

Development of Sustainable Muslim-Friendly Tourism: A Case Study of the Management of Mina Padi Educational Tourism in Banyumas

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the development of sustainable Muslim-friendly tourism at the Mina Padi Educational Tourism Site in Panembangan Village, Banyumas, using the Access, Communication, Environment, and Services (ACES) dimensions of the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) as an analytical framework. This qualitative case study is based on interviews with tourism managers and community representatives, local business owners, and tourists, supplemented by observations and documentation. The findings indicate that the destination's key strengths are its rice-fish farming landscape, hands-on educational activities for school groups, community participation, and affordable access costs. Lokal residents are involved as guides, food vendors and service workers; tourism revenue is managed through business contributions and revenue-sharing arrangements. However, the visitor experience is hampered by poor road conditions, an insufficient number of restrooms, exposure to heat and rain, and the lack of fully functional dedicated prayer facilities complete with wudu facilities and prayer equipment. One tourist described repeated family visits and the children's enjoyment of feeding fish and swimming, while noting that the admission cost was affordable since they only paid for parking. The findings indicate that Mina Padi has a strong community and environment based foundation, but the availability of Muslim-friendly services remains uneven. This study contributes by applying the GMTI-ACES framework at the level of agricultural education tourism destinations and demonstrates that community participation alone does not guarantee adequate access to and provision of worship services.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a crucial sector in supporting both national and regional economic growth. The Banyumas tourism region boasts abundant natural and cultural potential, featuring breathtaking natural scenery and rich local cultural heritage. However, tourism growth must meet the needs of an increasingly diverse tourist demographic, particularly Muslim tourists. This makes Muslim tourists a highly potential target market. The growing awareness among Muslim tourists of the importance of Sharia-compliant tourism necessitates that tourism destination managers develop plans to meet these needs (Nugroho et al., 2021; Santoso et al., 2021). Indonesia is capitalizing on the halal lifestyle trend by developing halal tourism. Muslim-friendly tourism is a segment of the tourism sector that services to travelers in accordance with Islamic principles. However, the public and stakeholders have differing understandings of Muslim-friendly tourism, which can pose a challenge (Hermawan Adinugraha et al., 2025). Muslim-friendly tourism is a growing segment within the global tourism industry that refers to the provision of facilities, services, and travel experiences that meet the specific needs of Muslim travelers based on Sharia principles. In a global context, this trend is on the rise alongside the growth of the world's Muslim population, which is projected to reach approximately 2.3 billion people by 2030 and account for about 27% of the total world population, driving demand

for travel that aligns with religious needs and spiritual experiences (Mastercard CrescentRating, 2024). The Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) is a global index compiled periodically by Mastercard and CrescentRating to measure the competitiveness of travel destinations in meeting the needs of international Muslim travelers. This index evaluates more than one hundred countries based on four main categories; access, communication, environment, and services (ACES). The services category is the largest component of the assessment because it reflects the extent to which halal facilities, places of worship, and safe travel experiences that comply with Sharia principles are available to Muslim travelers. A community-benefit perspective also indicates that the development of halal tourism must take into account the interests and well-being local residents (Dewi, 2023).

Tourism can support the livelihoods of rural communities if local potential is developed without damaging the environmental and social systems that sustain it. Sustainable tourism emphasizes a balance between economic benefits for the community, sociocultural sustainability, and environmental conservation; a community-based approach can help integrate these three aspects through community participation in the management and utilization of local potential (Priatmoko et al., 2021; Risfandini, 2024). In Panembangan Village, Cilongok Subdistrict, Banyumas Regency, the “Mina Padi” system-which integrates rice and fish farming-has developed as both an agricultural practice and the foundation for educational tourism. This destination offers visitors the opportunity to experience village life and agricultural processes firsthand, rather than merely enjoying the scenery as a visual attraction. Its development raises a practical question: To what extent can community-managed agricultural destinations provide a sustainable tourism experience while also meeting the needs of Muslim tourists? In this article, Muslim-friendly tourism is understood as tourism that reasonably provides for the basic needs of Muslim tourists without requiring every destination to be a tourists site specifically oriented toward religious activities. These practical needs include access to halal food, opportunities for worship, cleanliness, safety, and visitor-friendly service. These aspects must be assessed based on the destination’s actual capacity and the travelers’ experience, rather than being assumed to be available simply because the destination is located in a predominantly Muslim community (Sarastiani et al., 2022). The Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) can serve as reference for assessing a tourist destination’s readiness. This article uses the Access, Communication, Environment, and Services (ACES) dimensions as an analytical framework, rather than as an official GMTI assessment or ranking. This distinction is important because a rural destination may possess strong environmental and community potential but still lack basic infrastructure or consistent services.

