



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HALAL TOURISM IN RELIGIOUS DESTINATIONS OF SYAIKH WASIL SETONO GEDONG KEDIRI

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Received 07 May 2025; Received in revised form 09 June 2025; Accepted 27 June 2025

Abstrak

Program pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memberdayakan masyarakat di sekitar destinasi religi Syaikh Wasil, Setono Gedong, Kediri, dalam mengembangkan wisata halal melalui peningkatan kapasitas, pemahaman, dan keterlibatan aktif warga. Kegiatan dilaksanakan dengan pendekatan Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), yang menekankan pada pengidentifikasian dan aktivasi aset lokal sebagai kekuatan utama pemberdayaan. Program mencakup rangkaian kegiatan berupa sosialisasi konsep wisata halal, pelatihan kewirausahaan berbasis syariah, pendampingan layanan wisata ramah Muslim, hingga pembentukan forum kolaboratif antar pelaku usaha dan komunitas lokal. Hasil yang dicapai meliputi peningkatan pemahaman masyarakat terhadap prinsip-prinsip wisata halal, lahirnya usaha-usaha baru dan penguatan UMKM yang lebih sadar nilai-nilai syariah, serta tumbuhnya inisiatif kolektif dalam membangun citra destinasi sebagai kawasan religi yang bersih, ramah, dan Islami. Di samping itu, kegiatan ini berdampak pada peningkatan pendapatan pelaku usaha kecil serta perbaikan pengalaman pengunjung secara signifikan. Kebermanfaatan program ini terletak pada kemampuannya membangun fondasi pariwisata halal berbasis komunitas yang berkelanjutan, memperkuat ekonomi lokal, serta mendukung penguatan identitas budaya-religius masyarakat Setonogedong dalam bingkai industri pariwisata yang inklusif dan bernilai tambah.

Kata kunci: Pemberdayaan Masyarakat, Halal Tourism, Destinasi Religius

Abstract

This community service program aims to empower local communities around the religious destination of Syaikh Wasil, Setono Gedong, Kediri, in developing halal tourism through capacity building, improved understanding, and active community involvement. The program adopts the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, focusing on identifying and activating local assets as the core strength of empowerment. Activities included public education on halal tourism concepts, entrepreneurship training based on Islamic principles, mentoring for Muslim-friendly tourism services, and the establishment of collaborative forums among local business actors and community groups. The results indicate increased community awareness of halal tourism principles, the emergence and strengthening of small businesses that align with sharia values, and collective initiatives to build the destination's image as a clean, friendly, and Islamic spiritual site. Additionally, the program has contributed to increased income for local micro-entrepreneurs and significantly improved visitor experiences. The benefit of this program lies in its ability to establish a sustainable, community-based halal

tourism foundation, strengthen the local economy, and promote the cultural-religious identity of Setonogedong within an inclusive and value-added tourism framework.

Keywords: Community Empowerment, Halal Tourism, Religious Destinations

INTRODUCTION

The global tourism industry continues to show a positive growth trend, especially after the post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery period (Moshin, 2020). The halal tourism segment is one of the fastest-growing sectors, expected to reach more than 230 million Muslim tourists (Priyatmoko, 2022). The need for tourism services that are in line with sharia values, such as halal food, worship-friendly accommodation, and an atmosphere that supports Islamic ethics, is increasing as the middle-class Muslim population grows in various parts of the world (Musnia, 2023). This makes halal tourism not only a lifestyle, but also a strategic opportunity in economic development and sustainable tourism (Nurjannah, 2023).

Indonesia, as a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, has great potential in developing the halal tourism sector (Yana & Sudrajat, 2024). The government through various policies such as the Indonesian Sharia Economic Masterplan 2019-2024 and the designation of several provinces as halal tourism development areas shows a commitment to supporting this sector (Anggara, 2025). Several regions have been identified as national leading halal destinations (Mabrurin & Latifah, 2021). However, the development of halal tourism has not been evenly distributed, especially in areas that have strong local religious and cultural potential but have not been touched by a halal tourism-based approach (Salsabila & Fauzi, 2021). In fact, in the current era of global competition, the integration of religiosity values, local wisdom, and halal tourism principles is a differentiating force that can encourage regional economic growth and strengthen the nation's cultural identity (Lintong, 2025).

