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Developing Muslim-Friendly Tourism in Pasuruan City, East Java: A SWOT Analysis Approach Aligned with Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract.

This study examines the potential and challenges of developing Muslim-friendly tourism in Pasuruan City, East Java, through a SWOT analysis framework integrated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Using qualitative methods involving field observation, document analysis, and stakeholder interviews, the research identifies key internal and external factors influencing tourism development. The findings reveal that Pasuruan City has strong potential, driven by its Islamic cultural heritage, strategic location, and active community participation. However, the city faces notable weaknesses in infrastructure, human resource competencies, and stakeholder coordination. Opportunities arise from the global growth of the halal tourism market and government support for sustainable tourism initiatives, while threats include competition from nearby destinations, policy inconsistency, and safety concerns. The study emphasizes the importance of aligning tourism development strategies with SDGs 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Strengthening digital promotion, enhancing service quality, and fostering cross-sector collaboration are recommended to improve competitiveness and ensure inclusive, sustainable growth. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how medium-sized cities in Indonesia can strategically position themselves within the Muslim-friendly tourism market while advancing sustainable development objectives.

Keywords: Destination competitiveness, Halal tourism, Muslim-friendly tourism, SWOT analysis, Sustainable tourism.

1. Introduction

The concept of Muslim-friendly tourism has gained increasing global relevance, particularly in countries such as Indonesia, where tourism development strategies emphasize inclusivity and the accommodation of Muslim lifestyles. Effective management of Muslim-friendly destinations requires policies that promote diversity, sustainable tourism practices, and the safety of all tourists, including non-Muslim visitors. Fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding is therefore essential, as cultural diversity represents a valuable asset in tourism management (Abror et al., 2020). Previous research has demonstrated a strong relationship between diversity management and enhanced tourist experiences, suggesting that inclusive policies can enrich the overall tourism landscape (Sarr et al., 2020). These approaches highlight the potential of inclusive management strategies to support sustainable tourism practices that address the unique preferences of Muslim travelers while remaining accessible to non-Muslim visitors (Wibawa et al., 2021).



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Pasuruan City, located within Pasuruan Regency, East Java Province, covers an area of 36.58 km² and possesses substantial potential for Muslim-friendly tourism development. The city features diverse attractions, including cultural heritage, historical, and religious tourism sites. Implementing Muslim-friendly tourism principles in Pasuruan is particularly relevant as the city aspires to strengthen its identity as a Muslim-friendly destination while maintaining cultural integrity and promoting sustainable development. The collaborative framework for tourism planning proposed by Eyisi et al. (2020) emphasizes community participation and the preservation of local identity as essential components of successful tourism management. By incorporating these principles, Pasuruan can enhance its appeal to broader audiences while ensuring that tourism growth remains respectful of local traditions and supportive of community well-being. Furthermore, the halal tourism market is expanding rapidly, supported by the increasing number of Muslim tourists worldwide, which significantly contributes to global tourism revenues (Wibawa et al., 2021). Emphasizing halal practices not only creates a welcoming environment for Muslim travelers but also provides a model for inclusive tourism that benefits visitors of all backgrounds. Such an approach promotes equitable tourism development and strengthens cultural understanding, leading to richer and more sustainable visitor experiences (Ratnasari et al., 2020).

In Pasuruan City, the growing cultural and religious diversity highlights the need for tourism strategies that accommodate Muslim travelers while promoting sustainability. In response, the local government—under the leadership of the Mayor—has initiated efforts to establish Muslim-friendly tourism destinations that celebrate Islamic heritage and support the local economy through sustainable practices. The introduction of the “*Pasuruan Kota Madinah*” branding in 2021 reflects this commitment to promoting the city’s cultural and religious identity (Artadita & Hisyam, 2021; Purwadi et al., 2023). Muslim-friendly tourism aligns with Sharia principles emphasizing halal food, suitable accommodation, and environments free from alcohol and pork products (Slamet et al., 2022; Mulyadi et al., 2023). These elements reinforce Islamic values while improving comfort and satisfaction among Muslim travelers, leading to potential economic benefits for local stakeholders (Mansor et al., 2023; Abror et al., 2020). The development of facilities such as prayer spaces and recreation options that align with Islamic values supports an inclusive tourism ecosystem capable of tapping into the growing global Muslim travel market (Huda et al., 2020; Yusuf et al., 2021).

