



# Developing a Muslim Friendly Index (MUFIN) Using a Bottom-Up Approach: Mapping Halal Tourism Potential in Demak Regency

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## Putri Rizka Citaningati

Department of Economics and Development Studies, Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia  
[putririzkac@lecturer.undip.ac.id](mailto:putririzkac@lecturer.undip.ac.id)

## Malika Azra Permata

Department of Economics and Development Studies, Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia  
[Malikaazra0306@gmail.com](mailto:Malikaazra0306@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop a Muslim Friendly Index (MUFIN) as a bottom-up evaluation tool for mapping the halal tourism potential of destinations in Demak Regency. Existing halal tourism indices, such as GMTI and IMTI, are largely top-down and lack sensitivity to local destination conditions. Using a qualitative case study approach, this research assesses 12 major tourism sites through field observation, interviews, and document analysis. MUFIN is constructed based on the ACES framework, Access, Communication, Environment, and Services, adapted to the local religious and cultural context. The findings indicate varying levels of Muslim-friendliness across destinations. The Museum of the Demak Grand Mosque achieved the highest score, while Arnavat Beach ranked the lowest, reflecting gaps in basic halal facilities, environmental hygiene, and service readiness. This study demonstrates MUFIN's potential as an operational tool for guiding local halal tourism development and evidence-based policy. However, this research is limited to a single regency and a qualitative assessment approach, which may restrict broader generalization. Future studies are recommended to apply MUFIN in other regions and integrate quantitative validation methods.

*Keywords: Halal Destination; Halal Tourism, Islamic Economic Development; Muslim Friendly Index; Muslim Travel Index*

## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan Muslim Friendly Index (MUFIN) sebagai alat evaluasi bottom-up untuk memetakan potensi pariwisata halal di destinasi-destinasi di Kabupaten Demak. Indeks pariwisata halal yang ada, seperti GMTI dan IMTI, sebagian besar bersifat top-down dan kurang sensitif terhadap kondisi destinasi lokal. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, penelitian ini menilai 12 lokasi wisata utama melalui observasi lapangan, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen. MUFIN dibangun berdasarkan kerangka kerja ACES, yaitu Akses, Komunikasi, Lingkungan, dan Layanan, yang diadaptasi dengan konteks agama dan budaya lokal. Temuan menunjukkan tingkat keramahan Muslim yang bervariasi di berbagai destinasi. Museum Masjidil Agung Demak meraih skor tertinggi, sedangkan Pantai

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Corresponding Author

Name : Putri Rizka Citaningati

Email : [putririzkac@lecturer.undip.ac.id](mailto:putririzkac@lecturer.undip.ac.id)

Arnavat berada di peringkat terendah, yang mencerminkan kesenjangan dalam fasilitas halal dasar, kebersihan lingkungan, dan kesiapan layanan. Penelitian ini menunjukkan potensi MUFIN sebagai alat operasional untuk memandu pengembangan pariwisata halal lokal dan kebijakan berbasis bukti. Namun, penelitian ini terbatas pada satu kabupaten dan pendekatan penilaian kualitatif, yang mungkin membatasi generalisasi yang lebih luas. Studi selanjutnya disarankan untuk menerapkan MUFIN di wilayah lain dan mengintegrasikan metode validasi kuantitatif.

*Kata Kunci: Destinasi Halal; Pariwisata Muslim, Ekonomi Pembangunan Islam; Indeks Ramah Muslim; Indeks Perjalanan Muslim*

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is a strategic sector that plays a vital role in the Indonesian economy. In 2023, the tourism sector contributed 4.01% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a 0.11% increase from 2023 (Kementerian Koordinator Bidang Perekonomian Republik Indonesia, 2025). Meanwhile, the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) recorded that by the end of 2024, the number of foreign tourist visits to Indonesia reached 13.9 million, approaching the pre-pandemic 2019 figure of 16.1 million (Badan Pusat Statistika, 2025). Most tourists entered through immigration, totaling 11.9 million visits, while visits through non-immigration gates totaled 1.9 million. These achievements are inseparable from the government's various efforts to attract international tourists, undertaken since 2022 through various international events, such as the 2022 MotoGP in Mandalika, World Tourism Day 2022, and the G20 Summit. This growth is expected to not only strengthen key destinations such as Bali, Lombok, and Yogyakarta, but also boost tourism potential in other regions.

In 2014, the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism initiated the implementation of sharia tourism in coordination with the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) to establish halal standards for tourism products. The Ministry of Tourism and the MUI ensure that halal certification can be utilized specifically by Muslim tourists. The implemented halal standards require tourist locations to provide halal food, easy access to places of worship, and accommodation and services that comply with sharia principles. The halal tourism initiative aims to position Indonesia as a friendly destination that can accommodate the needs of Muslims. All tourist attractions and support facilities must meet the halal standards set by the MUI. Therefore, the active role of tourism institutions in promoting and facilitating tourism is crucial to ensure that Muslim tourists can access destinations that comply with Sharia principles.

Current assessment systems in the halal sector still utilize a top-down indicator approach, such as the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) and the Indonesian Muslim Travel Index (IMTI), which assess a region within a country and province to meet the needs of Muslim travelers. However, these indicators are still unable to address specific community concerns in selecting tourist destinations. In response to these limitations, this study aims to develop an assessment index product, the Muslim Friendly Index (MUFIN). The index is compiled using a bottom-up approach based on Halal Friendly Tourism to assess the fulfillment of tourist needs at tourist destinations as part of a national tourism recovery effort.