In Kediri Regency, Setono Gedong Village has a pilgrimage site for the charismatic cleric Shaikh Wasil which attracts thousands of pilgrims every year. However, this religious potential has not been followed by structured halal tourism management; Halal dining facilities, adequate worship facilities, bilingual information boards, and Islamic souvenir products are still limited. Local communities play a dominant role informally serving parking, home culinary, and simple homestays but do not have managerial capacity, halal service standards, and access to adequate digital marketing networks to optimize economic benefits and maintain the quality of the pilgrim experience.

However, if the development is not prepared and managed properly involving all parties, starting from tourism managers, the government, and the local community, it will cause problems that make it difficult or even detrimental to the community (Basit, 2022). Seeing the great potential of the Muslim market, the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy launched a halal



tourism program to increase the attraction of Muslim tourists. Halal tourism is defined as additional services that meet the needs of Muslim tourists, including the aspects of need to have (halal food, prayer facilities) and good to have (Muslim-friendly toilets) (Mabrurin & Latifah, 2021).

Halal tourism has a wider scope than just religious tourism (Ferdiansyah, 2020). One of the tourism activities that is experiencing growth is religious tourism, which is an activity related to religion (Hamidah et al., 2022). Religious pilgrimage tourism is provided to meet the needs of spirituality that arise amid a global society that is loaded with personal spiritual and figurative meanings (Hasan, 2023). Halal tourism destinations are geographical areas located in one or more administrative areas in which there are tourist attractions, worship and public facilities, tourism facilities, accessibility, and communities that are interrelated and complement the realization of tourism by sharia principles (Sari et al., 2024). On the other hand, in addition to tourist attractions, it can also be a potential job opportunity and an effort to increase positive social impacts, the opening of jobs around tourist areas, and increasing business opportunities (Ristiani et al., 2020).

The tourism sector also plays an important role in the world economy because it is considered one of the contributors to job growth and economic growth in any country (Satriana & Faridah, 2018). So tourism can also be seen as one of the most important sources of Gross Domestic Product. The increase in Muslim tourists is an opportunity and challenge to improve the tourism sector (Rozi, 2024). Based on what has been explained above, this community service takes the theme of the Development of Halal Tourism (Azizah, 2021). A community-based approach is also an important part of the development of this religious tourism. Through the strengthening of local communities, the demand for halal services, such as halal food and adequate worship facilities, is very high (Zahara, 2024). The positive impact of increased revenues in the tourism sector is evident, with job creation and investment in halal tourism infrastructure (Noviantoro & Zurohman, 2020).

Research on Community-Based Tourism (CBT) confirms that socio-economic empowerment and shared ownership are the keys to destination sustainability (Rahmi, 2020). The study of halal tourism Soleha, (2023) emphasizes three pillars: halal assurance, an ummah-friendly dovolential environment, and sharia-standard services. Meanwhile, research on community empowerment in rural religious destinations is still limited, with most of the literature focusing on big cities or national tourism icons. This gap shows the need for an intervention model that combines CBT with halal tourism principles in the context of village pilgrimage destinations.

This service is positioned as a catalyst that bridges the religious potential of Syaikh Wasil with halal tourism market opportunities, as well as supporting the

