Muslim populations (2009):

Country	Number of Muslims
Indonesia	203 million
Pakistan	174 million
India	161 million
Bangladesh	145 million
Egypt	79 million

spiritual aspect to support global nature conservation, including water.

Promoting tourism as an agent of economic growth as well as conservation strategy is a significant potential market for Muslim society. According to statistical data, the contribution of Islamic countries' tourist to Indonesia was considered significant. Tourist growth from Middle East countries (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Qatar) increased significantly from 2006 – 2010. In 2006, there were about 8,358 tourists from such areas and that increased significantly to become 113,935 in 2009. In 2010, there were about 143,002 tourists from the Middle East. In South East Asian countries, Malaysian tourists have the highest number in term of international tourist arrivals. Malaysian tourist's arrival has increased significantly from 699,124 tourists in 2006 to 1,171,737 tourists in 2010. There are also increased tourists number from Brunei, Singapore and tourists of other Islamic countries from South Asia Regions (Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India). Domestic tourism has grown from 5,158,441 at 2006 to 6,750,416 at (2011) (Ministry of Tourism and Economic Creative, 2012). This figure shows that Islamic tourism is growing and in the near future it is considered as a potential market for Indonesian tourism.

This paper aims to conceptualize relationship of tourism, Islam and water conservation. In the context of global conservation strategies, such approach will provide alternative model to maximize economic benefits from tourism in conservation and enhance human awareness to conservation through their spirituality.

## 2. Tourism in Islam

Prior to the modern concept of tourism being introduced, Islamic scholars in the past have discussed travel and/or tourism in Islamic perspectives. Tourism and/or travel (*Siyaahah*) as a part of human activity is one of the debatable subjects among scholars due to its negative potential impact to the Moslem community. Islam has come to improve human beings in the world and tries to mitigate any potential activities which lead to moral and environmental degradation. Throughout the world, tourism has been reported able to change human behavior, contribute towards prostitution and sex tourism. The growth of tourism is often accompanied by increased crime and sexual harassment. These points become the focus of Islamic rejection on tourism. Scholars argue that the negative impacts from tourism occur when tourism is not managed in sustainable manner.

Principally, there are also many benefits derived from tourism. Ibn Rajab in his famous book *Fath al-Baari* (1/56) argues that traveling in Islam has several benefits, including worship, improve knowledge, learn lessons and receive reminders (see Qur'an 30 (9)):

“Have they not traveled through the earth and observed how was the end of those before them? They were greater than them in power, and they plowed the earth and built it up more than they have built it up, and their messengers came to them with clear evidences. And Allah would not ever have wronged them, but they were wronging themselves”

“Similar situations [as yours] have passed on before you, so proceed throughout the earth and observe how was the end of those who denied”; 34 (18): And We placed between them and the cities which We had blessed [many] visible cities. And We determined between them the [distances of] journey, [saying], "Travel between them by night or day in safety": Qur'an (3): 137

According to Holly Qur'an, Muslims are encouraged to travel to observe the signs of Allah (*Subhana wa Taala*) creation (Qur'an 3: (190-191). In the past, there were also famous muslim travelers such as Ibn Wahb Al-Qorashi, Osama Bin Mongid, Abdellatif El Bagdadi, El Harawi As-Sa'ih, Naser Khasrou, Ibn Fadlan, Ibn Battuta and Ibnu Jubir; indicating tourism as part of the long tradition of Muslims in the world. In the recent decades, several phenomena of tourism development occur in Islamic countries. For instance, many airlines of Islamic countries (*i.e.* Al-Ittihad, United Arab Emirates; Garuda Indonesia; Malaysian Airlines) grow significantly to facilitate tourist access tourism destination in Islamic countries. Moreover, the rapid development of Islamic city as international tourist attraction in the past decades can be phenomena of tourism development in Islamic countries.

## 3. Tourism as Conservation Media

In many countries, tourism nowadays has been considered as an important media for nature conservation (Gunn and Var 2002, Hakim *et al.* 2012). In the aspect of biodiversity conservation, tourism is able to reintroduce many trees in a destination, and increase forest cover. In their perspectives of environmental education for conservation, tourism has ability to introduce natural phenomena, including natural degradation (Hakim and Nakagoshi 2010).

The significant role of tourism includes:

- Educate tourists about nature. The objective is to provide educational experience so that tourist knows the component of nature and how they develop biological interaction to produce integrative life system. The educational benefits of tourism are substantial for conserving biodiversity (Cousins *et al.* 2009).
- Educate and enhance local community awareness on biodiversity as a component of natural attraction. By

promoting local people involvement in tourism industry through community based tourism scenarios, benefits generated from the tourism can be used for the poverty alleviation programs as well as community-based conservation program (Neba 2010).

