STRENGTHENING THE UNDERSTANDING OF INDIGENOUS LEADERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HALAL TOURISM BASED ON RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN THE CALDERA OF LAKE TOBA

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ABSTRACT
This community service activity aims to strengthen the understanding of traditional leaders towards the concept of halal tourism based on the values of religious moderation in the Lake Toba Caldera area, especially in Dairi and Balige Regencies. The method used is Participatory Action Research (PAR), with stages of identification, planning, implementation, and reflection. The activity was carried out through workshops and intercultural dialogue forums involving traditional leaders, extension workers of the Ministry of Religion, tourism managers, and local communities as partners. The results of the activity show a positive change in the perception and attitude of traditional leaders towards the concept of halal tourism which was previously seen as exclusive to become an ethical and inclusive service. The implication of this activity is the formation of a collective awareness of the importance of religious moderation in the development of sustainable and harmonious tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Lake Toba Caldera is one of the national leading tourist destinations that has the natural wealth and culture of the Batak indigenous people. In the context of sustainable tourism development, the concept of halal tourism began to be introduced as a strategy to expand the Muslim tourist market while strengthening the local economy. However, the application of this concept is inseparable from complex social dynamics, especially related to indigenous peoples' resistance to the term "halal" which is considered to have ideological implications. Based on research by Maraimbang (2024), some traditional leaders in the Toba area consider that the term halal tourism is a form of Islamization that can threaten local cultural values and harmony between religious communities. (Ponja et al., 2020) (Adinugraha, 2018) (Fatkurrohman, 2017)

In a number of areas such as Dairi (especially Silalahi), Samosir, and Humbang Hasundutan, there has been an open rejection of the use of the term halal tourism.Indigenous leaders argue that the term has the potential to

discriminate against non-Muslim communities, and even some local Muslim leaders are concerned about its social impact on the stability of interfaith relations.However, the values of religious moderation still seem strong in their view. The value of *i'tidāl* (balanced) arises in support of Muslim-friendly facilities without a halal label; the value *of tasāmuh* (tolerance) is seen in the encouragement of providing sanitation and decent food;While the value *of musāwah* (equality) is reflected in the pragmatic view that inclusive services will increase tourist visits.   (Daulay et al., 2024)

Studies on public perception of halal tourism have been carried out in various regions. For example, research by Hamzana (2018) in NTB shows that the success of the implementation of halal tourism is greatly influenced by regulatory and institutional aspects, as stipulated in NTB Regional Regulation No. 02 of 2016 concerning Halal Tourism. Meanwhile, Pratiwi's (2021) research in Yogyakarta confirms the majority of people's support for halal tourism, with 65% of respondents in favor and only 1% rejected. However, there are still doubts due to the low understanding of the concept. The Faraby (2021) study in Bangkalan also shows great potential for halal tourism, although the level of readiness between regions still varies. (Scott, 2017)   (Faraby, 2021)

From a cultural and social perspective, Awali (2017) highlights the dangers of komodification of halal tourism that can get rid of local culture if it is not managed with the principle of inclusivity. A similar finding was put forward by Masful (2017) in Payakumbuh, that the integration of religious values and local culture is very important so that halal tourism does not become a symbol of exclusivity, but a harmony of values.Meanwhile, Hasyim and Maulana (2020) and emphasized the importance of public acceptance and the provision of representative halal tourism support facilities so as not to cause social disparities in tourist areas.   (Scott, 2017)   (Wahyulina et al., 2018) (Hasyim & Maulana, 2020;   Stuttgart   , 2017)

Observing these various studies, it appears that the main gap in the context of the Lake Toba Caldera is not in infrastructure, but in the dimensions of indigenous peoples' perception and social acceptance of the concept of halal tourism. Therefore, a participatory and dialogical approach is needed that can connect religious values with local wisdom. The *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) approach is considered relevant because it involves indigenous leaders as active partners in the process of reflection and understanding change. Through intercultural dialogue based on religious moderation, it is hoped that a new understanding of halal tourism will be created as an inclusive service, not an exclusive ideology, so that tourism development in the Lake Toba Caldera can run in harmony with cultural values and social harmony of indigenous peoples.

