

Cultural Identity, Digital Branding, and Tourism Marketing: The Aengtong-Tong Keris Tradition in Sumenep, Indonesia

Abd. Syakur, Nursayidah, Suyanto

Dr. Soetomo University, Indonesia.

syakurabdmppd@gmail.com *✉

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

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Background: The rapid growth of Muslim-friendly tourism has created significant opportunities for destinations to integrate Islamic values, cultural heritage, and local wisdom into tourism development strategies. Sumenep Regency, known as the "City of Keris," possesses unique tourism assets through the Asta Tinggi Royal Cemetery and Aengtong-Tong Keris Tourism Village, which combine religious tourism, cultural heritage, local traditions, and spiritual experiences. Despite these strengths, the marketing of Muslim-friendly tourism in Sumenep remains fragmented and has not yet been supported by an integrated and sustainable tourism marketing framework.

Research Gap: Existing literature on Muslim-friendly tourism has predominantly focused on destination competitiveness, tourist satisfaction, halal tourism attributes, destination image, and service quality. Most of these studies employ quantitative approaches and concentrate on behavioral relationships among variables. Limited attention has been given to understanding the lived experiences, meanings, cultural interpretations, and local values that shape Muslim-friendly tourism destinations from the perspectives of stakeholders and visitors themselves. This gap is particularly evident in heritage-based Muslim-friendly tourism destinations where religious values and local wisdom coexist as core tourism resources.

Novelty: This study introduces novelty by developing a Muslim-friendly tourism marketing model based on phenomenological exploration of the Asta Tinggi Royal Cemetery and Aengtong-Tong Keris Tourism Village in Sumenep. Unlike previous studies that primarily rely on quantitative measurements and destination attributes, this research explores the meanings, experiences, values, and interpretations constructed by tourists, destination managers, religious leaders, cultural figures, local communities, and tourism stakeholders. The study further integrates Islamic values, local wisdom, heritage tourism, destination branding, digital communication, and Pentahelix collaboration into a comprehensive framework for Muslim-friendly destination development.

Method: A qualitative approach with phenomenological methodology was employed to understand the experiences, perceptions, and meanings constructed by stakeholders regarding Muslim-friendly tourism development. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation involving tourism officials, destination managers, religious leaders, cultural figures, tourism entrepreneurs, academics, media representatives, and tourists. Data analysis followed phenomenological procedures through transcription, horizontalization, coding, categorization, thematic analysis, interpretation, and synthesis.

Results: The findings identify six major themes: Islamic values, cultural heritage, local wisdom, spiritual experience, stakeholder collaboration, and destination branding. Islamic values were the most frequently identified theme (27 of 28 informants; 96.4 percent) and accounted for 24.7 percent of coded references. The proposed Meaning-Based Muslim-Friendly Tourism Marketing Model integrates Islamic values, cultural heritage, local wisdom, spiritual experience, destination branding, and Pentahelix

collaboration. The analysis further indicates that digital branding can translate cultural identity into marketable narratives through social media, digital storytelling, and integrated online destination information.

Conclusion: Sustainable Muslim-friendly tourism development in Sumenep requires more than halal-oriented facilities. It requires meaningful experiences, ethical service, cultural authenticity, coordinated digital branding, and collaborative governance. The study provides actionable directions for policymakers and destination stakeholders through infrastructure improvement, digital content coordination, heritage interpretation, service-quality strengthening, and a Pentahelix-based destination management mechanism.

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INTRODUCTION

The global tourism industry has experienced a significant transformation driven by the growth of Muslim travelers and the increasing demand for tourism products that accommodate Islamic values. Muslim-friendly tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing segments in the tourism sector, supported by the expansion of the halal economy encompassing food, hospitality, fashion, finance, and cultural tourism. Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, possesses substantial opportunities to develop Muslim-friendly tourism destinations based on religious values, cultural heritage, and local wisdom. Previous studies have highlighted that Muslim-friendly tourism contributes not only to tourism competitiveness but also to regional economic development, cultural preservation, and community empowerment (Jaelani, 2019; Santoso et al., 2021). Furthermore, Indonesia has consistently been recognized among the world's leading Muslim-friendly tourism destinations due to its strong cultural and religious resources.