Previous research has examined halal tourism as a strategy for regional economic development and discussed the need to improve accessibility and the tourist experience in Central Java (Aniqoh & Tayob, 2022), as well as highlighted the importance of community participation in the development of halal tourism villages (Adinugraha et al., 2020). A study on the ACES 3.0 framework also emphasizes the need to focus on access and the environment, as well as collaboration among stakeholders (Irsyad & Mursyid, 2024). Furthermore, community-based tourism underscores the importance of resident participation, while research on Mina Padi in system (Ayal et al., 2024). These studies can serve as a relevant foundation, but they do not specifically explain how village-scale agricultural tourism sites can meet the practical dimensions of Muslim-friendly travel. The research gap discussed in this article does not lie in the lack of a general definition of Muslim-friendly tourism. Rather, the gap lies in the limited explanation at the destination level regarding the relationship between agricultural learning, local economic participation, physical access, and worship services within the context of village tourism. The novelty of this article lies in the application of the GMTI-ACES framework to analyze the Mina Padi Educational Tourism program and to compare the strengths of the environment and community with the specific and infrastructure challenges reported by managers, residents, and tourists. Community cooperation, the hospitality of

residents, and the fact that food vendors hold halal certificates are relevant strengths. However, these factors cannot replace Muslim tourists' need for religious observance and safe, comfortable access. A destination services readiness, as the literature discusses halal product certification and Sharia-compliant hotels as related but not identical issues to the readiness of the entire tourist area (Evi Sopiah et al., 2024; Farih Fahmi et al., 2025; Shifa Akhsanty et al., 2023). Thus, Muslim-friendly tourism should not be treated merely as a label but as a set of practical conditions that can still be improved. This study examines how the Mina Padi Educational Tourism site is managed, how local communities and tourists experience it, and what these findings reveal when analyzed through the GMTI-ACES framework. By focusing on management practices and reported experiences regarding the uneven development of Muslim-friendly rural tourism, this article also offers priorities for improvement to managers without claiming that this case represents all tourism villages.

2. METHODS

The study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the management and tourist experiences at the Mina Padi Educational Tourism Site in Panembangan Village, Cilongok Subdistrict, Banyumas Regency. Preliminary research was conducted in Juni-July 2025, and data were updated through interviews and observations on October 7-8, 2026, to capture phenomenon in a real-world context through multiple data sources (Yin et al., 2018). Informants were selected based on their direct involvement or experience with the destination, including Mrs. Ngasimmag (manager and Pkk member), Mr. Candra (manager and Karang Taruna member), Mr. Untung Sanyoto, S.Pd (Village Head), Mrs. Khalimah (local business owner), as well as tourist including Mrs. Muti'ah, Mr. Amin, and Mrs. Saroh. Interviews with tourists, Pokdarwis managers, and business owners were conducted on October 7, 2026, while the interview with the Village Head was conducted in person on October 8, 2026. Tourists' accounts were used to understand their visit experiences, not to represent the entire visitor population. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation.