METHOD

This study uses the *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) approach because it is relevant to the character of activities that emphasize active collaboration between academics and local communities in solving socio-cultural problems in a reflective and transformative manner. In the context of "Strengthening the Understanding of Indigenous Leaders in the Development of Halal Tourism Based on Religious Moderation in the Lake Toba Caldera", the PAR approach was chosen because the issues faced were cultural, involved different perceptions of the term "halal", and demanded a change in understanding based on dialogue and appreciation for local values. Through this participatory process, academics bring a scientific perspective on religious moderation and halal tourism, while traditional leaders contribute local knowledge, traditions, and experiences of maintaining social harmony, so that both can form a new understanding that is contextual and inclusive. (Kemmis et al., 2014)   (Kemmis   & McTaggart, 2005)

Service activities are carried out cyclically through four main stages, namely planning, action, observation, and reflection. At the planning stage, the team together with traditional leaders identified problems and formulated the need to strengthen understanding through *Focus Group Discussion* (FGD). The action stage is realized through training and intercultural dialogue forums in two regions, namely Dairi (10–13 September 2025) and Balige (26–29 September 2025), involving the Ministry of Religion, tourism managers, and local governments.Observation was carried out through documentation, field notes, and interviews with activity participants, while the reflection stage was carried out in a participatory manner to assess the achievement of understanding, inhibiting factors, and follow-up strategies.This cyclical process allows activities to continue continuously as a social learning process that continues to develop. (Stringer, 2013)

PkM partners consist of traditional leaders in two main locations, namely Silalahi (Dairi Regency) and Balige, who act as guardians of local wisdom as well as a liaison between indigenous peoples and tourists. In addition, the activity also involved local tourism actors, religious leaders, and village officials as supporting partners. This cross-stakeholder involvement creates synergy between cultural, religious, and public policy values to encourage the realization of moderate and sustainable halal tourism. This collaboration is in line with the principle of PAR that social solutions can only be achieved through participation and reflection with all parties directly affected. (Stringer, 2013)
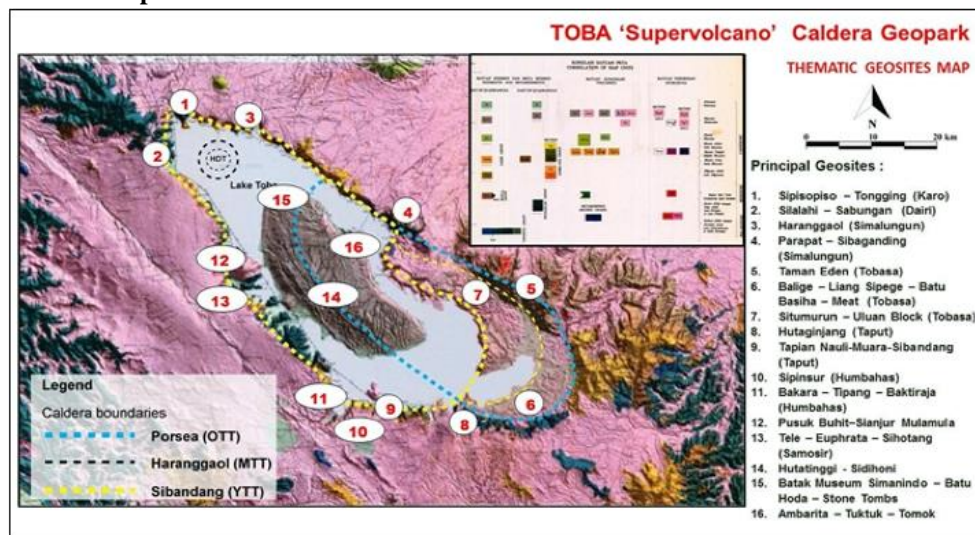
Data collection techniques include participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and *Focus Group Discussions*. Observations are used to understand the social practices and cultural dynamics of local communities (Spradley, 1980), while in-depth interviews delve into the perceptions and experiences of indigenous leaders (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The FGD is used to build a consensus among stakeholders on the value of religious moderation in tourism (Morgan, 1997). Secondary data were obtained from official documents and the results of previous research. Data analysis was carried out through the stages of reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawn, with validity maintained through triangulation of sources and methods. This approach ensures that the results of service are not only descriptive, but also reflective and applicable to strengthening the role of traditional leaders in halal tourism based on religious moderation in the Lake Toba Caldera. (Hadi, 1989)   (Miles et al., 2014)   (Denzin, 2012)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Overview of PkM Locations