- Address changes to human (tourist) behavior. Tourism programs encourages tourist to adopt eco-friendly behavior that are needed to enhance nature conservation success. Knowledge and experience is basis for human behavior, and tourism provides opportunities for such fundamental factor fur human behavior.

#### 4. Tourism and Water

Water is the crucial resources for tourism. The use of water in tourism can be categorized as follows (Gunn and Var 2002):

- Water as natural tourism attraction. Traditionally, marine, river, waterfall, spring is used as a tourism attraction. The significance of water in tourism leads to numerous water-based tourism themes, such as visit waterfall, sea resort, aquaria, Sea world, *etc.*
- Water as component of tourism accommodation. Water use in accommodation for consumption and non-consumption. For consumption purposes, water is used to support restaurants and for drinking. Non-consumption includes water for swimming pool, watering garden and hotel yards, *etc.* In many nature-based tourism, particularly water-based destination, there are emerging issues related water quality.

It encompasses:

- Eutrophication: This phenomenon has become the problem of many lakes in Indonesia, particularly lakes in areas used as tourist attractions. In Bromo Tengger Semeru, the Ranu Pani and Ranu Regulo Lakes ecosystem represent the good example how intensive agriculture and tourism affect eutrophication. In Both lakes, our record shows that, the Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen in Ranu Pani was found 0.26-0.85 mg/L, while in Ranu Regulo was 0.24-0.36 mg/L. The total phosphate (TP) in Ranu Pani ranges from 0.02 to 0.03 mg/L and in Ranu Regulo was range from 0.02 to 0.58 mg/L. According to several water quality classification (see Carlson and Simpson classification, 1996 and Marganof classification 2007), it is concluded that Ranu Pani and Ranu Regulo could be classified as eutrophic (Hakim *et al.* 2010).
- Invasion of exotic species: In many lakes in Indonesia which areas is tourism destinations, problems related to invasive of exotic species widely reported. In Ranu Pany, the invasion of *Salvinia molesta* has decreased lakes ecosystems and quality of lakes as nature-based tourism. In Tondano lakes (North Sulawesi), the invasion of *Eichhornia crassipes* has been recognized

as a factor affecting lakes quality by degradation, which threatens lakes' biodiversity (Hakim *et al.* 2012).

- Water scarcity: Besides human population growth, deforestation plays an important role in water scarcity. In Indonesia, many lakes facing serious problems of water depletion due to deforestation.

#### 5. Towards Sustainable Water Management for Tourism Attraction

As mentioned above that water is crucial in the tourism sector, it is very important to design the sustainable use of water in the context of tourism industry. Basically, there are three pillars of sustainability, namely economic, environmental, and social aspects. The conceptual models for water as tourism in Islamic perspective therefore could be drawn in Fig. 1. Management of water is crucial as an aspect of environmental protection, while at the same time the tourism industry provides economic opportunities for water conservation. The social aspect allows visitors to learn about water and interact with the local residents in destination sites. The social aspect also promotes the participation of local resident in tourism destination in many parts of tourism business. In every component, however, Islamic code of conduct can be an important issue to control and manage such triangle.

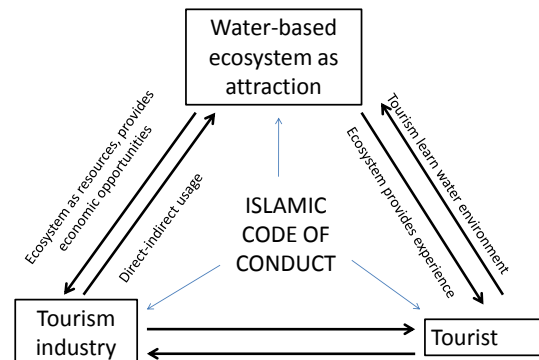


Fig.1. The triangle relationship of tourism and the role of Islamic code of conduct.

Moreover, there are foundations for successful Islamic-water conservation in the perspectives of tourism, including:

- Visitor education
- Host community education
- Tourism industry enhancement

#### 6. Conclusions

Enhancing tourism as an Islamic media for water conservation has the following potential impacts:

- Support water conservation, particularly in the perspectives of Islamic philosophy and spirituality
- Increase human awareness to water

There are challenges for tourism development in Indonesia as representative of Islamic countries in this study. Among the nature-based attraction, water is a crucial attraction as well as a consumptive resource. Nevertheless, there are less Islamic guidelines in such cases. Therefore, contemporary Islamic guidelines related to tourism and traveling are needed urgently. For instance establishing Islamic role and code of conduct in tourism such as contemporary Islamic jurisprudence in traveling (*i.e.* Fiqh Siyaahah) is crucial. Among the content of guidelines to be discussed are the basic principles of tourism and attraction management, such as water.

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