In line with efforts to develop the halal tourism sector, Vice President Ma'ruf Amin instructed the optimisation of halal tourism potential in Indonesia. Indonesia's halal tourism position on the global stage in 2019 was number one, with projections of attracting up to 230 million tourists by 2026. However, the reality in 2021 showed a decline in the quality of halal tourism in Indonesia, reflected in the GMTI ranking, which dropped to fourth place. This was caused by two main factors, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of specific regulations and guidelines regarding halal tourism development (Mastercard & Crescent-Rating, 2019; Wardi & Trinanda,

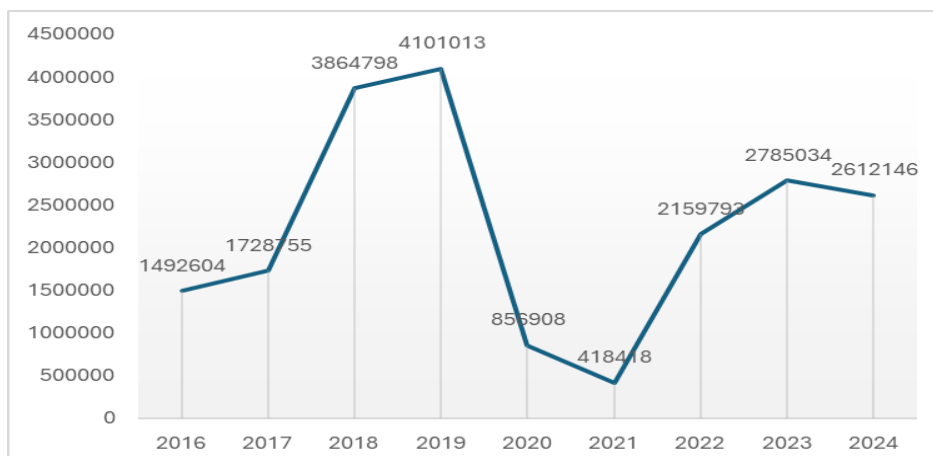
2022). The halal tourism sector in Indonesia began to recover post-pandemic in 2023, marked by Indonesia's return to first place in the list of the top 20 global halal tourism destinations according to the 2023 GMTI report (Mastercard & Crescent-Rating, 2023). Despite these impressive achievements, Indonesia still faces various potentials that have not been optimally developed and challenges that need to be overcome to promote halal tourism, especially regional tourism.

Demak Regency is one of the regencies in Central Java Province, nicknamed the "City of Saints." Currently, Demak Regency is striving to optimise its regional tourism potential. Based on data from the Demak Regency Tourism Office, there are various types of tourism currently operating (Kasdi et al., 2018; Triyanto, 2019). These tourist sites include religious tourism at the Great Mosque of Demak, the Tomb of Sunan Kalijaga, the Tomb of Sheikh Mudzakir, and the Tomb of Mbah Panji Kusumo. In addition, efforts to develop natural tourism potential, such as Morosari Beach, Panati Morodemak, Jati Park, Istanbul, Watu Lempit, Tracking Mangrove Babalan and others as cultural elements, are also utilised in arts and cultural tourism, such as the Kademangan, Kusumojoyo, Condromowo art studios. Furthermore, culinary tourism is also a destination for local tourists to explore typical Demak Regency culinary delights such as Manggut Kepala Manyung, Nasi Ndoreng, Rica-Rica Enthok, Ingkung Bandeng and other culinary delights. Finally, Demak also has educational tourism such as Tyo Alba, Reduksi Sibat Tourism and the English Village in Candisari Village.

GRDP data indicate that the manufacturing sector remains the primary economic driver in Demak Regency, while the tourism-related sector, reflected in accommodation and food services, contributes a relatively smaller share. Nevertheless, this sector has demonstrated consistent growth between 2022 and 2024, suggesting increasing tourism activity and underscoring its potential for further development, particularly within the halal tourism framework. The data shows growth from 672.66 million rupiah in 2022 to 839.09 million rupiah in 2024. Although the contribution to GDP is still relatively low, this growth indicates an increase in tourism activity in Demak Regency.

Post-COVID-19, the tourism sector has shown positive growth, reflected in a 14.5% increase from 2021 to 2022 and a 13.5% increase from 2022 to 2023. This growth demonstrates a strong recovery after a period of uncertainty caused by the impact of the pandemic. This growth is also in line with the increase in the number of domestic tourist visits, the development of new destinations, and improvements in tourism facilities and services. Despite this growth, the tourism sector has yet to become a major contributor to Demak Regency's GRDP. However, the tourism sector has the potential to increase its contribution to GRDP through further optimization efforts, such as promoting halal tourism destinations, improving infrastructure, and diversifying tourism products.

**Figure 1.** Number of Visitors to Tourist Attractions in Demak Regency, 2016-2024

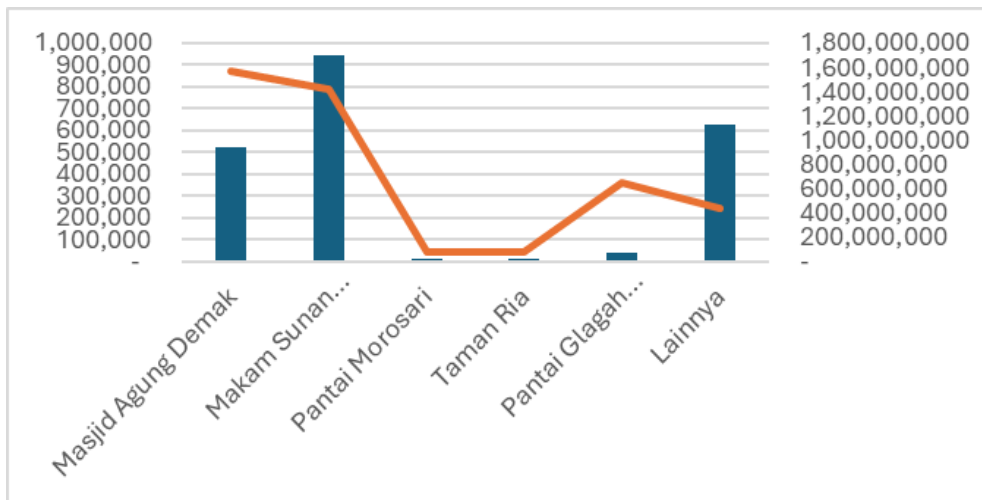


Source: (Dinas Pariwisata Kabupaten Demak, 2022)

The Tourism Office recorded 2,159,789 visitors to tourist attractions in 2022, a 500% increase from the previous year. Demak Regency's tourist destinations are dominated by historical relics and steeped in religious values. Therefore, management requires special attention to maintain these destinations to ensure they remain intact and prevent damage. For example, the Tomb of Sunan Kalijaga was visited by 946,730 tourists in 2022, while another religious tourism destination, the Great Mosque of Demak, attracted 521,617 visitors.

In the post-COVID-19 pandemic period in 2022, tourism to Demak Regency experienced a significant increase. This was evident in the number of tourists to Demak Regency in 2023, which increased to 2,785,034, and is expected to continue to increase until the end of 2024. By mid-2024, the number of tourists to Demak Regency had reached 2,612,146, nearly surpassing the number in 2023.

