

Halal Tourism in Historic Areas: Analysis of the Availability of Worship Facilities in Surabaya's Old Town

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Abstract: Based on data from the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Muslim population in Indonesia has reached 229.62 million people, which is the basis for the development of Muslim-friendly tourist destinations. One of the areas currently undergoing development is the old town of Surabaya, a historic area that has long been known as a center of trade and services. This study aims to analyze the adequacy of worship facilities in the Old Town of Surabaya based on DSN-MUI Fatwa No. 108/2016 and the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), particularly in terms of accessibility, capacity, and fulfillment of the basic worship needs of Muslims. The research method used a mixed methods approach, combining field observations, literature studies, and questionnaires distributed to visitors. Based on the results of observations and questionnaires, worship facilities such as prayer rooms and places for wudu (ablution) are available and easily accessible to most visitors. However, there are still shortcomings in terms of accessibility for people with disabilities, the availability of worship equipment, and other supporting facilities. Respondents' assessments ranged from 3 to 4 on a scale of 5, which means that they are quite good but still need improvement.

Keywords: Halal Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Worship Facilities, Muslim-friendly Tourism, Surabaya Old Town

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1. Introduction

Indonesia is a country with enormous tourism potential, supported by abundant natural resources and unique cultural diversity. Recent data shows that Indonesia's Muslim population reaches 229.62 million people, or about 87.2% of the total population of 269.6 million. This figure places Indonesia as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, contributing around 13.1% of the total global Muslim population, which is projected to reach 2.2 billion by 2030 (Matsuki, 2020). This huge demographic potential is a strategic asset for the development of halal tourism in Indonesia, while also reflecting the characteristics of a nation steeped in Islamic values. This condition not only creates a conducive environment for domestic Muslim tourists, but also becomes a special attraction for international Muslim tourists who want to enjoy a travel experience that is in accordance with Islamic values. The tourism sector based on Islamic values is better known as halal tourism.

Halal tourism is part of the tourism industry aimed at tourists, especially Muslim tourists. Halal tourism refers to the provision of locations, transportation, consumption, and accommodation in accordance with the rules of Islamic law (Sukma et al., 2021). Seeing this great potential, Indonesia has developed in the tourism sector based on Islamic values. Academic interest in halal tourism has grown substantially over the past decade. Halal tourism has expanded significantly in Southeast Asia, driven by rising Muslim populations, economic growth, and an increased demand for Shariah-compliant travel services. Bibliometric analyses confirm this trajectory: thematic studies on halal tourism cluster into nine key categories, namely Muslim tourist behavior and loyalty, policy and governance, branding and promotion, religious moderation and local wisdom, destination strategies, halal food consumption, technology and digitalization, literacy and social capital, and halal certification.

Among these, Indonesia has emerged as the country with the highest volume of published halal tourism scholarship (Supriyadi & Rahman, 2024). Previous studies have largely focused on tourist behavior and satisfaction, while aspects of facility implementation and certification remain

underexplored, indicating a critical research gap that the present study seeks to address. The role of worship facilities within the halal tourism ecosystem has been a recurring concern in the literature. Information on the availability of mosques and prayer rooms is considered an essential requirement for Muslim tourists, given that the five-time daily prayer constitutes a strict religious obligation under Islamic law (Afnarius et al., 2020).

A study on Geographic Information System (GIS) development for mosque mapping in Bukittinggi, Indonesia, demonstrated that inadequate information on mosque locations significantly hinders the Muslim travel experience, reinforcing the necessity for accessible and well-documented prayer infrastructure at tourist destinations (Afnarius et al., 2020). Complementing this, recent research has proposed a framework for the standardization of public worship facilities in Muslim-friendly tourism areas, incorporating indicators such as accessibility, layout, safety, supporting facilities, and cleanliness. These studies collectively underscore the importance of evaluating worship facilities not merely from a quantitative standpoint, but through a comprehensive, multi-dimensional lens. From a technological perspective, digital platforms have increasingly become important instruments for enhancing the halal travel experience.

