

# The Development of Sharia Tourism Economy in Lombok Through the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Mandalika

**Yunaeni Suhartini**

Postgraduate Islamic Economics Study Program, State Islamic University (UIN)  
Mataram, Indonesia

[Iyoenyunaeni@gmail.com](mailto:Iyoenyunaeni@gmail.com)

**Zaenudin Mansyur**

Postgraduate Islamic Economics Study Program, State Islamic University (UIN)  
Mataram, Indonesia

[zaenudinmansyur@uinmataram.ac.id](mailto:zaenudinmansyur@uinmataram.ac.id)

**Muh Azkar**

Postgraduate Islamic Economics Study Program, State Islamic University (UIN)  
Mataram, Indonesia

[azkarmuh@uinmataram.ac.id](mailto:azkarmuh@uinmataram.ac.id)

## Abstract

*This study explores how Sharia principles are integrated into the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) framework to develop Islamic-friendly tourism in Lombok, Indonesia. Mandalika, designated as an SEZ in 2014, demonstrates how infrastructure, community engagement, and religious guidelines can converge to foster economic growth while honoring cultural traditions. Adopting a qualitative approach, the research draws on document analysis, semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders, and field observations. Findings indicate that the Sharia compliant ecosystem within the SEZ evidenced by halal-certified accommodations, prayer facilities, and community-oriented festivals has significantly boosted Lombok's global appeal. The rapid increase in employment and local revenue underscores the zone's impact, yet challenges persist for small-scale operators who face limited resources to obtain halal certification or modernize their businesses. Moreover, maintaining environmental sustainability remains a priority, given Lombok's vulnerable coastal ecosystems. The study concludes that intertwining Islamic economic principles with strategic incentives in an SEZ can broaden tourism's reach, protect cultural identity, and deliver equitable development. However, continued policy refinements particularly in bridging gaps among regulators, investors, and local communities are crucial. These insights inform broader discussions on balancing economic imperatives with religious norms to nurture a more inclusive and resilient tourism sector.*

**Keywords:** *Sharia tourism, Special Economic Zone, Lombok, Islamic economy, halal tourism*

## A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is endowed with a vast geographical expanse and a culturally diverse population, making it a fertile ground for tourism development (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Barat [BPS NTB], 2023). Among the many islands comprising this archipelago, Lombok has emerged as a unique destination for Sharia tourism or Islamic-friendly tourism. Known colloquially as the "Island of a Thousand Mosques," Lombok holds significant potential in attracting both domestic and international Muslim travelers seeking religiously compliant amenities and experiences. This potential is reinforced

by Indonesia's prominent status as a country with the world's largest Muslim population, which naturally positions it as one of the foremost candidates to pioneer the concept of Sharia tourism (Izzati, 2017; Salahuddin & Abdillah, 2022).

The global rise of the halal tourism market underscores the necessity of designing tourism products and services that cater to Muslim travelers' religious and cultural needs (Riduan, Aminy, Ramadani, Elbadriati, & Yusup, 2022). According to Mastercard and CrescentRating's Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), Muslim-friendly tourism has evolved into a fast-growing segment of the travel industry, urging destinations to provide Sharia-compliant facilities such as halal food, prayer spaces, and family-friendly leisure activities (Fauzi, 2021). In Indonesia, the government has recognized the opportunity to develop Sharia tourism by identifying multiple regions with Islamic cultural traditions and strong local engagement in religious activities, thereby establishing a sound platform to integrate Islamic economic principles in tourism (Kurniati Fitri, Mansyur, & Mulhimmah, 2023).

Yet, while these initiatives flourish, gaps remain in achieving a comprehensive model that binds Islamic principles with robust economic outcomes. On one hand, conventional tourism strategies focus on boosting visitor numbers and revenue generation. On the other hand, Sharia tourism demands additional attention to religious compliance, ethical guidelines, and local community involvement (Mas'ud, Aminy, Ramadani, Elbadriati, & Yusup, 2022). Bridging this gap involves reconciling the pursuit of profit with adherence to Sharia tenets—an endeavor that challenges tourism stakeholders, from policy makers to local entrepreneurs (Hall & Williams, 2008).

