

# THE STIGMA OF CANNABIS USE IN ACEHNESE CUISINE: CHALLENGES FOR HALAL TOURISM



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## **Abstract**

This study aims to analyze the impact of stigma on the use of cannabis in Acehese cuisine and its implications for the sustainability of halal tourism. The method employed is qualitative with a literature review approach, analyzing secondary data from scientific journals, books, official documents, and media articles. The primary data sources include regulations on cannabis, its historical use in cuisine, and the negative and positive impacts of stigma. The findings reveal that social stigma toward cannabis, often associated with drug abuse, poses significant challenges for Acehese cuisine. Although historically, cannabis was used as a cooking ingredient without psychoactive effects, shifts in public perception have affected the image of Aceh's halal tourism. As a result, this stigma has the potential to reduce Muslim tourists' interest in Acehese cuisine and negatively impact the local economic sector. This study provides a fresh perspective on the role of stigma in hindering the potential of Acehese cuisine in the halal tourism industry. Its scholarly contribution enriches the literature on the relationship between social stigma, traditional culinary practices, and halal tourism, which has been rarely explored in depth. Methodologically, the literature-based approach focusing on regulatory, historical, and social perception analyses offers a model that can be applied to similar issues in other regions or cultural contexts.

**Keywords: Cannabis, Acehness Cuisine, Halal Tourism**

## INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry serves as the backbone of the economy in many countries, generating significant revenue from both domestic and international travelers. This sector not only drives visitation but also positively impacts related industries such as transportation, culinary, and hospitality. Culinary tourism, which focuses on the uniqueness of flavors and signature dishes, holds a special appeal within the tourism industry (Prabowo, Lestariningsih, and Mau 2024). The culinary industry has undergone significant development since ancient times (Novia Anggraeni et al. n.d.). In the current technological era, many culinary businesses have successfully established themselves as favorites, with certain foods and beverages even becoming iconic symbols of specific regions or cities. This strategy is employed by producers to attract the interest of visitors or tourists passing through those areas. Consequently, these foods and beverages gain wider recognition or even become viral within society (Agustinar, Sumarni, and Mufida 2023).

Aceh is renowned for its rich and distinctive culinary heritage, characterized by a variety of unique spices rarely found in other regions. This diversity of flavors and the uniqueness of its taste make Acehnese cuisine a significant attraction in the tourism sector, particularly in halal tourism (Gardjito, Santoso, and Utami 2018). The culinary industry in Aceh also plays a vital role in strengthening the region's image as a destination that upholds Islamic values, offering a sense of comfort and security for Muslim travelers (Razali, Syahputra, and Ulfah 2021).

Aceh has implemented halal tourism, encompassing both tourist attractions and culinary offerings. Halal tourism has grown in tandem with the increasing Muslim population worldwide. Currently, the global Muslim population continues to rise, marked by higher educational backgrounds, younger demographics, and increasing income levels, making Muslim travelers an attractive target market for the international tourism industry. In Aceh, the potential for halal tourism is significant (Razali et al. 2021).

However, Acehnese cuisine has recently faced challenges due to the emergence of negative stigma regarding the use of cannabis as an ingredient. Reports about certain foods allegedly containing cannabis have created perceptions that threaten the image of Acehnese cuisine, particularly within the context of halal tourism. This stigma gained traction after a case involving an Acehnese individual who tested positive for cannabis in a urine test in Jakarta, which was subsequently linked to food consumed at a local eatery in Aceh.

In response to this issue, the Aceh Provincial National Narcotics Agency (BNNP) plans to conduct laboratory tests to determine whether cannabis is truly present in Acehnese cuisine or if it is merely a perception circulating among the public. This initiative is expected to dispel the stigma that is believed to harm the reputation of Acehnese cuisine. However, this effort has sparked debates, with some concerned that it might inadvertently reinforce the stigma (Safrina 2024).

Aceh is often associated with cannabis, a perception rooted in the historical relationship between Aceh and cannabis culture. When interacting with Acehnese locals, outsiders frequently express curiosity about cannabis. This issue has become widespread, especially on social media, where such opinions dominate discussions. Unfortunately, this understanding has significantly disadvantaged the people of Aceh. Cannabis, often associated with narcotics abuse, actually has a long history in Aceh's traditional cuisine. The local community has long used cannabis as a spice to enhance the flavors of their signature dishes. However, the persistent negative stigma surrounding the plant often hinders broader understanding of its benefits and applications in the culinary world.

Cannabis, once used as a traditional cooking spice in Aceh, underwent a shift in status due to its misuse as a narcotic. The Government of the Republic of Indonesia responded by issuing Law Number 8 of 1976 on Narcotics, which classified cannabis as a Class I narcotic. Since the enactment of this law, media coverage of cannabis has significantly shifted. While earlier reports highlighted its potential medical benefits, the focus has now shifted to arrests of cannabis users and dealers in Indonesia (Daris Warsito 2018).