One destination that possesses significant potential for Muslim-friendly tourism development is Sumenep Regency, East Java. Sumenep is widely known as the "City of Keris" and is characterized by a strong Islamic culture, historical heritage, royal traditions, and religious tourism attractions. Among its prominent destinations are the Asta Tinggi Royal Cemetery and Aengtong-Tong Keris Tourism Village. Asta Tinggi represents the integration of Islamic values, royal history, local culture, and pilgrimage traditions, while Aengtong-Tong strengthens Sumenep's cultural identity through the living tradition of keris craftsmanship. Together, these destinations offer a basis for Muslim-friendly tourism that combines spiritual experience, cultural authenticity, and local wisdom. However, their competitiveness depends not only on the existence of cultural assets but also on the ability to communicate these meanings consistently through destination branding, digital channels, visitor services, and coordinated stakeholder action. However, the use of heritage as a tourism asset also creates an ethical tension: increased visibility and commercialization may generate economic opportunities while simultaneously creating risks of commodification, cultural erosion, or the reduction of sacred and living traditions to marketable symbols. Accordingly, Muslim-friendly tourism development should be evaluated through *maslahah* (public benefit), *adl* (justice), *amanah* (trustworthy stewardship), *ihsan* (excellence), and the principle of *halal* and *thayyib*, so that tourism value creation remains consistent with community welfare, cultural authenticity, and responsible representation (Battour & Ismail, 2016; El-Gohary, 2016).

The existing literature on Muslim-friendly tourism has predominantly focused on destination competitiveness, tourist satisfaction, halal tourism attributes, destination image, service quality, and visitor loyalty. Previous studies have also examined the role of halal facilities, accommodation, transportation, and government support in influencing tourist behavior. However, most of these studies employ quantitative approaches and concentrate on behavioral relationships among variables. Consequently, limited attention has been given to understanding the lived experiences, meanings,

cultural interpretations, and local values that shape Muslim-friendly tourism destinations from the perspectives of stakeholders and visitors themselves. This gap is particularly evident in heritage-based Muslim-friendly tourism destinations where religious values and local wisdom coexist as core tourism resources. The current state of the art in tourism marketing emphasizes destination authenticity, experiential value, cultural identity, and stakeholder collaboration as important determinants of destination competitiveness. Recent tourism marketing studies suggest that destinations are no longer promoted solely through physical attractions but also through symbolic meanings, cultural narratives, and emotional experiences. Nevertheless, existing Muslim-friendly tourism models generally focus on service attributes and destination facilities rather than exploring how local culture, spirituality, religious values, and historical heritage collectively shape destination marketing strategies. Therefore, a deeper understanding of Muslim-friendly tourism through a phenomenological lens remains necessary.

This study introduces novelty by developing a Muslim-friendly tourism marketing model based on phenomenological exploration of the Asta Tinggi Royal Cemetery and Aengtong-Tong Keris Tourism Village in Sumenep. Unlike previous studies that primarily rely on quantitative measurements and destination attributes, this research explores the meanings, experiences, values, and interpretations constructed by tourists, destination managers, religious leaders, cultural figures, local communities, and tourism stakeholders. The study further integrates Islamic values, local wisdom, heritage tourism, destination branding, digital communication, and Pentahelix collaboration into a comprehensive framework for Muslim-friendly destination development. In the proposed model, Islamic values are not treated only as religious symbols or facility requirements; they are translated into service and communication principles. *Amanah* (trustworthiness) emphasizes truthful information, transparent service, and responsible management; *ihsan* (excellence) emphasizes quality, hospitality, cleanliness, and respectful visitor service; and *tawazun* (balance) emphasizes balancing religious meaning, cultural preservation, community interests, economic benefits, and tourism activity. These three concepts are used as an analytical operationalization of the dominant Islamic-values theme rather than as separate empirical themes. The contribution of this study is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it enriches Muslim-friendly tourism literature by integrating phenomenological perspectives with tourism marketing theory and local wisdom approaches. Practically, it provides a basis for coordinated digital branding, heritage interpretation, service improvement, and Pentahelix governance in Sumenep. Based on the identified research gap, this study addresses the following research question: How can a Muslim-friendly tourism marketing model be designed through a phenomenological understanding of the experiences, meanings, cultural values, and religious dimensions associated with the Asta Tinggi Royal Cemetery and Aengtong-Tong Keris Tourism Village in Sumenep? Specifically, this study seeks to explore existing marketing practices and formulate a comprehensive Muslim-friendly tourism marketing model that integrates Islamic values, local wisdom, cultural heritage, digital branding, and sustainable tourism development.

The revised analytical framing therefore treats sustainability as a multidimensional governance issue rather than only an outcome of competitiveness. It includes socio-cultural safeguards for living heritage, fair distribution of tourism benefits, environmental management, and mechanisms through which local communities can participate in decisions concerning the representation and use of their heritage. This is consistent with recent scholarship that calls for halal tourism to be considered beyond religious compliance toward experience-driven and sustainable destination development.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a phenomenological research design. The phenomenological approach was selected because it enables researchers to explore, understand, and interpret the meanings, experiences, and consciousness of individuals regarding a particular phenomenon. In the context of this study, phenomenology was used to understand how stakeholders perceive, experience, and construct the concept of Muslim-friendly tourism marketing at the Asta Tinggi Royal Cemetery and Aengtong-Tong Keris Tourism destinations in Sumenep. This approach allows researchers to uncover the essence of experiences and meanings behind tourism marketing practices, local wisdom, religious values, and cultural heritage associated with Muslim-friendly tourism development (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). The research was conducted in Sumenep Regency, East Java, Indonesia, focusing on two major tourism destinations: the Asta Tinggi Royal Cemetery and Aengtong-Tong Keris Tourism Village. These destinations were selected because they represent unique