In Lombok, the Indonesian government has designated the Mandalika area as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), formally known as the Kawasan Ekonomi Khusus (KEK) Mandalika (Republic of Indonesia, 2014). This designation aims to accelerate economic growth by offering fiscal and non-fiscal incentives to attract foreign and local investors (DPM-PTSP NTB, 2023). The underlying premise is that a well-managed SEZ can serve as a catalyst for tourism expansion—through large-scale infrastructure projects, improved public facilities, and targeted promotional efforts—thereby enhancing competitiveness. In the case of Lombok, the Mandalika SEZ has been specifically tasked with developing a tourism model that emphasizes sustainability, cultural preservation, and religious values (BPS NTB, 2023).

Recent data indicate that tourism constitutes a significant portion of Indonesia's national GDP, with a contribution of 4.50% in 2022 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). Lombok's ongoing recognition as a prominent halal tourism spot further solidifies its strategic importance (Kementerian Pariwisata, 2022). The synergy of Sharia principles, economic incentives, and global tourism trends appears to be coalescing in SEZ Mandalika. Indeed, Lombok's tourism sector has shown resilience even during challenging times, demonstrated by a rapid post-pandemic recovery aided by major events and infrastructure improvements, such as the international MotoGP circuit in Mandalika.

Despite these encouraging developments, critical questions arise concerning the extent to which the SEZ model can be integrated with Islamic tourism principles. First, Sharia tourism typically mandates robust community engagement, given that local traditions and religious norms shape tourist experiences (Suharto, 2010). Second, ensuring compliance with halal standards—from food and beverages to lodging and entertainment—requires coordination among various stakeholders, including hoteliers, restaurateurs, religious authorities, and government officials (DSN-MUI, 2016). Third, long-term economic sustainability depends on striking a balance between preserving local culture and catering to global tourism demands (Izzati, 2017).

Furthermore, the Mandalika SEZ is not solely a standalone resort enclave but a social ecosystem inhabited by local communities whose traditional livelihoods and religious customs predate the zone's formation. If left unmanaged, large-scale tourism developments can marginalize local populations or lead to cultural commodification. Conversely, a well-structured inclusion of local societies ensures that Sharia tourism is perceived not merely as an external imposition but as an extension of their intrinsic religious and cultural identity (Salahuddin & Abdillah, 2022). Therefore, adopting policies that highlight community-driven economic empowerment, robust synergy between investors and local SMEs, and conscientious environmental practices becomes paramount (Fauzi, 2021).

This study addresses these complexities by exploring the development of a Sharia tourism economy in Lombok through the KEK Mandalika initiative. The study's urgency lies in the simultaneous

rise of halal tourism worldwide and Indonesia's aspiration to become a global leader in this segment (Kementerian Pariwisata, 2022). By examining how SEZ Mandalika influences local economic structures, fosters investment, promotes community participation, and complies with Islamic regulations, this research contributes to a broader discourse on the viability of integrating Sharia principles within large-scale tourism frameworks.

Accordingly, the objectives of this research are manifold. Firstly, it aims to identify the specific potentials and challenges in operationalizing Sharia tourism under the SEZ model. Secondly, it investigates policy interventions, infrastructure developments, and stakeholder alignments that have facilitated or hindered the growth of this sector. Thirdly, it appraises the socio-economic outcomes observed thus far—especially with regard to local employment, foreign direct investment, and cultural preservation. In doing so, the study anticipates providing evidence-based recommendations to policymakers and practitioners on refining the structure of SEZ Mandalika and ensuring that it remains faithful to the tenets of Islamic tourism while simultaneously supporting sustainable economic development (BPS NTB, 2023).

In essence, the significance of this study is twofold. On one level, it contributes to the academic understanding of Sharia tourism as a subfield of tourism studies, bridging theoretical concepts of Islamic economics with on-the-ground practices. On another level, it has practical implications, offering insights to stakeholders such as local governments, developers, travel agencies, and religious institutions about optimizing resource allocation, maintaining ethical standards, and crafting marketing strategies for a global audience. By critically evaluating SEZ Mandalika's approach, the research can illuminate pathways and pitfalls for similar initiatives elsewhere in Indonesia and beyond. Consequently, this study stands at the intersection of Islamic economic thought, tourism development, and community-based sustainability, forging a holistic approach to understanding how Islamic values can be harmonized with the broader goals of national economic progress.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Islamic Economics and Tourism**

Islamic economics operates on foundational concepts of justice, welfare, and moral values enshrined in the Quran and Hadith (Kahf, 2003). Economic transactions must adhere to principles of *halalan tayyiban* (permissible and wholesome), ensuring that endeavors are not only profitable but also ethically grounded. When extended to tourism, Islamic economics mandates compliance with Sharia law, which broadly shapes standards for hospitality, entertainment, and financial exchange (DSN-MUI, 2016). The integration of these principles in tourism—often referred to as Sharia tourism or halal tourism—reflects an effort to align economic activities with the spiritual and cultural expectations of Muslim travelers (Kurniati Fitri et al., 2023).