Figure 2. Number of Tourists and Revenue from Tourist Attractions Demak Regency in 2022



Source: Dinas Pariwisata Kabupaten Demak (2022)

The increase in the number of tourists visiting various tourist destinations in Demak Regency has been accompanied by an increase in tourism revenues generated by the region. This positive relationship indicates that increased tourism revenues can drive greater economic activity in the region. This also has positive impacts on the local community, such as increasing job availability, creating new business opportunities, and improving welfare. Furthermore, the tourism sector has begun to make a more significant contribution to Regional Gross Product (GDP). This increase in revenue comes from hotel and restaurant taxes, tourist attraction fees, and other related sectors.

Thus, Demak Regency, as one of the regions rich in Islamic historical heritage in Indonesia, has the potential to be optimized as a leading halal tourism area. To realize this potential, various strategic and measurable steps are needed to ensure that every tourist destination in Demak Regency meets general halal tourism standards. Therefore, this study aims to analyze and map the potential of halal tourism in Demak Regency by assessing the extent to which Demak tourist destinations meet the standards of hospitality for Muslim tourists. This mapping of tourist destinations is expected to identify strengths and weaknesses that can be transformed into a foundation for developing a leading halal tourism sector in Demak Regency. In addition, this study also aims to formulate targets, implementation strategies, and appropriate policy directions to optimize the potential of halal tourism, so that it can ultimately make a significant contribution to the economy and welfare of the people of Demak Regency.

Moreover, this research is important for explaining how the measurement of halal tourism, based on the GMTI and IMTI approaches, is implemented at the micro level, starting from a grassroots approach. The MUFIN index was developed using local socio-cultural indicators,

stakeholder participation, and the contextual nature of applicable halal standards. Operationally, this research will produce a MUFIN index that can serve as a more detailed and actionable assessment tool to support policy interventions by local and national governments in developing halal tourism. Therefore, the results of this research serve not only as an alternative measurement tool but also as a context-relevant framework that can be directly implemented in optimizing halal tourism in Indonesia.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Halal Tourism

Halal tourism is a form of tourism that emphasizes the application of Islamic values in every activity undertaken. Halal tourism focuses not only on the tourist attraction but also encompasses behavior during the trip and other supporting facilities. Halal tourism is regulated by considering Islamic values and norms, where travelers comply with Sharia law facilitated by the organizer. Wilson and Liu (2010) state that the term halal is used to refer to anything permitted under Islamic law.

As halal tourism rapidly develops as a global trend, it has garnered global attention, leading to its significant development by various countries, given its significant potential. Halal tourism is defined as a tourist destination and industry that provides sharia-compliant tourism products, services, and management. Halal tourism focuses on services that comply with halal principles, with the essence of halal being health, cleanliness, politeness, hospitality, and strengthening the seven pillars of health and safety (CHSE), based on sincerity and *rahmatan lil alamin* (Kementerian Agama RI, 2022).

Affordability and ease of travel are two key elements contributing significantly to the growth of halal tourism among Muslim travelers. With improved accessibility and more affordable travel costs, more Muslim travelers are able to enjoy destinations that meet their needs. Other service providers, such as transportation and entertainment, are also starting to follow the development of halal tourism by offering halal-compliant options, thus creating a more inclusive and diverse tourism ecosystem. These overall trends demonstrate that halal tourism is not just a niche market, but an integral part of the growing global tourism industry (Ekka, 2024).

Halal tourism is generally defined as tourism products and services that address all the needs of Muslim travelers related to food and religious activities. Bon and Hussain define halal tourism as a Muslim-oriented travel approach designed for alternatives. The concept of halal itself is used generally to refer to permissible acts, but it applies not only to food but also to all aspects of the products offered. Therefore, several criteria must be prepared to implement the halal tourism concept, including tourism objects and halal tourism infrastructure.

### 2.2. Global Muslim Travel Index

Indonesia, in developing halal tourism, has adopted the criteria from the Global Muslim Travel Index as a basis. Based on this, Indonesia established an agency under the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia, responsible for and authorizing tourism in Indonesia. This special agency is called the Halal Tourism Development Acceleration Team (TP3H). The TP3H is authorized to assist the government in mapping, developing, and providing guidance to regions with potential for halal tourism development.

ACES (Access, Communication, Environment, Services) is one of the models used in the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) to assess halal tourism criteria. ACES provides a systematic approach to evaluating specific aspects of tourist destinations within a Muslim-friendly context. Introduced in 2017 within the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), ACES is a comprehensive assessment tool for evaluating Muslim-friendly facilities and services at tourist destinations (CrescentRating, 2023).

### **2.3. Access**

Access criteria in halal tourism assessments assess the ease of reaching a destination. This evaluation encompasses various key factors influencing accessibility, such as air connectivity, land connectivity, visa requirements, and transportation infrastructure. Air connectivity assesses the availability and frequency of direct flights to the destination from key Muslim markets, while geographic distance is also considered, as shorter distances often provide easier access. Land connectivity evaluates the quality of the road network and border crossings connecting the destination to Muslim-majority areas, which facilitate smooth travel.

Additionally, visa requirements assess the ease of obtaining a visa, including the types of visas available and any special conditions that may apply. Transportation infrastructure assesses the quality, efficiency, and variety of transportation options at the destination, including accessibility and comfort while traveling within the destination. By considering all these factors, the Access criteria provide valuable guidance for destinations to improve accessibility and attract Muslim travelers more effectively.

Evidence shows that public transportation facilitates access to tourist destinations and improves mobility within them, thereby making attractions more reachable for visitors (Rohini & Meenakshi, 2024). In addition, government-supported policies and infrastructure improvements play a crucial role in enhancing accessibility for Muslim tourists (Sumardi et al., 2025). By emphasizing destination level metrics rather than relying on aggregated international indicators, MUFIN ensures that accessibility assessments more accurately reflect the actual ease of travel within a specific locality.

### **2.4. Communication**

The communication criteria assess a destination's ability and efforts to market itself to Muslim tourists. These criteria encompass three main factors: communication skills, destination marketing, and stakeholder awareness. The first factor, communication skills, evaluates a destination's ability to communicate in 10 primary languages frequently used by Muslim tourists, including English, Arabic, Indonesian, Malay, Urdu, Turkish, Russian, French, Persian, and German. The ability to communicate in these languages is crucial to ensuring that the information conveyed is well received by tourists from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Furthermore, the destination marketing factor assesses how the destination promotes Muslim-friendly services and facilities to attract Muslim tourists. This includes evaluating destination marketing efforts, such as the availability of comprehensive and accurate information on websites, dedicated Halal travel guides, media mentions, and promotional campaigns highlighting the destination's Muslim-friendly offerings. Effective destination marketing is crucial for attracting Muslim tourists and demonstrating the destination's commitment to meeting their needs.