combinations of religious tourism, cultural heritage tourism, local wisdom, and Muslim-friendly tourism practices. Furthermore, both destinations have strategic significance in strengthening Sumenep's identity as a religious and cultural tourism destination.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on their knowledge, involvement, and direct experience with Muslim-friendly tourism development. The informants consisted of representatives from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports of Sumenep Regency, destination managers, religious leaders, cultural leaders, tourism business actors, Muslim and non-Muslim tourists, academics, tourism observers, and media representatives involved in tourism promotion. The selection of participants continued until data saturation was achieved and no new information emerged from subsequent interviews. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observations, and documentation studies. Semi-structured interview guidelines were employed to facilitate the exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations regarding tourism marketing practices, destination attractiveness, local wisdom, stakeholder collaboration, and the implementation of Muslim-friendly tourism principles. Observations were conducted to examine tourism facilities, visitor interactions, cultural activities, and destination management practices. Secondary data were obtained from government reports, tourism statistics, academic publications, policy documents, and other relevant literature.

Data analysis followed the phenomenological analysis procedures proposed by Moustakas (1994). The process began with data transcription, followed by horizontalization, coding, categorization, thematic analysis, and interpretation of meanings. Significant statements from interview transcripts were identified and grouped into themes reflecting participants' lived experiences. These themes were then synthesized to reveal the essential structures and meanings underlying Muslim-friendly tourism marketing in Sumenep. The analysis focused on understanding how religious values, cultural heritage, local wisdom, tourism services, stakeholder collaboration, and marketing activities interact in shaping destination competitiveness. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria. Credibility was achieved through source triangulation, method triangulation, prolonged engagement, and member checking. Transferability was enhanced through detailed contextual descriptions of the research setting. Dependability was maintained by documenting all research procedures systematically, while confirmability was ensured through audit trails and reflective notes throughout the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The ultimate objective of the analysis was to formulate a Muslim-friendly tourism marketing model grounded in the lived experiences and perspectives of stakeholders. In interpreting the dominant Islamic-values theme, the analysis distinguishes empirical themes from the conceptual operationalization of those values. Thus, amanah, ihsan, and tawazun are used to explain how the broader Islamic-values theme can be translated into tourism service, communication, and governance practices without claiming that these terms emerged as independently coded themes. The resulting model integrates Islamic values, local wisdom, cultural heritage, destination marketing strategies, digital branding, and stakeholder collaboration to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of Muslim-friendly tourism destinations in Sumenep.

RESULTS

Characteristics of Research Informants

This study involved 28 informants selected purposively based on their experience and involvement in the development of Muslim-friendly tourism in Sumenep Regency. Informants consisted of representatives from the Tourism Office, destination managers, religious leaders, cultural leaders, tourism entrepreneurs, academics, media representatives, and tourists. The diversity of informants enabled a comprehensive understanding of the meanings, experiences, and perceptions related to Muslim-friendly tourism development.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Informants

Informant Category	Number
Tourism Office Representatives	2
Destination Managers	4
Religious Leaders	3
Cultural Leaders	3
Tourism Entrepreneurs	4

Academics	2
Media Representatives	2
Tourists	8
Total	28

Source: Research Data (2026)

Emergence of Main Themes in Muslim-Friendly Tourism Development

The phenomenological analysis identified six major themes that characterize the development and marketing of Muslim-friendly tourism at Asta Tinggi Royal Cemetery and Aengtong-Tong Keris Tourism Village. The findings indicate that Islamic values, cultural heritage, and local wisdom constitute the dominant foundations shaping destination identity and visitor experiences.

Table 2. Frequency of Theme Emergence

Main Theme	Number of Informants	Percentage (%)
Islamic Values	27	96.4
Cultural Heritage	25	89.3
Local Wisdom	24	85.7
Spiritual Experience	23	82.1
Stakeholder Collaboration	21	75
Destination Branding	18	64.3

Source: Research Data Analysis (2026).

The results demonstrate that Islamic values emerged as the most dominant theme, confirming that Muslim-friendly tourism in Sumenep is not merely associated with halal facilities but also reflects spiritual meanings and religious experiences embedded in destination activities.

Contribution of Themes to the Proposed Marketing Model

Further analysis revealed the relative contribution of each theme to the development of the Muslim-friendly tourism marketing model. Islamic values and cultural heritage were identified as the strongest drivers influencing destination attractiveness and competitiveness.