These platforms provide halal-specific information such as the location of prayer rooms and nearby mosques, prayer timings, and Qibla direction indicators, as well as the halal certification status of food establishments, thereby significantly facilitating travel planning for Muslim tourists (Azam et al., 2024). This development reflects the growing expectation among modern Muslim travelers for tourism destinations to not only provide adequate worship facilities, but to ensure that such information is readily accessible through digital channels. At the global level, the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), developed by Mastercard-CrescentRating, has become the primary international benchmark for evaluating the readiness of tourism destinations to serve Muslim travelers. The GMTI assesses destinations worldwide based on the ACES 3.0 framework, which covers four key dimensions: ease of access to the destination; internal and external communication by the destination; the overall environment and setting of the destination; and the range of services provided to cater to the needs of Muslim travelers (Mastercard & Crecentrating, 2024).

Indonesia has demonstrated a consistent high performance within this framework, achieving first place in the GMTI rankings in 2019, 2023, and 2024, reflecting the country's foundational commitment to high-quality Muslim-friendly services (Mastercard & Crecentrating, 2024). However, Indonesia's position shifted to fifth place in the GMTI 2025, not due to declining performance but as a result of intensified global competition. This development signals the urgent need for Indonesia to accelerate innovation, strengthen halal certification for micro and small enterprises, expand accessibility, and enhance regional-level halal tourism initiatives (Mastercard & Crecentrating, 2025). At the national regulatory level, Fatwa DSN-MUI No. 108/2016 serves as the key domestic reference framework for halal tourism in Indonesia, establishing Sharia-compliant standards for accommodation, food services, and worship facilities at tourist destinations. When applied in conjunction with the GMTI's ACES framework, these two standards form a complementary, dual-layer evaluation system one grounded in Islamic jurisprudence, and the other in global market benchmarking. Their combined application constitutes a rigorous and comprehensive approach to assessing the halal tourism readiness of a destination (Mastercard & Crecentrating, 2025).

The Old Town area of Surabaya is a historic region that once served as a center for trade and services, preserving colonial architectural heritage and high cultural value. Since its inauguration as a tourist destination in 2024, this area has undergone significant transformation with the emergence of various creative economic activities. One of its main attractions is the presence of unique cafes based on antique cars that have become new icons, combined with dozens of MSMEs selling local products, ranging from culinary to handicrafts. This development has not only revived the historical value of the area but also created a new space for sustainable and inclusive tourism. With the concept of heritage meets creativity, Surabaya's Old Town has the potential to become a successful example of the revitalization of a historic area that combines cultural preservation with the modern economy (Lini, 2024).

This study aims to analyze the adequacy of worship facilities in the Old Town of Surabaya based on two main standards, namely Fatwa DSN-MUI No. 108/2016 as a sharia reference and the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) as a global standard for halal tourism (Mastercard & Crecentrating, 2025). The research focuses on three crucial aspects, namely the accessibility of worship facilities for tourists, adequate capacity, and the fulfillment of basic worship needs such as cleanliness, privacy, and the suitability of the direction of the qibla. To achieve these objectives, this study uses a mixed

methods approach with data collection techniques through field observations, literature studies, and the distribution of questionnaires to visitors. The data obtained is then analyzed thematically and descriptively.

The results of this study are expected to form the basis for synergistic collaboration between the central/regional government, area managers, and relevant stakeholders (such as DSN-MUI, MSME actors, and communities) in developing comprehensive standards for worship facilities. Thus, the Old Town area of Surabaya will not only be able to meet the needs of domestic Muslim tourists but will also be ready to compete as a sustainable international halal tourism destination.

2. Materials and Methods

As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, where 87.2% of the population is Muslim, Indonesia has strategic potential in the development of halal tourism. This potential is further strengthened by its natural wealth and cultural diversity, which are major tourist attractions. In the context of halal tourism development, the Old Town of Surabaya has emerged as a unique destination that combines colonial history with modern creativity through the presence of antique car-based cafes and dozens of local MSMEs. This study specifically aims to analyze the adequacy of worship facilities in the area as a halal tourism destination.