Finally, the stakeholder awareness factor measures stakeholders' level of understanding of the needs and preferences of Muslim travelers. This factor considers factors such as the percentage of the destination's Muslim population, the presence of Halal conferences or events, online searches related to Halal and Muslim-friendly services, and local community awareness of Halal requirements. Stakeholder awareness reflects a destination's ability to recognize and address the specific needs of Muslim travelers. By considering these factors, the Communications criterion provides insight into a destination's communication capabilities, marketing strategies, and stakeholder awareness regarding Muslim-friendly travel. This assessment helps destinations enhance their communication efforts, refine their marketing strategies, and promote understanding among stakeholders.

Recent studies show that marketing strategies supported by high quality information, government initiatives that facilitate promotion, and the availability of tour guides positively

influence tourists' behavioral intentions (Huang et al., 2026; Idris et al., 2025; Trenggono et al., 2022). By tying each indicator to the scoring system, MUFIN ensures that the communication performance is meaningfully reflected in the destination's overall rating.

### **2.5. Environment**

The Environment criteria assess the overall environment and ambiance of a destination in terms of its attractiveness and suitability for Muslim travelers. First, General Safety measures the level of safety of the destination, including the risk of hate crimes and general safety. This assessment ensures that the destination provides a safe and peaceful environment for Muslim travelers, so they can enjoy their visit without worrying about their safety. Second, Restrictions on Worship assesses whether there are any restrictions or limitations imposed on Muslim religious practices, such as dress codes for Muslim women. This evaluation assesses the extent to which these restrictions may impact Muslim travelers' experiences and perceptions of the destination.

Third, the destination's supportive climate for innovation and entrepreneurship, considering factors such as policy frameworks, access to financing, and innovation capacity that can create a conducive environment for innovation and entrepreneurship. Fourth, the number of Muslim visitor arrivals, which considers the volume of Muslim tourists visiting the destination, reflecting the level of attractiveness and environmental suitability for this group. Fifth, sustainability, which assesses the destination's sustainability efforts, including factors such as CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, renewable energy use, air quality, heritage preservation, and human development. This aspect recognizes the importance of sustainable practices in creating a good environment for Muslim tourists, in accordance with their values and ethical considerations.

### **2.6. Services**

Muslim travelers increasingly demand services that are compliant with Islamic principles (Sumardi et al., 2025). The Service dimension is assessed through indicators that capture the availability of places of worship and mosques, halal food options, Muslim-friendly airports, Muslim-friendly accommodation and heritage experiences and attractions. In addition, MUFIN incorporates supporting human resource availability as an enabling indicator, because the effectiveness of Muslim-Friendly Tourism depends not only on physical facilities, but also on the competence of personnel in delivering responsive and Sharia-compliant services. This indicator is particularly important, as human resource competence has been shown to improve tourist satisfaction and loyalty, while also contributing to innovation performance (Syahputra et al., 2025). Accordingly, the services dimension does not merely describe destination readiness, but also reflects the institutional capacity required to sustain high quality Muslim-friendly tourism over time.

The indicator used in the GMTI has notable limitations, particularly due to its top-down approach and the diverse cultural and halal standards. Recent studies suggest that halal tourism evaluation cannot rely exclusively on a standardized top-down approach because destination readiness is shaped by local norms, belief systems, and governance policy that vary across regions. Purwandani and Yusuf (2024) show that halal tourism policy in Indonesia must be localized because Padang, Aceh and Lombok differ in customs, social norms and policy needs, which implies that a single measurement logic may fail to capture destination-specific realities. Hennida et al., (2024) explain that belief systems and misperceptions can shape the success or failure of halal implementation, indicating that standardized indicators may overlook socio-cultural resistance at the local level. Jaelani et al., (2025) likewise report that Indonesia's halal tourism regulation remains fragmented and insufficiently participatory, while the integration of local wisdom and community involvement is essential for legitimacy and sustainability.

Another aspect analyzed is Muslim-friendly accommodation, which includes hotels, resorts, or other accommodations that provide services and facilities tailored to the needs of Muslim

travelers, such as Qibla direction, halal food service, and Sharia-compliant privacy. Furthermore, cultural and heritage experiences and attractions are crucial, with destinations showcasing historical sites, cultural landmarks, and attractions that reflect the richness of Islamic heritage, providing travelers with the opportunity to connect with their religious identity. By evaluating all these factors, the Service criteria assess not only the availability of facilities but also the quality of the experience received by Muslim travelers, thus becoming an important benchmark in determining the extent to which a destination can be categorized as Muslim-friendly and potentially enhance the overall appeal of halal tourism. Thus, the study proposes the MUFIN as a bottom up, destination level measurement framework that incorporates local participation, socio cultural specificity, and contextual halal standards into the assessment of halal tourism potential in Demak regency. Within MUFIN approach, the study seeks to overcome the micro level blind spots of GMTI and strengthening halal tourism in line with Demak's local realities.

### 3. Method

This study adopts an exploratory, quantitative index-based approach supported by qualitative insights. While the MUFIN index is constructed using quantitative data derived from questionnaires, qualitative observations, and field assessments are incorporated to contextualize the findings at the destination level (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This research uses a case study approach to tourism in Demak Regency.

This study developed a Muslim Friendly Index (MUFIN) score (Appendix 1), based on the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) and the Indonesian Muslim Travel Index (IMTI). The Muslim Friendly Index (MUFIN) score range (Table 2) is designed as a progressive stage reflecting a destination's level of readiness and commitment to meeting the needs of Muslim travelers. Categories 48–57 (Not Muslim Friendly) represent the initial phase, where prayer facilities, halal information, and Muslim-friendly services are still very limited or not well integrated. However, this category is not merely a negative label, but rather a starting point for evaluation for destination managers to identify fundamental aspects that need immediate improvement.

The data collected from the MUFIN-based questionnaire were analyzed using a descriptive statistical approach based on index computation. Each indicator was measured using a Likert scale, and the responses from 100 tourist respondents in Demak Regency were processed by calculating the mean score for each item. The mean values were then aggregated to construct the MUFIN index across its four main dimensions, namely Access, Communication, Environment, and Services. This approach enabled the study to evaluate the overall level of Muslim-friendly tourism performance in Demak Regency, identify the highest and lowest scoring dimensions, and highlight specific aspects requiring improvement.