Although numerous studies have explored halal tourism in various contexts, such as destinations, culinary offerings, and services rooted in Islamic values, research on the impact of cannabis stigma in the context of Acehnese cuisine remains scarce. Most studies focus on the legal aspects of cannabis or its applications in medicine and the medical industry. However, there is little research addressing how the stigma associated with cannabis affects local cultural elements, such as Aceh's traditional cuisine, which has a long history of using cannabis as a cooking spice..

This research gap underscores the importance of studies that not only examine the stigma itself but also explore the implications it creates. Furthermore, the impact of this stigma extends beyond individual perceptions and touches upon the collective image of Aceh as a halal tourism destination. With the influence of globalization and the growing

awareness of tourism based on Islamic values, the sustainability of halal tourism in Aceh heavily depends on the region's ability to maintain an image consistent with those values.. This research is relevant in addressing the knowledge gap by exploring how this stigma affects Aceh's image and its impact on the sustainability of tourism from both social and economic perspectives. The study aims to analyze various perspectives regarding the use of cannabis in Acehnese cuisine based on existing literature. It also seeks to identify the factors influencing public perception of this issue and evaluate the impact of the stigma surrounding cannabis use in culinary practices on tourist interest and the sustainability of halal tourism in Aceh.

## **METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative method with a literature review approach to explore the stigma surrounding the use of cannabis in Acehnese cuisine and its impact on halal tourism. The method aims to analyze relevant and reliable secondary data, including scholarly journal articles, books, official documents, and media reports. Data was collected by conducting a literature search through academic databases such as Google Scholar and other platforms. The literature selection process involved several stages. First, data sources were identified using keywords such as "cannabis in Acehnese cuisine," "social stigma of cannabis," "halal tourism," and "cannabis use in culture" to locate relevant publications. Next, selected literature had to meet inclusion criteria, specifically addressing the history and use of cannabis in Acehnese cuisine, emerging social stigmas, and their impact on the halal tourism industry. Irrelevant, outdated, or unreliable sources were excluded from the analysis.

The data analysis process utilized a thematic approach to identify patterns and key themes. The steps included in-depth reading of the literature to understand the context and main arguments, coding the data based on themes such as the history of cannabis use in cuisine, the dynamics of social stigma, and its influence on the culinary and halal tourism sectors in Aceh, and organizing the data into thematic categories for easier interpretation. Data validity was ensured through triangulation by comparing information from various types of sources, including journal articles, media reports, and official documents. Data reliability was maintained by selecting sources from indexed publications or those issued by recognized institutions. Any potentially biased data was identified and adjusted during the analysis process.

As a literature review, this study has limitations as it relies on available secondary data. Consequently, the findings reflect only the information accessible from published literature. Nevertheless, this method is expected to provide comprehensive insights into the stigma surrounding the use of cannabis in Acehese cuisine and its implications for the sustainability of halal tourism.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

#### **The History of Cannabis Use in Acehese Cuisine**

The use of cannabis as a cooking ingredient has a long history, particularly in Aceh, Indonesia. Cannabis is believed to have been introduced to the archipelago around the 14th century by traders and sailors from Gujarat, India, who brought the plant as a trade commodity and herbal medicine. In Acehese society, cannabis was traditionally used as a seasoning in various local dishes, as recorded in ancient manuscripts such as the *Kitab Tajul Muluk*. Traditional dishes like *kuah beulangong*, duck curry, and spiced porridge often utilized ground cannabis seeds to enhance the umami flavor and enrich the taste. Additionally, cannabis leaves were used as food wrappers to preserve the freshness of dishes in the era before modern storage technology. The use of cannabis in Acehese cuisine is regarded as a part of cultural heritage that has persisted for centuries, although its usage has significantly declined due to regulations prohibiting its use. Nevertheless, this tradition is still remembered as part of Aceh's culinary identity, reflecting its historical role in the lives of the local community..

Cannabis was once regarded as a spice with benefits for both medicine and culinary practices in the archipelago (Akhyar 2022). However, changes in international and national policies emphasizing prohibition have shifted this perception, portraying cannabis as an illegal substance with no value. This shift has led to the loss of traditional knowledge about the positive uses of cannabis. Over time, particularly following the implementation of Indonesia's Narcotics Law in 1976, the use of cannabis saw a drastic decline as the law prohibited its consumption, including its use in cooking. Cannabis is now considered illegal, and its application in culinary practices has nearly vanished due to the negative stigma surrounding it (Setyadi 2022; Susanto n.d.). Stigma refers to an attribute or behavior that causes someone to lose their reputation in society. Substance users, including cannabis users, are highly vulnerable to this stigma because society often perceives them negatively (Kelly & Westerhoff, 2010).