The Lake Toba Caldera area is one of the areas with high ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity in North Sumatra.The society is dominated by the Batak tribe with various sub-ethnicities such as the Toba, Pakpak, and Karo Bataks, each of which has a strong customary system, social structure, and cultural values. The social structure of indigenous peoples in this region is still greatly influenced by the clan *system* which is the basis of social, political, and economic relations between residents. (Squirt   &   Basit , 2020)

Figure 1. Thematic Map of the Toba Caldera Geosite

Source: Toba Caldera Geopark

In general, the indigenous peoples of the Lake Toba Caldera area have close ties to ancestral lands, customary rites, and traditional symbols that affirm their cultural identity. Traditions such as mangulosi, marhata sinamot, and various traditional rituals show how intertwined religion and culture are in their social lives. Therefore, all forms of social innovation, including the development of the concept of halal tourism, are often perceived as new things that have the potential to shift the balance between traditional values and modernity.   (Saeroji et al., 2019; Said et al., 2022)

This locus of service is located in two main areas, namely Dairi Regency (especially Silalahi) and Balige (Toba Regency).

1. The Dairi (Silalahi) area has indigenous peoples who highly uphold local wisdom based on Pakpak and Toba customs.Its people live in a tightly knit communal social pattern, with religious life mixed between Christian traditions, local beliefs, and modern influences.
2. The Balige area, as one of the centers of Toba's Batak culture, also shows distinctive social dynamics. This area is a center for intense tourism and cultural activities, but some people show resistance to the terminology of "halal tourism" because it is considered to have the potential to intervene in culinary traditions and cultural activities that are the identity of the local community.

The resistance is not solely caused by rejection of Islamic values, but by fears of losing cultural autonomy and local identity. This shows that there is a gap in understanding between the meaning of "halal" in the perspective

of Islam which is universal and local values that have been the basis of social harmony in the indigenous people of Lake Toba. (Samsuduha, 2020; Siroj, 2006)

With such a socio-cultural background, this PkM activity is strategic to bridge the understanding between the value of religious moderation and local wisdom, so that indigenous people can understand that halal tourism is not a form of religious hegemony, but an effort to build tourism that is inclusive, ethical, and respects cultural diversity. (Bustamam-Ahmad, 2011)

Within this framework, this Community Service activity involves various strategic partners to bridge cross-cultural and religious dialogue:

1. Indigenous leaders, as holders of moral and social authority in the community, play an important role in shaping public perception of the concept of tourism.
2. The Ministry of Religious Affairs/Halal Product Extension, as an official institution that understands halal-based regulations and principles, is an important partner in providing clarification and education based on religious moderation.
3. Tourism managers, who play a direct role in the implementation of the concept of halal tourism and services to tourists, need to understand the inclusive meaning of halal tourism so as not to cause exclusivity.
4. Local communities, as the main actors in the social and economic life of tourist areas, are expected to be an active part of the process of changing understanding and attitudes.

This synergy between partners allows the implementation of PkM to run in a participatory and transformative manner, in accordance with the spirit of *Participatory Action Research* (PAR). This collaboration is expected to be able to strengthen the bridge of understanding between the Islamic values of rahmatan lil-'alamin and local Batak wisdom, so that halal tourism can develop within the framework of religious moderation and social harmony. (Sutono et al., 2019; Tahan et al., 2021)

Initial Perception of Traditional Leaders on Halal Tourism

The results of observations in Toba Regency show that the public's understanding of the concept of halal tourism tends to be inclusive, although it is still limited to the aspect of tourism facilities and services. In Bulbul Beach, Balige, tourism management has grown rapidly with the support of the local government which has succeeded in shifting the community's profession from fishermen to tourism business actors. Many cafes and hotels now provide Muslim-friendly facilities such as prayer rooms, clean toilets, and water taps for ablution. (Al Hasan, 2017)

HS, one of the managers of a Muslim café in Bulbul Beach, stated that halal tourism is needed because the majority of tourists who come are Muslims:

"*If there are no Muslim tourists, then there is no way to do this, Bang*," (Interview with HS, Balige, May 19, 2024).

