



Strengthening Muslim-Friendly Tourism Attractiveness in Artificial Tourism Destinations in Kota Batu through a 6A's-Based Indicator Development

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ABSTRACT

Muslim-friendly tourism has become a strategic agenda for artificial tourism destinations in Indonesia, including those in Kota Batu, East Java, given the large share of domestic Muslim travelers and Indonesia's position as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. This study aims to analyze stakeholder understanding of Muslim-friendly tourism, evaluate the readiness of two artificial tourism destinations in Kota Batu, Jatim Park 1 and Alun-alun Kota Batu, identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats affecting their development, and formulate strategies to strengthen their Muslim-friendly tourism attractiveness. A qualitative descriptive approach was used, with primary data collected through in-depth interviews with 15 purposively selected informants across seven stakeholder groups, complemented by structured field observations and document reviews, and analyzed using the interactive model of Milles, Huberman, and Saldana, together with source and method triangulation. Destination readiness was evaluated through six indicators adapted from the 6A's concept, namely attractions, accessibility, amenities, accommodation, activities, and ancillary services, cross-referenced against the four dimensions of the Global Muslim Travel Index, namely access, communication, environment, and service. Results show that stakeholder understanding of Muslim-friendly tourism remains uneven between government officials and business actors; destination readiness is only partially fulfilled across most components; amenities are relatively strong, while accommodation and ancillary services remain the weakest; and no halal-certified accommodation was found in Kota Batu. A SWOT analysis produced 12 strategic alternatives across the SO, WO, ST, and WT categories, with drafting a regional regulation on Muslim-friendly tourism identified as the priority foundation for implementing the remaining strategies. This study concludes that destination readiness alone is insufficient without a supporting policy framework and contributes a contextual model that links destination management theory to a global tourism readiness standard for developing artificial tourism destinations in Indonesia and comparable contexts.

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■ INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector is a strategic instrument of economic development because it absorbs large numbers of workers, drives the growth of micro, small, and medium enterprises, and generates foreign exchange earnings. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2023) reported that tourism contributed 10.4 percent of global gross domestic product, equivalent to 10.6 trillion United States dollars, while supporting 333 million jobs and recording 1.3 billion international trips in 2023. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2024) projects

that tourism's contribution to global GDP will reach 10 percent by 2030.

In Indonesia, tourism's contribution to national GDP has shown a strong recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, rising from 1.8 percent in 2021 to about 4.8 percent in 2024, with foreign exchange earnings from tourism reaching 16.7 billion United States dollars in 2024 (Kemenparekraf, 2025). This macroeconomic growth is closely tied to shifting traveler demographics, as the expanding global Muslim population represents one of the fastest-growing segments within the broadest tourism market, making destination

readiness for Muslim travelers increasingly relevant to national tourism revenue strategies. The global Muslim Population is projected to reach 2 billion in 2024 (Pew Research Center, 2023), with 230 million halal tourism trips projected for 2025 (State of the Global Islamic Economy Report, 2024). Indonesia, with the world's largest Muslim population at 244.96 million people (BPS, 2024), holds a strategic position for developing Muslim-friendly tourism. However, its destination competitiveness still lags, ranking 44th in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2023 (WEF, 2023).

The terms halal tourism, sharia tourism, and Muslim-friendly tourism are often used interchangeably yet carry different emphases. Battour and Ismail (2016) define halal tourism as travel that complies with sharia principles across products, services, and the destination environment. Sharia tourism emphasizes a formal regulatory framework, as stipulated in the Fatwa of the National Sharia Council of the Indonesian Council of Ulama Number 108/DSN-MUI/X/2016. Muslim-friendly tourism has a more inclusive scope, intended for all travelers seeking a clean, safe, ethical, and comfortable environment (CrescentRating, 2025).

