

Potential and Strategies for Developing Muslim-Friendly Tourism in West Java

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the feasibility and method of developing Muslim-friendly tourism in West Java, Indonesia, a culturally rich region with natural landscapes and a majority Muslim population. A qualitative research method was employed whereby data were collected from government officials, tourism operators, and representatives of local communities using semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The findings of the research show that West Java's natural beauty, Islamic heritage sites, and halal food culture are firm foundations of Muslim-friendly tourism development. However, the research also reveals some primary challenges like fragmented application of policy, uneven levels of infrastructure quality, poor stakeholder coordination, and varying levels of awareness among small and medium enterprises regarding halal certification processes. The analysis further highlights the vital significance of socio-cultural harmonious matching and peoples' involvement, whereby local communities, particularly pesantren-based networks, are directly involved in promoting ethical and value-based tourism culture. To fill in the gaps identified, the study recommends five strategic directions: (1) improving branding and marketing communication to market West Java as a Muslim-friendly inclusive destination, (2) increasing capacity-building programs for tourism stakeholders, (3) improving infrastructure and preparedness of services, (4) building multi-stakeholder partnerships, and (5) establishing a provincial halal tourism task force to enable coordinated implementation. The study determines that comprehensive and inclusive Muslim-friendly tourism development in West Java requires a strategy that reconciles regional religious values with global tourism norms. Through doing this, the province will be able to enhance its competitiveness in the global halal tourism market while nurturing social harmony, cultural authenticity, and economic empowerment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world, also holds a huge

potential for being the global Muslim-friendly tourism leader. Muslim-friendly or halal tourism is defined as tourism where activities are in line with Islamic values, including the

availability of halal meals, prayer facilities, humble accommodations, and the implementation of Islamic values in interacting and serving [1]. Whereas Muslim travel expenditure worldwide continues to grow, countries such as Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are already prominent as destinations in this niche. Indonesia, with rich cultural richness and Islamic history, is currently integrating this approach into its national tourism strategy through the development of halal-certified destinations and services [2], [3]. In this broader national perspective, West Java is an optimistic region because of the combination of natural beauty, cultural diversity, and a population base which highly identifies with Islamic values.

West Java (Jawa Barat) is one of the most livewire provinces of Indonesia, with diverse tourist attractions spanning highland country, beaches, waterfalls, natural parks, historical and religious sites. Bandung, Bogor, Garut, and Sukabumi cities have been the top performers in the province's tourism industry. In addition to its natural resources, West Java is also discovered to have numerous Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), religious festivals, and culture expressions that show the fusion between Islamic tradition and Sundanese culture [4], [5]. This fusion offers a source of creating an original Muslim-friendly tourism pattern that not just fulfills religious aspiration but also shapes local identity. In addition, higher local Muslim tourists looking for halal-certified tourist destination means Muslim-friendly tourist products in the province will continue to gain popularity over the next several years [6].

Economically, Muslim-friendly tourism development is in sync with local aspirations of inclusive and sustainable development. The tourism sector in West Java is a significant contributor to employment and local business creation, particularly for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the culinary, accommodation, and handicraft sectors [7]. By introducing halal values and Islamic principles into such dominant economic activities, domestic businessmen will be able to access broader national and

international Muslim markets. In addition, the global halal travel economy has been identified as the fastest-growing segment of the travel economy, expected to expand to over USD 300 billion in size by 2030 [8], [9]. Therefore, increasing the readiness of West Java to receive Muslim tourists not only supports cultural diversity but also the province's competitiveness in the world tourism industry.

However, for Muslim-friendly tourism to embrace its full potential in West Java, there must be a carefully crafted strategy that ensures infrastructure readiness, stakeholder collaboration, and human capacity development [10]. Despite increased attention to halal accreditation and welcoming Muslim tourists, the majority of West Java tourist attractions still lack standardized facilities such as prayer areas, ablution points, halal-accredited restaurants, and gender-sensitive recreation facilities. Furthermore, destination marketing has yet to maximize digital promotion channels for promoting the province's Muslim-friendly image [11], [12]. Effective development therefore depends not just on physical infrastructure but also on intangible elements, including service attitudes, hospitality ethics, and Islamic tourism principles understanding among tourism operators. In this regard, state institutions, national firms, and public organizations must collaborate in creating a sustainable and authentic Muslim-friendly tourism culture.

The other essential aspect relates to policy and governance support. The Indonesian government has put in place various frameworks for developing halal tourism, such as the National Sharia Tourism Master Plan and the Indonesian Ulama Council's (MUI) halal certification system. The West Java local government has also initiated some programs to promote halal destinations, but stakeholder coordination remains fragmented. There are usually challenges in aligning tourism policy with religious affairs, regional economic plans, and empowerment programs for the people [13], [14]. Due to this, the majority of Muslim-

friendly tourism programs in West Java are still pilot programs rather than properly institutionalized schemes. Institutionalization of arrangements, consistency in policy, and monitoring mechanisms are therefore necessary to make Muslim-friendly tourism development systematic and effective.

As much as West Java has a good platform for constructing Muslim-friendly tourism there are numerous issues that remain unsolved. There is still a gap between promise and reality: the majority of tourism spots continue to lack standard halal specifications, there remains limited awareness among local tourism players about Muslim-friendly concepts, and interagency coordination for the execution of policies is lacking. In addition, marketing efforts barely promote the distinctiveness of Muslim-friendly tourism products and therefore achieve low visibility among home-based and overseas Muslim travelers. Without a well-integrated plan of development, the province has failed to take full advantage of its cultural and economic prowess in this emerging sector. Without an overall approach, West Java is likely to lag behind other destinations that are more aggressively marketing themselves as leading Muslim-friendly destinations. This study aims to analyze the potential and formulate strategies for developing Muslim-friendly tourism in West Java.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Foundations of Muslim-Friendly Tourism

Muslim-friendly tourism, also widely known as halal tourism or Sharia-compliant tourism, is an emerging niche in the global travel sector whose product and service features are aligned with Islamic principles and values. [15] have described halal tourism as Muslims' tourist activities which are in accordance with Islamic teachings so that food, accommodation, recreation, and

social contact are in accordance with Sharia law. The vision goes beyond the provision of halal-approved food and prayer facilities; it encompasses ethical service, humility, family-based hospitality, and respect for cultural diversity [16]. According to the Global Muslim Travel Index, Muslim travelers seek destinations where they can be confident of ease in worship, halal consumption, cleanliness, security, and respect for Islamic rituals. Thus, Muslim-friendly tourism can be seen as a framework that includes physical facilities, service norms, and religious fulfillment [13].