## **Social Stigma and Media Towards Acehese Culinary Heritage**

The stigma surrounding cannabis as a culinary ingredient is often influenced by social cues that associate it with negative behaviors or attributes. In the case of cannabis, these cues may include perceptions of its link to illegal activities, adverse effects on mental health, or its classification as a narcotic (Coles et al. 2024). Such labeling creates a negative image, even though cannabis has a historical role in traditional cuisines of some cultures. Consequently, this social stigma leads people to feel uneasy or afraid to accept cannabis as a food ingredient, even when its use is within legal and traditional contexts. The stigma against cannabis use in Acehese cuisine stems from negative societal perceptions that associate cannabis with illegal activities and drug abuse. This stigma has the potential to alter public views of Acehese traditional cuisine and contribute to complex social and economic challenges..

Media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and influencing perceptions of certain issues, including the stigma surrounding the use of cannabis in Acehese cuisine (Qadri 2020). In this context, media can serve as a tool to either reduce or reinforce the stigma attached to the practice of using cannabis as part of local culinary traditions. If media outlets present neutral and fact-based narratives, such as educating the public about the history of cannabis use in Acehese dishes, its benefits within legal regulations, and its cultural and health perspectives, they have the potential to help reduce the stigma. Such an approach could foster more constructive discussions and promote a more comprehensive understanding of Acehese culinary traditions.

Conversely, if media outlets portray cannabis use negatively without adequately addressing its cultural and legal context, such coverage may amplify the stigma (Qadri 2020). For instance, emphasizing the illegality of cannabis use without considering its historical and cultural values could harm the reputation of Acehese cuisine. This could also jeopardize Aceh's efforts to promote halal tourism, particularly if outsiders perceive Acehese cuisine as inconsistent with halal principles.

## **The Impact of Stigma on Aceh's Halal Tourism**

### **Negative Impacts**

Aceh, as the only province in Indonesia that officially implements Islamic law (Sharia), holds a strong image as a religious region that upholds Islamic values. The application of Sharia in Aceh encompasses various aspects of life, including criminal law,

morality, and social ethics (Amal 2004). However, the use of cannabis in Acehese traditional cuisine presents a contradiction that challenges this image. Cannabis, widely regarded as a narcotic substance and criminalized in many countries, including Indonesia, carries a negative stigma that conflicts with the principles of Sharia, which prohibits the consumption of intoxicating and health-damaging substances (PutriHasan 2024).

Stigma, whether directed at individuals or groups, is considered harmful because once someone is labeled with a negative stigma, it becomes difficult to remove (Rüsch, Angermeyer, and Corrigan 2005). Its impact is not only felt in the immediate environment but can spread across society, even to those who are unfamiliar with the origins of the stigma. Social stigma, defined as society's negative beliefs about certain individuals or groups, has significant psychological and practical consequences in everyday life (Yu 2024). In the context of cannabis use in Acehese cuisine, social stigma can affect public perceptions of Aceh's traditional dishes, associating them with negative connotations. This, in turn, can impact the culinary industry, where business owners may face a decline in consumer trust.

Negative stigma attached to a particular cuisine can have far-reaching effects, both directly and indirectly. People influenced by such stigma may hesitate to try or purchase the dish, leading to decreased interest and demand. This can result in reduced sales for culinary businesses. Regions like Aceh, known for their unique culinary heritage, may experience a decline in tourist visits from those eager to explore local dishes. Food vendors, restaurants, or market traders relying on stigmatized cuisine may suffer financial losses due to a shrinking customer base. Diminished interest in traditional cuisine can also negatively impact the local economy, especially if that cuisine is a vital part of the region's economic activity.

The negative stigma surrounding Acehese cuisine, such as allegations of cannabis use as a cooking ingredient, can significantly affect Aceh's halal tourism image. In the context of a Sharia-based tourism destination like Aceh, known as the "Serambie Mekkah," maintaining a halal image is crucial. This image not only influences domestic tourists' perceptions but also those of international visitors, particularly from Muslim-majority countries. According to (Nassar, Mostafa, and Reisinger 2015) a tourism destination's image reflects the impressions formed in tourists' minds, while (Souiden, Ladhari, and Chiadmi 2017) emphasize the importance of destination branding in building a positive image. In the case of Aceh, branding focused on halal tourism becomes

increasingly challenging when negative stigma—such as allegations of using ingredients deemed non-halal—gains traction in public discourse..

The stigma that Acehese cuisine contains cannabis can negatively affect Aceh's image as a region that implements Islamic law (Sharia). The use of cannabis in cooking, even in small amounts, can create a perception that the people of Aceh are less committed to practicing Islamic principles. This is particularly concerning as Aceh is actively promoting halal tourism globally. The perception arises from the belief that cannabis is classified as an intoxicating substance, which is prohibited in Islam. Therefore, this stigma could damage Aceh's reputation as a region dedicated to upholding Islamic values, as highlighted by an Acehese historian in an interview with BBC Indonesia (Raja Eben 2020).