Table 3. Theme Contribution to the Marketing Model

Theme	Frequency of References	Weight (%)
Islamic Values	112	24.7
Cultural Heritage	95	21
Local Wisdom	84	18.5
Spiritual Experience	72	15.9
Stakeholder Collaboration	53	11.7
Destination Branding	37	8.2
Total	453	100

Source: Coding and Thematic Analysis Results (2026)

The findings indicate that Islamic values serve as the core element of the proposed marketing model. Visitors perceive Asta Tinggi not only as a religious tourism destination but also as a place of spiritual reflection and cultural learning. Likewise, the keris tradition in Aengtong-Tong contributes significantly to destination differentiation and authenticity.

Development of the Muslim-Friendly Tourism Marketing Model

The synthesis of findings generated a conceptual marketing model integrating Islamic values, local wisdom, cultural heritage, destination branding, and stakeholder collaboration.

Table 4. Core Components of the Muslim-Friendly Tourism Marketing Model

Component	Strategic Function
Islamic Values	Core destination identity
Cultural Heritage	Authentic tourism attraction
Local Wisdom	Destination differentiation
Spiritual Experience	Visitor engagement
Destination Branding	Market positioning

Stakeholder Collaboration	Sustainable governance
Tourism Competitiveness	Long-term sustainability

Source: *Research Synthesis (2026)*.

In addition to amanah, ihsan, and tawazun, the revised model incorporates maslahah, adl, and halal-thayyib as complementary Islamic economic and ethical lenses. Maslahah emphasizes public benefit and social welfare; adl emphasizes fairness in access to opportunities and distribution of benefits; and halal-thayyib extends permissibility toward wholesomeness, safety, authenticity, and ethical quality. These concepts are conceptual lenses rather than independently coded empirical themes. Their purpose is to strengthen the normative interpretation of the dominant Islamic-values theme and to connect tourism marketing with the broader ethical responsibilities of destination governance.

Table 5. Operationalization of Islamic Values in the Meaning-Based Model

Islamic Value	Meaning in Tourism Context	Operational Practice	Marketing Implication
Amanah	Trustworthiness and responsibility in managing visitors, heritage, and information.	Accurate destination information; transparent service and pricing; responsible heritage management; protection of visitor trust.	Builds credibility and reduces the gap between promotional messages and actual visitor experience.
Ihsan	Excellence expressed through respectful, high-quality, and caring service.	Improve hospitality, cleanliness, accessibility, interpretation, and staff responsiveness.	Strengthens visitor satisfaction, memorable experiences, and positive word-of-mouth.
Tawazun	Balance among religious meaning, cultural preservation, community interests, and economic tourism benefits.	Coordinate visitor flows; protect sacred/cultural spaces; involve communities; balance commercialization with authenticity.	Positions the destination as ethical, culturally authentic, and sustainable.
Maslahah	Public benefit and social welfare generated by tourism development.	Assess tourism initiatives against community welfare, local employment, heritage protection, visitor well-being, and long-term destination resilience.	Provides an ethical test for whether tourism growth produces broad and durable benefits rather than only short-term commercial gains.
Adl	Justice and fairness in the distribution of tourism opportunities, costs, and benefits.	Use transparent benefit-sharing arrangements; include local voices in decisions; monitor access to tourism income, training, and business opportunities.	Supports equitable stakeholder relations and reduces the risk that tourism benefits become concentrated among a small group.
Halal and Thayyib	Permissible, wholesome, safe, authentic, and ethically responsible tourism experiences.	Extend halal consideration beyond food and facilities to truthful information, respectful cultural interpretation, safe visitor practices, environmental responsibility, and authenticity.	Links Sharia-oriented tourism with quality, integrity, safety, and responsible consumption.

Source: *Conceptual synthesis based on the dominant Islamic-values theme and reviewer-directed operationalization (2026)*

The model suggests that destination competitiveness is developed through the interaction between religious values, cultural authenticity, and collaborative governance. These elements create meaningful tourism experiences that strengthen destination image and visitor loyalty.

The dominance of Islamic values (96.4% of informants and 24.7% of coded references) indicates that the meaning of Muslim-friendly tourism in Sumenep extends beyond the provision of halal facilities. To make this finding more actionable, the model conceptualizes three complementary values. First, amanah can guide destination managers and tourism businesses to provide truthful promotional information, transparent prices, responsible handling of heritage sites, and reliable visitor services. Second, ihsan can guide the pursuit of service excellence through hospitality, cleanliness, accessibility, respectful interaction, and accurate cultural interpretation. Third, tawazun can guide the balance between tourism commercialization and the preservation of sacred spaces, cultural authenticity, community

interests, and economic benefits. These values should be understood as principles for implementing the dominant Islamic-values theme, not as additional empirical themes generated from the coding process. Their inclusion strengthens the model by connecting religious meaning with observable management and marketing practices.