The interviews explored the history of the destination's development, the division of roles among managers, the involvement of local businesses, tourists' experiences, and management challenges. Observations covered tourism activities, the rice field environment, road access, restrooms, rest areas, and places of worship-which are part of the "Muslim-friendly" indicators. Documentation was used as supporting data regarding the destination's development and promotion. Data were analyzed interactively through three stages; data condensation, data presentation, and the derivation and verification of conclusions (Miles et al., 2020). Data from interviews, observations, documentation were grouped into themes related to management, the local economy, tourist experiences, and the GMTI-ACES dimensions. The findings were then presented thematically and mapped within the GMTI-ACES qualitative matrix. This matrix serves as a research analysis tool, not an official GMTI score. Data validity in this study was ensured through source triangulation, which involved comparing statements from managers, community representatives, business operators, and tourists, and then cross-checking them against available observations and documentation. This step was taken to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the management of the Mina Padi Educational Tourism site, community involvement, and the fulfillment of Muslim tourist's needs. Korstjens & Moser (2018) explain that triangulation is one strategy for enhancing the credibility of qualitative research findings. Thus, the interpretation of the research results is based on the consistency between informants' accounts, field conditions, and supporting documentation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on observations, interviews, and field documentation, the findings indicate that the Mina Padi Educational Tourism program combines agricultural education, family recreation, and the provision of community-based services. In addition, the Mina Padi Educational Tourism site in Banyumas also exhibits characteristics of community-based sustainable tourism. Its main strengths are the rice paddy and fish landscape, opportunities for children to interact directly with fish and engage in agricultural activities, and the involvement of local residents. However, the destination's readiness is uneven: road conditions, restroom, weather protection, and places of worship do not consistently support a comfortable visitor experience. The findings of this study were analyzed using the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) indicators, which cover the aspects of access communication, environment, and services (ACES). The following sections outline the history and management structure, local economic arrangements, tourist experiences, and a qualitative mapping of the ACES dimensions.

History and Management Organization

This destination development through several stages, rather than a single launch. Field notes mention river tubing as an initial attraction around 2019, followed by village tourism planning under the "Swarga Mina Padi" identity in 2020 as the rice-farming program expanded. Visitors began arriving for rice-farming educational activities around the end of 2021, while 2022 is described as a period of reopening or more formal development following challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, accompanied by the gradual addition of facilities. Community-based management involves members of the Pokdarwis, consisting of women from the PKK and the local Karang Taruna youth organization. Field notes identify Mrs. Ngasimah as a manager involved in tourism activities as well as a member of Pokdarwis. Youth involvement is particularly crucial for river tubing activities, while other Pokdarwis members contribute through the sale of fish feed and tourism services. The organization operates in a practical and flexible manner. Educational activities related to the rice-fish system—including planting rice, learning about the rice-fish system, and catching fish—are not held on a fixed daily schedule. These activities are conducted on a reservation basis, typically for school groups and field trips involving preschoolers or elementary school students. Local guides will tailor the activities to the group's specific needs. This flexibility helps the destination accommodate reservations, but visitors who arrive without a prior appointment may not receive the same educational experience.

Muslim-Friendly Facilities and Service

Field notes indicate a gap between the destination's potential as a Muslim-friendly tourist site and the current availability of prayer facilities. A dedicated prayer room with wudu facilities and a complete set of prayer equipment was not yet fully available during the period described. Visitors can temporarily use the main pavilion for prayer or rest, while prayer equipment can be borrowed from the management or local business operators. Mrs. Ngasimah explained "As part of this development, construction of a prayer hall (mosque) is still underway, and a small lake will also be built to further enhance the tourist experience in the future". This statement indicates that dedicated prayer facilities remain part of the development plan rather than facilities that are already fully operational. Food vendors are local residents, and field notes indicate that these vendors already hold halal certifications. This finding must be distinguished from destination-wide certification; the available evidence does not indicate that the entire tourist area or all services have been certified under a single, uniform standard. Consequently, Muslim-friendly services are only partially fulfilled.

Food provision is a strength, whereas the lack of dedicated prayer spaces, adequate wudu facilities, and prayer equipment remains a clear shortcoming.