Tourism Village and Kediri Halal Hub programs that are being initiated by the local government. Through improving community competence and establishing local institutions, this activity is expected to strengthen the community-based economy, maintain the preservation of religious values, and increase the competitiveness of Kediri as a halal destination in East Java. The purpose of this service activity is to empower the community around the religious destination of Syaikh Wasil, Setono Gedong, Kediri, in the development of Halal Tourism through increasing capacity, understanding, and active involvement of the community in creating tourism services and environments in accordance with sharia principles, so as to be able to encourage local economic growth based on religious and cultural potential.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This service activity uses the ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development) approach, which is an empowerment model that focuses on excavating, strengthening, and utilizing assets or potentials owned by local communities to create sustainable change (Wiradharma et al., 2020). This approach was chosen because it empowers the community as the main actor (subject), not just the recipient of assistance (object), thereby encouraging active participation in the development of halal tourism in the religious destination of Syaikh Wasil, Setono Gedong, Kediri. The subjects of assistance in this service activity are local communities around the religious destination of Shaikh Wasil, Setono Gedong, Kediri, among others: micro and household business actors (Local MSMEs), religious leaders and local community leaders, and youth organizations, pilgrims and managers of Shaikh Wasil religious sites. The implementation of the activity is carried out through several stages as follows (Sayekti, 2019) :

Discovery (Identification of Community Assets)

In the initial stage, local asset mapping was carried out through observation, participatory interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). The assets in question include individual assets (community knowledge, local figures, MSME actors), physical assets (Sheikh Wasil tomb sites, stalls, prayer rooms), social assets (study groups, youth organizations), and cultural assets (religious rituals, spiritual values, local traditions). This process aims to explore potential that can be developed without dependence on external resources.

Dream (Formulation of Shared Vision)

After the assets are identified, the community has a vision and common hopes for the development of halal tourism destinations based on religious values. This activity was facilitated in the form of participatory workshops involving community leaders, local business actors, village officials, and academics. This process results in an agreement on the direction of development and the values that will be maintained in the process of destination transformation.



Design (Collaborative Action Planning)

This stage is the preparation of a strategic action plan based on the assets and vision that has been set. The form of activities includes halal tourism literacy training, packaging of sharia-based tourism products and services, and strengthening the community's digital marketing capacity. Action plans are designed in a participatory and adaptive manner to the local context, taking into account the potential resources and challenges on the ground.

Define or Deliver (Institutional Implementation and Strengthening)

The implementation stages are carried out through the implementation of programs directly with the community, such as training, assistance for halal MSMEs, the preparation of halal tourism service standards, and the formation of institutions (tourism awareness groups, sharia cooperatives, or halal information service units). Institutional strengthening is a priority so that the development of halal tourism can take place independently and sustainably.

Celebrate (Participatory Reflection and Evaluation)

In closing, participatory reflection and evaluation activities were carried out to assess the effectiveness of the activities, the impact on the community, and the potential for further development. This activity is also a momentum to celebrate common achievements and strengthen a sense of ownership of the changes that have been built.

ABCD's approach in this service is believed to be able to raise local strengths that have been hidden and encourage the transformation of Sheikh Wasil's religious destinations into a competitive and sustainable community-based halal tourism model.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this service show that the Religious Tourism of the Tomb of Sheikh Wasil Setono Gedong has significant potential to be developed as a halal tourism destination by integrating the concept of experience tourism, supported by the active role of the local community, namely mosque takmir and the local community. The implementation of the experience tourism concept enriches the experience of tourists in halal tourism destinations. Visitors not only get a spiritual experience, but also education, aesthetics, and positive social interactions. The focus is on estimating the number of visitors and ensuring that one type of alternative tourism, ecotourism, for example, has provided greater insight into the impact of humans on the environment.

Identification and Activation of Local Assets in the Development of Halal Services

The identification and activation stage of local assets is a crucial part of the ABCD approach applied to this service activity. Through field observations, focus group discussions, and interviews with community leaders, five main types of

assets owned by the community around Shaikh Wasil's religious destination were successfully mapped. First, human assets are shown by the active participation of local residents in religious and social activities around the tomb, the presence of religious figures such as the kyai from Pondok Lirboyo and Habaib in routine studies. Second, in terms of physical assets, there are two main facilities, namely the tomb of Sheikh Wasil Syamsuddin and the Auliya Mosque which are integrated with each other and become the center of religious activities of the community and pilgrims. Third, natural assets include a very strategic geographical location because it is located in the center of Kediri, facilitating access for tourists and opening up synergy opportunities with the city's tourism sector.