Table 6. Sustainability Indicators, Monitoring Mechanisms, and Management Responses for Muslim-Friendly Tourism Development

Dimension	Indicator	Monitoring mechanism	Suggested management response
Cultural heritage	Condition of heritage assets; preservation compliance; number of heritage interpretation activities	Quarterly site inspection; documentation log; community review	Restrict activities in sensitive areas; repair/conservation plan; revise interpretation content
Community participation	Local participation in decisions; number of local cultural practitioners/businesses involved; benefit distribution	Pentahelix meeting records; annual stakeholder survey; local economic tracking	Increase local representation; targeted training; transparent benefit-sharing
Visitor pressure	Visitor volume by day/season; congestion incidents; visitor behavior complaints	Monthly visitor counts; peak-period observation; complaint log	Timed entry, visitor-flow routing, or temporary limits when thresholds are exceeded
Environment	Waste volume; waste segregation rate; water/energy use; cleanliness score	Monthly environmental checklist and utility/waste records	Waste-reduction campaign; facility upgrades; vendor requirements
Service and ethics	Information accuracy; complaint response time; accessibility; respectful interpretation	Mystery visitor/visitor survey; complaint dashboard; periodic content audit	Correct misleading information; staff training; accessibility improvements
Digital responsibility	Engagement with educational heritage content; content accuracy; community approval of sensitive content	Quarterly content audit and analytics review	Remove inaccurate/sensational content; update stories; obtain additional consent where needed

Operationalizing Islamic Values in Muslim-Friendly Tourism

The findings can be translated into a practical implementation agenda. First, the local government should establish a Pentahelix destination coordination mechanism with defined representatives from government, business, academia, community, and media. This forum should use a shared annual destination calendar, agreed branding guidelines, and periodic performance reviews so that promotion and service development are coordinated rather than fragmented. Second, the destination should implement a digital content plan covering heritage storytelling, Islamic values, visitor guidance, artisan stories, short videos, multilingual information, and verified tourism-service information. Third, destination managers should introduce service-quality standards based on amanah and ihsan, including accuracy of information, cleanliness, hospitality, accessibility, and complaint-response procedures. Fourth, tawazun should be reflected in heritage-management rules that protect sacred and cultural spaces while allowing appropriate tourism activity and community economic participation. Fifth, government and stakeholders should prioritize infrastructure and accessibility improvements based on visitor needs and destination readiness. These actions provide a staged pathway from the conceptual model to implementation and can be monitored through indicators such as digital reach and engagement, visitor satisfaction, service-response time, community participation, heritage-preservation compliance, and stakeholder meeting frequency.

Stakeholder-Specific Implementation, Sequencing, and Governance

To make the model actionable, implementation can be sequenced in three stages. Stage 1 (0–12 months) should focus on governance and destination readiness: establish the Pentahelix coordination

forum, map cultural assets and sensitive areas, agree on heritage interpretation and digital-branding guidelines, establish baseline sustainability indicators, and identify priority infrastructure gaps. Stage 2 (12–24 months) should focus on service and product strengthening: train guides and tourism businesses, develop community-based interpretation and artisan experiences, improve accessibility and waste-management facilities, and launch coordinated digital storytelling. Stage 3 (24 months onward) should focus on consolidation and adaptive management: review sustainability indicators, revise visitor-management thresholds, expand community enterprises, evaluate benefit distribution, and adjust promotional strategies according to evidence. Funding can be combined from local government tourism and infrastructure budgets, community and village-level programs where eligible, private-sector partnership, and responsible destination-investment mechanisms; each funding source should be matched to clearly defined outputs and monitored transparently.

Table 7. Stakeholder-Specific Implementation and Governance Framework

Stakeholder	Primary responsibility	Concrete action	Governance mechanism
Local government	Policy, infrastructure, regulation, public funding	Approve destination management plan; finance priority access, sanitation, waste, and heritage-support infrastructure; establish monitoring requirements	Pentahelix forum; annual budget and performance review
Destination managers	Daily operations and visitor management	Set visitor-flow procedures; maintain service standards; manage complaints; monitor heritage and environmental indicators	Monthly operational dashboard and quarterly review
Business/tourism entrepreneurs	Service quality, ethical marketing, local economic participation	Use verified information and fair pricing; employ/train local residents; reduce waste; contribute to heritage interpretation	Code of conduct and supplier/vendor agreements
Community and cultural custodians	Cultural authority, consent, interpretation, benefit sharing	Approve sensitive narratives; participate in storytelling; lead artisan/cultural activities; monitor authenticity	Community consent protocol and benefit-sharing record
Academia	Research, training, evaluation	Conduct periodic impact evaluation; train stakeholders; develop documentation and monitoring tools	Independent evaluation and knowledge-sharing forum
Media/content creators	Public communication and responsible representation	Publish accurate, contextualized stories; avoid sensationalization; promote visitor etiquette and conservation messages	Content guidelines and periodic community fact-checking