However, the limited number of Muslim managers causes tourists to often have difficulty finding cafes that truly meet halal standards. HS took the initiative to build a prayer room behind his café next to the Christian cemetery as a symbol of tolerance and social harmony. He also gave input to other managers to provide directions for the qibla, prayer mats, and non-halal free kitchens in the homestay. According to him, Islamic values do not contradict Batak customs:

"*If you really follow Batak [Parmalim] customs, it is exactly the same as Islam*," (HS, Balige, May 19, 2024).

The Chairman of MUI Toba, JES, emphasized that the community actually does not reject halal tourism, but rather does not understand its meaning. Proper education is believed to increase community support because the program has a direct impact on the local economy (Interview in Porsea, May 18, 2024).

In contrast to Toba, in Silalahi (Dairi Regency) resistance to the term halal tourism is still strong. TMS and HJS traditional leaders consider that the term "halal" is considered to have the potential to bring an Islamization agenda or threaten local wisdom. "It's better to have an identity-neutral term," said TMS (Interview, June 25, 2024). The same thing was conveyed by HJS, an official of Silalahi II Village, who recalled that there were residents who exclaimed, "Are we really haram?" during the socialization of halal products a few years ago. (Drafting Team of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019; Umar, 2014)

Despite this, the Silalahi community still shows high tolerance for Muslim tourists. A permanent prayer room has been established, there are more than 50 Muslim families, and in every traditional feast there is always a special kitchen for Muslim guests. Thus, the resistance that arises is not a form of rejection of Islamic values, but an expression of prudence in maintaining cultural identity and social harmony in the midst of diversity. (Adrian, 2017)

This situation describes the social conditions before the implementation of Community Service (PkM) activities. Resistance to the term "halal tourism" was not born from a rejection of the substance of Islamic values, but rather because of the concern of traditional leaders about a shift in the meaning of local culture and the potential for

friction between religious communities. For the indigenous people of Toba, especially in Silalahi and Balige, the term "halal" is considered to carry a certain ideological burden that seems to standardize all tourism activities with Islamic religious norms. (Boğan & Sarıışık , 2019)

However, through in-depth observation and informal dialogue before the PKM began, the team found that behind the resistance there is actually a moderate consciousness that lives among indigenous peoples. Traditional leaders naturally understand that Islam is an integral part of social life in tourist areas, because Muslim tourists dominate the flow of visits to Lake Toba. They also realize that the presence of Muslim-friendly facilities such as prayer rooms, halal food, and clean sanitation services is not a threat to local wisdom, but rather part of a form of tolerance (tasāmuh) and balance (i'tidāl) in maintaining common comfort. (June, 2020)

This awareness is the entrance for the service team to build a collaborative approach. The team then coordinated with PkM partners, namely traditional leaders, halal product extension workers of the Ministry of Religion, tourism managers, and local communities to formulate strategic steps to reduce misunderstandings while strengthening a common understanding of the concept of halal tourism based on religious moderation.

The Process of Implementing Service

The process of implementing community service is carried out using the *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) approach which emphasizes collaboration between the service team, PkM partners, and local communities, especially traditional leaders in the Lake Toba Caldera area. This approach is considered the most relevant to answer the social and cultural challenges that arise related to the concept of halal tourism that previously caused resistance among indigenous peoples. PAR allows for social learning, collective reflection, and transformative awareness change through participatory and dialogical processes. (Maryam, 2020)

Initial Identification and Observation Stage

The first stage was carried out with participatory observation in the two main areas of the service location, namely Dairi Regency (Silalahi) and Toba Regency (Balige). This stage is supported by the results of research conducted by the service team in 2024 which shows that there is semantic resistance to the term "halal" among traditional leaders. Some indigenous peoples consider the term to potentially threaten their cultural and spiritual values that are deeply rooted in Batak traditions. However, on the other hand, the observation results also show that there is an awareness of the importance of coexistence in harmony with the Muslim community which is quite dominant in the tourist area. (Mohsin et al., 2016)

Through in-depth observation and open interviews with traditional leaders, local tourism managers, Ministry of Religion extension workers, and the community, initial perception mapping and socio-cultural maps were obtained that became the basis for the preparation of the service program. These findings are the initial basis for designing strategies to strengthen understanding that are not patronizing, but build awareness through intercultural dialogue spaces.