Fourth, social assets can be seen from the strength of the local community network and mosque takmir which have coordinated with tourism managers informally but closely, becoming important social capital for strengthening halal tourism governance. Fifth, financial assets come from the existence of street vendors, stall owners, and connections with local hotel agencies that have begun to show interest in supporting religious tourism-based activities. All of these assets are then activated through the preparation of collaborative plans, training, and communication forums between stakeholders, thus forming an initial ecosystem for the development of halal services based on the real potential of the community itself. The description of asset identification from the religious tourism of the tomb of Sheikh Wasil Syamsuddin Setono Gedong Kediri is described in Table 1.

Table 1. Identification of Assets of the Tomb of Sheikh Wasil Syamsuddin Setono Gedong Kediri

No	ABCD Approach	Asset Identification
1	Human Assets	Local communities play an active role in empowering religious tourism at the tomb of Sheikh Wasil. In the study program, there were great Cleric from Lirboyo and the Habaib.
2	Physical Assets	The tomb of Sheikh Wasil Syamsuddin and the Auliya Mosque, which is integrated with the tomb.
3	Natural Assets	Strategic location in the center of Kediri.
4	Social assets	The local community and takmir of the Auliya mosque that have integration with tourism managers.
5	Financial Assets	Traders around the tomb. Hotel bureau.

Based on the results of local asset identification carried out through the ABCD approach, this service activity produced several strategic outputs that became the initial foundation for the development of halal tourism in the Syaikh Wasil religious area. First, the formation of comprehensive asset mapping that clarifies the community's internal potential, ranging from human resources, physical infrastructure, social networks, to informal financial support. This mapping is the basis for developing a contextual and targeted training program. Second, the results of the identification encourage the emergence of community



initiatives in forming a working group for halal tourism development consisting of elements of mosque takmir, youth leaders, MSME actors, and pilgrimage site managers. This group then became the main actor in the planning and implementation of various activities, such as training for Muslim-friendly tourism services, the preparation of hygiene and service ethics standards, and the packaging of religious tour packages based on Islamic values. Third, the asset activation process also resulted in the formation of an initial partnership network between the community and business actors such as stall owners, hotel bureaus, and study communities, all of which showed a commitment to supporting the concept of halal tourism. Thus, the identification and activation of local assets is not only the first step, but also generates a new social structure that is ready to move and develop independently towards community-based halal tourism management.

Increasing Public Understanding of the Concept of Halal Tourism

Activities to increase public understanding of the concept of halal tourism are one of the main components in a series of community service programs at the Syaikh Wasil religious destination, Setono Gedong, Kediri. The implementation of activities is carried out through two main methods, namely educational socialization and participatory training. The socialization was carried out in the form of small seminars and open dialogues attended by the general public, MSME actors around the tomb, religious leaders, youth organizations, and takmir of the Auliya mosque. The socialization material includes the definition of halal tourism from an Islamic perspective, the characteristics of halal tourism (such as the availability of worship facilities, halal food and beverages, and a Muslim-friendly social environment), as well as its relevance to the development of the local economy based on religion. Resource persons came from university academics and sharia tourism practitioners.

Furthermore, participatory training was held for more specific target groups, namely stall managers, homestay owners, and local youth communities. In this training, participants were given a simulation of halal tourism services, including how to welcome pilgrimage guests with Islamic manners, prepare halal food packages, and pay attention to aspects of cleanliness, safety, and comfort according to sharia standards. This training is also complemented by group discussions and case studies so that participants can relate the concept of halal tourism to the reality they face daily. In addition, there has been a change in positive attitudes that is reflected in the enthusiasm of the community to integrate halal principles in their business activities, such as starting to provide a clearer halal menu, providing ablution places, and maintaining service ethics to pilgrim guests.

