

# Islamic Business Case *Series*

Halal Tourism Development:  
Case of Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB) Province

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## Islamic Business Cases Series

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## Halal Tourism Development: Case of Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB) Province

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The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Tourism, has played a key role in developing Indonesia's *halal* tourism industry. In 2012 it formulated a formal strategy to develop the industry, which included establishing preliminary growth targets for Muslim tourists. In 2013, the government encouraged investment in 12 designated *halal* destinations in several provinces, including Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (NAD), West Sumatra, Lampung, DKI Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, Yogyakarta, East Java, South Sulawesi and Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB). As a result, Lombok, the island west of NTB province, won awards for the "World's Best Halal Honeymoon Destination", "World's Best Halal Beach Resort" and "World's Best Halal Tourism Website" at the World Halal Travel Awards held in Abu Dhabi in 2016 (Oxford Business Report, 2018).

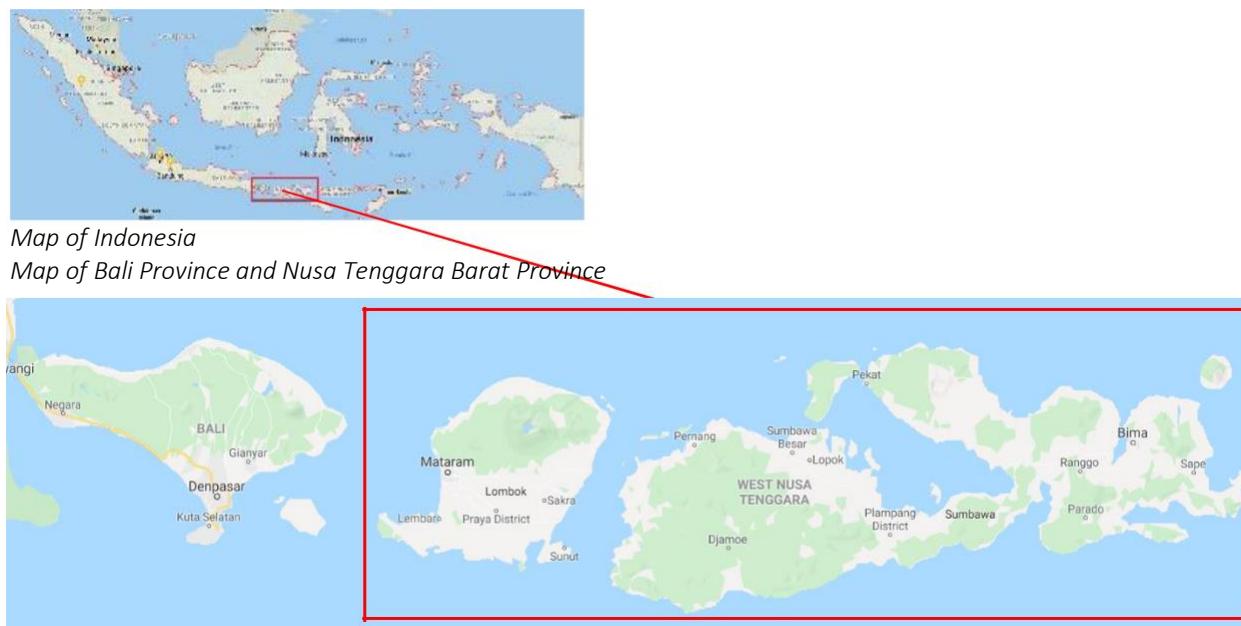
Tourism development in the province of Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB) began in the 1970s when tourists started to visit three small islands: Gili Air, Gili Meno, and Gili Trawangan, as well as Lombok Island as a side trip from their main destination of Bali province<sup>1</sup>. Since then, the government of NTB had been looking at ways to make NTB a tourist destination to rival its world-famous neighbor island, Bali province.