Actionable Recommendations for Policymakers and Stakeholders

The model should also be interpreted in light of practical constraints. The study identifies infrastructure, accessibility, destination cleanliness, halal facilities, service quality, promotion, digital marketing, and stakeholder coordination as areas requiring improvement. These limitations can weaken the conversion of cultural assets into a consistent visitor experience. Service-quality gaps are particularly important because a destination may have strong spiritual and cultural appeal while still generating dissatisfaction if information, hospitality, cleanliness, or accessibility is inconsistent. Sumenep also operates within a competitive tourism environment in which other heritage, religious, and Muslim-friendly destinations may offer more integrated facilities or stronger digital visibility. Competition therefore does not imply that Sumenep should imitate other destinations; rather, it should differentiate itself through the combination of royal heritage, Islamic meaning, local wisdom, and the living keris tradition. The strategic challenge is to improve basic destination readiness while protecting the authenticity that constitutes the destination's distinctive resource.

This study concludes that the development of Muslim-friendly tourism in Sumenep is fundamentally shaped by the integration of Islamic values, local wisdom, cultural heritage, spiritual experience, destination branding, and stakeholder collaboration. The findings reveal that Muslim-friendly tourism at the Asta Tinggi Royal Cemetery and Aengtong-Tong Keris Tourism Village is not merely understood as compliance with halal tourism standards, but as a manifestation of religious, cultural, and historical meanings embedded within the local community. Islamic values were the dominant theme, identified by 27 of 28 informants (96.4%) and representing 24.7% of coded references. The findings therefore support a meaning-based interpretation of Muslim-friendly tourism in which cultural authenticity and spiritual experience are central to destination identity.

Implementation nevertheless faces resource constraints, uneven institutional capacity, possible stakeholder resistance, and coordination costs across the Pentahelix. These risks can be addressed through phased implementation, transparent roles, low-cost pilot actions, public reporting of indicators, and regular stakeholder review. The model should therefore be treated as an adaptive governance framework rather than a one-time marketing program.

A major contribution of this study is the formulation of a Meaning-Based Muslim-Friendly Tourism Marketing Model grounded in phenomenological insights. The model integrates Islamic values, local wisdom, heritage tourism, destination branding, digital communication, spiritual experience, and the Pentahelix collaboration framework involving government, business, academia, communities, and media. The study further clarifies how *amanah*, *ihsan*, and *tawazun* can operationalize the dominant Islamic-values theme through trustworthy communication and management, service excellence, and balance between tourism development and cultural preservation. For implementation, policymakers and destination managers should establish a Pentahelix coordination forum, develop shared digital-branding and content guidelines, improve infrastructure and accessibility, strengthen service quality, institutionalize heritage interpretation, and empower communities to participate in tourism products and promotion. These actions should be monitored through practical indicators such as digital engagement, visitor satisfaction, service quality, community participation, and heritage-preservation performance. At the same time, the destination must address competition from other heritage and Muslim-friendly destinations by differentiating Sumenep through the combined identity of royal heritage, Islamic meaning, local wisdom, and the living keris tradition. The proposed model therefore provides a practical and theoretical reference for heritage-based destinations seeking to strengthen competitiveness without separating tourism marketing from cultural authenticity and sustainable governance.

The integration of digital branding with cultural identity is central to the proposed model because the cultural assets of Sumenep require translation into accessible and credible destination narratives. For Asta Tinggi, digital storytelling can communicate the site's royal history, religious significance, visitor etiquette, and spiritual meanings without reducing the destination to a generic pilgrimage attraction. For Aengtong-Tong, short-form videos, photo narratives, artisan profiles, and educational stories about keris craftsmanship can make local wisdom visible to audiences who have never visited Sumenep. Social media should therefore function not only as an advertising channel but also as a cultural interpretation space. Content can be organized around recurring themes such as heritage stories, Islamic values, artisan processes, visitor guidance, community voices, and responsible tourism practices. This approach is consistent with the finding that destination attractiveness is constructed through meaning and experience rather than physical attributes alone.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that digital branding functions as a strategic mechanism for transforming cultural identity into marketable destination narratives. The keris tradition, local wisdom, and religious heritage of Sumenep provide valuable content for digital promotion and destination image formation. This finding supports the experience economy perspective proposed by Pine and Gilmore (2019), which emphasizes that memorable experiences create stronger destination attachment and visitor loyalty than tangible tourism products alone. In the context of Asta Tinggi and Aengtong-Tong, visitors are attracted not only by physical attractions but also by the spiritual and cultural meanings embedded within the destinations. The dominance of Islamic values identified in this study reinforces the concept of Muslim-friendly tourism as a value-based tourism experience. Rather than focusing exclusively on halal certification and Islamic facilities, Muslim-friendly destinations should facilitate spiritual fulfillment,

religious comfort, and ethical tourism experiences (Battour & Ismail, 2016; El-Gohary, 2016). The findings indicate that religious values serve as the foundation of destination identity, influencing tourists' perceptions and behavioral intentions. This result is consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which suggests that beliefs and values significantly influence travel decisions and destination preferences (Ajzen, 2020).

