

## The Role of Tourism as a Medium of Reconciliation to Domesticate Radicalism and Religion-Based Intolerance

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**ABSTRACT:** The high threat of radicalism and intolerance in Indonesia, fueled by primordialism sentiments and disseminated through social media, requires a new, innovative approach. Although the organizational network has weakened, radical ideologies remain adaptive and have the potential to undermine the harmony of a multicultural society. This study examines the role of tourism as an effective medium of reconciliation to domesticate attitudes of radicalism and religion-based intolerance. By integrating the concepts of peace tourism and culture-based tourism, this article argues that tourism can be a bridge for intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Through the interactions that occur in tourist destinations, tourists and local communities are invited to understand universal values that cross religious boundaries. This approach to tourism offers a humanistic preventive solution, focusing on real experience and mutual understanding, rather than a purely reactive approach. The domestication of extremist attitudes can be achieved through the development of peaceful tourism destinations, increased cultural literacy, and strategic partnerships with religious leaders. In conclusion, tourism plays not only a role as an economic sector, but also a strategic tool to build bridges of peace and promote harmony, which will ultimately strengthen the unity of the Indonesian nation.

**KEYWORDS:** Tourism, Reconciliation, Radicalism, Intolerance, Religious Harmony.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Radicalism and intolerance are phenomena that cannot be separated from the opening of the tap of political freedom and democracy after the collapse of the New Order regime in 1998. According to Supriadi, et al., (2020), the opening of political and democratic spaces not only provides space for the emergence of various expressions built on religious sentiments and primordialism identity, but also paves the way for the expansion of radicalism into wider spaces of social life. In the midst of the increasingly massive development of social media, the public and law enforcement officials have difficulty in tracking criminal behavior committed through digital platforms. Although organizationally, the network of radicalism in the Unitary State of Indonesia (NKRI) has weakened considerably, this does not mean that the threat has ended. Radical ideological agencies have proven to have the ability to adapt or change themselves to survive in various dynamics of the times. In fact, these agents play an important role in expanding the circulation of radical ideology, not only among the deeply disillusioned minority, but also with those with lower levels of disillusionment.

This phenomenon is strengthened by the findings of a survey by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) UIN Jakarta (2017) which shows that 34.3% of young respondents agree that jihad is a movement against non-Muslim groups. Acts of religious violence are fueled by intolerance and can turn into terrorism at any moment, as the most extreme form of radicalism (Perkasa 2016). Given that Indonesia is very multicultural, with about 656 different ethnicities, races, religions, customs, and cultures (Hidayah in Atmadja, 2010), the potential for friction based on religious sentiments is very high. The condition of this pluralistic society is very vulnerable to causing friction between ethnic groups wrapped in religious sentiments. Therefore, the fundamental problem that must be understood is how to recognize and domesticate radicalism and intolerance wrapped in religion so that the development of terrorism can be minimized.

This is where the role of tourism becomes very relevant. Tourism is no longer only seen as an economic sector, but also as a cultural instrument that can facilitate reconciliation and intercultural dialogue. The concept of peace tourism offers a unique

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approach to addressing conflicts, including interreligious, interethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts. Through tourism, cross-religious and cross-cultural interactions can occur naturally and positively. Visits to religious tourism destinations, cultural festivals, or villages that uphold tolerance provide hands-on experiences that can foster mutual respect, reduce stereotypes, and open up insights into diversity. Thus, tourism serves as a medium to "bring differences" closer, bridge the gap of understanding, and ultimately, domesticate (tame) radical and intolerant attitudes, turning potential conflicts into harmony.

### **2. METHODOLOGY**

This paper adopts a qualitative-interpretive approach, based on verstehen analysis techniques to understand the subjective meaning behind the phenomenon of tourism as a medium of reconciliation in the context of radicalism and religion-based intolerance. Case studies were chosen as a type of research to investigate in depth tourism destinations that are considered potential or have been successful in facilitating reconciliation. Data collection will be carried out through in-depth interviews with various key informants (religious leaders, tourism actors, tourists), participant observation to observe social interaction and tourism activities, as well as documentation studies to analyze relevant tourism promotion policies and materials.

The collected data will be analyzed using the verstehen technique, which involves data reduction to focus information, presentation of data in the form of narratives and citations, in-depth interpretation to understand subjective meaning, and drawing conclusions supported by empirical evidence. To ensure validity and reliability, this study will apply data triangulation, member checks with informants, recording research processes (audit trail), and discussions with colleagues (peer debriefing). Research ethics will be maintained by ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity of informants.