*“A stigma that cannot be substantiated will clearly harm the implementation of Islamic law in Aceh and damage the character of Acehese people, who have long been known for their religious devotion. This stigma also harms the (culinary) traders themselves”*

This statement underscores the negative impact of unfounded stigma on various aspects of Sharia implementation in Aceh. The stigma not only risks creating a negative perception of the region's commitment to religious values but also tarnishes the image of the Acehese people, historically regarded as having a high level of religious observance. Moreover, the stigma directly affects the sustainability of culinary businesses in Aceh. Unverified claims reduce consumer trust in local culinary products, ultimately leading to a decline in sales and the livelihood of traders. Therefore, it is crucial to address this issue wisely through evidence-based research and educational approaches to prevent widespread social, economic, and cultural repercussions.

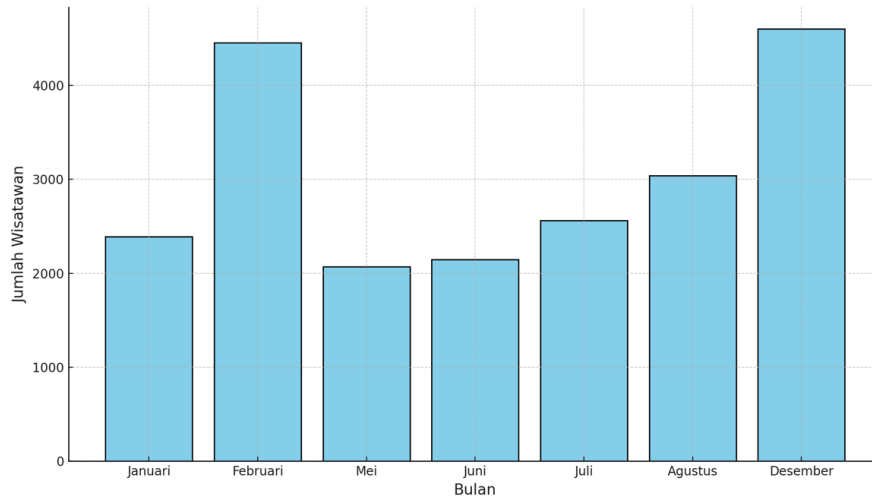
By tackling the stigma with clear and factual information, Aceh can safeguard its culinary heritage, support local businesses, and preserve its image as a model for Islamic adherence and halal tourism

### **Positive Impact**

This article aims to demonstrate that stigma, which is often viewed negatively, can actually have positive impacts in certain contexts. On the one hand, stigma can trigger constructive behavioral changes, raise public awareness about certain issues, or drive innovation in responding to specific situations. As an illustration, the author refers to data on international tourist visits to Aceh in 2024. Although Aceh may have certain stigmas,



such as its strict implementation of Islamic Sharia law, this could, in fact, attract specific tourists who are interested in the region's unique culture and local wisdom. In other words, existing stigmas might encourage Aceh to improve its image, develop appropriate tourism promotion strategies, or create authentic travel experiences for visitors.



**Figure 1.1 International Tourist Visits to Aceh in 2024**

*Source: BPS RI*

Aceh is often associated with certain stigmas, such as Sharia-based regulations that are perceived as less welcoming to non-Muslim tourists or issues related to cultural freedom. However, data shows that certain months, such as February and December, have recorded significant increases in tourist visits. This indicates that stigma does not entirely deter tourists from visiting; rather, it can serve as a unique attraction for specific segments of travelers.

These findings also reveal that tourists' motivations for visiting Aceh are more complex than simply being influenced by or disregarding stigma. Factors such as the desire for authentic experiences, curiosity, cultural capital, and the effectiveness of destination promotion all play a role. By understanding this, Aceh can continue to promote its positive image and enhance its tourism appeal without being hindered by old stigmas.

## Discussion

### Social Stigma

(Goffman 2009) defines stigma as a dynamic process that discredits individuals or groups, diminishes their self-worth, and leads to differential treatment from others.

This stigma deprives individuals or groups of important life opportunities and makes it difficult for them to thrive. According to Goffman, stigma is an attribute or behavior that causes someone to be perceived as inferior or different from social norms. In his book *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Goffman explains that stigma lowers a person's social status, rendering them viewed as less whole or tainted in the eyes of society. Stigma is understood as a phenomenon that impacts an individual's entire self. In *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963), Erving Goffman also identifies three main categories of stigma that describe various forms of negative labeling experienced by individuals or groups. Each category reflects different aspects of problematic social relations caused by stigma, namely:

### **Abominations of the Body**

This stigma relates to physical conditions that society perceives as abnormal. It includes physical deformities, bodily disabilities, or visible impairments, such as amputations, skin disorders, or asymmetrical facial features. Individuals with these characteristics often face discrimination in the form of demeaning looks, social avoidance, or judgment. This stigma illustrates how socially accepted standards of aesthetics or physical appearance influence the acceptance of individuals within a community. In this context, negative stereotypes frequently dominate perceptions of individuals with physical abnormalities, hindering their participation in social and economic life.