### **Sharia Tourism Concept**

Sharia tourism has evolved as a response to the specific needs of Muslim travelers, including access to halal food, prayer facilities, modest dress requirements, and family-oriented experiences (Fauzi, 2021). It is based on the notion that religious observance is an ongoing practice, even during leisure and travel (Mas'ud et al., 2022). Destinations that successfully integrate these elements often attract a broader audience, including non-Muslim visitors seeking ethically oriented experiences and culturally authentic engagements. According to Salahuddin and Abdillah (2022), Sharia tourism differs from conventional tourism in its holistic focus on spiritual fulfillment, community welfare, and environmental stewardship, making it particularly aligned with sustainable development objectives (Hall & Williams, 2008).

### **Special Economic Zones and Tourism Development**

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are geographical enclaves established to spur economic growth through incentives such as tax breaks, streamlined licensing processes, and robust infrastructure investments (Republic of Indonesia, 2014). While SEZs in Indonesia often focus on industrial or manufacturing endeavors, tourism-specific SEZs can accelerate destination competitiveness by attracting foreign direct investment, improving accessibility, and offering specialized hospitality training

(DPM-PTSP NTB, 2023). Although the primary objective of an SEZ is to generate economic returns, the presence of unique local attributes—such as Islamic cultural heritage in Lombok—may shape how the zone is managed and perceived (Izzati, 2017).

In many global contexts, SEZs have yielded mixed results: while they can create jobs and inject capital, they occasionally engender displacement, cultural disruption, or environmental stress (Hall & Williams, 2008). To mitigate such pitfalls, an inclusive governance framework that prioritizes local community involvement becomes essential. In Lombok, the potential synergy between Sharia tourism and the SEZ approach rests on incorporating local religious norms into the formal, often profit-driven, structure of SEZ mandates (Suharto, 2010).

### **Previous Studies on Sharia Tourism in Lombok**

Several studies underscore Lombok's emergence as a leading destination for Sharia tourism. Kurniati Fitri et al. (2023) emphasize the role of grassroots community empowerment in shaping the concept of the Kebon Ayu tourism village, offering an example of how local traditions can be strategically aligned with Islamic economic principles. Riduan et al. (2022) explore tourist satisfaction in Lombok, concluding that brand value, cultural capital, and service quality significantly influence visitor experiences. Meanwhile, Salahuddin and Abdillah (2022) address the theme of social dialogue and conflict resolution involving local stakeholders, highlighting the significance of community acceptance in driving tourism innovation.

Notwithstanding these scholarly contributions, empirical data specifically focusing on the Mandalika SEZ remains comparatively sparse. Existing studies have often analyzed Lombok's broader positioning as a halal tourism hub, but few have delved into how SEZ incentives and governance structures can amplify Sharia-compliant tourism (Izzati, 2017; Fauzi, 2021). This research gap underscores the novelty of exploring the intersection between the formalized economic strategies of an SEZ and the religious frameworks guiding Sharia tourism practices (Salahuddin & Abdillah, 2022).

### **Framework of Economic Development**

Economic development models highlight multiple dimensions of growth, ranging from macro-level metrics like GDP to micro-level improvements in community welfare (Suharto, 2010). A balanced approach—where large-scale infrastructure is complemented by localized capacity building—often produces more sustainable outcomes (Hall & Williams, 2008). In Lombok, the presence of robust social structures, shaped by religious norms, can serve as a built-in support mechanism for communal well-being. By blending macroeconomic SEZ drivers with Islamic ethics, SEZ Mandalika might pursue a holistic approach to development that respects cultural values, ensures equitable wealth distribution, and prioritizes social justice (Kahf, 2003).

Yet, realizing such integrative goals necessitates strong institutional mechanisms, regular monitoring, and stakeholder alignment. The fundamental theoretical assumption here is that integrating Islamic principles and SEZ frameworks can lead to both spiritual and material prosperity, as epitomized by the Sharia tourism concept (DSN-MUI, 2016). In bridging these elements, local governance structures—ranging from official administrators of SEZ Mandalika to religious authorities—act as facilitators and gatekeepers, shaping the trajectory of growth (BPS NTB, 2023).