### **3. RESULTS**

#### **3.1 Tourism as a Means of Practicing Normative Principles to Fight Radicalism**

The normative principles of religious life in Indonesia have actually been strictly regulated in Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution. Paragraph (1) of the article emphasizes that the state is based on the One Godhead, while paragraph (2) guarantees the freedom of each citizen to embrace his or her own religion and to worship according to his religion and belief. Referring to this provision, it can be understood that freedom in carrying out religious life should be enjoyed by every citizen, regardless of religion or ethnicity. This guarantee of harmony has been provided by the 1945 Constitution and various other implementing regulations. However, in reality, religious harmony has begun to be disturbed in recent decades, even almost bringing this nation to the brink of division. The existence of a series of riots with SARA nuances, such as the cases of Tumenggung (April 1997), Banjarmasin (May 1997), and Sampit (1999) (Ma'asrif (2005)) as well as more temporary cases such as the ban on Christian worship in Bandar Lampung (February 2023) (quoted from Detiksumut, February 20, 2023) are clear evidence that these normative guarantees have not been fully implemented.

Derrida in his book explains that the Politics of Friendship (1977) becomes relevant. According to Derrida, political society is paradoxical, in that constitutions and laws seek to unite different communities in a single unit, but on the other hand can loosen traditional communal ties. In line with that, Samuel P. Huntington (cited in Triguna, 2011) emphasized that the end of the cold war opened up opportunities for clashes between civilizations, including between religions, caused by unfair competition. In the context of tourism, this phenomenon can be a major obstacle to the development of the tourism industry itself. Diversity, which should be the main attraction of tourism, is actually threatened by negative sentiments and conflicts, which have the potential to damage the image of tourist destinations and create a sense of insecurity for tourists.

Unhealthy competition between civilizations or between religions, coupled with a lack of understanding of diversity, can be the initial trigger for the emergence of radicalism and intolerance in religious beliefs. This competitive attitude can turn into excessive fanaticism, then develop into intolerance, and eventually turn into terrorism. If this condition is allowed to continue, the unity and unity of the nation is threatened. To prevent this, tourism can take a strategic role. Tourism not only sells natural or cultural beauty, but it also offers an interaction experience that can bridge differences. Through visits to religious sites, cultural festivals, or villages that uphold tolerance, tourism becomes a medium to educate and prove that diversity is wealth. This is a practical way to recognize and domesticate radicalism and intolerance, so that it does not develop into absurd terrorism, while ensuring the peaceful sustainability of the tourism industry.

#### **3.2 Tourism as an Educational Space to Recognize Radicalism and Intolerance**

Before domesticating the attitudes of radicalism and intolerance that have grown and developed in the lives of Indonesian people in the last few decades, it seems necessary to first understand what is meant by radicalism and intolerance. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Banjarnegara ([kemenag.go.id](http://kemenag.go.id)), radicalism is an understanding or school that wants social and political change or reform by violent means or by revolutionary means. The characteristics of adherents of radicalism are that they

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are less able to understand or appreciate differences and respect the views of others. In addition, people who adhere to radical beliefs also tend to be exclusive, excessively fanatical, and like to use violent methods, in responding to the difference in their beliefs (religion) with those embraced by other people or groups. This attitude is very contrary to the basic principles of tourism that prioritize openness, friendliness, and cross-cultural interaction. In fact, according to Ma'arif (2005), morality and virtue can be born (and indeed exist) in the construction of other religions, a view that is very relevant in the context of tourism that promotes interfaith encounters. Understanding and understanding the religion of others is not intended to affect the purity of their respective religious teachings, but is limited to studying and understanding the sources of the values of religious pluralism, which can be facilitated through tourism experiences.

Meanwhile, intolerance in this study is intended to be an attitude that cannot respect differences with others or is unable to live tolerantly, in the sense of respecting each other. The word tolerance also has a close meaning to the word moderation, which is the attitude of avoiding violence or extreme attitudes in religious life. Then terrorism according to Law Number 15 of 2003, is as follows: "Terrorism is the use of violence or threats of violence that causes a situation of terror or fear of people widely and causes mass casualties, by seizing other people's property, which results in damage or destruction of strategic vital objects, the environment, public facilities, and state facilities."