The theoretical foundation of the development of Muslim-friendly tourism is often framed in sustainable tourism theory and religious consumer behavior theory. Within the sustainability framework, halal tourism enables social and cultural sustainability through the integration of religious values with local customs to create harmony between visitors and host communities [14]. Meanwhile, based on consumer behavior, Muslim tourists demonstrate value-based decision-making wherein faith-based parameters have a significant contribution to destination choice, perceived satisfaction, and loyalty [17]. These theories point out that the success of Muslim-friendly destinations is not simply based on physical infrastructure but on perceived authenticity and moral quality of the experience offered to Muslim tourists.

2.2 Global Trends in Muslim-Friendly Tourism Development

Globally, the Muslim-friendly tourism industry has grown greatly in the past ten years. According to the Mastercard–CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index, spending from Muslim travel accounted for approximately USD 189 billion in 2022 and is anticipated to exceed USD 300 billion by 2030. Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates are among the leading nations that are leading the way in developing comprehensive halal tourism ecosystems driven by certification regimes, hospitality education, and e-marketing campaigns. Malaysia, for instance, has institutionalized halal tourism through the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC), which not only certifies and trains but also researches in order to standardize the industry. Turkey combines cultural and religious destinations, while Saudi Arabia's tourism transformation entails the development of religious and holiday tourism under Vision 2030 [16]. Comparative studies show that thriving Muslim-friendly tourist destinations share three similar characteristics: (1) robust policy and institutional support, (2) effective halal certification frameworks, and (3) robust destination marketing focusing on highlighting Islamic and cultural authenticity (Razalli, Abdullah, & Hassan, 2019). Global experience offers developing areas such as West Java valuable lessons in that, in essence, a structured approach that incorporates policy innovation, business

involvement, and community engagement is fundamental to success.

2.3 Muslim-Friendly Tourism in Indonesia

Indonesia's development of Muslim-friendly tourism began with recognizing the halal tourism sector as a national interest during the early 2010s. The government, through the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, initiated the concept of *Pariwisata Ramah Muslim* (Muslim-friendly tourism) and cooperated with the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) to establish halal certification standards for the hospitality and food service sectors. Indonesia's frequent ranking among the world's top Muslim-friendly destinations in the Global Muslim Travel Index is a sign of its improvement in balancing national tourism strategy with Islamic values [9]. However, the application of halal tourism across regions has not been equal. Based on research, regions like West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) and Aceh have shown a great deal of advancement with domestic regulation and certification systems, whereas provinces like West Java are in the process of institutionalizing Muslim-friendly tourism [11]. Nonstandardization, lack of awareness among tourism stakeholders, and incoordination among parties have been cited as persistent problems [12], [13]. Therefore, West Java with its dense cultural background and high percentage of Muslims continues to be far from achieving its full potential in this rapidly expanding niche market.

2.4 Determinants of Muslim-Friendly Tourism Development

The development of Muslim-friendly tourism hinges on a number of interrelated drivers that can be classified into five dimensions, which are supply, demand, institutional, technological, and socio-cultural. Firstly, supply-side readiness is the availability of halal-compliant infrastructure, accommodation, transport, and food services. [14] emphasize that reliable halal certification, prayer facilities, and modest recreation activities are the key drivers of Muslim tourist satisfaction. Second, demand-side dynamics focus on traveler attitudes, motivation, and perceived value. The literature demonstrates that Muslim tourists consider religious compliance, security, and cultural similarity as important factors influencing destination choice [18]. Third, institutional dimensions—like government policies, tourism policies, and inter-ministry coordination—are critical in synchronizing development efforts and ensuring the sustainability of halal tourism developments [19]. Fourth, technological innovation has appeared as an enabling factor through using digital platforms for marketing halal destinations, online certification databases, and mobile apps that provide information about halal restaurants or mosques [20]. Finally, socio-cultural factors such as hospitality norms at the local level, community awareness, and inclusivity influence how Muslim-friendly principles are translated into

practice. In places like West Java, where local culture (Sundanese hospitality) overlaps with Islamic values, the intersection of these dimensions can create a uniquely authentic and appealing destination identity.

2.5 Muslim-Friendly Tourism in the Context of West Java

West Java's Muslim tourism potential arises from the heterogeneity of its tourism resources and Islamic cultural environment. The province contains different natural destinations (such as Pangandaran Beach, Tangkuban Perahu, and Ciletuh Geopark), heritages, and religious destinations. Moreover, the existence of pesantren society ensures an environment conducive to ethical behavior in tourism, plain hospitality, and local entrepreneurship. Studies by Suryana (2019) indicate that the inclusion of Islamic cultural heritage in tourism planning can boost tourist satisfaction and community pride. The province's strategic location close to Jakarta puts it in a good position to attract domestic and international Muslim tourists looking for short religious or family vacations.