### **Blemishes of Individual Character**

This category refers to stigma associated with an individual's traits or behaviors that are deemed deviant from social norms. Examples of behaviors often linked to this type of stigma include drug addiction, mental illness, or a criminal record. This stigma not only affects how others perceive the individual but also impacts their self-esteem. Goffman explains that individuals labeled in this way often face significant challenges in rehabilitating their image, as society tends to associate their past behavior with a permanent identity.

The stigma surrounding the use of cannabis in cuisine by the Acehnese community can be categorized as "*Blemishes of Individual Character*", a stigma targeting behaviors or habits considered deviant from societal norms (Freska and Kep 2023; Hayat and Nurhakki 2022). In this context, the use of cannabis in culinary practices is often

associated with wrongful or immoral actions, similar to the stigma attached to behaviors such as drug addiction, criminal activity, or other forms of deviance. This negative perception arises because the use of cannabis is viewed as inconsistent with the cultural and religious values held by the majority of Acehese society.

### **Tribal Stigma**

This type of stigma is associated with the collective identity of certain groups based on race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. Such stigma is often inherited and involves systemic discrimination against individuals perceived as part of these groups (Noya 2022). For instance, in majority-dominated societies, certain ethnic or religious minorities often become targets of stereotypes and unfair treatment, which affects their access to education, employment opportunities, or public services (Gordon et al. 2024). Tribal stigma reflects how social prejudice becomes entrenched within societal structures and influences intergroup relationships.

Erving Goffman stated that if someone has an attribute that makes them different from others in the same category (such as being perceived as worse, dangerous, or weak), they are assumed to be tainted. This attribute is what Goffman refers to as stigma. Thus, stigma refers to attributes that severely damage an individual's image (Arifin and Suardi 2017).

The stigma surrounding the use of cannabis in Acehese cuisine can also be categorized as *Tribal Stigma*, a stigma attached to specific groups within society. In this context, the stigma arises from the perception that using cannabis in culinary practices is a tradition passed down by certain segments of the Acehese community. This stigma is challenging to eliminate as it is considered part of the group's identity..

The stigma against the use of cannabis in Acehese cuisine is tied to negative perceptions and controversy surrounding the use of cannabis as a cooking ingredient. Personal experiences or stories from others can shape individual perceptions. If someone has a negative experience or hears negative stories about a particular group or practice, they may develop a stigma against it. Someone who has seen or heard about the harmful effects of cannabis may associate it with negative connotations, even when it is used in a different context, such as cooking. Communities outside of this group often assign negative labels, associating the use of cannabis in cuisine with illegal or deviant activities. As a result, groups that engage in this practice are frequently regarded as not adhering to

cultural and religious norms, reinforcing persistent negative stereotypes that are difficult to overcome because they have become a collective perception.

(Phelan, Bromet, and Link 1998) drawing on Goffman's ideas, state that stigma consists of three main forms:

**1. Labeling**, which refers to the assignment of social labels based on prominent differences in individuals or groups that reinforce stigma. This labeling influences how individuals or groups are socially perceived and serves as a key component of social stigma. Social labeling is the process by which individuals or groups are assigned specific identities based on notable characteristics or differences, often within a negative context. This process can intensify stigma, as such labels shape how others perceive, interact with, or evaluate the labeled individuals or groups in society. In the context of social stigma, labeling acts as a mechanism that marks "differences" as deviations from accepted social norms.

### **The Process of Social Reaction to Labeling**

Societal reactions to individuals or groups labeled negatively can be understood through several mechanisms:

1. *Rejection and Discrimination*: Negative labeling often leads to social rejection, either directly or indirectly. This rejection not only exacerbates the social isolation of the labeled individual but also creates barriers to reintegrating into society (Brown et al. 2022). Such rejection may even reinforce deviant behavior, creating a vicious cycle that is difficult to break.
2. *Self-Fulfilling Prophecy*: Within the framework of labeling theory, individuals who are negatively labeled tend to internalize those labels as part of their self-identity. This drives them to behave in ways that align with society's negative expectations (Hayat and Nurhakki 2022). In the context of Acehnese cuisine, which is stigmatized as "containing cannabis," the association persists even though the use of such ingredients has been banned or is no longer practiced. This stigma often leads outsiders to ignore facts or changes that have occurred, perpetuating the negative image. As a result, this stigma remains entrenched and difficult to eliminate, even when Acehnese culinary businesses make great efforts to showcase the quality and uniqueness of their traditional spices as their primary appeal.