While Buhalis's (2000) 6A's framework was originally developed for general destination competitiveness, its structural logic, evaluating a destination through attractions, accessibility, amenities, accommodation, activities, and ancillary services, remains applicable to Muslim-friendly tourism contexts. Rather than introducing a separate Islamic Hospitality variable, this study integrates the sharia-specific dimension by cross-referencing each 6A's component against the Global Muslim Travel Index's ACES standard (CrescentRating, 2025), consistent with recent studies that treat Muslim-friendly destination readiness as an extension of, rather than a replacement for, established destination competitiveness theory (Hamdy et al., 2024).

The 6A's concept, introduced by Buhalis (2000), provides a relevant foundation for unpacking the components of a tourism destination. In this study, the framework is contextually adapted into six operational components, namely attractions, accessibility, amenities, accommodation, activities, and ancillary services, with accommodation assessed as a distinct component in line with the Muslim-friendly accommodation sub-indicator in the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI, 2025). Cooper et al. (2008) reinforce this foundation by positioning tourism as an integrated system of interconnected

components. Developing Muslim-friendly indicators for each of the 6A's components is important because a destination's success depends not only on its main attraction but also on the integration of all supporting components. Ritchie and Crouch (2003) emphasize that destination competitiveness is determined by the totality of services that consistently meet visitor expectations.

Kota Batu was selected as the research site because it is a leading tourism destination in East Java with numerous modern artificial attractions, such as Jatim Park 1 and Alun-alun Kota Batu. According to BPS (2023), about 96.7 percent of East Java's population is Muslim, and domestic tourists visiting Kota Batu are predominantly from Muslim-majority provinces, making the Muslim traveler segment the largest market served by Kota Batu's artificial tourism destinations. However, no systematic study has yet evaluated the readiness of these destinations against international standards, and no regional regulation specifically governs Muslim-friendly tourism in Kota Batu or East Java Province. This gap underlies the urgency of the present study.

Based on this background, this study addresses the following research questions. RQ1: How do stakeholders understand and implement Muslim-friendly tourism in Kota Batu's artificial tourism destinations? RQ2: To what extent are the 6A's components at Jatim Park 1 and Alun-alun Kota Batu ready to meet the GMTI ACES standards, based on destination conditions and tourist perceptions? RQ3: What strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats affect the development of Muslim-friendly tourism at these two destinations? RQ4: What strategies can be formulated to enhance the attractiveness of Muslim-friendly tourism in Kota Batu's artificial tourism destinations?

■ METHOD

This section describes the research method in four parts, covering the informants, the research design and approach, the data collection procedure, and the data analysis.

Informants

Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with a total of 15 informants selected through purposive sampling, a technique in which informants are chosen because they understand the issue under study or represent relevant authority (Sugiyono, 2019). The informants consisted of two officials from the Kota Batu Tourism Office, two officials from the Kota Batu Ministry of

Table 1. Anonymized profile of informants

Code	Stakeholder Group	Location
DISPAR 01	Kota Batu Tourism Office	Kota Batu (city level)
DISPAR 02	Kota Batu Tourism Office	Kota Batu (city level)
KEMENAG 01	Kota Batu Ministry of Religious Affairs	Kota Batu (city level)
KEMENAG 02	Kota Batu Ministry of Religious Affairs	Kota Batu (city level)
JP1	Jatim Park 1 Management	Jatim Park 1
JP1UMKM 01	Food Court traders	Jatim Park 1
JP1UMKM02	Food Court traders	Jatim Park 1
ALN UMKM 01	Local traders	Alun-Alun Kota Batu
ALN UMKM 02	Local traders	Alun-Alun Kota Batu
JP 1 TUR 1	Muslim tourists	Jatim Park 1
JP 1 TUR 2	Muslim tourists	Jatim Park 1
JP 1 TUR 3	Muslim tourists	Jatim Park 1
ALN TUR 1	Muslim Tourists	Alun-Alun Kota Batu
ALN TUR 2	Muslim Tourists	Alun-Alun Kota Batu
ALN TUR 3	Muslim Tourists	Alun-Alun Kota Batu

Note: DISPAR and KEMENAG informants operate at the city level and are not affiliated with a single research site.