Participatory Planning Stage

The planning stage is carried out by carrying the principle of collaborative and participatory through *planning workshops* and intercultural dialogue forums. This activity aims to equalize perceptions between service teams, partners, and traditional leaders regarding the urgency of building a new understanding of halal tourism based on religious moderation. (Nurohman & Qurniawati , 2021)

In this meeting, it was agreed that the use of the term "halal" needs to be contextualized, not only as a religious label, but also as a symbol of universal values such as cleanliness, honesty, responsibility, and openness to differences. Through in-depth discussions, the traditional leaders began to see that the values contained in the halal concept actually do not contradict the philosophy of life of Dalihan Na Tolu which is the core of the Batak socio-cultural system.

The result of this planning stage is the formation of an agreement to hold an Intercultural Dialogue Forum Based on Religious Moderation, which will be held at two strategic points: Silalahi (Dairi Regency) and Balige (Toba Regency). These two locations were chosen because they were previously identified as having a higher level of resistance to the concept of halal tourism. (Muhammad, 2021)

Implementation Stage (Workshop and Intercultural Dialogue)

The implementation of service activities was carried out in two main sessions, namely in Dairi and Balige, involving PkM partners and resource persons from the Ministry of Religion and local traditional leaders.

1. Intercultural Dialogue Forum Session 1 (Dairi, 10-13 September 2025)

The first activity was held in Dairi Regency on September 10-13, 2025. This activity was attended by Silalahi traditional leaders, Lake Silalahi tourism managers, halal product extension workers from the Ministry of Religion, and local communities. In this forum, extension workers from the Ministry of Religion

delivered material on halal products and the philosophy of religious moderation values in the context of tourism.

The dialogue took place openly and honestly, where traditional leaders expressed their objections, experiences, and views on the term "halal." Through a dialogical approach and concrete examples, the extension workers succeeded in opening up a new space of understanding that the concept of halal does not intend to standardize cultures, but emphasizes universal ethical values in the social and economic interaction of tourism.

Figure 2. PkM Activities of Dairi Intercultural Dialogue

2. Intercultural Dialogue Forum Session 2 (Balige, 26-29 September 2025)
    The second session was held in Balige on September 26-29, 2025, involving Balige traditional leaders, tourism MSME actors, and representatives from the Tourism Office and the Ministry of Religion of Toba Regency. This forum is a follow-up forum to deepen the results of reflection in Dairi and strengthen the collaboration network between social actors.
    In this forum, resource persons from the Ministry of Religion again emphasized the importance of religious moderation as a common framework in tourism development. Balige traditional leaders, who previously showed resistance to the term halal, are now more open in understanding that these values can be in line with the philosophy of "Hagabeon and Marsiadapari" typical Batak mutual cooperation values that uphold social harmony.

Figure 3. Intercultural Dialogue PkM Activities Balige

Changes in the Understanding and Attitude of Indigenous Leaders

The results of the Community Service (PkM) activity entitled "Strengthening the Understanding of

Indigenous Leaders in the Development of Halal Tourism Based on Religious Moderation in the Lake Toba Caldera" showed a significant change in the perspective and attitude of traditional leaders towards the concept of halal tourism. Before the activity was carried out, most of the traditional leaders showed resistance to the term "halal" which they considered to have an exclusive connotation, even considered to have the potential to erode local cultural values.However, through the process of intercultural dialogue and a reflective-participatory approach based on *Participatory Action Research* (PAR), the resistance began to melt and shift towards more open and contextual acceptance. (Rhama, 2022)