## The Effect of Labeling on Identity and Behavior

According to labeling theory, negative labels profoundly impact an individual's identity. Labels not only influence how society treats individuals but also change how individuals perceive themselves (Hayat and Nurhakki 2022). This process of internalization can lead to social alienation, lowered self-esteem, and reinforcement of deviant behavior. For instance, a teenager labeled as a "rebel" may continue to exhibit rebellious behavior due to a perception that there is no opportunity for positive acceptance (Lestari and Huda 2021).

The stigma associated with using cannabis as a traditional spice in Acehnese cuisine reflects similar labeling dynamics. Social rejection of cannabis use in Acehnese culinary practices has the potential to strengthen stigma toward this tradition. Furthermore, the effects of labeling can create a *self-fulfilling prophecy* where the Acehnese community that maintains this practice is perceived as “*opposing modernity*” or “*not supporting halal values,*” even though no in-depth scientific studies have conclusively validated such claims. As a result, the local community may feel alienated from national and international discourse on halal principles, ultimately widening the gap between traditional values and modern perceptions.

**2. Stereotypes**, defined as cognitive frameworks that generate general beliefs about certain characteristics associated with social groups, often reflect common views or perceptions thought to apply to all members of those groups (Baron and Byrne 1977). These stereotypes often arise from simplified views of reality or assumptions that are not always accurate. For example, the belief that everyone in a particular group possesses the same traits or behaviors disregards the significant diversity among individuals within that group. Stereotypes can be either positive or negative but often result in discrimination or unfair treatment.

**3. Separation**, Separation refers to the process of dividing groups into those who assign stigma (perceiving themselves as superior) and those who receive it, thereby reinforcing social differences and emphasizing the boundary between “us” and “them” (Wilandika, Gartika, and Salami 2023). *Separation entails a division where the group assigning stigma views itself as superior, while the labeled individuals or groups often internalize this differentiation, further perpetuating stereotypes and social divides* (Baron and Byrne 1977).

Goffman divides identity into two perspectives, which he terms *virtual social identity* and *actual social identity*. Virtual social identity refers to the identity formed by the characteristics we assume or think about a person, known as characterization. *Actual social identity*, on the other hand, is the identity formed by characteristics that have been proven (Elviera, Saputra, and Dedoe 2021). Any individual who has a gap between these two identities is then stigmatized. Virtual identity and actual identity are two distinct concepts. When the discrepancy between them becomes known to the public, the stigmatized individual may feel isolated.

Erving Goffman's explanation of *virtual social identity* and *actual social identity* can be applied to understanding the stigma surrounding the use of cannabis in Acehese cuisine, particularly in the context of halal tourism. Virtual social identity represents the perception of society or tourists regarding Acehese cuisine as a symbol of strong Islamic culture, aligning with Aceh's image as the "Serambie Mekkah." Conversely, actual social identity reflects the reality that some traditional Acehese dishes use cannabis as part of their inherited recipes. The incongruence between the expectations of halal standards and this reality creates an identity gap that gives rise to stigma, whereby Acehese cuisine using cannabis is perceived as non-halal or even illegal. This stigma can lead to alienation for traditional culinary practitioners and diminish the trust of Muslim tourists in the halal integrity of Acehese cuisine as a whole.

### **The Process of Stigma Formation**

Stigma develops within society through a complex process involving social communication, individual experiences, and cultural influences. Mass media, including television, films, and social media, play a significant role in shaping public perceptions. When a topic or group is frequently depicted negatively in the media, society tends to develop stigma against that topic or group. Personal experiences or stories from others can also shape individual perceptions. If someone has a negative experience or hears negative stories about a group or practice, they may develop stigma toward it.

(Yu 2024) elaborates that the media plays a substantial role in shaping public perceptions, either by reinforcing stigma through negative portrayals or combating stigma with accurate and sensitive presentations. News about cannabis users' arrests is often presented with sensational tones, reinforcing the negative image that cannabis users are criminals or have moral issues (Adinda 2021; LPM Institut 2023). Consequently, society tends to associate cannabis use with deviant and irresponsible behavior

In the context of cannabis use in Acehnese cuisine, media can reinforce stigma if narratives focus solely on the illegal or controversial aspects of cannabis. Conversely, if media coverage highlights cannabis as part of Aceh's culinary tradition with a culturally and historically sensitive perspective, it can help reduce stigma and increase public understanding of this culinary heritage. Balanced portrayals can also open more constructive discussions about the legality, benefits, and limitations of cannabis use in cuisine.

(Lemert 1951) a sociologist, explained that the concepts of *primary deviance* and *secondary deviance* form the foundation of stigma formation. Primary deviance refers to the labels imposed by society, whether from within or outside the community, while secondary deviance describes actions that may be taken by individuals who have been labeled as a form of expression or realization of the label attached to them. The stigma surrounding the use of cannabis in Acehnese cuisine arises from the interaction between labels imposed by external parties (primary deviance) and the reactions of the Acehnese community itself (secondary deviance). When labels such as “non-halal” or “illegal” are applied, the Acehnese community may face a dilemma between preserving tradition and adhering to widely accepted standards. If they feel discriminated against or misunderstood, this can reinforce behaviors or actions deemed deviant by outsiders, further solidifying the stigma.