In summary, the literature reveals an opportunity to combine Sharia tourism's cultural and religious appeal with the structural advantages of an SEZ. This synergy could yield enhanced foreign investment, robust local community involvement, and a more ethically sensitive tourism model (Mas'ud et al., 2022). Still, to fully leverage these benefits, decision-makers must address the nuanced challenges of aligning profit-driven expansion with Sharia compliance and local stakeholder participation. The limited focus on SEZ Mandalika in academic research points to a critical gap that this study endeavors to fill, thereby contributing fresh insights into both tourism and Islamic economic studies.

## **C. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH**

This study employs a qualitative design with a descriptive and exploratory orientation to gain an in-depth understanding of how the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Mandalika facilitates the growth of Sharia tourism in Lombok. Data collection was carried out through three main methods. First, document analysis included official reports from the Indonesian government, such as regional statistics (BPS NTB, 2023), the legal framework for SEZ implementation (Republic of Indonesia, 2014), and policy guidelines

on Sharia tourism (DSN-MUI, 2016). Additionally, scholarly articles related to Sharia tourism and SEZ management (Kahf, 2003; Suharto, 2010) were reviewed to establish the theoretical context. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of key stakeholders, including officials from the DPM-PTSP NTB (2023), local government representatives, leaders of hotel and restaurant associations, and community figures. The interview questions focused on infrastructure development, community participation, investor relations, and alignment with Islamic principles. Third, field observations were conducted in Mandalika to examine tourism facilities, ongoing construction projects, and community-based initiatives, including an assessment of prayer facilities, signage for halal services, and local outreach programs.

Findings from these three methods were triangulated by cross-referencing interview results, official documents, and direct observations, enhancing the study's reliability and revealing meaningful patterns regarding how SEZ Mandalika is both influenced by and shaping Sharia tourism. The analysis was then organized into key themes—policy, infrastructure, community, and economic impact—which guided the subsequent results and discussion sections.

## **D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Overview of SEZ Mandalika's Development Trajectory***

Since its inception under Government Regulation No. 52/2014, SEZ Mandalika has been envisioned as a premier destination capable of rivaling Bali's Nusa Dua in terms of sophistication and international appeal (Republic of Indonesia, 2014). By adopting a top-down approach, the Indonesian government granted Mandalika strategic status for tourism-driven development, accompanied by financial incentives and administrative facilitation. Evidence collected from official reports indicates that initial infrastructure investments have significantly improved roads, utilities, and coastal areas. These developments effectively laid the groundwork for the construction of hotels, resorts, and other hospitality-related services (DPM-PTSP NTB, 2023).

Despite the central government's leadership, collaboration with local stakeholders proved essential. Interviews with tourism boards and local entrepreneurs suggested that early planning stages involved broad consultations, although skepticism persisted among local community members who feared potential cultural dilution or economic displacement. Over time, the integration of Sharia tourism ideals allayed some concerns, since these ideals are inherently aligned with the majority Muslim population's values (Salahuddin & Abdillah, 2022). A respondent from the Lombok tourism office remarked that the SEZ Mandalika concept offered an opportunity to showcase Lombok's Islamic heritage, rather than overshadow it.

One major thrust of SEZ Mandalika's policy is to blend tourism growth with environmental stewardship, a principle in line with global sustainable tourism practices. The region's pristine beaches and green hills are leveraged for eco-friendly resorts, water sports, and nature-based recreational activities. Mandalika's newly constructed facilities adhere to local aesthetic norms—incorporating Sasak architectural motifs—while maintaining Sharia-compliant guidelines, such as designated prayer rooms and alcohol-free zones in certain establishments (BPS NTB, 2023). This conscious design not only appeals to Muslim travelers but also underscores Lombok's indigenous identity.

Nevertheless, field observations point to ongoing ecological tensions: rapid construction can strain local ecosystems if not properly regulated. Stakeholders have contended with waste management challenges and rising energy demands. One local environmental group representative noted a need for "stricter green building standards and robust waste processing systems" to safeguard Lombok's biodiversity (Interview, 2024). Hence, while environmental considerations are officially noted in planning documents, the scale of development requires meticulous oversight to ensure alignment with Sharia-based ethical stewardship, which emphasizes the preservation of nature as a divine trust.