Changes in Attitudes and Positive Responses of Indigenous Leaders

In the intercultural dialogue session and workshop, there was a real change in attitude from traditional leaders. If at first the term "halal tourism" was seen as a symbol of the dominance of Islamic culture, then after getting explanations from the speakers and partners of PkM, they began to understand that this concept did not intend to monopolize religious values, but rather prioritize universal ethics such as cleanliness, honesty, responsibility, and openness to diversity. (Wahid, 2015)

Resource persons from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, especially halal product extension workers, played an important role in bridging these misunderstandings. They emphasized that halal tourism is not a form of Islamic exclusivity, but an effort to expand tourism services to make them accessible to all visitors, both Muslims and non-Muslims. This approach is well received by traditional leaders, although some still feel that the term "halal" does not represent the spirit of inclusivity that they embrace. (Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2020)

As a form of cultural adaptation, the traditional leaders then discussed alternative terms, such as "religious moderation tourism" or "love tourism", which were considered to reflect the spirit of harmony and openness typical of the Batak people. This discourse is part of a follow-up plan (RTL) that is the result of joint reflection, which shows the synthesis of values between religious views and local culture.   (Roberts, 2019)

Indicators of Religious Moderation in Attitude Change

The change in the understanding of traditional leaders can be analyzed through three main indicators of religious moderation, namely *i'tidāl* (balance), *tasāmuh* (tolerance), and *musāwah* (egalitarianism).

First, the principle *of i'tidāl* is reflected in the ability of traditional leaders to maintain a balance between cultural traditions and religious values present in their territory. They began to see that the existence of halal tourism did not need to be considered a threat, but could instead enrich the treasure of moral values in local tourism practices.

Second, the value *of tasāmuh* (tolerance) is evident in the open attitude of traditional leaders during the dialogue process. They are willing to listen, discuss, and even criticize constructively the concept of halal tourism without negative prejudices. The process of honest and egalitarian two-way communication makes this PkM forum a productive cultural meeting space.   (Pratomo et al., 2019)

Third, the indicator of *musāwah* (egalitarianism) arises from the willingness of traditional leaders to place themselves on an equal footing with the speakers and partners of the PKM.They no longer position themselves as "objectified" parties, but as *co-researchers* and *co-creators* in formulating tourism models that are in accordance with the socio-cultural context of the Batak people.

Acceptance of the Concept of Halal Tourism as a Service, not an Ideology

The most important change that resulted from this activity was a paradigm shift in understanding. If

previously halal tourism was seen as an ideology that had the potential to dominate, now traditional leaders understand it as a public service based on universal values. In various reflections, there is an awareness that halal tourism is actually an effort to improve the quality of friendly, clean, and ethical tourism services, the benefits of which can be felt by all parties, not only Muslim tourists. This new perspective is a turning point that strengthens the synergy between the Islamic values   (Ramakrishna, 2009) *of rahmatan lil-'alamin* and the principles of Batak culture that uphold harmony, such as somba marhula-hula, elek marboru, and *manat mardongan tubu*.

Participation Rate and Enthusiasm of Participants

During the process of implementing *workshops* and intercultural dialogues, the level of participation of indigenous leaders and communities is very high. They are not only physically present, but also actively contribute to discussions, questions and answers, and reflections. This enthusiasm shows that the participatory approach applied has succeeded in creating a sense of belonging to the program.   (Yustati et al., 2017)

From the results of joint reflection, a new understanding emerged of contextual halal tourism, namely a tourism model that maintains Islamic principles without negating the values of local wisdom. The traditional leaders then agreed to participate in the preparation of a follow-up plan (RTL) involving all stakeholders, including local governments, tourism managers, and religious institutions.   (Nugroho, 2019; Nur, 2016)

Cross-Indigenous Leader Agreements and Proposals to Local Governments

One of the important achievements of this PkM activity is the formation of agreements between traditional leaders from various regions around the Lake Toba Caldera. They agreed to encourage local governments to include the principle of religious moderation in the strategic plan for regional tourism development.

This deal marks an orientation shift from resistance to collaboration. Traditional leaders are no longer reactive, but agents of social change who play a role in building a harmonious, inclusive, and culturally just tourism narrative.