Community Participation and Local Economic Management

Local residents participate as tour guides, food vendors, parking attendants, and providers of tourist activities and facilities. Mrs. Khalimah, a local vendor who has been involved since the early days of the tourism operation, stated that residents of Panembangan are given priority to run businesses in the area. Many vendors also work as farmers, so tourism activities serve as an additional source of income rather than always replacing agricultural work. The monthly contribution from UMKM vendors for their sales spaces is Rp. 155,000, which is included in the Pokdarwis budget. Field notes indicate that worker payments are supported by revenue from parking or entrance fees, the Mina Padi activity, the swimming pool, gazebos, and river tubing. Workers are paid based on half-day shifts, even though visitor numbers fluctuate. This arrangement provides a source of income for residents, but operational capacity remains dependent on revenue from these attractions. Admission fees are relatively affordable, as visitors only need to pay a parking fee of Rp. 3,000 for motorcycles and Rp. 5,000 for a group of cars, while separate fees apply for activities such as the swimming pool, river tubing and gazebos. The public pavilion area is free to use, and many families typically bring their own food. This local economic model is significant because community participation goes beyond mere symbolic involvement. Residents provide services and generate income through sales, rotating work shifts, and revenue from tourism activities. This model aligns with discussions on community-based tourism, which links local involvement to sustainable development and community well-being (Hutnaleontina et al., 2022). However, the available information does not yet indicate the magnitude or distribution of net profits among all parties involved. Therefore, this study identifies the existence of local economic participation but does not conclude that there has been a specific increase in household income.

Tourist Experiences

Tourists describe this destination as a unique place with a peaceful rural atmosphere, perfect for family visits. Activities include buying and feeding fish in ponds or rice fields; children can swim, enjoy the rural atmosphere, and savor warm mendoan and hot unsweetened tea. This experience combines recreation with informal learning about rural agricultural. These activities are suitable for families and school groups, although structured educational activities require advance booking. Studies on tourist experiences and satisfaction highlight the importance of destination experience quality in shaping tourist responses, including electronic word-of-mouth communication (Aimon et al., 2023), while research on Muslim tourists emphasizes the connection between experience, religiosity, and visit intent (Ibrahim et al., 2025). Mrs. Muti'ah recounted her repeated visits "I've been here many times with my family; my child also really enjoys feeding the fish and swimming here. Besides offering a charming rural atmosphere, the admission fee is very affordable-you only need to pay parking." This statement illustrates the connection between affordable costs, children's activities, and the appeal of the rural environment. However, positive perceptions do not eliminate practical issues such as damaged access roads and limited prayer facilities, which are also cited as sources of inconvenience.

Infrastructure and Promotion Challenges

The destination is located in the middle of rice fields, which are a key part of its appeal but also leave visitors exposed to the heat and rain, as there are still limited places to take shelter. The number of restrooms is also insufficient during peak times. Road access is damaged, and construction activities as well as heavy vehicles reportedly make travel even more difficult. This issue is not merely a matter of appearance but affects safety, comfort, and the consistency of service. Promotion

is carried out through several social media accounts and information channels. Field notes indicate that the river tubing account @sukan_rivertubing has the most followers and viewers, while @Panembangan.tourism showcases the broader identity. This suggests that the destination gains visibility through spesific attractions, but information about the overall tourism experience is potentially scattered across multiple accounts. The recorded information website is wisatapanembangan.id. These findings align with studies that digital tourism as a means of developing Muslim-friendly tourism villages, with the caveat that digital media must be supported by clear and coordinated destination information (Noviarita et al., 2024). Destinations can be developed through the coordination of information regarding reservations, activity schedules, pricing, and updates on Muslim-friendly facilities and services.