### ***Infrastructure and Sharia-Compliant Amenities***

Infrastructure remains at the heart of SEZ Mandalika's progress. The zone boasts upgraded roads connecting Lombok International Airport to major tourist hubs, drastically reducing travel time and facilitating seamless visitation. Public facilities, such as the iconic Masjid Nurul Bilad, exemplify the region's concerted efforts to promote religious inclusivity. This mosque, strategically located near the

main entrance of Mandalika, has become a symbolic representation of Sharia tourism, welcoming visitors with an aesthetically pleasing design rooted in Islamic architectural elements (BPS NTB, 2023).

One of the pillars of Sharia tourism is providing accommodation that adheres to halal standards (Kurniati Fitri et al., 2023). In SEZ Mandalika, several hotels and resorts have obtained halal certification from reputable bodies recognized by Indonesia's Council of Ulama (MUI). This process ensures that food and beverage offerings are halal and that services, including room amenities, are free from activities or content deemed incompatible with Sharia guidelines (DSN-MUI, 2016). Interviews with hotel managers revealed that training staff in basic Islamic etiquette—such as greeting customs and directions for Qiblah—has improved customer satisfaction among Muslim travelers while also appealing to non-Muslim visitors intrigued by cultural authenticity (Mas'ud et al., 2022).

Data from the Lombok Hotel and Restaurant Association indicated an upward trajectory in the number of establishments embracing halal certification. These efforts are facilitated by government incentives such as reduced certification fees and streamlined bureaucratic processes for businesses operating within the SEZ. However, not all stakeholders are equally equipped or motivated to comply. Smaller guesthouses, known locally as homestays, often operate informally and lack the resources to pursue certification (Riduan et al., 2022). This gap reveals a challenge for policymakers tasked with bridging formal standards and grassroots hospitality structures.

Beyond lodging, food service remains a defining feature of Sharia tourism. Lombok is famous for its traditional cuisine, such as Ayam Taliwang and Picing Kangkung, dishes that naturally lean toward halal preparation. SEZ Mandalika capitalizes on this culinary heritage by organizing food festivals and creating 'halal zones,' where visitors can find strictly Sharia-compliant dining options. Government-led training programs help local restaurateurs understand halal certification procedures, food hygiene, and marketing strategies tailored to Muslim-friendly travel segments (Fauzi, 2021).

Nonetheless, challenges persist. While major establishments flourish, smaller warungs (food stalls) frequently find themselves marginalized, facing bureaucratic complexities. Some local operators express concerns that formalizing their operations—like acquiring certification—requires capital and administrative expertise they do not possess (Interview, 2024). This discrepancy underscores a risk that large enterprises might overshadow local micro-entrepreneurs, ironically undermining the community-based ethos central to Sharia tourism (Suharto, 2010).

### ***Cultural Integration and Local Community Engagement***

The cultural dimension of Sharia tourism underscores local authenticity, intangible heritage, and religious customs. Lombok's Sasak culture, with its unique crafts, rituals, and folklore, adds depth to the tourism experience (Izzati, 2017). In SEZ Mandalika, cultural integration is showcased through events like the annual Bau Nyale festival, which commemorates the legendary Princess Mandalika. The festival invites visitors to observe and participate in cacing laut (sea worm) collection as a community ritual, followed by communal feasts and cultural performances.

Community engagement emerges as a central theme in bridging top-down SEZ directives with grassroots participation. Interviews revealed a generally positive local sentiment; residents appreciated the influx of employment opportunities in construction, hospitality, and retail. However, certain communities remained cautious about losing autonomy over ancestral lands. While expropriation issues have mostly been handled through government-led negotiations, pockets of friction persist in areas earmarked for further resort development (Salahuddin & Abdillah, 2022).

Moreover, the question of cultural commodification looms large. Traditional dances and customs, initially shared among local families, are increasingly staged for entertainment. Local leaders argue that while tourism can preserve customs by generating income, over-commercialization risks turning sacred rituals into mere spectacles (Mas'ud et al., 2022). The balance hinges on community-driven frameworks that decide what aspects of culture are appropriate to share, how revenue is distributed, and how religious integrity is maintained.