Furthermore, this activity also has an impact on the emergence of community initiatives to form an internal education team tasked with spreading

understanding of halal tourism to other residents who have not been directly involved. This initiative shows that the process of internalizing halal tourism values has begun to run, and the community is no longer passive, but actively becomes an agent of change in building the identity of religious tourism destinations in accordance with Islamic values. Thus, this activity not only increases knowledge, but also fosters collective awareness and community readiness to support the development of halal tourism independently and sustainably.

Capacity Building for Halal Tourism Entrepreneurship and Services

Activities to increase the capacity of entrepreneurship and halal tourism services are an integral part of the community empowerment strategy in supporting the development of Syaikh Wasil religious destinations, Setonogedong, Kediri as halal tourism areas. The implementation of activities is carried out through two main approaches: entrepreneurship training and halal tourism service assistance. Entrepreneurship training is focused on strengthening business mentality, micro business management, halal product packaging, and digital marketing strategies. The material was delivered by MSME practitioners, halal branding consultants, and academics in the field of Islamic economics. Participants consisted of 30 local business actors engaged in the culinary, souvenir, transportation services, and homestay sectors. The participants were invited to recognize their business potential, calculate costs and profits simply, and start using social media to promote halal products more effectively.

Meanwhile, halal tourism service training is given to youth and pilgrimage site managers. The training materials include sharia-based tourism service standards, Islamic hospitality, and the management of Muslim-friendly public facilities, such as the provision of places of worship, clean toilets, halal food areas, and ethics of serving Muslim tourists. This activity was enriched by simulations of tourist services and case studies from halal tourism villages that have developed in other areas. Participants showed high enthusiasm, as seen from active participation in discussions as well as commitment to apply these values in daily management.

The results of the activity show that the community has experienced a significant increase in terms of skills and confidence in running a business and providing tourism services in accordance with halal principles. A total of 20 MSME actors managed to create social media accounts and start marketing their products online, with an increase in consumer interaction in the first two weeks after the training. Some of them have also started packaging products with labels and designs with Islamic nuances. On the other hand, the Pokdarwis youth group has drawn up a short-term work plan to improve tourism services, including cleanliness schedules, guest service standards, and advanced training for local cadres.



In addition to increasing individuals, this activity also triggered the formation of the Setono Gedong Halal MSME Forum, a community that accommodates business actors who are committed to carrying out business principles according to Islamic values and supporting religious areas as halal destinations. This forum is expected to be an embryo for the development of a community-based halal economic ecosystem and integrated with the potential of local religious tourism. Thus, this capacity building activity has had a real impact both personally, socially, and institutionally, which strengthens the direction of regional development towards a competitive and sustainable halal tourist destination.

Initial Impact on Local Economic Growth and Destination Image

Community service activities carried out in the Syaikh Wasil religious area, Setonogedong, Kediri, have shown a number of positive initial impacts on local economic growth and improved the image of the destination. Although the program is still in its early stages, the active involvement of the community in training, mentoring, and activation of local assets has begun to bring about significant changes, both in terms of the microeconomy and the strengthening of public perception of the region as a Muslim-friendly religious tourism destination.

In terms of the local economy, the increase in micro business activities is one of the main indicators of the initial impact felt. After entrepreneurship training activities and halal tourism services, there has been an increase in the number of informal business actors who have started to actively market their products, both through social media and directly to pilgrims. Some food and souvenir vendors around the tomb area reported an increase in daily turnover of between 10–25% over the past two weeks, especially during religious activities or pilgrims visiting from outside the city. In addition, there are new business actors who have started to open halal food services and simple homestays, which were previously not available systematically.

The image of the destination also shows a significant improvement, especially in the perception of visitors to the comfort and suitability of services with Islamic values. This is inseparable from the improvement of the quality of services in tourist areas, such as the availability of more organized places of worship, the improvement of the cleanliness of the pilgrimage area, and the friendly and informative attitude of the community in welcoming guests. Some of the visitors interviewed stated that the Shaykh Wasil religious area now feels more manageable and provides a more comfortable spiritual experience and in accordance with sharia principles. One of the visitors from Nganjuk stated,

“Now the place is much cleaner and organized. The ablution place is also comfortable, so it's nice if you want to worship here.”