Table 1. Qualitative mapping of Mina Padi against GMTI-ACES

GMTI-ACES Dimension	Evidence from the case	Qualitative Analysis
Access	The access road to the site is still damaged and, under certain conditions, difficult to traverse. Road repairs are a critical need as visitor numbers increase.	Still needs improvement
Communication	There are Instagram accounts related to rever tubing, Pokdarwis, Panembangan.tourism, and the website wisatapanembangan.id. However, promotional communications remain scattered, and the sukan_rivertubing account appears to be more active and visible to the public.	Already available, but not yet integrated
Environtment	Mina Padi combines rice farming and fish farming and serves as an agricultural conditions and seasons.	Relatively strong
Services	Food from local businesses is reported to be halal-certified.	Growing, but not yet evenly distributed

DISCUSSION

When viewed rthrough the GMTI-ACES framework, the findings of this study indicate that Mina Padi cannot yet be fully described as Muslim-friendly or considered to have achieved a specific official GMTI rating. The Environment dimension represents the most evident relative strength; rice and fish farming provide an ecological and educational and educational foundation, while the village landsape is a key component of the tourist experience. The Services dimension show a mixed picture: the availability of local food and affordable basic costs are positive aspects, but prayer facilities, restroom, and weather protection remain inadequate. The Access dimension is costrained by road conditions, while Communication has potential through digital channels, though information appears scattered across multiple accounts. Community-based management helps explain how the destination remains oprational despite limited formal infrastructure. Pokdarwis members, farmers, and merchants contribute their labor and diverse expertise. This aligns with studies on community-based tourism that emphasize how local participation can strengthen residents' sense of ownership and economic opportunities (Adinugraha et al., 2020; Hariyadi et al., 2024; Priatmoko et al., 2021). Menghayati et al. (2021) explain the interconnection between community-based tourism and sustainable tourism in the development of halal tourism, which positions community participation as a curcial aspect of destination management. This is relevant to the management of the Mina Padi Educational Tourism site in Panembangan Village, which involves a Pokdarwis group comprising PKK women and youth organizations in tourism activities and the provision of visitor amenities. However, community paticipation should not be romanticised; residents' efforts alone are insufficient to repair damaged roads, provide adequate restroom, and construc dedicated places of

worship. This case highlight both the benefits and limitations of community-based management when infrastructure investment and services lag behind the growing needs of visitors.

The agricultural nature of this destination is both a strength and a management challenge. Direct contact with rice and fish provides children with learning experiences that might not be found at typical recreational sites. However, the open rice-field area leaves visitors exposed to heat and rain. Therefore, landscape conservation must be balanced with the provision of adequate shelter. From the perspective of sustainable tourism, these findings highlight three interrelated dimensions: the environmental dimension, the social dimension through the involvement of Pokdarwis and business oprators, and the economic dimensions through sales opportunities and income generated by various tourism activities. The study by Oktadiana & Rahman (2025) examines sustainable travel practices among Indonesian Muslim tourists, offering the perspective that travel experiences can be analyzed not only from a recreational standpoint but also in terms of values and responsibilities during the journey. The sustainable of Muslim-friendly tourism in this region is supported by the active involvement of local UMKM that responsibly utilize lcal agricultural and fishery resources. This approach not only strengthens the grassroots economy through the diversification of tourism products but also minimizes *the ecological footprint* in the Mina Padi tourism area (Agung & Triana, 2025). A study on the sustainability of the Mina Padi system also highlights the relevance of evaluating cultivation practices, although the context and location of that research differ from tourism management in Panembangan (Fyka et al., 2025). Furthermore, this approach aligns with the framework, which positions community-based tourism as a means of linking destination sustainability with benefits for local residents (Priatmoko et al., 2021; Risfandini, 2024). Nevertheless, the presence of these three dimensions does not necessarily mean that management is fully sustainable. Infrastructure improvements must enhance safety and comfort without eroding the agricultural character that defines the destination's uniqueness. Economic arrangements demonstrate community participation by providing sales spaces, shift-based work, and income from diverse activities. Vendors' contributions of Rp.155,000 per month and parking fess serve as concrete examples of destination revenue management. However, these figures should be interpreted as oprational details, not as evidence that benefits have been distributed evenly. This study does not include audited financial statements or comparisons of household incomes. Management can improve transparency through periodic reporting on revenue sources, oprational costs, and priorities for the reinvestment of revenue.