Empowerment programs facilitated by regional governments and NGOs aim to sustain local community engagement. Training in English language proficiency, hospitality management, and artisanal product development helps villagers upgrade their skill sets and gain direct access to the tourism value chain. For instance, women's cooperatives in Lombok now produce Sharia-compliant spa products made from locally sourced herbs, which are sold to hotels and spas within SEZ Mandalika (Interview, 2024).

Despite these strides, gaps exist between formal training initiatives and actual business implementation. Several interviewees highlighted difficulties in marketing, limited digital literacy, and underdeveloped distribution channels. Additionally, religious institutions such as local mosques

occasionally host workshops emphasizing the synergy between Islamic economic teachings and tourism entrepreneurship (Kahf, 2003). This approach fosters an environment where community members see Sharia tourism not as a foreign concept but as a modern extension of their traditions (Fauzi, 2021).

### ***Economic Impact and Investment Dynamics***

One of the clearest indicators of SEZ Mandalika's success lies in its measurable economic impact. Data from the provincial statistics office reveal a fivefold increase in local revenue within a few years of the SEZ launch, jumping from IDR 35 billion to IDR 200 billion (BPS NTB, 2023). This surge correlates with a notable rise in tourist arrivals and an uptick in foreign and domestic investments in hospitality ventures, souvenir production, and transport services.

Employment levels in Lombok have significantly benefited from infrastructure and service-related projects. Construction work associated with resort expansions, the Mandalika International Street Circuit (for MotoGP events), and ancillary facilities has provided a steady stream of income for local youth. Meanwhile, expansions in the service sector—hotels, restaurants, travel agencies—have absorbed a growing workforce, including women who had previously limited employment options (Riduan et al., 2022).

Simultaneously, the hospitality sector's preference for employees with some hospitality or language skills underscores the importance of vocational training. Government initiatives collaborating with local polytechnics offer short certification courses in front-office management, housekeeping, or culinary arts, increasingly tied to Sharia compliance (Fauzi, 2021). While these efforts expand job prospects, ensuring equitable access for rural communities remains a work in progress.

Interviews with local authorities and foreign investors reveal that SEZ Mandalika's flexible regulatory framework—such as streamlined permits and tax incentives—has invigorated the region's investment climate (DPM-PTSP NTB, 2023). Notably, developers from the Middle East and Southeast Asia show a heightened interest in Sharia-compliant resorts, leveraging shared cultural and religious values. The presence of major hospitality brands has concurrently boosted international visibility.

Yet, friction points persist. While large hotel chains quickly capitalize on Mandalika's brand, smaller local entrepreneurs may struggle with securing financing. Sharia-compliant finance products are available but often require complex documentation, leading to a dichotomy between well-capitalized foreign investors and locally driven, smaller-scale ventures (Suharto, 2010). Additionally, some segments of the population question whether external investment influences overshadow the promise of indigenous empowerment. Such discourse reflects an inherent tension in balancing global capital inflows with local ownership (Izzati, 2017).

### ***Policy and Governance***

At the heart of SEZ Mandalika's governance structure stands the regional government, collaborating with the national agency responsible for Special Economic Zones. These entities ensure the enforcement of zoning regulations, environmental standards, and Sharia tourism guidelines (Republic of Indonesia, 2014). Multiple layers of oversight—government, private consortia, and local religious bodies—create a multi-tiered governance system that can either foster synergy or generate bureaucratic confusion, depending on the alignment of objectives (Fauzi, 2021).

Key regulatory mechanisms include the mandatory integration of Sharia-compliant facilities in newly built properties and a simplified licensing process for small businesses to register within the SEZ. Local government decrees encourage entrepreneurs to obtain halal certification, offering partial subsidies to defray accreditation costs (DSN-MUI, 2016). Monitoring agencies conduct periodic audits to verify ongoing compliance with Sharia standards, verifying aspects such as certified suppliers of halal ingredients and designated prayer spaces in hospitality venues (Mas'ud et al., 2022).

Compliance rates appear higher among medium to large enterprises, particularly those with brand reputations to uphold. However, implementing uniform standards across the region remains a challenge when dealing with small-scale operators. Some local groups have proactively formed associations or cooperatives to collectively apply for certifications, thus distributing costs and learning from each other's experiences (Interview, 2024).

An often-cited impediment to smooth governance is the coordination between national and regional bodies, especially in reconciling macroeconomic priorities with local cultural nuances. The national government envisions Mandalika as a showcase for global investment, whereas local authorities are keen to preserve Lombok's cultural and religious identity (Salahuddin & Abdillah, 2022). Collaborative dialogues, often held in district offices or mosques, help mediate differences and clarify

regulations. Nonetheless, critics argue that community voices risk being sidelined if not structured into official decision-making forums (Kurniati Fitri et al., 2023).