However, various studies have identified hurdles that restrain West Java's evolution into a central Muslim-friendly tourism destination. Some of these include low levels of halal certification among restaurants and hotels, lack of standardized guidelines for tourist operators, and poor coordination among government, academia, and private stakeholders [12], [13]. Marketing has focused on food and nature tourism without

explicitly emphasizing halal attributes, causing missed opportunities in capitalizing on the expanded Muslim traveler market. Moreover, online preparedness of West Java tourism businesses is not uniform either, which affects availability of Muslim-friendly services on the web. These gaps require an overall strategy that incorporates policy formulation, infrastructure development, capacity enhancement of stakeholders, and creation of a strong brand identity for West Java as a Muslim-friendly destination.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study utilizes a qualitative research method in a try to analyze and explore the possibility and how to construct Muslim-friendly tourism in West Java. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate as it allows the researcher to identify complex social, cultural, and economic problems related to the growth of tourism that could not be obtained from figures. Using a descriptive and exploratory research design, this study aims to gather information on stakeholders' perception, concerns, and initiatives in formulating Muslim-friendly tourism in the region. This research design is also aligned with the study's aim to identify not only the potentials that exist at the moment but also the strategic directions for sustainable development under the socio-cultural context of West Java.

3.2 Data Sources and Participants

The study is primarily founded on primary data collected through interviews and observation, complemented by secondary data provided through government reports, academic books, and industry publications. The key informants are the West Java Tourism and Culture Office respondents, local government officials, Muslim tourism

entrepreneurs, hospitality managers, community leaders, and tourists. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the participants, with emphasis on individuals possessing the right experience and information regarding Muslim-friendly tourism initiatives. About 20 informants took part, representing all stakeholders - public, private, and community. This approach ensures that the voices collected are a multi-stakeholder view of regional tourism growth.

3.3 Data Collection Technique

The main data collection techniques used in this research involved semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews provided flexibility in exploring participants' experiences and perceptions while maintaining a standard structure of open-ended questions. All interviews, lasting from 45 minutes to 90 minutes, were conducted at the participants' consent and were aimed to obtain in-depth perceptions on Muslim-friendly tourism policies and practices. Aside from this, participant observation was carried out at the selected tourist destinations to personally experience firsthand the implementation of Muslim-friendly facilities and services, such as the availability of halal food, prayer rooms, modesty-friendly recreational activities, and gender-sensitive accommodations. In addition, document analysis was conducted in examining regional tourism plans, government policy documents, promotional brochures, and Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy reports to enhance contextual understanding and to obtain triangulation of data gathered through interviews and observations. Integration of the three methods developed combined insights into both policy-level frameworks and grassroots realities of Muslim-friendly tourism development in West Java.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted through the use of thematic analysis method that is suitable for analyzing, extracting, and

interpreting patterns of meaning in qualitative data. The steps involved a number of them including data familiarization, coding, theme identification, and interpretation. A start was made by transcribing and going through all the field notes and interview transcripts thoroughly to have an idea about the overall data. After that, open coding was conducted in order to settle on significant statements, ideas, and keywords that were either tourism potential, stakeholder collaboration, challenges, and development strategies. The codes were then grouped into broad themes that were equivalent to the research objectives. Through iterative analysis, major themes such as "infrastructure readiness," "policy and governance," "cultural authenticity," "market segmentation," and "strategic collaboration" were identified. The research also accounted for the socio-religious setting of West Java, which deeply influences the establishment of Muslim-friendly tourism policies.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Overview of Findings

Findings of this study indicate that West Java holds great potential for the development of Muslim-friendly tourism due to its varied cultural heritages, natural wonders, Islamic strong values, and growing tourism facilities. However, realization of the potential is still uneven by area, depending mostly on the level of attention given by the government, private sector initiative, and people's participation. The data collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis reveals that while Muslim-friendly tourism consciousness is growing, there is limited strategic integration among stakeholders. From the field data, five overarching themes are examined: (1) appeal and tourism potential, (2) infrastructure and facility preparedness, (3) policy and institutional readiness, (4) socio-cultural harmony, and (5) development strategy and stakeholder integration.

4.2 Tourism Potential and Attractiveness

West Java's tourism potential is rooted deeply on the province's extensive natural, cultural, and religious assets, most of which are compatible with Muslim-friendly practices in nature. Being one of Indonesia's more populated provinces and a predominantly Muslim province, West Java has both the cultural basis and market readiness to emerge as a frontier Muslim-friendly destination in Southeast Asia. The region is characterized by its geographical range, with lush highlands, volcanic landscape, peaceful beaches, waterfalls, and agricultural villages that accommodate nature and family forms of tourism. West Java Tourism and Culture Office survey interviewees emphasized that destinations such as Puncak in Bogor, Lembang in Bandung, and Ciwidey in south Bandung are favorite destinations for local Muslim tourists due to the agreeable climate, family-friendly activities, and ease of identifying halal food and prayer facilities. These characteristics are important since Muslim tourists are likely to seek destinations that provide a combination of relaxation, comfort, and Islamic value orientations, such as cleanliness, modesty, and the assurance of halal.

Aside from natural beauty, cultural heritage in West Java also provides a good base to establish special Muslim-friendly tourist experiences. The province has an abounding Islamic heritage, with Islamic presence as early as the 15th century in Cirebon, which is well known for its ancient mosques, royal palaces (keraton), and Islamic art traditions. Sunan Gunung Jati Mosque in Cirebon, for instance, serves not only as a mosque for prayers but also as a pilgrimage place and mosque where thousands of Muslim tourists flock annually. Similarly, Tasikmalaya and Garut have many Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) that assist in maintaining Islamic education, local culture, and values. Pesantren began to collaborate with local tourist agencies to create educational tourism packages (pesantren tourism), in which tourists can engage in day-

to-day religious activities and Islamic study programs. This new spiritual and educational tourism genre reflects the possibilities of religious identity and cultural authenticity being bridged into West Java's tourism nexus.

Food culture of the province also helps in making it more attractive to Muslim tourists. West Java is renowned for the richness of its cuisine, which is mostly already halal-friendly because of its majority Muslim population. Places like Bandung and Bogor also have active food streets with traditional Sundanese dishes in the nasi timbel, sayur asem, pepes ikan, and ayam goreng lengkuas, all prepared using halal ingredients. It was through interviews with industry players in the culinary tourism segment that the majority of food establishments in major cities were already halal certified or observe Islamic food handling processes, although they are not officially certified. This informal but culturally embedded devotion to the ideals of halal also assists in supplying the security and comfort with which Muslim tourists feel when dining out. The recent proliferation of "halal lifestyle cafés" and family restaurants that do not serve alcohol or provide family rooms is also evidence of market acculturation towards hospitality norms conducive to Muslims.