Despite the growing recognition of Muslim-friendly tourism, existing studies have predominantly focused on major destinations such as Lombok and Aceh, leaving smaller and emerging destinations like Pasuruan underexplored. This gap limits understanding of how such cities can effectively implement sustainable and inclusive tourism strategies that align with both Sharia principles and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, this study aims to conduct a SWOT analysis of Pasuruan City’s Muslim-friendly tourism and analyze it within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This integrative approach provides strategic insights for policymakers, local governments, and tourism stakeholders to foster inclusive, sustainable, and competitive Muslim-friendly tourism development in Pasuruan City.



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2. Literature Review

2.1 Sustainable Tourism Development

Sustainable tourism development requires a holistic approach that integrates environmental, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions (Risfandini, 2024). The use of digital technologies plays a vital role in enhancing community engagement and improving infrastructure (Hidayat, 2023). Through smart tourism initiatives, Pasuruan can expand economic opportunities while preserving its cultural and natural assets. Sustainability metrics further enable stakeholders to assess tourism's impacts on local communities and ecosystems, promoting responsible practices that generate shared benefits (Rasdi et al., 2022; Shukor et al., 2023).

Cultural festivals and community events are equally important for shaping sustainable destinations. They not only attract tourists but also strengthen local identity, community solidarity, and destination branding (Purwadi et al., 2023; Adona et al., 2023). Integrating these elements into Pasuruan's tourism strategy enhances its appeal as a Muslim-friendly destination while safeguarding cultural heritage.

Muslim-friendly tourism aligns closely with sustainability principles by addressing the needs of Muslim travelers and promoting local economic inclusion. Such destinations should uphold fairness, non-discrimination, and environmental awareness through renewable energy use and efficient waste management (Cader et al., 2024; Masum et al., 2024). Community participation is central to this process, as involving residents in tourism planning preserves authenticity, supports livelihoods, and fosters social sustainability (Suffarruddin et al., 2023; Tumiran et al., 2025).

Environmentally sustainable practices—such as adopting renewable energy, eco-friendly infrastructure, and effective waste management—reduce degradation and enhance competitiveness (Mehmood & Kaewsang-on, 2024; Ahmad et al., 2022; Masum et al., 2024; Taufik et al., 2024). Achieving this vision requires strong collaboration among governments, communities, and industry actors (Pachauri, 2024; Irawan et al., 2024).

Sustainable initiatives also increase tourist satisfaction and revisit intentions by offering meaningful and culturally rich experiences that align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those promoting responsible consumption and inclusive growth (Rahim et al., 2024). Employing SWOT analysis further supports tourism stakeholders in identifying key strategic priorities for sustainability (Anwar et al., 2023). Ultimately, by embedding sustainability into Muslim-friendly tourism, Pasuruan can stimulate local economic growth, preserve cultural assets, and promote environmental stewardship—positioning itself as a model of inclusive and sustainable tourism that benefits both Muslim and non-Muslim travelers alike.

2.2 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established in 2015, provide a global framework for achieving economic, social, and environmental balance. Tourism plays a vital role in advancing these goals, serving as both a catalyst for economic growth and a means of promoting social inclusion and environmental stewardship (Song, 2022; Sánchez et al., 2020). According to the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), sustainable tourism should maximize visitor satisfaction while protecting the environment and ensuring equitable benefits for host communities (Sharkhuu et al., 2020).



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Tourism contributes significantly to several SDGs. It supports Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) through job creation and entrepreneurship and promotes Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by fostering cultural exchange and social cohesion (Farmaki & Stergiou, 2021). The sector's role is particularly crucial in rural and marginalized areas, where it encourages economic diversification and enhances community well-being (Mansur et al., 2024; Mohan, 2022). However, to ensure long-term impact, these economic gains must be balanced with environmental and social responsibility to prevent challenges such as pollution, resource depletion, and cultural commodification (Go & Kang, 2022; Nigg & Eichelberger, 2021).

The UNWTO outlines five pillars of sustainable tourism: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership (Tremblay et al., 2020; Carlsen, 2024). These pillars highlight a holistic understanding of sustainability—from ecosystem protection (Planet) and human rights promotion (People) to inclusive economic growth (Prosperity) and global collaboration (Partnership) (Özgit & Zhandildina, 2021). Achieving these objectives requires cooperation among governments, industries, and communities to share best practices and coordinate long-term strategies (Mansur et al., 2024). The SDGs are inherently interconnected; progress in one goal reinforces others. For example, promoting gender equality in tourism (Goal 5) enhances inclusive growth and service quality, while integrating local knowledge and cultural heritage supports both sustainability and community empowerment (KC, 2023; Petti et al., 2020).