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## Background

The Province of West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) is formed by two main islands, Lombok island and Sumbawa island. In terms of geology, they, along with Bali, are part of the Lesser Sunda Islands. Ecologically, the flora and fauna of Lombok and Sumbawa are similar to the flora and fauna of Papua, Australia and the Pacific islands, whereas Bali's flora and fauna are part of the Asian continent.<sup>2</sup>



Today, NTB has a population of over four million people who are ethnically and culturally very diverse. The *Sasak*, the indigenous people of the islands, form the predominant culture of the province. In addition, there are four subcultures with distinct languages. The capital city of Mataram, also on Lombok Island, was part of the Kingdom of Karangasem of Bali, and today 15% of the population are of Balinese lineage. Meanwhile, Sumbawa, an island rich in natural resources was invaded and was subject to different kingdoms in its history, including the Majapahit Kingdom, a Hindu kingdom in Java that dominated the region. Later, the western part of the island was subjugated by the Kingdom of Gelgel of Bali while on the eastern part, the Kingdom of Bima was an Islamic kingdom with close ties to the people of Bugis and Makassar of southern Sulawesi. As these different cultures interacted with the local cultures throughout time, they have created a modern distinctive multi-cultural NTB with strong Islamic values.<sup>3</sup>

Up until 1998, the last year of the New Order government of President Soeharto, the development of provinces outside of Java island, including NTB, was relatively stagnant. Construction of infrastructure such as roads, public transportation, airport and seaport services important to the hospitality sector saw very little development. The lack of infrastructure discouraged private sector investment in the province, including tourism-related projects. Attempts to promote the NTB province to international tourists were too weak to make an impact. Despite its diverse and

colorful cultural and natural heritage, NTB was little known. Changes were to come only after the fall of the New Order regime after regional autonomy was granted and power passed on to locally elected officials.<sup>4</sup>

Regional autonomy allowed for the evolution of a distinctive approach to developing the tourism industry in NTB. Although made up of many different cultures, including the Hindu Balinese, the majority of the population, about 97%, were observant Muslims. This meant that the consumption of *halal* (religiously permitted by Islam) food and drink prevailed in NTB. Unlike in Bali, the trade and consumption of non-*halal* pork and alcoholic beverages, for example, was rare beyond certain establishments, notably the international chain hotels.

This could give rise to the dilemma of a flow of international tourists who might prefer non-*halal* food and drink to such an extent that an increase of international tourist would be unwelcomed by many in NTB province. Indeed, the beginning of tourism in the three Gili islands was seen as appropriate and encouraged as it limited interactions of tourists with the population.<sup>5</sup> However, the importance of the tourist trade to the economy of the province demanded a policy approach that would be satisfactory to all relevant stakeholders.

### Tourism as a Contributor to the Economy

The Travel & Tourism Council reported in their 2019 annual research that the tourism sector was an important contributor to the world economy. In 2018 the global tourism market contributed 10.4% of global GDP, and created 20% of global jobs, a faster pace of 3.9% compared to the rest of the global economy at 3.2%<sup>6</sup> (see Figure 2).

In Indonesia, the impact of the tourism and travel sector was greater than the global average. In 2018 the sector's international visitors spent IDR 221 billion, which was 6% of the Indonesian GDP that year. The industry grew by 7.8% and employed almost 13 million people.<sup>7</sup>



Source: (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2019)

Figure 2: Travel and Tourism Contribution to the Global Economy

### Fulfilling the Needs of Muslim Tourists

In a very specific portion of the tourism population, Muslim travelers were making a mark. In 2007, World Travel Market, in association with Euromonitor International, published World Trend Report 2007, a special section of which was dedicated to the Middle East and the potential for *halal* tourism. The report described how the Dubai Emirates, as part of a policy to lessen its dependency on oil, succeeded in developing its tourism sector by catering to the needs of Muslim travelers. Saudi Arabia followed suit by developing its own tourism industry to attract regional tourists. Euromonitor International forecasted that inbound tourists in the Middle East would grow by 66% between 2006 and 2011.<sup>8</sup>

### Who are these Muslim Travelers?

Muslim travelers, because of their faith, have certain special needs when travelling. The provision of solutions and services to help fulfill the expectations of Muslim travelers to make their journey comfortable and easier in fulfilling their faith-based needs is a challenge to service providers. The core faith-based needs of Muslim travelers are:

- *Halal* food service, or permitted food and drinks for Muslims
- Mosque/mussalla/surau or praying facilities

To help service providers improve their services and offers to Muslim travelers, CrescentRating<sup>9</sup> proposed a framework to help design services that would fulfill faith-based needs of Muslim travelers, and which non-Muslim travelers could also enjoy:

Customer Needs	Pre-Trip Touchpoints	Main-Trip Touchpoints	Post-Trip Touchpoints
<b>Need to Have:</b> Solution catering to the <u>core needs</u> of Muslim Travelers		Availability of <i>halal</i> food and drinks on the premises	
<b>Good to Have:</b> Solution catering to <u>preferred needs</u> of Muslim Travelers	Information on available <i>halal</i> services and products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of a separate area for the consumption of <i>halal</i> food, drinks, and services on the premises</li> <li>Information on available <i>halal</i> services and products beyond the premises</li> </ul>	Information on available <i>halal</i> services and products
<b>Nice to Have:</b> Solution delivering <u>unique experiences</u> for Muslim Travelers	Provision of specific <i>halal</i> services and products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of a separate area for the consumption of <i>halal</i> food, drinks, and services on the premises</li> <li>Information on available <i>halal</i> services and products beyond the premises</li> </ul>	Provision of specific <i>halal</i> services and products

Source: (CrescentRating Pte Ltd, 2016)

**Figure 3: Framework for Product Development for the Muslim Tourist**

As one moves further down the “customer needs” column, from “good to have” aspect to “nice to have” aspect, the quality and value of the service offerings improve and become relevant to more consumers beyond the intended Muslim travelers.

### Why Target Muslim Travelers?

After the Dubai Emirates diversified into tourism targeting Muslim tourists from the Middle East, the Muslim tourist market grew to become a global market by expanding geographically. It also expanded due to the global increase of the Muslim population. Furthermore, Muslim millennials,

with their increasing disposable income, have shown a large appetite for travel, new experiences and leisure.

In 2014, CrescentRating projected that the size of the Muslim tourism market for 2020 would be around 150 million visitors. In its 2019 projection, CrescentRating increased its projection for 2020 to 160 million visitors. Meanwhile, the 2018 realization of Muslim travelers was already at around 140 million international visitors.

### **The Nusa Tenggara Barat Experience**

**Tuan Guru Haji (TGH) Muhammad Zainul Majdi**

When TGH Muhammad Zainul Majdi was installed as governor of NTB on September 17, 2008, he would go on to serve two terms up to September 17, 2018. During his term of service, he would gain a reputation for increasing the profile of the province in such areas as *sharia* banking and *halal* tourism. He was popularly called Tuan Guru Bajang (TGB). As he explained it<sup>10</sup>, the term “*Tuan Guru*” was the term used by the *Sasak* community for a religious leader. “*Bajang*” meant “young” in the *Sasak* language and since he was the youngest among the *Sasak* religious leaders at the time, he became Tuan Guru Bajang (TGB). He was also at the time, the youngest provincial governor at 36 years old, in the country.

He governed a province known for its natural beauty and cultural diversity yet with far less tourist visitors than its neighbor, Bali. At the same time, the province had a 97% strong Muslim population that had the potential to reject an increasing inflow of international tourists for fear of the possible negative cultural impact.

But the new governor saw the opportunity in the rising trend of Muslim travelers internationally and developed a Muslim traveler-oriented strategy to achieve an increase in incoming tourist flow and to communicate the strategy to all stakeholders. He hired qualified professionals to formulate and execute both the strategy and the communication of the strategy.<sup>11</sup> By targeting Muslim tourists, the NTB tourism sector had the opportunity to craft a strategy to develop a tourism sector that would propel the province to a new era of sustainable development.

## Execution to Increase Tourism Arrival to NTB Province

In developing a strategy for tourism development for the province of NTB, the tourism sector faced two fronts:

1. **The local stakeholders of the tourism industry of NTB.** For a province where the potential impact of the industry could be misunderstood and to some extent unwanted, the tourism sector had to make community stakeholders understand the opportunity and the need to target Muslim tourist in order to gain their support.
2. **The market, with a focus on the global Muslim tourist market.** The market was well defined with clear requirements and expectations.

### Engaging Stakeholders of the NTB Tourism Sector

Before the NTB tourism sector could promote the province to the world, it needed to engage the local stakeholders, particularly those potentially opposed to the development of the sector. The governor took an active role in the communication effort, engaging particular stakeholders directly. Among others, the important stakeholders that were engaged early in the process were:

- The religious leaders, particularly the MUI (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia/Council Islamic Scholars of Indonesia*) in NTB Province,
- The business stakeholders of the NTB tourism sector, including:
  - The hotel and restaurants association and its members
  - The Chambers of Commerce (*Kamar Dagang Indonesia/KADIN*) and its members
  - The small businesses in the craft and souvenirs
  - Travel related associations and businesses
- The Department of Tourism in Jakarta, the local hospitality industry association and members
- Airlines: local and international airlines, and
- Non-formal leaders of the community.<sup>12</sup>