Apart from the metropolitan towns, tourism in West Java extends to rural areas and community-based tourism initiatives emphasizing Islamic values and sustainable development. Several villages, such as Kampung Naga in Tasikmalaya and Kampung Mahmud in Bandung, have made a marriage of cultural heritage preservation and Islamic faith-based tourism. The villages receive tourists who seek to live traditional Sundanese lifestyles, handicrafts of the people, and Islamic traditions that characterized rural society for centuries. Interviews with community leaders pointed out that such destinations typify core Muslim-friendly attributes—modesty, respect for nature, hospitality, and inter-community harmony. This intersection of cultural genuineness and Islamic values makes rural tourism in West Java a best practice model of

sustainable Muslim-friendly tourism development with both tourists and residents.

Field observation during fieldwork validated that domestic local tourism players in the government and private sectors have begun adopting "halal" and "Muslim-friendly" branding in a bid to tap into growing domestic and international Muslim tourist market. Marketing collateral in cities like Bandung and Cirebon increasingly uses terms like "halal destination," "family-friendly resort," or "spiritual heritage route." Although these are encouraging signs, however, standardization and validation of Muslim-friendly assertions remain thin on the ground. Several hospitality providers attested in interviews that although they provide halal food and prayer facilities, they have not sought formal certification processes due to cost considerations or insufficiency of technical support. This lack of harmony in branding and certification has a potential for inconsistency and confusion among visitors, particularly foreign visitors who rely on official standards when making decisions regarding destinations and hotels.

The second new strength revealed in the findings is the emerging awareness among tourism stakeholders regarding the economic potential of the Muslim tourism market. Tourism sector interviewees mentioned that the Muslim travel market is a rapidly growing segment both domestically and internationally, of which Indonesia alone is a considerable source market for Muslim visitors. Some local businesses have begun adapting their products and services to suit the needs of such a market, such as providing information regarding the availability of halal food, reserving prayer rooms (mushalla) in buildings, and providing customers with modest recreational activities suitable for family patronage. West Java Culture and Tourism Agency has also started collaborating with universities and religious institutions to disseminate campaigns and training courses about ideas of halal tourism aimed at the enhancement of actors' knowledge and ability in managing Muslim-friendly destinations.

But research also found some challenges which must be overcome if potential of the tourism of West Java can be maximally developed. Among the bigger challenges is the fact that there is no coordination among stakeholders. While all the local players in the tourism industry know that Muslim-friendly tourism is important, there is no master plan that interweaves government programs, private sector initiatives, and community participation. Moreover, the variety of West Java's tourism sectors from urban to rural areas guarantees that some are well developed in facilities and have high levels of service readiness, while others trail far behind. This is where the need for a region-specific development plan that takes into account the variation in infrastructure, community engagement, and market access across districts becomes apparent.

4.3 Infrastructure and Facility Readiness

Infrastructural and facility preparedness for Muslim-tourism readiness in West Java is by itself quite diverse from one area to another, according to different development agendas, government intervention, and business enterprise participation. According to interview and observation findings, big cities such as Bandung, Bogor, and Cirebon are quite ready, but less big or rural ones such as Sukabumi, Pangandaran, and Garut are still plagued by infrastructure and management limitations. This disparity attests to the fact that Muslim-friendly tourism growth in West Java remains centered in urban regions, while peripheral areas remain underdeveloped with high natural and cultural capital. Having an adequate infrastructure ranging from transport, accommodation, and eating to religious and recreational facilities is indispensable in making Muslim travelers feel comfortable, respected, and able to practice their religious traditions on the go.

Both in Bandung and Bogor, it was evident from the study that the tourism industry has already integrated Muslim-

friendly ideas into facility planning and service delivery. The majority of hotels and resorts there provide prayer rooms, qibla signs in guest room doors, and restaurants that have been given halal certification. In addition, certain hospitality firms have taken it upon themselves to introduce policies that are compliant with Islamic ethics, such as prohibiting the sale of alcohol, providing men and women with separated facilities for recreation, and arranging family-oriented recreational activities. Hotel management informants rationalized these practices by stating that they are not only founded on religious sensitivity but on business practicality, taking into account the growth of the local Muslim tourist market. The fact that supportive infrastructure—such as favorable transportation, good communications, and favorable road access—is present there also adds to traveling there, earning it one of the best Muslim-friendly tourist spots in the province.

Meanwhile, things are otherwise for rural or developing locations such as Sukabumi and Pangandaran, where Muslim-friendly amenities still emerge unevenly and comparatively in an informal manner. Field observations showed that while these places boast excellent natural attractions—i.e., beaches, waterfalls, and nature attractions—basic facilities like halal food places, well-managed prayer facilities, and humble accommodations are not always available. Tourists who visit these places have to fend for themselves in order to find halal-approved restaurants or prayer facilities, which has consequences on convenience and satisfaction. A survey of local businesspeople elicited several key concerns: lack of knowledge in halal tourism standards, not enough money to undertake improvements, and poor government support for certification processes. Hospitality and food SMEs were receptive to including halal certification but are deterred by red tape, procedural cost, and a sense that domestic markets do not require certification. This implies that while rural cultural practice is already compatible with Muslim-friendly values, technical support

and formal institutional assistance are still necessary in order to have recognized standards in the practice.

The study also entrenched that public religious spaces, such as mushalla (prayer areas) and mosques, are widespread across West Java because of the pervasiveness of Islam in the area. However, the quality, cleanliness, and accessibility vary considerably depending on the location. In big transportation terminals, such as Bandung Station or Husein Sastranegara Airport, prayer rooms are well-maintained and well-signposted. Smaller tourist attractions and rest stops typically have prayer facilities that are in bad condition or poorly signposted. Female tourists in particular complained about limited private or sanitary spaces for prayer, necessitating gender-sensitive arrangements in public facilities. The imbalanced character of mushalla accommodations shows the need for the installation of standardized maintenance practices and regular checks to ensure a homogenized comfort and sanitation experience for travelers.