The research framework is built on three main pillars: First, the potential for halal tourism, supported by the large Muslim population and government policies on the development of sharia-based tourism. Second, worship facility standards that refer to DSN MUI Fatwa No. 108/2016 as a sharia reference with parameters such as the availability of prayer rooms, clean ablution facilities, privacy, and a clear direction of the qibla, followed by the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) as an international standard, a global standard that measures the readiness of halal tourist destinations in terms of worship facilities, halal cuisine, and Muslim-friendly environments. Third, the practical needs of Muslim tourists, which include accessibility, capacity, and the sharia compliance of worship facilities. This study uses a mixed methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods to obtain comprehensive data. Data collection was carried out using the following techniques:

a. Field Observation

Direct monitoring of worship facilities in the Old Town area of Surabaya. Researchers reviewed the condition of worship facilities, such as prayer rooms and places for wudu (ablution), providing a clear picture of the availability, cleanliness, and completeness of worship facilities in the Old Town area of Surabaya.

b. Literature Study

A review of DSN-MUI Fatwa No. 108/2016, GMTI, and previous research journals related to halal tourism. This analysis helped researchers understand the applicable standards and compare them with field findings.

c. Questionnaire

A questionnaire was distributed to 30 visitors to the Old Town area of Surabaya to measure their level of satisfaction with the available worship facilities. The questions in the questionnaire covered aspects of accessibility, capacity, cleanliness, and sharia compliance. The data from this questionnaire provided a direct perspective from the users of the facilities, which was an important indicator in the study.

After the data was collected, data analysis was carried out using two approaches. Qualitatively, findings from observations and literature studies were grouped based on themes such as accessibility, capacity, and sharia compliance to identify patterns and gaps. Quantitatively, the questionnaire responses were processed using descriptive statistics to calculate the percentage of tourist satisfaction with worship facilities.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the data from the questionnaire results that we have distributed to visitors who have come to the old city of Surabaya, as many as 30 respondents with an age range of 18 – 44 years. Respondents were dominated by women as ±83% with only 1 respondent with disabilities.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents (n = 30)

No.	Characteristics	Categories	n	%
1	Gender	Women	25	83,3
		Male	5	16,7
2	Disability Status	No	29	96,7
		Yes	1	3,3
3	Age (years)	17–20	18	60,0
		21–30	11	36,7
		31–50	1	3,3

Note: n = number of respondents; % = percentage of the total sample

Table 2. Average mosque facility assessment score by respondents (n = 30)

No.	Assessment Indicators	Average (\bar{x})	Categories
1	Satisfaction of supporting facilities	3,27	Pretty Good.
2	Woman friendly	3,25	Pretty Good.
3	Condition of prayer equipment	3,10	Pretty Good.
4	The Comfort of a Safe Place	3,07	Pretty Good.
5	Toilet cleanliness	3,05	Pretty Good.
6	Disability toilet comfort	2,98	Pretty Good.
	Overall average	3,12	Pretty Good.

Note: Rating scale 1–5. Categories: 1.00–1.80 = Very Poor; 1.81–2.60 = Bad; 2.61–3.40 = Pretty Good; 3.41–4.20 = Good; 4.21–5.00 = Excellent.

The finding that nearly all respondents were aware of mosque and prayer room locations within the Old Town area is a positive indicator, suggesting that worship facilities occupy strategically visible positions within the destination layout. This aligns with the GMTI 2025 criterion stipulating that prayer facilities must be easily discoverable by Muslim visitors. However, awareness alone is insufficient; the DSN-MUI Fatwa (Ketujuh, ayat 2a) explicitly requires that worship facilities be not only accessible but also functionally adequate and sharia-compliant. The mean score for Supporting Facilities ($\bar{x} = 3.27$) suggests that while the basic infrastructure exists, it has not yet attained the standard of "Good" (≥ 3.41).