### Engaging the Market

To engage the market, the governor and his staff crafted a strategy to encourage tourists, especially Muslim tourists, to set their destination trips to NTB. That NTB was largely unknown to the global tourist market was a challenge. To help overcome the market unfamiliarity on NTB, Tuan Guru Bajang (TGB) enrolled the support of the Minister of Tourism in Jakarta for the resources needed.<sup>13</sup>

But still strapped for resources, the governor found new ways to promote NTB to the world, particularly in the form of social media. He needed a young and effective social media influencer

to be part of the promotion team. Tuan Guru Bajang found his person in Mr.Taufan Rahmadi, whom TGB made Chairman of West Nusa Tenggara Tourism Promotion Board. Mr.Taufan proved to be instrumental in successfully bridging NTB with the global Muslim community.<sup>14</sup>

## Preparing the Destinations

As the promotion for the province was being prepared, the physical development of the infrastructure for the destination and the people development process got underway. Some of the highlights of the developments included:

1. A new international airport, *Zainuddin Abdul Madjid International Airport*, with a longer airfield to accommodate larger high capacity wide body Boeing 767 and Airbus A330 aircrafts. The former airport, the *Selaparang Airport*, was a small airport located in the center of the city, which could not accommodate the increasing numbers of larger aircrafts coming to Lombok. The new international airport was located in Central Lombok, about one-hour drive from the capital of Mataram. It was announced for construction in 2005 and started operation in 2011. Although far from the city, it was close to new destinations on the southeastern part of the island of Lombok giving the opportunity for other areas and destinations to be developed for tourism.<sup>15</sup>
2. New roads to reach tourism destinations: Many existing destinations and potential destinations either have old dilapidated access or none.
3. New destinations: living traditional villages, such as the *Sade Village*, where visitors could see and experience traditional village life. Support was provided for training villagers to become tourist guides and loans for refitting and restoring destination villages and public facilities, including mosques, parking spaces, and bathrooms. The multicultural makeup of the people of NTB provided opportunities to develop traditional village tours.
4. Improve existing destinations, for example, *Mandalika* beach. It was a destination that was only accessible to adventurer surfers reachable by way of off-road vehicles and motorcycles through rough terrain. Previously only enjoyed by the very few willing to overcome the traveling hardships, the beach could now be reached by family car. The local government prepared public amenities catering to Muslim families to make it a popular destination.<sup>16</sup>.

## Outcome

Locally, the governor received great support from the tourism stakeholders. The local government together with the MUI (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*/ Council Islamic Scholars of Indonesia) issued a law on *halal* certification for hotels and restaurants. The certification gave Muslim tourists assurances on the level of quality of the food and services. The law offered guidance on *halal* certification and did not require all establishments to be certified. It clarified the meaning of a *halal* certified establishment and the products and services it provided. The *halal* certification law highlighted the importance of certification for the consumers by providing clear guidance and establishing standards. Some did not appreciate the need for the costly *halal* certification because

as Muslims, they would not, for any reason, go against their own values and beliefs. But the communication regarding the law of the law made its rationale clear, which made it more acceptable. It also made clear the intent of NTB to be known as a global *halal* destination.<sup>17</sup>

While the infrastructure development was undergoing, the promotional processes exercise was also underway in parallel. The target was to convince Muslim tourists that NTB was the destination of choice. To achieve the goal, Mr.Taufan Rahmadi engaged the CrescentRating and together with his team and a team of the Department of Tourism went on a global social media campaign such as Facebook and Twitter. The result was a barrage of awards that NTB won in succeeding years.<sup>18</sup> (Wikipedia, n.d.):

- ❖ **Year 2009:**
  1. Indonesia Tourism Award (ITA), by the Ministry of Tourism
  2. The 2nd Indonesia MICE AWARDS, by the Ministry of Tourism
- ❖ **Year 2010:**

Indonesia Tourism Award for the best Province in Tourism Development, by the Ministry of Tourism
- ❖ **Year 2011:**

The Best Dedicated Governor in Developing of MICE Industry
- ❖ **Year 2012:**

The Most Improved in the development of the Tourism Sector, by Travel Club Tourism Award
- ❖ **Year 2015:**
  1. Award for Indonesia Attractiveness Index, by Tempo Media Group dan Frontier Consulting Group
  2. World's Best Halal Honeymoon Destination, The World Halal Travel Summit, and Exhibition Award in Abu Dhabi,
  3. World's Best Halal Tourism Destination, The World Halal Travel Summit, and Exhibition Award in Abu Dhabi