Transportation and information systems are other key areas of infrastructure readiness. Although major highway networks and public transport in urban areas generally tend to be well-developed, connectivity to peripheral zones is a challenge. Limited access reduces rural tourism destinations' attractiveness for domestic and international Muslim tourists. Further, a dearth of observable signs and travel systems information—especially halal food outlets, prayer timings, and nearby mosques—reduces convenience levels for unknown visitors. Interviews with tourism officials showed that information services are delivered mainly in the conventional manner, such as printed brochures or banners, and have not yet adopted digital innovations such as mobile apps or QR-based directories for halal places. The adoption of smart tourism technologies with features of halal maps and prayer times could significantly contribute to an enhanced tourist experience and be part of Indonesia's broader digital tourism policy.

Service readiness is another dimension from a hospitality perspective that influences the general Muslim-friendly environment. Staff awareness levels in the hotels and restaurants were observed to be extremes in meeting Muslim tourists' specific needs. Hotel employees in some city hotels are instructed to accommodate special early breakfast orders in Ramadan or provide family dining discreetly. However, in the less developed countries, such cultural sensitivity is not yet applied in service routine procedures. Interview respondents from the tourist associations cited the need for continuous training programs in halal service standards, modest hospitality etiquette, and cross-cultural communication. Such that Muslim-friendly values would not only be observed in physical facilities but also in human interaction quality between host and guest.

There is a second discovery which has to do with the gap between policy intentions and policy implementation. As much as the West Java government is purportedly keen on selling halal or Muslim-friendly tourism, policy implementation is generally not followed up on. For instance, tourism master plans always have halal tourism as one of the strategic focus areas but fail to allocate specific budgets for infrastructure upgrade or certification assistance. As a result, the majority of local governments depend on the initiatives of the private sector to fill infrastructural deficits. Document analysis revealed that only a handful of municipalities, such as Bandung City and Cirebon Regency, have established partnerships with the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) or halal certification agencies in order to enable streamlined certification of local businesses. Expanding such partnerships across the province would accelerate the standardization and accreditation of Muslim-friendly facilities. Secondly, environmental sustainability in infrastructure development was an important issue. Muslim-friendly tourism emphasizes ethical consumption, cleanliness (thaharah), and respectability of nature—all of which align with sustainable

tourism practices. Nevertheless, there were field-level observations that among the most frequented sites there are waste management issues, crowding, and unsanitary conditions. Upgrading the environmental infrastructure, such as waste management systems, clean water facilities, and eco-friendly amenities, would improve comfort as well as preserve Islamic values of cleanliness and stewardship (*khalifah fil ardh*). Such alignment would firmly establish West Java as a model of sustainable Muslim-friendly tourism that balances faith-based values with ecological stewardship.

4.4 Policy and Institutional Support

Policy and institutional support are the building blocks to make Muslim-friendly tourism development a success and sustainable venture in West Java. Although there has been considerable advancement at the national level—with Indonesia being the world's top Muslim-friendly tourist destination as per the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI)—institutionalization of these policies into usable frameworks at the provincial level has yet to occur. Government representatives and tourism officers covered in this study emphasized that the West Java Provincial Government has clearly expressed commitment to advancing halal and Muslim-friendly tourism by integrating them into its overall tourism master plans. These efforts are generally aligned with the strategic vision of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, which has initiated the Guidelines for Muslim-Friendly Tourism Development and the Indonesia Muslim Travel Index (IMTI). However, despite the fact that policies have been adjusted to mirror this, there is still an evident disconnect between policy intention and everyday practice at the grassroots level.

Many government officials at the local level admitted that while they have agreed in policy documents to Muslim-friendly tourism, operationalization in reality remains very aspirational. The absence of tangible regulation tools, i.e., provincial

decrees or standard operating procedures, has led to uneven implementation at regencies and cities. Such policy ambiguity has in turn bewildered the tourism stakeholders, namely the hoteliers, restaurant business owners, and tour operators, regarding the exact parameters or dimensions to be treated as "Muslim-friendly." For instance, while some locations identify Muslim-friendly tourism as simply placing emphasis on halal food accreditation, others outline more inclusive dimensions such as prayer spaces, dress code for modest clothing by staff, and gender-sensitive recreational areas. Consequently, no single standard or certification procedure exists that assures conformity in service quality and regulation across the province.

Institutionally, coordination among the key stakeholders remains scattered. Research found that there remains limited coordination among the West Java Tourism and Culture Office, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), and the Indonesian Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH). Each institution operates independently, with little cross-sectoral synergy. This institutional fragmentation is expressed in duplicative or duplicative efforts—such as separate training programs for halal certification—and fails to address the bigger needs of the tourism environment. Industry and government stakeholders across both the industry and government sides emphasized that there needs to be more coordinated institutional framework, where policy-making, delivery, and evaluation are orchestrated with shared goals and identical gauges of success.

Besides, interviews with small and medium tourism entrepreneurs also found that the majority of them face challenges in achieving certification as halal due to bureaucratic complexity, financial burden, and unawareness of the benefit of certification. A number of operators, particularly rural or niche tourism ones, questioned the tangible benefit of certification, arguing that their clients are already predominantly Muslim travelers who assume halal compliance as standard. Such a mindset proves the worth of capacity-

building efforts by the government that not only educate stakeholders about Muslim-friendly tourism standards but also provide economic and technical assistance to facilitate certification processes.