Building on these principles, strategic analytical tools such as SWOT analysis offer practical means to assess the current condition and potential of Muslim-friendly tourism. While the SDGs provide a global agenda emphasizing environmental preservation, social inclusivity, and economic resilience, the SWOT framework allows destinations like Pasuruan City (Gunawan et al., 2024; Hardinie et al., 2024) to translate these broad objectives into actionable strategies that align local initiatives with sustainable development priorities and the needs of Muslim travelers.

2.3 SWOT Analysis for Muslim-Friendly Tourism

A SWOT analysis for a Muslim-friendly destination assesses the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that shape its development and market positioning. Islamic or halal tourism has gained substantial traction in recent years, driven by the growing number of Muslim travelers seeking culturally and religiously aligned experiences. This analysis synthesizes key findings from recent research to identify major factors influencing the competitiveness of Muslim-friendly destinations.

a. Strengths

Muslim-friendly destinations possess distinctive advantages that enhance their appeal to Muslim tourists. A primary strength lies in the provision of halal-compliant services—such as food, accommodation, and prayer facilities—which foster comfort and trust among travelers (Napitupulu et al., 2022). Malaysia, for example, is widely recognized for its robust halal gastronomy industry grounded in Islamic dietary traditions (Saffinee et al., 2024). Similarly, Jepara in Indonesia benefits from its predominantly Muslim population, aligning naturally with visitors' cultural and religious expectations (Anwar et al., 2023). Moreover, adequate infrastructure and tailored tourism services enhance visitor satisfaction and encourage repeat visitation (Lubis et al., 2023).

b. Weaknesses

Despite these strengths, Muslim-friendly destinations face several internal challenges.



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Inadequate infrastructure—particularly poor accessibility and the limited maintenance of religious facilities such as mosques and restrooms—remains a persistent issue (Anwar et al., 2023). A lack of awareness and training among local tourism providers regarding Muslim travelers' specific needs often leads to inconsistent service quality (Ahmad et al., 2022). Weak marketing strategies also hinder broader market reach, as many potential tourists remain unaware of the available Muslim-friendly offerings (Uslan, 2025).

c. Opportunities

The rapid global growth of halal tourism presents significant opportunities for destination development. Rising demand for Muslim-friendly experiences enables destinations to strengthen their positioning through innovative, targeted marketing and service strategies (Putra, 2024). The post-COVID-19 recovery period further amplifies these opportunities, as travelers increasingly value safety and culturally sensitive experiences (Lubis et al., 2023). Incorporating local wisdom and sustainability principles can also enhance authenticity and community participation (Aziz et al., 2023), while promoting distinctive cultural and religious attractions can reinforce competitive advantage (Lada et al., 2024).

d. Threats

Conversely, several external factors may constrain the growth of Muslim-friendly destinations. Heightened competition from countries with more established halal tourism industries presents a significant challenge (Uslan, 2025). Socio-political instability in certain regions can also discourage visitors and disrupt tourism flows (Aksuř & Atayev, 2024). Moreover, global issues such as climate change and pandemics—exemplified by COVID-19—pose enduring risks that require strategic management to ensure resilience and long-term sustainability (Mufli, 2021; Lubis et al., 2023).

Overall, the SWOT analysis underscores the complex interplay of internal and external factors shaping Muslim-friendly tourism. While such destinations exhibit notable strengths and emerging opportunities, their long-term sustainability depends on addressing weaknesses and mitigating potential threats. By leveraging inherent advantages and adopting proactive management strategies, Muslim-friendly destinations can enhance their competitiveness and contribute meaningfully to the global development of halal tourism.

3. Method

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to explore Muslim-friendly tourism development in Pasuruan City. The approach enables an in-depth understanding of stakeholder perspectives within their real-life contexts, aligning with the study's exploratory nature. A purposive sampling technique was applied to select informants based on the following criteria:

1. Tourism stakeholders in Pasuruan City, representing the Academics, Businesses, Communities, Government, and Media (ABCGM) framework.
2. Individuals occupying key positions within tourism management organizations, including government officials directly involved in tourism and leaders of community-based organizations.
3. Informants with direct or indirect involvement in tourism management and development in Pasuruan City.