**Table 2.** Muslim Tourist Friendliness Standard Rating Scale

Score Range	Explanation
48-57	Non-Muslim-Friendly
58-67	Low Muslim-Friendliness
68-77	Moderate Muslim-Friendliness
78-87	Muslim-Friendliness
88-97	Excellent Muslim-Friendly

Source: Authors (2025)

Within the 58–67 (Low Muslim-Friendliness) range, destinations begin to demonstrate initial efforts to accommodate Muslim tourists, such as providing basic prayer facilities and limited access to halal food services. However, these provisions are often not yet consistently available or integrated into the overall tourism experience. The 68–77 (Moderate Muslim-Friendliness)

category reflects a transitional development stage, where Muslim-friendly facilities and services are more regularly provided, although improvements are still needed in terms of quality, standardization, and management. Destinations classified within the 78–87 (Muslim-Friendliness) range indicate a stronger level of commitment, characterized by the provision of relatively complete, clean, easily accessible facilities and responsive services that meet the essential needs of Muslim tourists. Finally, the 88–97 (Excellent Muslim-Friendly) category represents destinations that have comprehensively integrated Muslim-friendly tourism principles into their facilities, services, governance, and visitor experience, offering a safe, comfortable, and holistically Islamic-oriented tourism environment. This classification functions not only as an evaluative framework, but also as a strategic roadmap for guiding progressive and sustainable improvement in destination quality.

This approach aims to analyze data related to local wisdom-based halal tourism destination development strategies to improve the local economy in Demak Regency. Through this approach, the author hopes to identify specific issues in each destination, thereby enabling more targeted policies to create welcoming destinations for Muslim tourists. Thus, the outcome of this analysis will be a more optimal and targeted development of halal tourism potential in Demak Regency, in line with the growing needs of Muslim tourists.

## **4. Result**

The Muslim Friendly Index (MUFIN) is used as a standard to assess the level of friendliness of tourist destinations towards Muslim tourists by measuring the provision of facilities and infrastructure in four main aspects, namely access, communication, environment, and services, which are derived indicators from the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) and the Indonesia Muslim Travel Index (IMTI). The results of the study show that there are quite significant variations in various assessment criteria based on the Access, Communication, Environment, and Services (ACES) indicators, so that in the study of Analysis and Mapping of Tourism Potential in Demak Regency, a more contextual assessment instrument was prepared to measure the level of friendliness of halal tourism to the specific needs of Muslim tourists (Appendix 1).

This study applies this assessment to 12 leading tourist destinations in Demak Regency as a pilot project to map the region's level of readiness to develop Muslim-friendly tourism in a targeted and sustainable manner. Based on the assessment results, scores for each indicator are identified for each destination. To provide a more in-depth analysis, this study specifically examines these 12 destinations. An analysis of the issues and challenges faced by each tourist destination in Demak Regency can be found in the following discussion.

### **4.1. MUFIN Analysis with GMTI Approach**

#### **4.1.1. Access**

Analysis shows that most tourist destinations in Demak Regency have diverse transportation accessibility. The availability and suitability of bus terminals are relatively adequate at almost all destinations, while airports and train stations are still limited, requiring more attention for Muslim tourists from outside the region. Supporting infrastructure, such as roads and local transportation, already exists at several prime destinations, such as the Demak Grand Mosque, Niagara Waterboom, and Demak Green Garden. However, more remote destinations, such as Polaris, Arnavat Beach, and Asap Indah Tourism Village, still need development. Improving accessibility is crucial to make tourist destinations more accessible to both domestic and international Muslim tourists.

Many leading destinations, such as the Niagara Waterboom, the Great Mosque of Demak, and the Demak Green Garden, scored high on bus terminal availability, indicating adequate local land transportation. Local infrastructure (roads, local transportation facilities) is also relatively adequate at destinations like the Great Mosque and the Demak Green Garden (infrastructure

score 3.00), providing easy access for Muslim tourists coming from within the regency or surrounding areas.

However, several tourist areas in Demak Regency still require special attention in terms of accessibility. This is indicated by the analysis of Arnavat Beach and Asap Indah Tourism Village, which scored low on airport (0.63) and infrastructure (1.50), indicating that access to these destinations is still very limited, especially for tourists from outside Demak or from major business cities. Several destinations, such as Mbah Mudzakir's Tomb and Tlogoweru Tourism Village, only scored low on train stations (1.38–1.75), indicating that rail is not yet the primary access option or is not yet optimal. Local governments and tourism managers can strengthen transportation connectivity, for example, by improving road quality to remote destinations, facilitating shuttle transportation from the main bus terminal, and exploring connections with train routes or intercity transportation to make destinations like Arnavat and Asap Indah more accessible.

#### **4.1.2. Communication**

In terms of communication, most destinations have good information availability, particularly through information boards, print media, and online platforms. However, stakeholder support and training for halal tourism operators remain uneven. For example, Glagah Wangi Beach and the Tomb of Sunan Kalijaga have limited training, while the Demak Grand Mosque Museum is already prominent in marketing platforms. To improve Muslim-friendly standards, consistent human resource training, more comprehensive halal tourism information, and promotions that emphasize halal aspects and comfort for Muslim visitors are needed.

This is shown by the analysis results (Table 3), which state that almost all destinations (except Arnavat) have a maximum score in information availability (5.00), indicating that signage, brochures, or digital information channels are sufficiently available. Marketing platforms are very strong in destinations such as the Niagara Waterboom, Demak Green Garden, the Demak Grand Mosque Museum, and the Asap Indah Tourism Village (marketing score 6.00), which means that the promotion of halal and Muslim-friendly tourism has been carried out relatively actively.

Furthermore, the analysis shows that halal tourism service training is still considered uneven. Tour guides at Glagah Wangi Beach felt they had never received any training on halal tourism (score 0.00). This indicates a lack of capacity of local administrators to serve Muslim tourists with halal-friendly standards. Therefore, providing halal tourism training for tour guides (both tour managers, guides, and MSMEs in the surrounding tourist areas) is recommended. Furthermore, building closer partnerships with local stakeholders such as local governments, religious leaders, and MSMEs is recommended to encourage greater support for destinations as Muslim-friendly destinations. Furthermore, improving communication channels specifically for halal tourism (blogs, websites, social media) is also recommended to provide more transparent information on halal tourism and ease of worship for Muslim tourists.