Analysis of provincial and national tourism development reports confirmed that while there is increasing awareness of the strategic importance of Muslim-friendly tourism, implementation of policies remains reactive rather than proactive. Most government initiatives are short-term and incident-based, e.g., conducting halal tourism expos or workshops, without establishing long-term institutional arrangements or monitoring mechanisms. In addition, the lack of clear budget allocations for Muslim-friendly tourism initiatives also limits their scalability and viability. Without a proper funding and monitoring system in place, even good intent fails to yield significant impacts. The study also suggests that more political will and leadership from institutions are necessary in order to transform policy promises into meaningful action. Some of the experts and stakeholders interviewed recommended the creation of a Provincial Halal Tourism Task Force with members from government, academe, industry associations, and religious organizations. A multi-stakeholder task force would serve as a coordinating body in converging standards, simplifying certification processes, and ensuring accountability in the implementation of policies. Moreover, coordination with higher education and research institutions would enhance evidence-based policymaking through regular monitoring and knowledge exchange.

4.5 Socio-Cultural Compatibility and Community Participation

Religious and cultural compatibility is perhaps the most important force to affect the viability and success of Muslim-friendly tourist activities. It has been observed in this study that West Java, as a province with a majority Muslim population—estimated to reach over 97% of its population—is very hospitable to accommodate Islamic values in

the tourism sector. This general Islamic observance naturally shapes social norms, hospitality practices, and local traditions and thus Muslim-friendly tourism is not a commercial invention but a reflection of deeply rooted cultural identity. The alignment of religious values and community traditions facilitates the tailoring of Muslim-friendly tourism initiatives since they are perceived to correspond with community values of modesty, cleanness, respectfulness, and hospitality (*ukhuwah*). This inherent congruence reduces opportunities for resistance towards the adoption of Muslim-oriented tourism practices and policies, distinguishing West Java from other more religiously diverse regions where similar programs would likely face socio-cultural negotiation.

Local people's leaders and tourism operators interviewed revealed residents in general perceive Muslim-friendly tourism as an opportunity to promote both moral values and economic development. In some rural areas—e.g., Cianjur, Garut, and Tasikmalaya—there have also been community tourism associations that themselves actively integrated Islamic values into practice. These have ranged from establishing prayer breaks as part of tour operations, promoting modest dress code for workers, and having all food supplied to tourists be halal-certified. Furthermore, *pesantren*-based society has been in the vanguard of promoting ethical tourism through education and mobilization. For example, some of the *pesantren* in Tasikmalaya and Cianjur have cooperated with local governments to conduct tour guide training on Islamic hospitality (*khidmah islāmiyyah*) and ethics of sustainable tourism which prioritize respect for nature and culture. This is an indication that religious institutions do have a part to play as key drivers of change in supporting tourism conduct in accordance with Islamic ethics while complementing overall empowerment of communities.

Participant observation also established that community participation

extends beyond the adoption of religious values; it is also evidence of a shared sense of stewardship of local resources. Muslim villagers have, for instance, embraced tourism as a means of sustaining local livelihoods without losing cultural heritage. Tourism cooperatives (*koperasi wisata*) have, for instance, been established to assume responsibility for visitor facilities on a shared basis, with the economic dividend being equitably distributed among locals. These cooperatives are usually operated under the umbrella of local religious leaders, supplementing social trust and imposing Islamic moral principles in business practice. Members also declared pride in showcasing traditional Sundanese culture—music, cuisine, and craftwork—under a Muslim-compatible guise, presenting unique cultural tourism products that are welcoming to non-Muslim tourists but still conveying local Islamic identity.

But despite the overall positive tone, some difficulties still exist in balancing the religious character of tourism with diversity and inclusiveness in the marketplace. Virtually all of the public and private sector respondents cautioned that excessive indulgence in religious identification—e.g., labeling destinations entirely as "halal" or "Islamic"—may stand to repel non-Muslim visitors or lead to feelings of exclusivity. This is particularly a major concern for multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies, in which tourism must be open to everyone. Some tourism entrepreneurs in Bandung and Bogor mentioned cases of tourists being perplexed or hesitant when they heard the term "halal tourism" as they thought it referred to restricting conduct or dress. Therefore, stakeholders emphasized the need for communication methods that present Muslim-friendly tourism as an inclusive concept—committed to service, cleanliness, and ethical hospitality—rather than a concept defined by religious exclusivity.

The study also noted the difference in the level of community involvement in different areas. In areas with strong organizational and leadership functions of the

community, such as Cianjur and Garut, locals are directly involved in tourism management and planning. They are involved in decision-making, benefit-sharing programs, and capacity-building programs launched by local governments or NGOs. In other less coordinated areas like parts of Sukabumi or Pangandaran, however, involvement is still restricted due to inadequate institutional support, information dissemination, and training opportunities. Some of the informants explained that Muslim-friendly sustainable tourism development not only encompasses cultural compatibility but also structural empowerment—communities having skills, knowledge, and capacity to independently and sustainably manage tourism. Moreover, gender inclusion was another key theme in community engagement. Discussions with local tourism entrepreneurs who are mostly women revealed that Muslim-friendly tourism offers spaces for active women's engagement in economic activities that are in line with religious norms. Women are involved in various activities as homestay operators, halal food vendors, or artisans, earning household money and ensuring the preservation of local cultural practices. These are typically seen as positive activities in society as they promote modesty and family values and ensure socio-economic integration. Empowering women in these roles not only contributes to regional economic resilience but also aligns with the broader values of ethical and equitable development promoted under Muslim-friendly tourism.

Regional analysis of tourism programs also indicates that local governments and community organizations have started addressing socio-cultural considerations within planning instruments. Programs for local cultural festivals, Islamic heritage tourism, and *pesantren* tourism have been the subject of interest due to their ability to foster social cohesion and cultural identity as well as to entice visitors interested in authentic, values-based experiences. Yet, the research also identified that these programs rely on short-term funding and lack long-term

monitoring and evaluation provisions, jeopardizing their continuity and effectiveness.

4.6 Development Strategies and Stakeholder Collaboration

Based on thematic coding of interview transcripts, observation notes, and accompanying documents, several strategic directions were determined as most imperative for solidifying the growth of Muslim-friendly tourism in West Java. These are interrelated and refer to a holistic approach with regard to marketing, human resource development, infrastructure preparedness, institutional coordination, and community empowerment. The study finds that Muslim-friendly tourism success is not simply a function of there being halal products or religious facilities on offer, but also the way various stakeholders—private sectors, government, locals, and academia—come together and ensure that they build an unbroken, inclusive, and sustainable ecosystem.