Sustainability Program Outcomes and Products

As a concrete form of the results of the activity, the service team with PkM partners succeeded in identifying the program's achievements and compiling them in the form of educational modules. This module contains practical guidance on strategies to strengthen traditional leaders' understanding of halal tourism based on religious moderation.The module is not only a documentation of results, but also a continuous learning tool for indigenous leaders, tourism managers, and local communities.   (Muhtarom et al., 2020; Nasution, 2017)

Thus, changes in the understanding of indigenous leaders have not only occurred at the cognitive level, but have also touched the dimensions of social attitudes and behaviors. This PkM activity succeeded in building a new awareness that is integrative between local cultural values and moderate Islamic values, as well as creating a model of social approach that can be replicated in other regions with similar multicultural characteristics.

Implications for the Development of Inclusive Halal Tourism

The Community Service Activity (PkM) with the theme "Strengthening the Understanding of Indigenous Leaders in the Development of Halal Tourism Based on Religious Moderation in the Lake Toba Caldera" provides a number of strategic implications for the development of inclusive and contextual halal tourism in the region. Based on the dynamics identified from the initial stage to the final reflection, it appears that the success of this program lies not only in increasing the conceptual understanding of indigenous leaders, but also in the establishment of a dialogue space that brings together local cultural values and the principles of religious moderation within the framework of equitable and sustainable tourism development.

Strengthening Collaboration Models Based on Local Wisdom

The results of the activity showed that the *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) approach applied succeeded in strengthening collaborative relationships between traditional leaders, extension workers of the Ministry of Religion, tourism managers, and local communities.This model proves that tourism development based on religious values cannot be done top-down, but rather needs to be done through participatory mechanisms that respect the socio-cultural systems of indigenous peoples.   (Muhtadi, 2009)

The dialogues held in Dairi and Balige became a space of cross-cultural and religious encounter, showing that true collaboration can grow from a willingness to listen, understand, and adapt universal values to the local context. Thus, the main implication of this activity is the birth of a *cultural-based halal tourism* development model that can be a reference for other multicultural regions in Indonesia.   (Misrawi, 2010)

Paradigm Shift towards an Inclusive Halal Tourism Concept

Prior to PkM activities, resistance to the term "halal" arose due to concerns about the dominance of certain religious symbols. However, after going through a series of workshops and dialogues, there was a paradigm shift

among traditional leaders. They began to view the concept of halal tourism not as an exclusive religious ideology, but as a public service based on universal values such as cleanliness, comfort, safety, and service ethics.

The implication is that the development of halal tourism in the Lake Toba Caldera area is no longer interpreted as the application of rigid Islamic standards, but the application of ethical principles that are in harmony with Batak culture and the spirit of religious moderation. This concept later developed into the idea of "religious moderation tourism" or "love tourism", which was more widely accepted by the community and had a higher adaptability to the local cultural diversity. (Madjid, 2008)

Contribution to Strengthening Religious Moderation in the Socio-Cultural Realm

From the socio-religious side, this activity has direct implications for strengthening religious moderation at the grassroots level. Through intense interaction between Ministry of Religion extension workers, traditional leaders, and tourism managers, the values of i'tidāl (balance), tasāmuh (tolerance), and musāwah (egalitarianism) were successfully actualized in social practice.

Traditional leaders who previously rejected the term "halal" are now part of religious moderation agents who actively spread the understanding that differences in beliefs are not obstacles, but a source of social strength. This process emphasizes that strengthening religious moderation does not always have to be through a theological approach, but can be realized through socio-cultural approaches and cross-value dialogue. (Ainin   et al., 2020; Arohman & Haryono , 2024)

Integration of Moderation Values in Regional Tourism Policies and Practices

Another important implication is the emergence of cross-party initiatives to encourage the integration of religious moderation values into regional tourism policies. The cross-indigenous agreement formed at the end of the activity resulted in recommendations to propose this inclusive tourism model to local governments as a reference for sustainable tourism development. (Decree of the Director General of Education, 2019)