#### **4.1.3. Environment**

Analysis of environmental criteria shows variations in the availability of security guarantees, comfort, facilities, geographical conditions, and cleanliness. Some destinations are very good in terms of security, such as the Demak Grand Mosque Museum (score 9.00) and the Tomb of Sunan Kalijaga (7.31), which provide a strong sense of security for visitors. Environmental comfort (e.g., shade, calm atmosphere) is quite high in destinations such as Demak Square (6.00) and the Museum (6.00), indicating that the tourist atmosphere is very supportive for Muslim visitors who may also want to rest or spiritual reflection. Supporting facilities (toilets, prayer rooms, rest areas) are quite complete in destinations such as the Grand Mosque, the Square, and the Museum (facility score = 6.00), which is very crucial for the needs of Muslim tourists.

On the other hand, many destinations still need to pay attention to the cleanliness of their facilities, the provision of Muslim-friendly supporting facilities, and the arrangement of a comfortable and safe environment for Muslim families and tourists. Cleanliness is a weak point in several destinations, such as Glagah Wangi Beach, which has a cleanliness score of 0.00, which significantly hinders the comfort and image of being Muslim-friendly, as cleanliness is an important aspect of halal tourism. Arnavat Beach (1.80) and Asap Indah Tourism Village (3.00) also need improvements in cleanliness to meet the expectations of Muslim tourists who may be concerned about hygiene aspects. The geographical conditions of several destinations are also less than ideal for Muslim-friendly tourism purposes. For example, Tlogoweru and Polaris Tourism Villages only have a score of 0.75 in the geographical aspect, indicating challenges in physical access or topography that can complicate mobility or the provision of prayer facilities.

Some of these identified issues can be addressed by maximizing the role of the Demak Regency Tourism Office in implementing routine cleanliness programs (providing trash cans, clean toilets, and drainage) at destinations such as Glagah Wangi Beach and Arnavat. Furthermore, the local government needs to improve the natural landscape by considering places of worship, rest areas, and shade, to provide comfort for visitors. This is done so that the landscape management of tourist destinations is not only beautiful but also friendly in terms of comfort and cleanliness. These improvements will strengthen the impression of a friendly and comfortable destination to visit, not only for Muslim tourists but also for tourists in general.

#### 4.1.4. Services

Regarding service, most destinations already have prayer facilities such as mosques in tourist areas and sharia-compliant accommodation or hotels. The availability of mosques or prayer rooms in tourist areas is very good in most destinations, especially in Demak Square, Demak Grand Mosque, and Sunan Kalijaga's Tomb, with high scores (up to 16.00 for some destinations), indicating that prayer facilities are a priority. The availability of sharia-compliant accommodation services has a score of 8.00 for sharia-compliant hotels/lodging, indicating that sufficient halal accommodation options are available. The availability of sharia-compliant accommodation is quite widespread in several tourist destination areas, such as around the Grand Mosque, the town square, and museums. The skills of supporting human resources are also relatively stable, with almost all destinations having HR scores of 6.00–8.00, indicating that there is local staff capacity ready to support Muslim-friendly tourism operations.

Halal restaurants are a weak point in several destinations: the Great Mosque of Demak and Tlogoweru Tourism Village scored 0.00 for halal restaurants, while other destinations like Polaris, Arnavat Beach, and Asap Indah Village scored only 2.93, indicating that halal culinary options are still very limited or less visible. Focusing on developing halal restaurant facilities, providing standardized tourism services, and improving human resource capacity will strengthen the destination's position as a Muslim-friendly tourist destination in Demak Regency. Thus, it can be concluded that Demak Regency has a fairly strong foundation in terms of worship services (mosques/prayer rooms) and local bus access, but long-term transportation access (airports and rail) needs to be strengthened to facilitate tourists from outside the region. Communication and promotion of halal tourism are already active in several destinations, but human resource training and stakeholder support must be broadly enhanced to improve the quality of interactions and services for Muslims.

## 4.2. Analysis of Halal Tourism Destinations Based on MUFIN Standards in Demak Regency

Based on the results of the mapping of halal tourism standards at 12 tourist destinations in Demak Regency, the ranking of halal tourist destinations is obtained based on halal tourism standards (Table 4). The mapping results also show quite significant variations in halal tourist

**Table 3.** Muslim Tourist Friendly Standards at Tourist Destinations in Demak Regency

Measurement Criteria		Tourist Destination											
		Glagah Wangi Beach	Demak Grand Mosque	Niagara Water-boom	Sunan Kalijaga's Tomb	Demak Green Garden	Tlogoweru Tourism Village	Demak Square	Demak Grand Mosque Museum	Mbah Mudzakir's Tomb	Polaris	Arnavat Beach	Asap Indah Tourism Village
Access	Airport availability and suitability	0,75	0,75	0,75	0,75	0,75	0,75	0,75	0,75	0,63	0,63	0,63	0,63
	Bus terminal availability and suitability	3,75	3,50	4,00	4,00	3,50	3,50	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00
	Train station availability and suitability	1,75	1,75	1,75	1,75	1,38	1,75	1,38	1,38	1,50	1,50	1,50	1,50
	Infrastructure availability	2,63	3,00	2,63	3,00	3,00	2,63	3,00	3,00	3,00	1,50	1,50	1,50
Communication	Information availability	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	3,00	5,00
	Stakeholder support availability	3,00	4,00	2,00	2,00	3,00	3,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	3,00
	Halal tourism service training for tourism managers	0,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,50	2,00	3,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00
	Tourism marketing platform availability	4,00	6,00	6,00	4,00	6,00	6,00	3,00	6,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	6,00
Environment	Security assurance availability	6,75	5,63	6,19	7,31	7,88	6,75	5,63	9,00	7,31	7,31	4,50	5,63
	Comfort assurance availability	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,50	5,50	4,00	6,00	6,00	6,00	4,50	4,00	4,50
	Facilities availability	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	6,00	6,00	6,00	5,00	1,00	5,00
	Geographical conditions	3,00	3,00	3,00	3,00	3,00	0,75	3,00	3,00	0,75	3,00	0,75	3,00
	Cleanliness	0,00	4,50	4,50	4,50	6,00	4,50	6,00	4,50	4,50	4,50	1,80	3,00
Services	Availability of mosques in tourist areas	5,44	16,00	7,52	15,20	12,80	15,20	16,00	16,00	13,60	4,64	4,64	4,64
	Availability of Sharia-compliant accommodations and hotels	4,00	8,00	4,00	6,00	4,00	4,00	8,00	8,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00
	Availability of halal restaurants	6,67	0,00	6,67	8,00	8,00	0,00	8,00	8,00	2,93	2,93	2,93	2,93
	Supporting human resources availability	6,00	8,00	6,00	8,00	6,00	6,00	6,00	6,00	6,00	6,00	6,00	6,00
<b>Final Score MUFIN Index</b>		<b>62,73</b>	<b>81,13</b>	<b>72,00</b>	<b>85,01</b>	<b>82,80</b>	<b>71,33</b>	<b>85,75</b>	<b>91,63</b>	<b>71,72</b>	<b>62,51</b>	<b>48,25</b>	<b>62,32</b>