### **Stages Leading to the Formation of Stigma**

Stigma associated with social identity involves negative perceptions of attributes such as race, ethnicity, religion, or ideology of an individual or group. This stigma often results in social disapproval with long-term impacts, including influencing legal and political policies, similar to the stigma surrounding mental illness (Yu 2024)

(Freska and Kep 2023) identify three critical stages that can lead to the formation of social stigma:

1. Interpretation Stage

Not all types of violations lead to stigma. Stigma arises as a result of moral violations committed by an individual, which are then interpreted by society as forms of deviance.

2. Definition Stage

This stage begins after an individual is interpreted or labeled as engaging in behavior that violates prevailing norms or standards. In this context, definition

refers to the process of assigning specific boundaries or characteristics to the individual's behavior, categorizing it as deviant or inappropriate.

### 3. Discrimination Stage

At this stage, society or a group begins to behave differently toward the individual considered deviant. Such treatment often includes exclusion and marginalization, ranging from rejection and social isolation to the reduction of certain rights within the community or society (Noya 2022). This stage reflects the negative social reactions directed toward individuals perceived to have violated the norms or values of a group or society.

Stigma is a common phenomenon in social environments and is closely linked to the values placed on various social identities. It represents a blemish or defect on an individual's character. Stigma can also be understood as a negative trait attached to an individual due to their environment or differing cultural understandings. There are many forms of stigma imposed on individuals or groups, including stigma related to the use of certain ingredients in the culinary traditions of specific regions.

The process of stigma against the use of cannabis in Acehese cuisine can be explained through the following three stages:

#### 1. Interpretation Stage

Not all practices involving cannabis in cuisine are immediately considered violations. However, stigma arises when society interprets this practice as a moral or religious violation. The use of cannabis in cooking is perceived as deviant because cannabis is often associated with illegal and negative activities, such as drug abuse. This interpretation forms the basis for the emergence of stigma.

#### 2. Definition Stage

After interpretation, society begins to define this behavior as wrong or inconsistent with norms. This definition involves labeling, such as viewing individuals who use cannabis in their cooking as immoral, unlawful, or in conflict with Aceh's cultural and religious values. This process reinforces stereotypes about the practice as deviant.

#### 3. Discrimination Stage

Once the practice is defined negatively, society begins to treat the individuals or groups involved differently. They may face exclusion, discriminatory treatment, or be regarded as people who do not conform to social norms.



This three-stage process highlights how stigma toward the use of cannabis in Acehese cuisine develops, ultimately affecting the individuals and communities involved.

### **The Impact of Stigma and Its Implications in the Context of Acehese Culinary Practices**

Social stigma stemming from the imposition of negative labels has a significant impact on both individuals and groups who are stigmatized. Negative labels often serve as the root cause of discrimination and stereotypes that influence how individuals interact with society (Yu 2024). For instance, individuals who have been involved in drug abuse face social barriers, such as difficulties in securing employment or reintegrating into society. This highlights how stigma exacerbates individual vulnerability through mechanisms of social exclusion and marginalization (Coles et al. 2024).

(Phelan et al. 1998) introduced the concept of “stigma as structural discrimination,” which refers to stigma that is not limited to interpersonal interactions but is embedded within larger social structures. Structural discrimination encompasses the ways stigma affects institutions such as law, economics, and public policy. In this context, stigma becomes a tool that indirectly perpetuates systemic inequality and creates obstacles for certain groups in accessing resources or enjoying the same rights as others.

One tangible impact of structural discrimination is the implementation of public policies that are biased or non-inclusive toward stigmatized groups (Brown et al. 2022). For example, minority groups often face barriers in accessing equitable healthcare services, educational opportunities, or labor market access. Furthermore, structural discrimination reinforces disparities in resource distribution. Stigmatized groups tend to receive fewer resources, whether in the form of government budgets, public facilities, or social support, as they are often deemed less deserving or prioritized compared to other groups (Gordon et al. 2024).

This phenomenon demonstrates that stigma at the structural level has far broader implications than interpersonal stigma. Its effects are felt not only by individuals but also by entire communities or groups, creating a cycle of injustice that is difficult to break (Brown et al. 2022). Addressing structural discrimination requires systemic efforts, such as inclusive policy reforms, public awareness campaigns, and advocacy for the rights of stigmatized groups. In the context of Aceh, halal tourism is under threat, as negative

publicity about traditional practices may diminish tourist interest. To bridge the identity gap, the government and culinary communities need to educate the public about the history and role of cannabis in culinary traditions, replace cannabis with legal and halal alternatives, and enhance transparency in halal certification. These measures will help preserve Aceh's unique and halal culinary identity, supporting the sustainable development of halal tourism.