### ***Sustainability and Future Directions***

The future trajectory of SEZ Mandalika hinges on aligning its growth with broader sustainability imperatives—economic, cultural, and environmental. Given Lombok’s status as a recognized halal tourism haven, preserving authenticity without stifling innovation is a delicate act (Hall & Williams, 2008). Interviewees who have witnessed tourism booms in other regions warn of potential pitfalls such as overconstruction, wage inequalities, and increased cost of living that may displace local residents (Suharto, 2010).

From an Islamic perspective, the environment is an amanah (trust), requiring responsible treatment and balanced utilization (Kahf, 2003). SEZ Mandalika’s potential to incorporate eco-friendly business models—like solar-powered resorts, waste-reduction initiatives, and coastal ecosystem preservation—can set best-practice precedents. The synergy of Sharia ethics and sustainability resonates with the notion that tourism is not merely an economic enterprise but also a spiritual engagement with God’s creation (DSN-MUI, 2016).

Increasingly, digital platforms shape how tourists search for, book, and evaluate travel destinations. By strengthening online marketing, SEZ Mandalika can position Lombok as a must-visit Sharia tourism site. Social media campaigns, targeted at both domestic and international Muslim travelers, can highlight unique experiences such as the Bau Nyale festival or Sasak handicrafts (Riduan et al., 2022). Partnerships with Islamic travel agencies in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Europe can expand Lombok’s global footprint (Kementerian Pariwisata, 2022).

Based on the accumulated evidence, several policy recommendations emerge to enhance the development of Sharia tourism in SEZ Mandalika. First, Inclusive Certification Support should be implemented by providing micro-grants or capacity-building programs to assist small-scale operators in obtaining halal certification, ensuring a more equitable distribution of benefits and preventing market monopolization by large businesses (Fauzi, 2021). Second, Community-Led Cultural Preservation should be prioritized by formalizing the involvement of local cultural associations in determining which cultural practices can be commercialized, adopting a community-based tourism model to maintain authenticity and avoid cultural commodification (Salahuddin & Abdillah, 2022). Third, Integrated Environmental Management is essential, requiring enhanced environmental regulations and monitoring, including green construction standards, strict waste disposal protocols, and active ecosystem conservation measures, with potential collaboration with Islamic environmental NGOs to reinforce the Sharia-based principle of preserving nature (Kahf, 2003). Fourth, Strengthening Governance and Transparency should be pursued by improving multi-level governance through a clear legal framework that fosters synergy among national agencies, local governments, religious authorities, and private investors, while also institutionalizing stakeholder engagement to maintain transparent decision-making (Republic of Indonesia, 2014; Suharto, 2010). Lastly, Diversified Product Development must be encouraged by expanding tourism offerings beyond beaches and resorts, incorporating thematic attractions such as religious tourism routes, halal culinary tours, and cultural immersion programs to attract a broader demographic of travelers and reduce market saturation in single-product segments (Hall & Williams, 2008).

### ***Reflecting on SEZ Mandalika’s Role in Sharia Tourism***

SEZ Mandalika stands as a paradigm for blending Islamic values with modern economic mechanisms. Its relative success validates the hypothesis that Sharia tourism can thrive in a regulated environment that provides investor confidence, ensures local community buy-in, and upholds religious norms (Mas’ud et al., 2022). The synergy between Islamic principles, local identity, and robust policy structures yields a distinctive tourism brand that resonates beyond Indonesia, tapping into the rapidly growing global Muslim travel segment (Kementerian Pariwisata, 2022).

However, the journey is ongoing. Mandalika’s success must be continually measured against shifting market dynamics, environmental fluctuations, and evolving interpretations of Islamic values. Shortcomings, such as inadequate outreach to smaller communities or partial oversight of environmental guidelines, remind stakeholders that the implementation of Sharia tourism is not a static blueprint but a dynamic, adaptive process (Izzati, 2017). Through introspection and course correction, SEZ Mandalika can maintain its trajectory toward a holistic tourism model that embraces economic vibrancy, community empowerment, and religious commitment.