With the support of traditional leaders and communities, the local government is expected to adopt the principles of religious moderation in the preparation of tourism regulations and promotion, so that the Lake Toba Caldera area can be known not only as a charming natural destination, but also as a harmonious intercultural and religious meeting space. (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia Bappenas, 2020)

Program Replication and Sustainability

Another impact that emerged from this activity was the formation of a module to strengthen the understanding of traditional leaders towards halal tourism based on religious moderation. This module becomes a concrete product of joint reflection that can be used for further training or replication of activities in other regions.   (El-Gohary, 2015)

The module contains practical guidance in building cross-cultural dialogue, methods of identifying local values relevant to the principles of religious moderation, and strategies for implementing the concept of halal tourism that is adaptive to the social context of multicultural communities. With this module, PkM activities do not stop as temporary projects, but become a sustainable movement towards strengthening collective awareness about the importance of friendly, inclusive, and value-just tourism. (Isnaeni et al., 2024)

Implications for the Image and Competitiveness of Toba Tourism

Economically and strategically, this activity also has implications for improving the tourism image of Lake Toba as a tourist destination that not only prioritizes natural beauty, but also the value of diversity and tolerance. The application of the principle of inclusive halal tourism is expected to expand the tourism market segment, attract domestic and international Muslim tourists, without necessitating Batak cultural values which are the main attraction. (Hidayati & Tangkung , 2021)

Thus, this PkM provides a conceptual and praxis foundation for the development of the "Toba Inclusive Halal Tourism" model, namely tourism that is service-oriented, ethical, and socio-cultural sustainability.This model is expected to be able to serve as an example for other tourist destinations in Indonesia that have similar social complexities between local wisdom, religious plurality, and national spirit.

Overall, the implications of this PkM activity show that religious moderation can be a conceptual and practical bridge in developing inclusive halal tourism. Through a dialogical, participatory, and local wisdom-based approach, resistance that originally appeared can be transformed into productive collaboration.   (Gaiser, 2008; Ghazali, 2009)

Traditional leaders, religious extension workers, tourism managers, and the community now have a more holistic understanding that tourism is not just an economic activity, but also a space for meeting universal human values. This is the main foundation for the development of halal tourism based on religious moderation in the Lake Toba Caldera towards a sustainable, harmonious, and equitable tourism future.

CONCLUSION

Before the implementation of the activity, the perception of traditional leaders towards the concept of halal tourism still tended to be negative and full of misunderstandings. The term halal is perceived as a form of Islamic exclusivity which is feared to shift local cultural values that have long lived in the Lake Toba Caldera area. However, through the process of participatory approach and intercultural dialogue based on religious moderation, this view has shifted. Traditional leaders began to understand that the concept of halal tourism is not a form of uniformity of values, but an effort to expand tourism services that respect a diversity of beliefs. Thus, traditional leaders see the presence of Islam in non-Muslim majority areas not as a threat, but as a partner in building social harmony and tourism sustainability.

The strategy used in this activity is based on the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, which emphasizes the active participation of the community in all stages of activities: from problem identification, planning, implementation, to reflection. The strategy that has proven effective is the implementation of *workshops* and intercultural dialogue forums at the two main points of Dairi and Balige involving traditional leaders, Ministry of Religion extension workers, tourism managers, and the community. In the forum, there was a process of mutual learning and an exchange of open and honest perspectives. Resource persons from the Ministry of Religion succeeded in bridging misunderstandings about the meaning of halal, while traditional leaders provided cultural views that enriched participants' understanding. This process not only increases religious literacy across communities, but also gives birth to shared awareness to build inclusive and equitable tourism.

The results of the activity showed a significant change in the attitude and understanding of traditional leaders. They now see halal tourism as a universal service that respects diversity, not a particular religious ideology. The indicators of religious moderation i *'tidāl* (balance), *tasāmuh* (tolerance), and *musāwah* (equality) were implemented in the attitudes and actions of traditional leaders during the dialogue.Their high enthusiasm and active involvement in developing follow-up plans shows a transformation of awareness towards social harmony and cross-cultural collaboration. Furthermore, this forum gave birth to the idea of new terms such as "religious moderation tourism" or "love tourism" as a form of local expression of a more contextual halal concept.

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