Muslim-friendly readiness is most clearly evident in the distinction between social values and infrastructure. Hospitality, local cuisine, and the community's Islamic social practices can shape a destination's atmosphere, but tourists also require practical access to prayer spaces and places for wudu. Halal certifications held by food vendors are a significant asset, but they cannot replace the need for comprehensive, dedicated worship facilities. This distiction aligns with research emphasizing that the development of halal tourism depends on destination attributes and implementation capacity, not merely on branding (Aniqoh & Tayob, 2022; Muheramtahadi & Fataron, 2022; Santoso et al., 2021). Studies on halal certification and policy implementation also indicate that standards and on-the-ground implementation must be considered separately (Evi Sopiah et al., 2024; Novita et al., 2024). Interview findings also reveal that tourists' experiences are not uniform. Families who prioritize affordable recreation such as feeding fish, swimming, and enjoying the lush rural atmosphere may view this destination positively. Conversely, tourists who require easily accessible prayer facilities or better road access may experience incovenience. These differences are important for managers; satisfaction cannot be concluded from just one positive testimonial, and improvements must consider the needs of different visitor groups without generalizing qualitative research findings to all tourists. The chronology of the destination's development also requires careful interpretation. The initial river tubing activities around 2019,

village tourism planning in 2020, the arrival of educational visitors in late 2021, and the reopening or formal development in 2022 appear to refer to distinct phases. This sequence of stages makes sense for a destination that is growing gradually, but supporting documents are needed to definitively confirm the chronology. For the same reason, claims regarding a ranking among the top 15 nationally in 2021 and the award from Pertamina must be verified through official documents before being presented as independently verified facts.

Based on the findings, the recommended order of priority for improvements is to repair roads and increase restroom capacity, complete the construction of a dedicated place of worship along with adequate wudu facilities and prayer equipment, and provide shaded areas appropriate for the rice paddy environment. These priorities are based on the identified constraints, not on assumptions regarding GMTI numerical scores. Educational activities are important, but their reservation-based nature needs to be clearly communicated. Schools and families can participate in rice planting and fishing activities when visitors make appointments through online reservations. Spontaneous visitors may prefer to enjoy the swimming pool, feed the fish, and take in the scenery. Providing an activity calendar or booking guidelines can bridge the gap between visitor expectations and available services while reinforcing the destination's identity as an educational tourism site. This case study contributes to research on sustainable Muslim-friendly tourism by demonstrating that environmental values, community participation, economic benefits, and service readiness develop at different paces. The Mina Padi agricultural system and community involvement are real strengths, but infrastructure and worship facilities have not yet developed at the same level. The main empirical finding is that a destination can be community-based and have environmental appeal, yet still fail to meet a number of practical needs as a Muslim-friendly destination. This analysis aligns with research on the sustainability of Mina Padi and community-based tourism (Ayal et al., 2024; Fyka et al., 2025; Priatmoko et al., 2021), while the use of the ACES framework helps map access, communication, environmental, and service needs in a more targeted manner (Irsyad & Mursyid, 2024). This study links agricultural systems with learning activities that depend on reservations, local income management, road and restroom constraints, and places of worship. The results provide a more detailed picture than the general assertion that the destination integrates Islamic values, ecology, and empowerment.

4. CONCLUSION

The Mina Padi Educational Tourism site in Panembangan Village has the potential for sustainable, Muslim-friendly tourism through the integration of rice-fish farming, agricultural education, community participation, and local economic opportunities. However, the GMTI-ACES analysis reveals an unbalanced development; the environment and community involvement are relative strengths, while road access, restroom, weather protection, tourist information, and places of worship still need improvement. The empirical contribution of this study is to demonstrate that community-based management and environmental appeal do not automatically make a destination ready to meet the particular needs of Muslim tourists. Therefore, development efforts should focus on improving basic services and coordinating information without losing the agricultural character that is central to the destination's appeal. This study has several limitations, including a case scope that focuses on a single destination, the unavailability of audited economic data, and the absence of comparison cases. Future research could document informant profiles more systematically, conduct repeated observations across different seasons and visitor groups, and assess the impact of infrastructure improvements on the tourist experience and the distribution of local economic benefits.

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