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Data were collected through unstructured interviews, allowing flexibility in exploring emerging themes and enabling informants to freely express their experiences and perceptions. Interview guidelines and a mobile phone were used to facilitate and record the sessions. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively using the Miles and Huberman model, which comprises three interrelated stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This framework ensures analytical rigor and transparency throughout the interpretation process. Data reduction involved selecting and focusing on the most relevant information aligned with the research objectives, while eliminating irrelevant material to maintain clarity and focus (Sugianto et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2022). The data display stage organized the refined data into tables, matrices, and narrative summaries to facilitate pattern recognition and enhance analytical coherence (Wulandari & Rahmadani, 2024; Takbir et al., 2023). In the final stage, conclusions were drawn and verified through critical reflection to ensure consistency with the research objectives and theoretical framework (Prabawa et al., 2023; Siregar & Nainggolan, 2024). The iterative nature of the Miles and Huberman approach allows researchers to revisit earlier stages as new insights emerge, strengthening the depth, validity, and credibility of the analysis (Lestari et al., 2022)

4. Result

4.1 SWOT Analysis of Muslim-Friendly Tourism Development in Pasuruan City

Pasuruan City, covering 36.58 km² in East Java, holds strong potential for Muslim-friendly tourism through its diverse cultural heritage, historical landmarks, and religious attractions. Its rich Islamic identity, supported by numerous mosques, Islamic schools, and active religious traditions, creates an authentic spiritual atmosphere that appeals to Muslim travelers (SDG 11). The city's strategic location near Surabaya, Malang, and Probolinggo enhances accessibility and connectivity (SDG 9), while government initiatives supported by Kemenparekraf strengthen institutional capacity and local engagement (SDG 8). Community-based tourism and halal culinary ventures also indicate growing participation and inclusivity (SDG 12). However, Pasuruan faces notable challenges, including inadequate infrastructure such as poor signage, sanitation, and digital systems, along with limited skilled human resources that affect service quality (SDG 9). Weak marketing and fragmented stakeholder coordination—among government, businesses, communities, and media—further constrain effective collaboration (SDG 17). Despite these weaknesses, significant opportunities arise from the global growth of Muslim-friendly tourism (SDG 8). Pasuruan can capitalize on this trend by positioning itself as a culturally accommodating destination through partnerships with Muslim-majority countries, enhanced digital marketing, and the development of halal-based experiences such as religious tours and culinary routes (SDG 9). The Makkah-themed tourism project in Krampyangan Village exemplifies this approach, combining spiritual enrichment with local entrepreneurship (SDG 12). Nonetheless, external threats—including security concerns, competition from nearby cities, inconsistent policies, and global risks such as pandemics and climate change—continue to challenge tourism resilience (SDG 3). Limited community adaptability and fear of cultural change may also slow innovation and sustainability efforts (SDG 17). Overall, while Pasuruan's Islamic heritage, strategic location, and community engagement provide a strong foundation, addressing gaps in infrastructure, branding, and coordination remains essential to realizing inclusive, sustainable, and competitive Muslim-friendly tourism development.



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Table 1. SWOT Analysis of Muslim-Friendly Tourism Development in Pasuruan City and its Alignment with SDGs

SWOT Element	Key Findings	Relevant SDGs
Strengths	- Abundance of mosques, halal food, and prayer facilities ensuring visitor comfort and confidence.- Strategic location in the “golden triangle” (Surabaya–Malang–Probolinggo) enhancing accessibility.- Development of attractions strengthening destination identity.- Strong community engagement through Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) supporting training and public awareness.- Religious and cultural events such as Haul KH Abdul Hamid promoting cultural preservation and creative economy.- Gender equality initiatives enhancing inclusive workforce participation.	SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being SDG 5: Gender Equality SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
Weaknesses	- Limited destination branding and ineffective promotion as “City of Madinah.”- Low public awareness of sustainable Islamic tourism practices.- Lack of trained human resources in hospitality and tourism management.- High dependence on natural resources and unsustainable tourism patterns.- Unequal distribution of tourism benefits among residents.- Short length of stay and low visitor spending.	SDG 2: Zero Hunger SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
Opportunities	- Rising global demand for Muslim-friendly tourism and halal experiences.- Partnerships with Muslim-majority countries (Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, UAE) for investment and co-branding.- Digital transformation for marketing and virtual tourism experiences.- Policy support from government for halal tourism development.- Local innovation projects (e.g., Makkah-themed tourism in Krampyangan Village) integrating spirituality and entrepreneurship.	SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
Threats	- Security issues such as motorcycle robbery affecting destination safety.- Competition from neighboring destinations (Malang, Batu, Surabaya).- Policy inconsistency due to leadership changes affecting continuity.- Negative media portrayal of Islamic destinations.- External shocks (pandemics, climate change) affecting travel resilience.- Community resistance to innovation due to limited knowledge or cultural apprehension.	SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Source: Researchers’ Analysis

5. Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce previous research highlighting the importance of integrating Islamic values and sustainability principles in tourism development (Abror et al.,



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2020; Wibawa et al., 2021; Ratnasari et al., 2020). Consistent with earlier studies, the results from Pasuruan City show that providing halal food, prayer facilities, and inclusive services enhances tourist satisfaction while preserving cultural authenticity. Initiatives such as developing Payung Madinah and Heerenstraat as Islamic-themed areas align with findings that destinations combining religious identity and local culture can broaden their market reach (Wibawa et al., 2021).

This study also supports prior research underscoring the role of community engagement and diversity management in sustainable tourism (Eyisi et al., 2020; Sarr et al., 2020). The involvement of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and local communities illustrates how collaborative participation strengthens destination identity and ensures equitable benefit distribution. However, compared to established Muslim-friendly destinations such as Malaysia (Saffinee et al., 2024) and Jepara, Indonesia (Anwar et al., 2023), Pasuruan still faces challenges in branding, infrastructure, and marketing, indicating that local readiness remains crucial for success. From a sustainability perspective, integrating SDGs into the SWOT analysis demonstrates Pasuruan's growing alignment with global sustainable tourism objectives. As noted by Shukor et al. (2023) and Rasdi et al. (2022), the city shows increasing awareness of environmental management, though gaps persist in resource efficiency and waste control. Similarly, Mehmood and Kaewsang-on (2024) and Masum et al. (2024) emphasize the need for renewable energy adoption and stronger ecological safeguards to minimize tourism's environmental footprint.

Economically, the uneven distribution of tourism benefits reflects issues identified by Tumiran et al. (2025) and Suffarruddin et al. (2023). While tourism contributes to local livelihoods, gains remain concentrated among a few actors, underscoring the need for broader community participation to achieve SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Moreover, Pasuruan's exposure to external threats such as pandemics and competition from nearby destinations parallels patterns described by Go and Kang (2022) and Nigg and Eichelberger (2021), highlighting the importance of resilience in sustainable tourism development.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature by contextualizing Muslim-friendly tourism development within the SDG framework, showing how religious, social, and environmental dimensions intersect. Although Pasuruan shares many strengths with other Muslim-friendly destinations, its continued progress depends on improving branding, stakeholder coordination, and innovation capacity—key areas identified in previous studies yet still developing locally.

6. Conclusion

The SWOT analysis reveals that Pasuruan City possesses substantial potential to emerge as a leading Muslim-friendly tourism destination, supported by its rich Islamic heritage, strategic geographic position, and strong community engagement. These strengths provide a solid foundation for developing tourism that reflects both religious values and local cultural identity. Nevertheless, several critical challenges remain. Weaknesses in infrastructure, limited human resource capacity, and inadequate coordination among tourism stakeholders hinder the city's ability to fully capitalize on its potential. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive and collaborative strategy that integrates government leadership, private sector innovation, academic research, and community participation.



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To achieve sustainable growth, Pasuruan City should prioritize strengthening digital marketing strategies to enhance destination visibility, improving service quality to meet the expectations of Muslim and non-Muslim visitors alike, and fostering capacity-building programs for local tourism actors. Furthermore, adopting an integrated policy framework aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 8, 9, 11, and 17) will ensure that development initiatives not only enhance competitiveness but also promote inclusive economic growth, innovation, and effective partnerships. By embracing these strategies, Pasuruan City can position itself as a national benchmark for sustainable Muslim-friendly tourism—one that harmonizes cultural authenticity, community empowerment, and environmental stewardship within the broader global sustainability agenda

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