Given that 83.3% of respondents were female, the Women-Friendly indicator ($\bar{x} = 3.25$) carries particular significance. The DSN-MUI Fatwa mandates that worship facilities meet full sharia requirements, which necessarily includes adequate gender-segregated spaces and sufficient prayer garments (mukena and sarung). Respondents reported a shortage of available mukena and an insufficient number of clearly marked prayer equipment storage areas. This finding is consistent with studies in other Indonesian heritage destinations that have similarly identified prayer garment availability as a persistent gap in Muslim-friendly facility provision (Battour & Ismail, 2016).

Toilet cleanliness received a mean score of 3.05, the second lowest among all indicators. The DSN-MUI Fatwa (Seventh, paragraph 1e) explicitly mandates the maintenance of cleanliness, sanitation, and environmental hygiene at sharia-compliant tourist destinations. In the Islamic context, cleanliness (taharah) is not merely a hygiene consideration but a religious prerequisite, as physical purity is a condition for the validity of prayer. Substandard sanitation at ablution and toilet facilities therefore directly undermines a visitor's capacity to fulfill religious obligations, making this finding particularly noteworthy from a sharia compliance perspective.

The lowest mean score across all indicators was recorded for Disability Toilet Comfort ($\bar{x} = 2.98$). The sole participant with a disability explicitly reported that toilet access was obstructed by stairways, rendering the facility inaccessible for wheelchair users. The absence of dedicated ramps constitutes a significant gap relative to the DSN-MUI Fatwa (Seventh, paragraph 1d), which mandates that tourist destinations realize "universal and inclusive goodness" (Goodness that is universal and inclusive). This principle is further reinforced by the GMTI 2025 framework's growing emphasis on inclusive Muslim-friendly destinations. The provision of barrier-free access is not merely a matter of physical infrastructure but reflects the Islamic value of equity and non-discrimination in public spaces.

Synthesizing the findings against the dual evaluative framework of GMTI 2025 and DSN-MUI Fatwa No. 108/2016, the Old Town of Surabaya demonstrates partial compliance with Islamic tourism standards. Core elements including the visible presence of worship facilities, basic prayer equipment, and a generally safe environment are in place. However, three critical areas require systematic improvement: disability accessibility, prayer equipment availability and visibility, and sanitation standards. These gaps collectively prevent the destination from achieving the level of Muslim-friendliness expected by the international Muslim traveler market, as defined by the GMTI 2025 framework.

4. Conclusion

Study shows that the Old Town area of Surabaya has great potential to be developed as a sustainable halal tourist destination. This is supported by the historical value of the area, creative transformation through the presence of MSMEs and thematic cafes, and its location in the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. Based on observations and questionnaires, worship facilities such as prayer rooms and places for wudu (ablution) are available and easily accessible to most visitors. However, there are still shortcomings in terms of accessibility for people with disabilities, the availability of worship equipment, and other supporting facilities. Respondents' ratings ranged from 3 to 4 on a scale of 5, which means that the facilities are quite good but still need improvement.

With reference to the DSN-MUI Fatwa No. 108/2016 and the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) standards, this study proposes several recommendations to improve the quality of worship in this area. First, facilities for people with disabilities need to be improved, such as special toilets. Second, adding signboards pointing to the location of prayer rooms, mosques, and toilets is very important to make it easier for visitors to find the facilities they need. Third, worship equipment such as prayer robes and sarongs should be provided in sufficient quantities and in clean and usable condition. Fourth, the cleanliness of toilets and wudu areas needs to be a serious concern for managers, considering that this is part of sharia compliance.

Finally, the wudu zone and women's prayer area should be designed to be more enclosed and comfortable in order to maintain the privacy and comfort of Muslim visitors. By implementing improvements based on these recommendations, it is hoped that the Old Town area of Surabaya can provide a more welcoming tourist experience for Muslim travelers and become an example of inclusive, world-class halal tourism destination development. This study is limited by its cross-sectional design and relatively small sample size ($n = 30$). Future research should employ larger probability samples, incorporate multi-method approaches including structured observation and stakeholder interviews, and extend the investigation to other heritage tourism destinations in Indonesia to enable comparative analysis.

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