Source: Authors (2025)

destinations in Demak Regency. The Demak Grand Mosque Museum ranked first with the highest index (91.63) and received the "Very Muslim-Friendly" standard. As analyzed in the previous discussion, the Demak Grand Mosque Museum has facilities and services that meet the needs of Muslim tourists. This is evidenced by the availability of adequate prayer facilities, the availability of halal food, and various Muslim-friendly attractions steeped in Islamic culture and history.

Other destinations, such as Demak Square (85.75) and Sunan Kalijaga's Tomb (85.01), are categorized as "Muslim-Friendly." These tourist destinations offer various Muslim-friendly attractions, including the history of Islamic civilization in Demak Regency, to Muslim tourists. While not ranked at the top, these destinations offer relevant experiences for Muslim travelers through the integration of cultural and religious elements within their destinations.

Based on Table 4, it can be seen that tourist destinations that meet the "Muslim-friendly" standard are still dominated by those with a strong Islamic religious nuance in Demak Regency. However, if we review the definition of "Halal Tourism," one of the important components in the assessment is the service criteria, which have a weighting of 40% in the GMTI. However, tourist destinations that lack Islamic religious elements generally fall into the "Quite Muslim-Friendly," "Less Muslim-Friendly," and "Not Muslim-Friendly" categories. Most of these destinations are natural or man-made tourist attractions that do not meet MUFIN standards.

**Table 4.** Final Score of the Muslim-Friendly Tourism Index

No	Tourist Destination	Tourist Score Index	Rank	Explanation
1	Demak Grand Mosque Museum	91.63	1	Excellent Muslim-Friendly
2	Demak Square	85.75	2	Muslim-Friendliness
3	Sunan Kalijaga's Tomb	85.01	3	Muslim-Friendliness
4	Demak Green Garden	82.80	4	Muslim-Friendliness
5	Demak Grand Mosque	81.13	5	Muslim-Friendliness
6	Niagara Waterboom	72.00	6	Moderate Muslim-Friendliness
7	Mbah Mudzakir's Floating Tomb	71.72	7	Moderate Muslim-Friendliness
8	Tlogoweru Tourist Village	71.33	8	Moderate Muslim-Friendliness
9	Glagah Wangi Beach	62.73	9	Low Muslim-Friendliness
10	Polaris	62.51	10	Low Muslim-Friendliness
11	Asap Indah Tourist Village	62.32	11	Low Muslim-Friendliness
12	Arnavat Beach	48.25	12	Non-Muslim-Friendly

Source: Authors (2025)

Destinations that categorized to the "Most Muslim-Friendly" category are Niagara Waterboom (72.00), Mbah Mudzakir's Floating Tomb (71.72), and Tlogoweru Tourism Village (71.33). Previous analysis indicates that these destinations still have shortcomings, particularly in terms of halal infrastructure, such as the lack of adequate prayer facilities and poorly maintained environments. Therefore, it is important for stakeholders to revitalize the shortcomings of each tourist destination so that they can meet halal tourism standards as outlined in the Muslim-Friendly Tourist Standards.

Furthermore, destinations with low index scores below 65, which fall into the "Less Muslim-Friendly" and "Not Muslim-Friendly" categories, are Glagah Wangi Beach (62.73) and Arnavat Beach (48.25). The main weaknesses in these destinations are related to the lack of halal infrastructure, such as the availability of halal food, places of worship, and the lack of adaptation of tourist attractions to be friendly to Muslim tourists. This condition illustrates the challenges for nature-based tourism destinations in integrating halal aspects and Muslim comfort. To overcome this problem, a comprehensive development strategy is needed, such as improving halal facilities, training for tourism industry players regarding Muslim-friendly services and strengthening promotions to attract tourists from this segment.

In developing a strategy, the Demak government can implement the strategy of the West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) government, which successfully won the "World Best Halal Tourism

Destination” award. One of the strategic steps taken by the NTB government is issuing Regional Regulation No. 2 of 2016 concerning Halal Tourism, which requires managers of halal tourism destinations to build public facilities that support the comfort of halal tourism activities, such as places and equipment for Muslim tourists to pray, as well as cleaning facilities that meet Sharia standards (Haris & Nashirudin, 2019). This optimization effort will not only increase the competitiveness of tourist destinations but also strengthen the image of Demak Regency as a leading halal tourism destination.

Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of tourist destinations in Demak Regency fall into the "Muslim Friendly" and "Quite Muslim Friendly" categories, with 4 and 3 destinations falling within the 78-87 and 68-77 ranges, respectively. This indicates that the majority of destinations in this region adequately support the needs of Muslim tourists, although there is still room for improvement. Conversely, there are 3 destinations that fall into the "Less Muslim Friendly" category (58-67), and 1 destination that is categorised as "Not Muslim Friendly" (48-57), indicating challenges in providing halal facilities in some locations. Meanwhile, only 1 destination managed to achieve the highest category, "Very Muslim Friendly" (88-97). This indicates that tourist destinations with the highest standards in meeting the needs of Muslim tourists are still very limited.

## 5. Discussion

Based on the research findings, halal tourism development in Demak Regency can be pursued in several potential tourist destinations. Although halal tourism does not focus solely on "religious" tourism, religious destinations such as the Sunan Kalijaga Tomb Pilgrimage and the Great Mosque of Demak tend to score highly, indicating strong tourist interest and satisfaction, especially when compared to other natural and man-made destinations. This finding aligns with a study by Zulvianti et al., (2022), which found that the environmental quality and performance of halal destinations influence tourist satisfaction. This suggests that the success of halal tourism is determined not only by religious identity but also by the quality of overall destination management.