Although stigma is often viewed in a negative light, under certain conditions, it can have significant positive effects (Yu 2024). Some scholars have identified how stigma can serve as a catalyst for social change, strengthen group solidarity, and drive innovation. Erving Goffman, through his studies, argued that stigma can raise awareness of the need for social change (Priandono et al. 2022). When a group experiences discrimination due to stigma, it is often motivated to fight for its rights and improve its image. For example, the civil rights movement in the United States, born out of racial stigma, and gender equality campaigns, driven by stigma against women, successfully brought about significant social transformations.

Meanwhile, Émile Durkheim highlighted how stigma can strengthen group solidarity and build collective identity (Abas et al. 2023a). When a group is deemed "deviant" by society, its members tend to unite to protect their values and fight for recognition. Additionally, Howard Becker, through his "labeling" theory (1963), explained that stigma can serve as a catalyst for innovation (Hayat and Nurhakki 2022). Stigmatized groups or individuals are often driven to seek creative solutions to overcome the challenges they face. For example, the development of halal tourism addresses the stigma surrounding communities that prioritize religious values in their lifestyle, and the growing public awareness of mental health emerges as a response to the stigma associated with mental disorders. Overall, stigma does not always have negative consequences (Abas et al. 2023b). In certain situations, it can act as a trigger for progressive social change, strengthen group solidarity, and inspire innovation with widespread impact.

In the context of tourism, the theory of curiosity-driven behavior explains that humans tend to explore new, different, or even controversial things as part of fulfilling their cognitive and emotional needs (Szumowska and Kruglanski 2020). Regarding the stigma of cannabis use in Acehnese cuisine, this curiosity can become a factor that attracts tourists, especially those interested in gaining a deeper understanding of local culture (Wandansari and Hernawati 2021). Although cannabis has a negative legal connotation

and is often associated with unlawful activities, its use in Acehese cuisine has long been a part of tradition passed down through generations.

The stigma surrounding cannabis creates a duality of perception: on one hand, cannabis is considered taboo, while on the other, curiosity about its traditional use can draw the attention of tourists eager to taste or learn more about the uniqueness of Acehese cuisine. This illustrates that curiosity can serve as a bridge to transform stigma into an attraction, provided that tourism managers package an educational and culture-preserving narrative (Maulydia, Hidayat, and Purwadhi 2023). Thus, cannabis in Acehese cuisine is not merely a controversial issue but also an opportunity to highlight the unique cultural identity that can captivate tourists..

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the stigma surrounding the use of cannabis in Acehese cuisine has significant implications for the image of traditional cuisine and its sustainability within the context of halal tourism. Cannabis, which was previously used in small amounts as a traditional seasoning without psychoactive effects, has now become a controversial symbol due to its classification as a Schedule I narcotic. This shift in perception poses a major challenge for Acehese cuisine in maintaining its unique flavors and the halal values foundational to tourism in the region.

The negative impacts of this stigma are evident in various aspects. Within the context of halal tourism, the stigma regarding the alleged use of cannabis as a cooking ingredient can tarnish Aceh's image as a region that consistently upholds Islamic law. This negative perception not only diminishes consumer trust in local cuisine but also affects the number of domestic and international tourists visiting the area. A decline in interest in traditional cuisine could negatively impact the local economy, especially for small business owners reliant on this sector. Furthermore, this stigma could create a negative perception of the implementation of Islamic values in Aceh, which is widely known as the "Serambie Mekkah."

However, positive impacts of the stigma can also be identified. In some contexts, stigma drives constructive behavioral changes, such as raising public awareness about the importance of ensuring the halal status of Acehese cuisine and supporting Sharia-based regulations. Additionally, the stigma can spur innovation in tourism promotion strategies, positioning Aceh as a more authentic and competitive halal tourism destination. Data shows that despite the stigma, Aceh has recorded a surge in tourist visits during certain

months, indicating that other factors such as promotions and cultural appeal can mitigate negative perceptions.

This research provides new insights into how stigma can influence the sustainability of traditional cuisine within the context of halal tourism. Public education and evidence-based reviews are essential steps to transforming negative perceptions, supporting the sustainability of the culinary industry, and strengthening Aceh's image as a halal tourism destination.

As a recommendation, future studies could focus on direct exploration of tourist perceptions, both domestic and international, regarding Acehnese cuisine related to this stigma. Further research could also evaluate the effectiveness of destination branding strategies and educational campaigns in mitigating the impact of stigma while enhancing the appeal of Aceh's halal tourism. This study has certain limitations, primarily due to its literature-based approach, which relies solely on secondary data. Consequently, the analysis of societal stigma toward cannabis and halal tourism in Aceh lacks depth and does not directly capture the perceptions of the public or industry stakeholders. Moreover, the study does not comprehensively address local dynamics, highlighting the need for follow-up studies with primary data such as interviews or surveys to complement these findings.

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