The first and perhaps most urgent strategy relates to branding and marketing communication. While West Java is already well settled as one of the leading local tourist spots due to its natural beauty and cultural heritage, its reputation as a Muslim-friendly but not exclusionary destination is still developing. The general consensus was that the branding had to revolve around highlighting the province's halal food experience, Islamic heritage trails, and family destinations, but without taking on too limiting religious marketing that could drive away non-Muslim travelers. The objective, say various tourism promotion officials, is to emphasize Muslim-friendly tourism as a component of quality, ethics, and hospitality rather than limitation. In accomplishing this, multi-platform marketing campaigns could utilize digital and mainstream media, identifying places such as Cirebon's historic mosques, geothermal hot springs in Garut, and Bandung's halal-approved eating zones. Collaboration with local and overseas Muslim travel agents, influencers, and travel bloggers

will enhance the province's image in the global Muslim tourism sector. Furthermore, creating a single brand identity through a tagline such as "West Java: Harmony in Halal Hospitality" would establish stronger recognition and consistency among regional stakeholders within the tourism sector.

Capacity building and education of players in the tourism sector are the second and most crucial strategies. Interview results showed that most tourism practitioners, particularly small and medium enterprise (SME) owners, lack adequate knowledge of Muslim-friendly tourism guidelines and halal certification processes. The majority of operators were uncertain regarding the procedure for getting certification from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) or the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH). Closing this gap entails comprehensive training programs for various stakeholder groups including hotel managers, restaurant owners, tour guides, and local leaders. The training modules cover not only technical aspects of halal assurance systems but also other generic aspects of Islamic hospitality ethics, customer service excellence, and cross-cultural sensitivity. These learning sessions can be jointly planned and conducted by the West Java Tourism and Culture Office, vocational institutions, universities, and pesantren centers that have Islamic economics and entrepreneurship courses. Additionally, establishing online learning websites and certification workshops would enable more individuals to join and push learning beyond physical classes.

The third strategy is the development of infrastructure and services, which is the foundation to ensuring a true and enjoyable Muslim-friendly experience. While previous research indicates that basic facilities such as prayer areas (mushalla) and halal eateries are prevalent, quality, accessibility, and maintenance of such facilities remain inconsistent. The strategy, therefore, targets systematic improvements through infrastructure investment and quality checks. These include enhancing prayer rooms in public areas (tourist spots, shopping centers,

and airports) in terms of cleanliness and aesthetics, expanding the options of halal food in tourist areas, and adopting technology-oriented solutions such as halal-friendly mobile apps that provide real-time updates on prayer times, halal dining establishments, and mosques within the vicinity. Furthermore, transport infrastructure also has to be adapted to facilitate easy access to Muslim-friendly service-oriented locations. Local governments could then induce private investors to invest in Islamic-compatible facilities, that is, gender-sensitive recreational spaces and family-oriented resorts. These enhancements would enhance the visitor's satisfaction and competitiveness of the province as a halal tourism market player globally.

The fourth strategy inferred from the data is the integration of multi-stakeholder cooperation and governance. Muslim-friendly tourism development is a multidisciplinary approach requiring coordination from different institutions and stakeholders. Representatives from all groups stressed that fragmented coordination between government departments, religious organizations, and private enterprise currently undermines the integration and effectiveness of implementation. Stronger institutional linkages are thus required. Provincial authorities need to lead the way in establishing joint forums with key stakeholders—e.g., West Java Tourism and Culture Office, Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), BPJPH, local governments, industry groups, and universities—to co-design policies, supply data, and monitor progress. Universities, particularly those with schools of tourism and Islamic studies, can contribute through research, training, and policy evaluation. Concurrently, the private sector also can be encouraged to adopt voluntary codes of business conduct promoting ethical business practices in line with Muslim-friendly values. Inter-sector alliances can even be extended to international associations, such as the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) of Malaysia, for best practice learning and benchmarking.

The fifth and final strategy proposed by stakeholders is the establishment of a Provincial Halal Tourism Task Force, a single agency responsible for coordinating standardization, certification, and oversight. The Task Force would be an anchor mechanism bridging provincial and national activities to coordinate policy harmonization and ensure accountability. Its activities could include setting up operating norms for Muslim-friendly tourism, certifying enterprises, providing technical assistance to SMEs, and developing a performance monitoring system based on measurable indicators—e.g., percentage of establishments certified, levels of tourist satisfaction, and degrees of community participation. The Task Force can further serve as a link of communication between national government agencies and local communities, ensuring that policy implementation remains responsive to local conditions. By institutionalizing such an arrangement, the province would be in a stronger position to facilitate long-term development projects rather than adopting short-term projects or ad-hoc initiatives.

4.7 Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the immense potential of West Java to be a pioneer Muslim-friendly destination in Indonesia because of its stable socio-cultural foundation, abundant natural and cultural capital, and growing institutional demand for halal and ethical tourism. But the study also indicates that this possibility hinges on a chain of interrelated factors: rational policy enforcement, infrastructure standardization, coordination of stakeholders, and balanced positioning culture. All these elements need to be harmonized in order to make Muslim-friendly tourism not only appeal to domestic Muslim tourists but also international tourists seeking ethical and family-focused tourism experience. The above discussion combines the empirical evidence with the right theoretical insights and previous research to give a better insight into opportunities and

challenges that affect West Java's Muslim-friendly tourism development.

Secondly, the research upholds the idea that Muslim-friendly tourism needs to be viewed as a by-product of ethical and sustainable tourism values and not in religious or segregated terms. This aligns with previous studies that theorize that Muslim-friendly tourism is rooted in universal values such as hospitality, cleanliness, fairness, and respect for host culture (Battour & Ismail, 2016). The findings affirm that West Java's tourism infrastructure is already pervaded by most of these values—specifically through its community-based tourism activities, down-to-earth cultural activities, and halal-oriented food culture. Thus, the province has a unique advantage: it does not need to come up with a completely new model of tourism but standardize and formalize what is already being undertaken under a single Muslim-friendly umbrella. The biggest challenge is turning these ad hoc, spontaneous initiatives into disciplined, marketable, and accredited tourism products that will satisfy both local and international markets.