Cultural heritage emerged as another critical component shaping destination attractiveness. The historical significance of Asta Tinggi and the keris-making tradition of Aengtong-Tong strengthen destination authenticity and differentiation. This finding supports heritage tourism theory, which argues that cultural authenticity represents a strategic resource capable of enhancing destination competitiveness and visitor satisfaction (Timothy & Nyaupane, 2022). Furthermore, heritage assets create symbolic value that cannot be easily replicated by competing destinations, thereby contributing to sustainable competitive advantage from a Resource-Based View (RBV) perspective (Barney, 1991; Teece, 2018). The study also highlights the strategic role of local wisdom in destination development. Local traditions, community values, and cultural practices function not only as tourism attractions but also as mechanisms for preserving cultural identity and strengthening community participation. This finding aligns with sustainable tourism theory, which emphasizes balancing economic development, socio-cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability (UNWTO, 2024). Similar studies have demonstrated that destinations integrating local wisdom into tourism experiences tend to achieve stronger visitor engagement and long-term sustainability (Suardana et al., 2023; Dolezal & Novelli, 2022).

Heritage Tourism Ethics, Community Rights, and Cultural Continuity

The cultural value of Asta Tinggi and the living keris tradition should not be interpreted solely as marketable destination resources. Heritage tourism can generate income and visibility, but it can also create pressure to simplify, standardize, or commercialize cultural expressions. Recent critical scholarship on halal tourism similarly highlights the risk that religious and cultural meanings can become commodified when they are primarily framed through market-oriented visibility. In the Sumenep context, this risk requires explicit safeguards: local communities and cultural custodians should have a meaningful role in deciding which narratives, rituals, symbols, images, and craft processes are shared publicly; culturally sensitive or sacred elements should not be disclosed merely because they have promotional value; and tourism revenues should create tangible opportunities for local cultural practitioners. Community consent and participation should therefore be treated as governance conditions for heritage interpretation, not as optional promotional activities.

The principle of cultural authenticity also requires respectful representation. Digital storytelling, guides, signage, and promotional materials should distinguish historical evidence from interpretation, identify community voices, avoid stereotyping, and explain appropriate visitor behavior at sacred sites. For the keris tradition, interpretation should emphasize the knowledge, skills, symbolism, and intergenerational transmission behind craftsmanship rather than presenting the keris only as a commercial souvenir. Such an approach can help tourism contribute to intangible heritage preservation through documentation, artisan demonstrations, intergenerational learning, language use, oral histories, and visitor education.

Environmental Sustainability and Visitor-Pressure Management

The sustainability framework is also expanded to include environmental dimensions that are particularly relevant to heritage destinations. Increasing visitor numbers may intensify waste generation, water and energy use, traffic, noise, and physical pressure on heritage spaces. Therefore, destination managers should establish simple carrying-capacity or visitor-pressure monitoring procedures, introduce waste segregation and reduction measures, encourage refillable drinking-water practices, improve public-transport or shared-mobility access where feasible, and monitor the condition of heritage facilities and surrounding public spaces. These measures align the destination with the broader sustainable-tourism agenda, which links tourism development with resource efficiency, environmental protection, and resilience.

Another important finding concerns stakeholder collaboration. The results reveal that sustainable Muslim-friendly tourism development requires active cooperation among government, businesses, local communities, academics, and media. This finding supports the Pentahelix framework, which emphasizes collaborative governance as a critical factor in tourism innovation and destination competitiveness.

(Carayannis & Campbell, 2019). Effective collaboration facilitates destination branding, resource mobilization, knowledge sharing, and policy implementation, thereby enhancing the capacity of destinations to respond to changing market demands and sustainability challenges. Based on these findings, this study proposes a Meaning-Based Muslim-Friendly Tourism Marketing Model, which integrates Islamic values, cultural heritage, local wisdom, destination branding, spiritual experiences, and Pentahelix collaboration. The model extends previous Muslim-friendly tourism studies that predominantly focus on halal attributes and service provision (Battour et al., 2022; Mohsin et al., 2016). Instead, the proposed framework positions spirituality, authenticity, and cultural meaning as the core drivers of destination competitiveness and sustainability. Theoretically, this model enriches Muslim-friendly tourism marketing literature by incorporating phenomenological perspectives that explain how tourism experiences are constructed through interactions between visitors, cultural symbols, and destination meanings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). From a managerial perspective, local governments should prioritize integrated destination development through infrastructure improvement, accessibility enhancement, digital branding and marketing optimization, and cultural heritage preservation. Destination managers should strengthen storytelling strategies, heritage interpretation programs, and community-based tourism initiatives to create authentic and memorable visitor experiences. By integrating religious values, local wisdom, cultural heritage, and digital branding into destination management strategies, tourism stakeholders can strengthen destination competitiveness while preserving cultural authenticity and sustainability.