Recognizing such radicalism, intolerance, and terrorism actually has an important meaning for efforts to prevent the spread of anti-pluralism attitudes, especially in tourist destinations. In this context, there is an adage that says that it is better to prevent than to cure. If this adage is analogous to the context of radicalism, intolerance, and terrorism, then the equivalent is that it is better to prevent the spread of these ideas through tourism, rather than looking for solutions after incidents that can damage the image of the destination. Tourism can be an effective platform to prevent such misunderstandings from spreading, especially among the younger generation who travel frequently, so it is necessary to trace the root of the problem so that the right solutions can be found. One of the root problems that triggered the emergence of such understandings, according to some experts, was the failure of religious education given to students during the New Order government, which was considered to have failed to form a moral character of the nation (Susetyo, 2005). One of the causes, according to Susetyo, is religious education that only attaches importance to a narrow attitude to life, favors one's own way of religion, and negates tolerance in religious life.

In this context, Noer as quoted by Suda (2017) stated that there are at least four factors that cause the failure of religious education in fostering tolerance in religious life, which can be answered through the tourism approach. First, religious learning in schools emphasizes the transfer of knowledge rather than the transmission of values, even though tourism can provide space for the transmission of values in real terms through interaction with local communities. Second, the attitude of some people who look down on religious education in schools can be overcome by the direct practice of tolerance in tourist destinations. Third, the lack of inculcation of universal moral values such as love and friendship, which is precisely the main foundation of the humanist tourism industry. Fourth, the lack of interest in studying other religions is limited to scientific interests; Tourism provides an opportunity to learn about other religions directly in places of worship or historical sites, which can be a practical reference for building tolerance.

Another factor that is also considered to be the cause of the failure of religious education in Indonesia is the assumption that the peak of human knowledge is positive sciences (science). As a result, science that does not carry out rigorous verification and measurement, including religious science, becomes marginalized. From there, it can also be suspected that the emergence of radicalism and intolerance. How not, because religious learning has been given in schools so far, according to Susetyo (2005), is more ritualistic and dogmatic. Tourism offers a way out of this approach by promoting empirical experiences. Through visits to religious sites or interactions with different communities, tourism provides a space for individuals to experience and experience faith values that are ethical, humanistic, and universal, rather than focusing solely on black-and-white rules.

Departing from this idea, the religious education provided, whether in formal schools, lectures in the community, or Islamic boarding schools, should not just provide teachings that are ritualistic, dogmatic, and legalistic. On the contrary, education must be emphasized on efforts to make students more active, creative, and innovative in applying religious values in social life. In the context of tourism, this means promoting experiences that encourage tourists to interact with others, share stories, and appreciate different traditions, instead of just living a religious life based on blind obedience to religious laws. Using Eric Fromm's idea, this is called "to be religious not to have religion", where in tourism the important thing is to increase faith through real experience, not just having religion.

In addition, religious education taught in classrooms as a medium to improve the religious literacy of the people, has not been able to develop an inclusive and pluralist theological attitude among the younger generation for the harmonization of religious life. This has resulted in the intensity of the emergence of radicalism, intolerance, and terrorism attitudes. Similarly, religious education, which should be used as a vehicle to develop the universal morality that exists in religions, has been reduced to exclusive and dogmatic religious education, so that it has more or less contributed to and perpetuated internal and external

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conflicts. This is where tourism can fill that void, as tourism inherently promotes inclusive theology through genuine interaction, where differences are not avoided, but celebrated.

Beyond the formal education system, tourism can also be a social laboratory for implementing tolerance at the micro level. By developing community-based tourism, local communities from various ethnic and religious backgrounds are encouraged to work together for the common good. Projects such as shared lodgings, multicultural culinary festivals, or historical tours that tell multiple perspectives, directly show tourists and the community itself that diversity is a strength, not a weakness. This creates a real model of a harmonious society and can be an example for other regions.

The economic aspect in tourism also plays a crucial role in domesticating radical ideas. When communities see that tolerance and openness to tourists from different backgrounds bring significant economic benefits, they will naturally be more motivated to practice harmony. Revenues from the tourism sector can be used to improve the quality of life, which in turn reduces the sense of discontent and anger that is often a breeding ground for radical ideologies. Thus, tourism offers a strong financial incentive to build a more tolerant and peaceful society.

Ultimately, tourism is not just an industry, but a transformative sociological process that can complement educational and law enforcement efforts in countering radicalism and intolerance. Tourism provides a space for interaction, opportunities for real learning, and economic incentives that foster harmony. By making tourism a "determinant" in reconciliation efforts, Indonesia can build a stronger, more united, and more resilient society in the face of the threat of extremism, ensuring that the diversity that is the nation's wealth will continue to be a source of strength.