The study discovers policy and institutional fragmentation remain major handicaps in the systemic building of Muslim-friendly tourism. While the West Java provincial government has expressed interest in subsidizing halal tourism under its strategic plans, no coherent regulatory regime exists, and accordingly "Muslim-friendly" has been understood variously at various times. This outcome substantiates previous research noting that Muslim-majority countries exhibit the same institutional shortcomings, since halal tourism policies are rather a promotional rhetoric than regimes that can be enforced (Henderson, 2019). The demand for the establishment of a Provincial Halal Tourism Task Force acknowledges this deficiency through the proposal of an orderly coordinating structure that possesses the ability to link provincial, national, and local efforts. Its function would be essential in the facilitation of standardization, monitoring, and continuous policy consistency required to attain global credibility.

The research highlights infrastructure preparedness and quality control's contributions to tourist satisfaction and destinations' competitiveness. Although West Java boasts a relatively advanced tourism infrastructure in large cities such as Bandung and Bogor, there are disparities between these and rural or developing locations such as Sukabumi or Pangandaran. The disparities demand equal investment and planning. According to DinarStandard (2023), Muslim travelers are increasingly seeking halal food and prayer facilities and easy and hassle-free traveling experiences aligned with Islamic values. West Java's development strategy must therefore invest in the improvement of physical infrastructures and taking technology-based tools such as halal information applications and online certification platforms to attain accessibility, transparency, and convenience. Such initiatives would not only serve the Muslim tourists but also enhance the overall quality of tourism in the province.

The findings of the study underscore the critical significance of community participation and social-cultural harmony to the sustainability of Muslim-friendly tourism. The prevalence of Islamic values and mass-based tourism initiatives in West Java is evidence of high readiness levels at the people's level. Tourism has been adopted by communities as a vehicle for promoting moral values, promoting ethical hospitality, and local income generation, what Jaelani (2017) calls the "localization of Islamic tourism." The study, however, describes the fine line between promoting Islamic values while remaining welcoming to non-Muslim travelers. Excessive rigidity or sectarian religious branding could jeopardize alienation of broader market segments and contradict Indonesia's pluralistic identity towards tourism. In this way, communication measures must highlight Muslim-friendly tourism as inclusive with the emphasis on shared values of comfort, cleanliness, and ethical service. This fits along with the "inclusive halal tourism" model proposed by Mohsin, Ramli, and Alkhulayfi (2016) which

accommodates Muslim-friendly values without excluding others from enjoying or participating.

The discourse highlights stakeholder partnership as the means to efficient Muslim-friendly tourism management. Lack of coordination among government agencies, certification bodies, and private sectors currently hampers the efficiency of policy and effectiveness of its implementation. Based on stakeholder theory of tourism development (Freeman, 1984; Timur & Getz, 2009), inclusive stakeholders can only achieve sustainable progress where everybody is accountable and benefiting together. The proposed multi-stakeholder governance structure of government, industry, academe, and community sectors helps develop shared responsibility and reducing institutional silos. Universities themselves can contribute through applied research, course development, and community outreach that add to local tourism capability. This collaboration would also ensure that policies are not imposed from the top but co-created ones developed from local realities and evidence-based approaches.

The research contributes to growing literature that views Muslim-friendly tourism as a mechanism for socio-economic empowerment, especially for women and small-scale businesses. In West Java, most women-owned micro-enterprises in food, crafts, and homestay activities have actually been halal values-consistent, providing religiously and culturally compatible employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. This is in agreement with the premise that Muslim-friendly tourism can facilitate inclusive development through religion- and culture-compatible employment and entrepreneurship opportunities (El-Gohary, 2016). In order to release these benefits, NGOs and provincial governments should provide capacity-building training in entrepreneurship, e-marketing, and personal finance. This empowerment will not only enhance economic resilience but also gender equality and social cohesion—two of the key elements of sustainable development. The

proximity of the province to Jakarta, good transport linkages, and cultural distinctiveness are a selling point that can be leveraged to attract regional tourists from Malaysia, Brunei, and the Middle East. Global fame, however, is accompanied by regular branding, certification, and quality assurance according to international standards such as those developed by CrescentRating and the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI). Global cooperation and benchmarking can allow West Java to acquire the best practices in marketing and managing halal tourism without compromising local authenticity. Such two-way orientation—international competitiveness and locality rootedness—is crucial for long-term sustainability.

5 CONCLUSION

This study concludes that West Java possesses tremendous potential to become a model case of Muslim-friendly tourism development in Indonesia, supported by its rich natural resources, magnificent cultural heritage, and firm Islamic socio-cultural foundation. Its predominantly Muslim populace and existing halal-oriented culinary offerings, with additional existing community-based tourism activities, pose a setting that is readily adaptable to the infusion of Islamic values into tourism without substantial cultural dislocation. Nonetheless, the research also suggests that this potential is presently underexploited as a result of uncoordinated institutional governance, weak policy standardization, and asymmetric infrastructure readiness at the regional level. Policy reinforcement, capacity development initiatives, service improvement, and inclusive brand management are thus necessary to translate Muslim-friendly tourism from an abstract aspiration to a sustainable reality. The study emphasizes the necessity of cooperative governance—when government authorities, civil society, community organizations, and learning institutions work synergistically together to offer coherence, accountability, and joint ownership of development projects. Furthermore, Muslim-friendly tourism in

West Java needs to be framed not as a segregative or exclusionary form of tourism, but as an exemplar of inclusive ethical, family-oriented, and culturally responsive tourism that is beneficial to Muslim and non-Muslim tourists alike. If done well, West Java can be a

market-competitive destination that demonstrates how domestic religious values and modern tourism practices could coexist in harmony to propel economic progress, cultural pride, and social sustainability.

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