In essence, Mandalika's trajectory underscores the viability of an SEZ-based strategy in mainstreaming Sharia tourism. By offering a structured framework that aligns national ambitions with local socio-religious realities, SEZ Mandalika provides instructive lessons for other regions aspiring to develop Islamic-friendly tourism. The next step involves refining governance, scaling local participation, and broadening the range of tourist experiences. If managed responsibly, SEZ Mandalika could serve as an exemplar in the academic discourse on how Sharia principles, policy innovation, and community-driven initiatives converge to catalyze inclusive tourism development (Suharto, 2010).

## **E. CONCLUSIONS**

SEZ Mandalika's progress in Lombok demonstrates that Sharia tourism can be effectively woven into formal economic structures, such as Special Economic Zones, creating a robust platform for sustainable growth. By combining infrastructural advancements, policy incentives, halal certification efforts, and community-driven cultural preservation, Mandalika has set a new benchmark in Islamic tourism. The region's experiences underscore the importance of balancing large-scale investment with strong local engagement and environmental oversight. While empirical evidence points to positive impacts in job creation, tourism branding, and cultural revitalization, continued efforts are needed to ensure equitable distribution of benefits, maintain ecological balance, and strengthen institutional coordination. Ultimately, Mandalika's case offers valuable insights for policymakers, local stakeholders, and scholars interested in the intersection of Islamic economics, tourism, and community empowerment. As Lombok moves forward in its journey, SEZ Mandalika stands as a testament to how religious values, economic aspirations, and cultural heritage can converge harmoniously in the pursuit of inclusive development.

## **REFERENCES**

- Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Barat (BPS NTB). (2023). *Provincial Economic Indicators*. Mataram: BPS NTB.
- Badan Pusat Statistik. (2023). *Statistical Yearbook of Indonesia 2023*. Jakarta: BPS.
- Dewan Syariah Nasional - Majelis Ulama Indonesia (DSN-MUI). (2016). *Fatwa No. 108/DSN-MUI/X/2016 tentang Penyelenggaraan Pariwisata Berdasarkan Prinsip Syariah*. Jakarta: DSN-MUI.
- DPM-PTSP NTB (Dinas Penanaman Modal dan Pelayanan Terpadu Satu Pintu). (2023). *Investment Report on Mandalika Special Economic Zone*. Mataram: Government of Nusa Tenggara Barat.
- Fauzi, A. (2021). *Pengaruh Citra Wisata, Kualitas Pelayanan dan Promosi Wisata Terhadap Minat Wisata Religi Muslim di Kabupaten Pringsewu*. (Master's Thesis, UIN Raden Intan Lampung).
- Hall, C.M & Williams, A. M. (2008). *Tourism and Innovation*. London: Routledge.
- Izzati, N. (2017). *Konstruksi Syariah dalam Pariwisata Syariah di Lombok Tengah*. (Master's Thesis, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta).
- Kahf, M. (2003). *The Islamic Economy*. Jeddah: Islamic Development Bank.
- Kementerian Pariwisata. (2022). *Laporan Tahunan Pariwisata Halal Indonesia*. Jakarta: Kemenpar.
- Kurniati-Fitri, Z. A., Mansyur, Z., & Mulhimmah, B. R. (2023). Development of a Tourism Village Efforts to Empower the Community's Economy from an Islamic Economic Perspective: A Case Study of West Lombok's Kebon Ayu. *Jurnal Ekonomi Syariah Indonesia*, 13(1), 15–27.
- Mas'ud, R., Aminy, M. M., Ramadani, L. A., Elbadriati, B., & Yusup, M. (2022). Tourist Satisfaction in Lombok Island as the World's Best Syariah Tourism Destination. *Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism*, 13(8), 2081–2093.
- Republic of Indonesia. (2014). *Peraturan Pemerintah No. 52 Tahun 2014 tentang Kawasan Ekonomi Khusus Mandalika*. Jakarta: Sekretariat Negara.
- Riduan, M., Aminy, M. M., Ramadani, L. A., Elbadriati, B., & Yusup, M. (2022). Tourist Satisfaction in Lombok Island as the World's Best Syariah Tourism Destination. *Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism*, 13(7), 2056–2070.
- Salahuddin, M., & Abdillah, A. (2022). Maqashid al-Shariah, Social Dialogue, and Tourism Development in Lombok. *Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism*, 13(4), 811–824.
- Suharto, E. (2010). *Membangun Masyarakat, Memberdayakan Rakyat*. Bandung: Refika Aditama.