Furthermore, this study found that the service dimension, particularly worship facilities, is a key strength, while accessibility and the environment remain weak. This finding is consistent with studies on the role of transportation in tourism, which emphasize that accessibility is a key prerequisite for the success of tourist destinations (Rohini & Meenakshi, 2024). Furthermore, a study by Xiong et al (2024) also showed that the quality of transportation access, particularly the "last-mile connectivity" aspect, significantly determines the tourist experience. Therefore, limited access in several Demak destinations explains the low MUFIN score on the Access dimension. Furthermore, the importance of services is further reinforced by research by Mursid et al., (2025), which emphasizes that religious respect and the fulfillment of religious needs contribute significantly to Muslim tourists' experience and satisfaction.

Furthermore, this study's findings reinforce the argument that halal tourism development cannot be separated from the local social and cultural context. A study by Purwandani dan Yusuf (2024) shows that the implementation of halal tourism policies in Indonesia is heavily influenced by local norms and values that differ across regions. Similar findings were also made by Hennida et al (2024), who stated that community belief systems and perceptions can influence the success or failure of halal tourism implementation. In the context of this study, variations in MUFIN scores between destinations in Demak reflect differences in local capacity, institutional readiness, and social acceptance of the halal tourism concept.

Thus, the results of this study explain the derivation of global indices such as GMTI and IMTI, with a bottom-up approach. Most of the previous research used macro-based measurements and ignored variations in the tourist destination level (micro). Critics of the GMTI also point out that this approach reflects the characteristics of mass tourism and is less sensitive to

aspects of sustainability and local involvement (Rhama, 2022). Therefore, the MUFIN index offered in this study is expected to provide a conceptual contribution as a form of critical deepening of previous indices by shifting the focus of analysis from the macro level to the grassroots level. This approach allows for the identification of more specific and contextual issues, making it more relevant for regional policy formulation.

## 6. Conclusions

This study demonstrates a targeted approach to halal tourism development in Demak Regency. Based on the MUFIN index used, halal tourism development in Demak Regency requires strengthening accessibility by increasing the availability of halal facilities, ensuring consistent environmental quality, and enhancing the capacity of human resources involved in managing tourism. This is equivalent to the MUFIN index, which has been developed into a practical tool served by the government to identify priority halal destination areas for development. Furthermore, the resulting values can serve as a strong and effective evidence base for the government in designing necessary halal tourism policies. Future research is expected to integrate more robust quantitative validation methods with a larger sample size to develop a more comprehensive halal tourism measurement framework.

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## 9. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Appendix

**Tourist-Friendly Destination Assessment Index**

Measurement Criteria			Score	
<b>ACCESS</b>				
1	Airport Availability	Distance to Airport	< 15 km	100
			15–30 km	75
			> 30 km	50
		Airport Type	International	100
			Domestic	50
		Airport Condition	Well-maintained	100
			Poorly maintained	50
		Intermodal Connectivity	Available	100
			Not available	50
2	Bus Terminal Availability	Distance to Terminal	< 15 km	100
			15–30 km	75
			> 30 km	50
		Terminal Type	Main terminal	100
			Transit terminal	50
		Terminal Condition	Well-maintained	100
			Poorly maintained	50
		Intermodal Connectivity	Available	100
			Not available	50
3	Railway Availability	Distance to Station	< 15 km	100
			15–30 km	75
			> 30 km	50
		Station Type	Passenger station	100
			Transit station	75
			Freight station	50
		Station Condition	Well-maintained	100
			Poorly maintained	50
		Intermodal Connectivity	Available	100
Not available	50			
4	Infrastructure	Departure Information Board	Available	100
			Not available	50
		Direction Signage	Available	100
			Not available	50
		Waiting Area	Adequate	100
			Inadequate	50
		Accessibility	Disability-friendly	100
			Stairs only	50
		<b>COOMUNICATION</b>		
1		Physical Information Guide	Available	100
			Not available	50
		Online Information Guide	Available	100
			Not available	50
		Multilingual Information	Available	100
			Not available	50
2	Stakeholder Support	Socialization Activity	> 5 times/month	100
			1–5 times/month	75
			< 1 time/month	50
		Tourism Exhibition	> 5 times/month	100
			1–5 times/month	75
			< 1 time/month	50
3	Halal Tourism Training	Training Programs	> 5 times/month	100
			1–5 times/month	75
			< 1 time/month	50
		Mentoring Programs	> 5 times/month	100
			1–5 times/month	75
			< 1 time/month	50
4	Marketing Platform	Social Media	Available	100
			Not available	50

Measurement Criteria			Score	
		Website	Available	100
			Not available	50
		Advertisement Board	Available	100
			Not available	50
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>				
1	Security	Parking Capacity	Large	100
			Moderate	75
			Small	50
		Security Guard	Available	100
			Not available	50
		CCTV	Available	100
			Not available	50
		Insurance	Available	100
Not available	50			
2	Comfort	Private Prayer Room	Available	100
			Not available	50
		Separate Toilets	Available	100
			Not available	50
		Donation Solicitation	None	100
			< 5 people	75
			> 5 people	50
		3	Facility	Internet Access
Not available	50			
Toilet	Available			100
	Not available			0
Prayer Room (Musholla)	Available			100
	Not available			0
4	Geography	Tidal Flood Risk	Not affected	100
			Affected	25
		Cleanliness Standard	Available	100
			Not available	50
5	Cleanliness	Waste Bin Facility	Separated bins	100
			Not separated	50
			None	10
<b>SERVICES</b>				
1	Mosque	Prayer Capacity	Large	100
			Moderate	75
			Small	50
		Separate Ablution	Available	100
			Not available	50
		Prayer Schedule	Available	100
			Not available	25
		Qibla Direction	Available	100
			Not available	10
		Prayer Partition	Available	100
Not available	10			
2	Sharia Accommodation	Non-Mahram Policy	Implemented	100
			Not implemented	50
		Sharia Certification	Available	100
			Not available	50
3	Halal Restaurant	Cleanliness	Hygienic	100
			Poor hygiene	50
		Menu Type	Fully halal only	75
			Includes non-halal	10
		Halal Certification	Available	100
			Not available	50
4	Supporting HR	Friendly Staff	Yes	100
			No	50
		Foreign Language Skill	Yes	100
			No	50