The proposed actions also have clear links to the Sustainable Development Goals. SDG 8 is relevant through decent work, local entrepreneurship, skills development, and inclusive economic participation; SDG 11 is relevant through the protection and adaptive management of cultural heritage and the development of inclusive, resilient communities; and SDG 12 is relevant through responsible consumption, waste reduction, resource efficiency, and responsible visitor behavior. Tourism has an established connection with the sustainable-development agenda, including through employment, local culture, and sustainable production and consumption (UN Tourism, 2019, 2024). The SDG alignment should therefore be operationalized through the indicators proposed in this study rather than treated only as a declarative policy statement.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the development of Muslim-friendly tourism in Sumenep is fundamentally shaped by the integration of Islamic values, local wisdom, cultural heritage, and stakeholder collaboration. The findings reveal that Muslim-friendly tourism at the Asta Tinggi Royal Cemetery and Aengtong-Tong Keris Tourism Village is not merely understood as compliance with halal tourism standards, but rather as a manifestation of religious, cultural, and historical values embedded within the local community. The destinations derive their uniqueness from the combination of spiritual experiences, cultural identity, royal heritage, and community participation, which collectively form a distinctive tourism attraction. The study further demonstrates that existing tourism marketing practices in Sumenep are predominantly value-based, relying on cultural narratives, religious traditions, and local wisdom. However, these practices have not yet been fully integrated into a structured and comprehensive marketing system. While the destinations possess strong tourism assets, including religious tourism attractions, cultural heritage, and the globally recognized keris tradition, improvements are still required in promotion, digital marketing, service quality, infrastructure, destination accessibility, and stakeholder coordination. A major contribution of this study is the formulation of a Muslim-friendly tourism marketing model grounded in phenomenological insights. The proposed model integrates Islamic values, local wisdom, heritage tourism, destination branding, and the Pentahelix collaboration framework involving government, business, academia, communities, and media. This integrated approach strengthens destination identity, enhances visitor experiences, supports cultural preservation, and improves destination competitiveness in both domestic and international tourism markets. The findings also highlight that sustainable Muslim-friendly tourism development requires more than the provision of halal facilities and services. It requires meaningful tourism experiences, authentic cultural engagement, effective destination branding, and strong collaboration among stakeholders. Consequently, local governments and tourism managers should prioritize integrated marketing strategies, digital promotion, infrastructure improvement, heritage conservation, and community empowerment to maximize the tourism potential of Sumenep. Therefore, the Muslim-friendly tourism

marketing model developed in this study may serve as a practical and theoretical reference for other heritage-based destinations in Indonesia seeking to strengthen their competitiveness through the integration of Islamic values, cultural authenticity, and sustainable tourism development. The model contributes to the growing body of knowledge on Muslim-friendly tourism by introducing a meaning-based destination marketing perspective that emphasizes spirituality, local wisdom, and cultural heritage as strategic tourism assets. The conclusion also emphasizes that sustainability requires explicit ethical and environmental safeguards. Heritage commercialization should be balanced with community consent, cultural-custodian participation, authenticity, and fair distribution of tourism benefits. Environmental sustainability should be monitored through visitor pressure, waste, resource use, cleanliness, and site-condition indicators. Intangible cultural heritage can be strengthened when tourism supports documentation, interpretation, artisan knowledge transmission, local-language use, and visitor education rather than merely commodifying cultural symbols. These mechanisms position *maslahah*, *adl*, *amanah*, *ihsan*, *tawazun*, and *halal-thayyib* as complementary principles for responsible Muslim-friendly tourism governance.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Conceptualization, research design, methodology development, and the formulation of the phenomenological research framework based on the Meaning-Based Muslim-Friendly Tourism Marketing Model were carried out by Abd. Syakur, Nursayidah, and Suyanto. Data collection, including in-depth interviews, participant observations, and documentation involving stakeholders at the Asta Tinggi Royal Cemetery and Aengtong-Tong Keris Tourism Village, was conducted by Abd. Syakur and Nursayidah. Formal analysis, including transcription, horizontalization, coding, categorization, thematic analysis, interpretation, and synthesis following Moustakas's phenomenological procedures, was performed by Abd. Syakur, Nursayidah, and Suyanto. Original draft preparation and writing were conducted by Abd. Syakur, while review, editing, and revision were performed by Nursayidah and Suyanto. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of this work.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used AI-assisted tools, such as grammar checkers and language enhancement software, solely for the purpose of improving readability and refining the language of the manuscript. No generative AI tools were used for qualitative data analysis, phenomenological interpretation, thematic synthesis, conceptual framework development, Islamic ethical interpretation, or core scientific writing. The authors take full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the research findings and the final content of this article.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper. The research was conducted independently, and the results are presented objectively and without bias. The authors have no affiliation with or financial interest in any tourism enterprise, destination management organization, or cultural institution mentioned in this study that could be perceived as influencing the analysis or conclusions of this research.

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