### **3.3. Domestication of Radicalism and Intolerance Through the Role of Tourism as a Medium of Reconciliation.**

According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (1995), the word domestication means to tame wild animals or wild animals. In the context of radicalism, intolerance, and terrorism, domestication can be interpreted as an attempt to dilute or neutralize exclusive attitudes, excessive fanaticism, and views that consider the religion they adhere to to be the most correct. This attitude is rooted in a lack of openness to the outside world and a literal view of religious teachings that is absorbed from social media. In fact, according to Ma'arif (2005: viii), morality and virtue can be born in the construction of other religions. To counter this narrow view, tourism offers an experience that can tame extremist attitudes. Through tourism, individuals can meet people from different faith backgrounds, witness different religious practices, and interact in person, thus fostering an understanding that the values of kindness are universal.

The phenomenon of radicalism and intolerance is also exacerbated by the rapid currents of globalization that are sweeping the world today. The shift in consumption behavior from utility values towards the consumption of symbolic values, as explained by Piliang (2004), also affects the socio-religious life of the community. Religious observance tends to be more concerned with outward forms and ritualism, leaving little room for heart sharpening and spiritual enlightenment. Tourism can be a counterweight to this trend. Instead of just consuming symbols, tourism offers an authentic experience that can touch the spiritual and inner aspects. Visits to sacred sites, meditation retreats, or religious festivals can lead individuals to seek deeper meaning, go beyond mere rituals, and cultivate wisdom. In this way, tourism can direct energy centered on the fulfillment of material desires towards spiritual growth, which is the antithesis of radicalism.

To domesticate radicalism and intolerance, tourism can be used in several ways. First, inserting religious moderation subject matter through educational tourism experiences. Tourism programs can be designed specifically for students and students, inviting them to interact with other religious communities in their native environment. This provides a direct understanding of diversity, which is polite, humane, and compassionate. Second, increasing literacy understanding for tour guides, industry players, and religious leaders so that they are able to socialize the beauty of living together in differences. They can be ambassadors of peace who convey a narrative of tolerance to tourists, as well as be a real example in their communities. Third, conducting effective coordination between religious institutions and communities to design and manage tourism destinations that uphold harmony. Collaboration between religious organizations and institutions such as FKUB can ensure that every tourism activity, from festivals to volunteer programs, reflects the values of tolerance.

Fourth, building partnerships with religious leaders, community leaders, and institutions such as FKUB in realizing the tri of harmony through tourism initiatives. For example, by developing harmony tourism where tourists are invited to visit and learn from three adjacent places of worship—such as mosques, churches, and temples—that coexist peacefully. Fifth, utilizing tourism to promote inclusive theology. Through face-to-face encounters with people from different backgrounds, tourism helps individuals see that kindness does not just belong to one religion, and that every belief has noble values that can be learned and respected. This is very important to overcome the tendency of reductionism and exclusivism in religious education that has contributed to the conflict.

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Through these approaches, tourism becomes more than just an industry, but a powerful sociological instrument to erode the seeds of radicalism and intolerance. Tourism provides space for interaction, opportunities for practical learning, and economic incentives that foster harmony. By making tourism an effective medium of reconciliation, we can undoubtedly bring this nation into a more harmonious, harmonious, and peaceful life, taming the understandings that have been flourishing in the archipelago.

### 4. CONCLUSION

Referring to some of the descriptions above, it can be concluded that the birth of radicalism, intolerance, and terrorism does not stand alone, but is influenced by various factors. Some of these are the approach to religious learning in formal schools that tends to emphasize more dogmatic ritualism; the development of globalization that affects the socio-religious life of the community; and unfair competition in seizing economic resources. These factors are what drive the emergence of extremist attitudes, especially for those who feel incapable of competing. In this context, tourism can be a counterbalance by providing a space for authentic interactions, beyond formal ritualism. Tourist experiences, especially those focused on culture and religion, can teach harmony firsthand, open up insights, and foster empathy that cannot be taught in a classroom.

Regarding this phenomenon, it is recommended that the public, especially the younger generation, always hone their skills with various sciences, including tourism science. In today's era of acceleration, speed is a hallmark of progress. Just as in the past the big beat the small, now the fast beat the slow. Tourism offers a platform that accelerates the reconciliation process. Through tourism, interreligious and intercultural dialogue can occur more quickly and effectively than through traditional approaches. Innovative and planned tourism initiatives can accelerate the domestication of radicalism and intolerance, making tolerance an attractive and valuable asset. By mastering the "law of acceleration" in the context of tourism, we can win the competition against divisive ideas and lead this nation towards a more harmonious and peaceful life.

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