## Tourist Arrivals in NTB Province

The results of the promotional activities reached expectations. The average increase in international tourist arrival to Indonesia between 2008 and 2014, was about 9%, compared to 20% for NTB's for the same period. The national figure went up to 14% after 2014, whereas NTB's figures peaked at over 50% in 2015. The international tourist coming to NTB are coming in twice as much as to the rest of the country. It is also resilient. When an earthquake befell on NTB in August 2018, which impacted the tourism arrival for the rest of the year, the numbers bounced

back the next year. The numbers for June 2019, the first half of the year, showed that international tourist arrival figures already surpassed those of the whole year in 2013.<sup>19</sup>

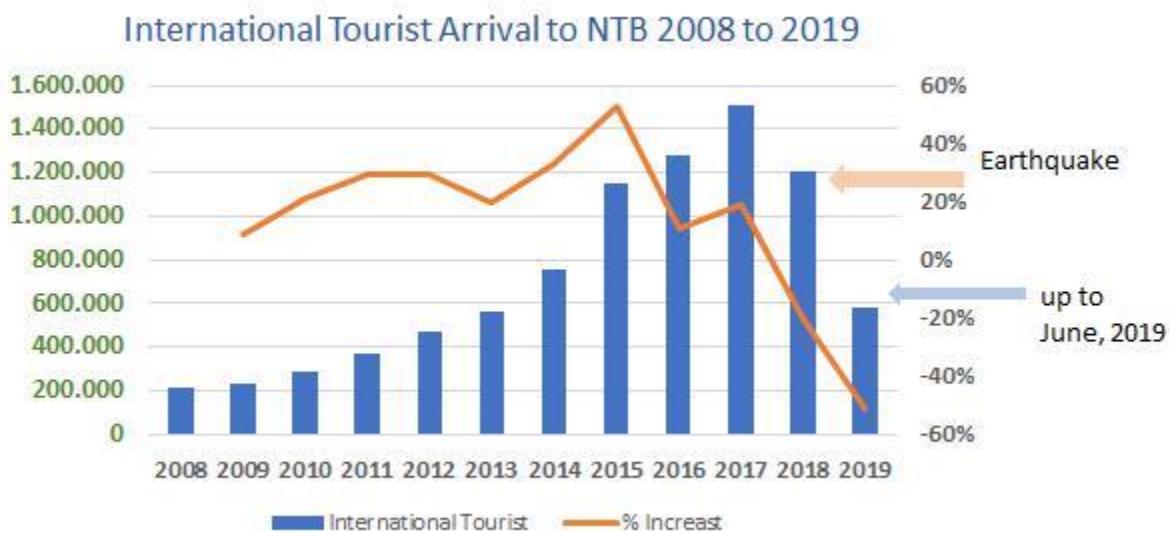


Figure 4: International Tourist Arrival in NTB Province (2009-2019)

### The Road Ahead

Now NTB province is in the spotlight, it needs to ensure to fulfill the consumers expectations, and that they will enjoy the experience to the point of either returning or referring to others to come and visit NTB. Thus, NTB needs to continue the momentum by continuing to build and develop the sector and the constituents and stakeholders of the sector.

It is clear that *halal* tourism is a strong value that reverberates with a potentially large and strong market that is also well endowed. It is therefore imperative for NTB to sustain and improve its strategy effort to maintain the level of satisfaction of tourists while ensuring the capture of new customers. As the market matures, its values would also mature and with it, the increasing higher levels of expectations. At the same time, the province will be confronted by higher levels of competition from other countries, both Islamic and non-Islamic, that are also engaging in *halal* tourism practices.

As the experienced of NTB province is shared to the public, there will be other provinces that will follow their footsteps. There are several special circumstances in the case of *halal* tourism development that are specifically unique to NTB province, such as in the personalities involved and the societal values. Nevertheless, these unique circumstances can be replaced by other unique and specific circumstances that are also aligned to the values and local wisdom resonating in each province in Indonesia.

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<sup>6</sup> Manzo, 2019, Fiona Jeffery and Caroline Bremner, n.d

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>11</sup> Gaffar, Uji interview August 2019 and Rahmadi, Taufan, interview September 2019

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Uji Gaffar, August 26, 2019, Taufan Rahmadi, September 3, 2019, Haji Lalu Gita Ariadi, September 4, 2019

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<sup>17</sup> H. Lalu Moh. Faozal, 2019

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<sup>19</sup> (Dinas Pariwisata NTB, 2008 to 2019)



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