Religion Affairs (Kemenag), one representative from the operational management of Jatim Park 1, two food court traders at Jatim Park 1, two traders at Alun-alun Kota Batu, three Muslim tourists visiting Alun-alun Kota Batu, and three Muslim tourists visiting Jatim Park 1. Tourist informants were selected based on the following criteria: identifying as Muslim, having visited the research site at least once within the past twelve months, being at least 17 years old, residing outside Kota Batu, and being willing to provide an honest assessment of their travel experience, including the destination's shortcomings. The number of informants was determined using the principle of theoretical saturation, the point at which new data no longer provide significant additional insight (Roberts, 2008), which was reached after the fifteenth interview. Table 1 presents the anonymized profile of informants.

This study involved interactions with human subjects, including tourists and micro-enterprise actors. Data collection was conducted under formal research permits, namely research permit No. 02892/UN10.F0301/B/PP/2026 and No. 00317/UN10.F0301/B/PP/2026 issued by the Faculty of Administrative Science, Universitas Brawijaya, and permit No. 074/63/35.79.403/2026 issued by the Kota Batu Tourism Office. Verbal informed consent was obtained from each informant prior to the interview, following a continuous and relational approach to consent throughout the fieldwork process (Klykken, 2022).

Research Design and Approach

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. According to

Creswell (2018), qualitative research allows researchers to interpret reality from the perspective of research subjects rather than through measurable variables. A descriptive design was chosen because the study does not test hypotheses; instead, it describes the destinations' factual readiness and develops strategies based on field findings.

The research was conducted at two sites, Jatim Park 1 and Alun-alun Kota Batu, selected based on three considerations: First, both sites recorded the highest visitor numbers in Kota Batu in 2024, with 752, 484 visitors at Jatim Park 1 and 2,302,385 visitors at Alun-alun (Kota Batu Tourism Office, 2024). This visitor volume was used solely as a site-selection criterion to ensure that both locations had a sufficiently diverse and active pool of stakeholders and tourists from which purposive informants could be drawn, not as a quantitative research variable. Second, the two sites represent different management models, namely centralized commercial management and government-managed public space. Third, both undertook initial efforts toward Muslim-friendly services that could be evaluated systematically.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, structured observations across the six 6A's components, and document review. Separate interview guides were developed for government stakeholders, destination management stakeholders, business actors, and tourists, with questions mapped to each of the six 6A's components: attractions, accessibility, amenities, accommodation, activities, and ancillary services. Questions

were adapted to reflect the distinct perspective and level of involvement of each informant group in destination management.

Because Alun-alun Kota Batu is a public open space without on-site lodging, the Accommodation component for this destination required a separate operational definition prior to data collection. It was operationally defined as the availability and halal certification status of lodging facilities located within the immediate surrounding commercial area, rather than within the alun-alun itself, consistent with how public square destinations are typically assessed in destination readiness frameworks, where lodging is not an integral built feature of the site. This operational definition guided the interview and observation instrument used for the Accommodation component at both research sites.

Data Analysis and Validity

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), comprising data condensation, data display in matrix tables and descriptive narratives, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity was tested using the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell, 2018), with source and method triangulation as the main strategies. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information from three sources: stakeholder interviews, tourist interviews, and field observations, in combination with document analysis. For example, the claim made by Jatim Park 1 management that nearly all food court tenants held halal certifications could not be statistically verified through a qualitative inquiry and corroborated by asking tourists directly whether they observed and trusted the visibility of halal certification during their visit. Findings were considered credible when the three sources showed consistent results, while discrepancies between sources were recorded as findings requiring further analysis. Identified SWOT factors were then mapped into a SWOT matrix, following Rangkuti (2018), to generate a strategy for strengthening.

■ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Stakeholder Understanding and Implementation of Muslim-Friendly Tourism

Regarding RQ1, stakeholders' understanding of Muslim-friendly tourism in Kota Batu's artificial tourism destinations remains uneven. The Kota Batu Tourism Office has the deepest understanding, yet acknowledges that no regional regulation

specifically governs Muslim-friendly tourism in Kota Batu or East Java. The management of Jatim Park 1 shows strong openness to formal Muslim-friendly standards, as reflected in its experience adopting the CHSE standard during the COVID-19 pandemic, which it has maintained to this day. The main obstacle faced by management is not a lack of internal readiness but the absence of a clear standard or regulation to guide implementation.

The management of Alun-alun Kota Batu, which involves several government agencies, reflects a more basic, unstructured understanding. The character of Alun-alun as an open, heterogeneous, and free public space means that the implementation of Muslim-friendly standards relies more on appeals and collective awareness than on binding regulations, unlike Jatim Park 1, which has full control over all elements within its area.

Culinary business actors and micro-enterprises at the two locations exhibit different levels of understanding. At Jatim Park 1, the vast majority of food court tenants display halal logos prominently, a claim made by the operational manager of Jatim Park 1 during an interview on 12 January 2026 and corroborated by subsequent tourist interviews, while at Alun-alun, most vendors understand Muslim-friendly tourism narrowly as halal food alone. Some vendors who had already obtained halal certification had not displayed it clearly to visitors, indicating that the success of halal certification programs should be measured not only by the number of certificates issued but also by how openly and accessibly halal information is communicated. This finding aligns with Battour and Ismail (2016), who argue that the success of Muslim-friendly tourism depends on shared understanding and commitment among all stakeholders rather than on a single party.

The finding aligns with Abdullah & Laila's (2022) study conducted in Batu City itself, which documented a fundamental disagreement between the local government's halal tourism branding efforts and the Batu City Indonesia Ulama Council's position that halal tourism should not be equated with worship and ablution facilities for Muslim tourists. This unresolved contestation of meaning between bureaucratic and religious authority helps explain why stakeholder understanding in this study also remained uneven across government officials, religious institutions, and business actors.

Destination Readiness Based on the 6A's Indicators and GMTI Standards

To answer RQ2, destination readiness was

Table 2. Summary of destination readiness based on the 6a's components and gmti standards

6A's Component	Existing Condition	GMTI Indicator Fulfilled	Main Gap	Status
Attractions	Educational rides and a virtual Umrah feature at JP1; family atmosphere	Service: Islamic-themed attraction	No formal family privacy zone	Partial
Accessibility	Good road access; Trans Jatim recently launched	Access: land connectivity	Minimal digital information on Muslim-friendly facilities	Partial
Amenities	Prayer rooms are available; the vast majority of food court tenants are halal-certified at JP1.	Service: prayer facility and halal food	Halal labels are not displayed evenly; inconsistent restroom cleanliness	Partial
Accommodation	Some hotels provide prayer rooms and self-branded sharia status	Service: prayer facilities in some hotels	Zero officially BPJPH halal-certified accommodation	Unfulfilled
Activities	Educational rides and virtual umrah; public activities	Service: Islamic experience	No themed Muslim-friendly packages	Partial
Ancillary services	Information posts, CCTV, and security available	Environment: general security	No integrated digital halal information; informal inter-agency coordination	Unfulfilled

evaluated by comparing the actual condition of each of the 6A's components against the four dimensions of GMTI 2025, namely access, communication, environment, and service (ACES). A summary of the evaluation is presented in Table 2.

The overall pattern of destination readiness across the six components is visualized in Figure 1. Rather than repeating the readiness status already presented in Table 2 and Figure 1, this section highlights a notable anomaly: while amenities scored relatively higher due to strong halal culinary provision, accommodation and ancillary services remained the weakest components at both destinations, suggesting that halal tourism development in Batu City has so far concentrated narrowly on food-related services. At the same time, other Muslim travelers' needs remain underserved. The most critical finding is that not a single accommodation in Kota Batu holds official halal certification from the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency. However, several hotels have adopted self-

branded sharia status without measurable standards. Henderson (2016) asserts that a Muslim-friendly tourist attraction is determined not only by entertainment value but also by alignment with Muslim-friendly values, while Ritchie and Crouch (2003) add that destination competitiveness is shaped by the entirety of services that consistently meet visitor expectations rather than by a single component.

The status of each 6A's component was determined through three qualitative categories. A component was categorized as fulfilled when the indicator was consistently applied, standardized, and verified through documentation or field observations. A component was categorized as partial when the indicator existed but was categorized as unfilled when the indicator was absent, had never been implemented, or lacked a supporting policy basis. These three categories were assigned through triangulation of interview data, field observations, and document reviews conducted throughout the study, rather than by a numeric weighting

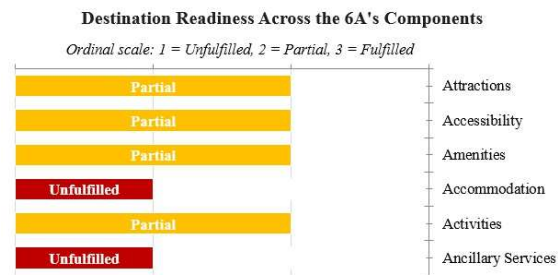


Figure 1. Destination readiness across the 6a's component

formula, consistent with the interpretive nature of qualitative destination assessment.

In the accessibility component, the main issues are the limited promotion of the Trans

Jatim public transport route connecting Malang City and Kota Batu and the lack of integration of prayer rooms and halal culinary locations into digital destination maps. This issue cannot be resolved at the Kota Batu level alone but requires cross-regional coordination among transport providers, destination management, and the Transportation Office. Buhalis (2000) emphasizes that accessibility involves not only physical ease but also access to information, so strengthening inter-institutional networks is a key prerequisite for this component, consistent with Volgger and Pechlaner (2015), who argue that successful destination governance depends heavily on the strength of collaborative networks among stakeholders rather than on a single managing authority.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
- High share of predominantly Muslim visitors - Family tourism branding aligned with Muslim-friendly values - Adequate prayer facilities at both destinations - Jatim Park 1 management readiness for formal standards - Support from Kemenag through halal certification assistance	- Absence of a specific regional regulation - Implementation still focused on culinary aspects - Weak inter-institutional coordination - Limited halal certification quota and cost - No integrated digital information system - No officially certified halal accommodation - Inconsistent cleanliness of public facilities
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
- Growth of the global Muslim travel market - Rising tourists from the Middle East and Malaysia - National regulatory support - Digital technology development - Best practice references from Lombok and Aceh - Growing micro enterprise interest in halal certification	- Competition from more advanced Muslim-friendly destinations - Faster facility development by Japan, South Korea, and Thailand - Indonesia's declining GMTI ranking - Perception that halal tourism is exclusive - Program continuity risk after leadership change - Facility quality pressure from high visitor volume

Figure 2. Swot matrix for strengthening muslim-friendly tourism in kota batu's artificial tourism destinations

Table 3. Twelve swot based strategic alternatives mapped to the 6a's components

Code	Strategy Description	Related 6A's Component(s)
SO1	Strengthen destination branding by combining the family tourism image with existing halal certification achievements.	Attractions, Amenities
SO2	Expand Islamic-themed attractions, such as the virtual umrah	Amenities
SO3	Broaden collaboration between Kemenag and universities on halal culinary training for business actors.	Amenities
WO1	Draft a regional regulation on Muslim-friendly tourism (priority foundation strategy)	Cross-cutting foundation for all components
WO2	Build an integrated digital information system covering prayer facilities and halal culinary locations.	Accessibility, Ancillary Services
WO3	Reform the halal certification scheme to be more inclusive and affordable for micro enterprises.	Amenities, Accommodation
ST1	Strengthen inclusive public communication on Muslim-friendly facilities	Ancillary Services
ST2	Raise facility cleanliness standards consistently across both destinations.	Amenities
ST3	Position halal certification and the virtual umrah feature as a competitive advantage against rival destinations	Attractions
WT1	Form a cross-sector coordination forum with a clear legal basis	Ancillary Services
WT2	Implement technology-based visitor capacity management	Accessibility
WT3	Develop a phased roadmap for halal accommodation certification	Accommodation

SWOT Factors Affecting the Strengthening of Muslim-Friendly Tourism

SWOT factors were derived through thematic condensation of interview and observation data, then validated by cross-checking each identified factor against at least two independent data sources, following the source triangulation procedure described in the Method section. No numeric weighting was applied to internal and external factors, consistent with the qualitative descriptive design of this study.

In response to RQ3, the SWOT analysis identified seven strengths, seven weaknesses, six opportunities, and six threats affecting the development of Muslim-friendly tourism in Kota Batu's artificial tourism destinations, as summarized in Figure 2. The most influential strength lies in the high number of predominantly Muslim visitors, combined with the existing halal certification at Jatim Park 1. At the same time, the most critical weakness is the absence of a specific regional regulation governing Muslim-friendly tourism standards.

Formulating Strategies to Strengthen Muslim-Friendly Tourism Attractiveness

Addressing RQ4, the SWOT matrix following Ranguti (2018) generated 12 strategic alternatives across four groups. The SO, WO, ST, and WT groups were mapped onto the six 6A's components, as presented in Figure 3. Accessibility, amenities, and ancillary services emerge as short-term priorities because they can be addressed quickly without major infrastructure investment. In contrast, accommodation requires a medium- to long-term approach given the greater time and investment needed for halal accommodation certification. Drafting the regional regulation on Muslim-friendly tourism, part of the WO strategy group, is positioned as the priority foundation because most other strategies depend on a clear legal and policy basis as a precondition for effective cross-sector coordination (Ansell & Gash, 2008). This is consistent with David (2011), who states that effective strategy formulation must be followed by an implementation framework with clear

authority and institutional continuity.

Note: SO= Strengths Opportunities, WO= Weaknesses Opportunities, ST= Strengths Threats, WT= Weaknesses Threats

■ CONCLUSION

This study aimed to address four research questions regarding Muslim-friendly tourism at Jatim Park 1 and Alun-alun Kota Batu. Stakeholder understanding was found to remain uneven across government, religious, and business actors. Destination readiness across the 6A's components was only partially fulfilled, with amenities relatively stronger than accommodation and ancillary services. Seven strengths, seven weaknesses, six opportunities, and six threats were identified as shaping the development of Muslim-friendly tourism at both sites. Twelve strategic alternatives were formulated, with drafting a regional regulation identified as the foundational priority strategy.

For local policymakers, the most actionable recommendation from this study is to prioritize drafting a regional regulation on Muslim friendly tourism, adapting the model already implemented under West Nusa Tenggara Province Regional Regulation No. 2 of 2016 (Rahmatullah, 2023), as a legal foundation that would enable coordinated implementation of the remaining strategic alternatives, including the establishment of a cross sector coordination forum and a phased roadmap for halal accommodation certification.

This framework was developed and tested on two artificial tourism destinations representing two distinct management models, centralized commercial management and government-managed public space, within a single city. While the analytical approach may offer a useful starting point for other artificial destinations with comparable management structures, its direct applicability to all artificial tourism destinations in Indonesia has not been empirically tested. It should be treated as a direction for future research rather than an established finding. Future research is encouraged to more explicitly develop the networking dimension among tourism stakeholders within the 6A's framework, as institutional coordination proved to be a determining factor in the success of strategies for strengthening Muslim-friendly tourism in artificial tourism destinations.

■ DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI USAGE IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the drafting of this manuscript, the author(s) utilized Claude (Anthropic) to improve language quality, refine sentence

structure, and assist in identifying potentially relevant scholarly literature. All suggested references were independently verified for relevance and accuracy before inclusion. Following the use of this tool, the author(s) reviewed and revised the manuscript as necessary and accept full responsibility for the final content of the article.

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