In addition to physical facilities, visitors also consider that the services of the local community are getting better and reflect Islamic values. A pilgrim from Malang said,

"I feel more appreciated and welcomed politely. The traders around are also now neater and less forceful than before."

Other visitors said that the spiritual atmosphere in the tomb area was even deeper because of the environment that supports tranquility.

"This pilgrimage feels more solemn, because the atmosphere is not too noisy and there are many Islamic messages displayed around the area,"

said a mother who came with her family. These findings show that the halal tourism approach that involves the community in the management of destinations in a sharia manner not only has an impact on the economic aspect, but also succeeds in improving the religious experience and overall visitor satisfaction.

Another impact is the formation of a collaborative network between business actors, local communities, and mosque takmir in building the collective image of religious areas as halal destinations. In addition, mosques in religious tourism areas often provide free food for pilgrims documented in Figure 2. This is also a tangible form of practicing hospitality values in Islam and strengthening the image of the destination as a halal tourist area that not only pays attention to spiritual aspects, but also social concern for guests who come.



Figure 1. Mosque Management Provides Free Food for Tourists



Thus, this service activity has had a concrete initial impact in two main aspects: increasing community-based economic activities and strengthening the identity of destinations as halal tourist areas. This achievement is an important foundation for the development of the next stage that is more systematic and structured, including in terms of local regulations, strengthening halal tourism branding, and the formation of more professional and competitive tourism institutions.

The development of halal tourism through community empowerment as carried out in the Syaikh Wasil religious area, Setono Gedong, Kediri, is in line with the concept of community-based sustainable tourism. In this approach, the community is not only the object, but the main subject in destination management (Green, 2015). Empowerment theory by Phillips, (2014) emphasizes the importance of three aspects: control, capacity, and active participation in the decision-making process. Training, socialization, and activation activities of local assets in this program prove that communities have great potential to manage tourism independently, especially if given access to information, networks, and technical support (Kanom, 2024).

The findings of this service also show that the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach is very effective in the context of halal tourism development (Setyani, 2024). The identification of human, physical, natural, social, and financial assets around the tomb of Sheikh Wasil is the main foundation in building a development strategy based on local potential. This result is in line with the dedication of Maulida, (2024) who emphasizes that the ABCD approach is able to create a sense of community ownership and accelerate social change in a positive way. In the case of Setono Gedong, the participation of religious leaders, local women, and MSME actors proves that the social and spiritual power of the community can be directed to become an inclusive and value-added tourism development capital.

This service also strengthens the findings of similar activities carried out in other religious tourism destinations, where community involvement in providing halal services such as food, lodging, and adequate worship facilities can improve the image of the destination and encourage local economic growth (Anas, 2025). The similarity between the two locations lies in the symbolic power of local religious figures and the network of Islamic boarding schools that are the spiritual and socio-economic drivers of the community (Yudiantoro, 2024). However, the approach used in Setono Gedong is more structured through active community involvement in the planning to evaluation stages, making it a potential model to be replicated in other religious areas.

Thus, this service not only shows how the theory of empowerment and community-based tourism can be implemented in real terms, but also proves that a collaborative approach based on Islamic values is able to strengthen the position

of destinations in the halal tourism market. This activity emphasizes that the synergy between local assets and the spiritual values of the community can be a strong foundation in building sustainable, competitive, and meaningful tourist destinations, both economically and socio-religiously..

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Community service activities at the Syaikh Wasil religious destination, Setonogedong, Kediri, have succeeded in empowering local communities in the development of halal tourism through increasing understanding, entrepreneurial capacity, and active involvement in sharia-based tourism services. The activation of local assets with the ABCD approach encourages the emergence of community collaboration, strengthening the microeconomy, and improving the image of the destination as a Muslim-friendly religious area. This activity not only builds awareness of the importance of tourism in accordance with Islamic values, but also creates an initial foundation for sustainable local economic growth based on local religious and cultural potential.

In order for the impact of this service to be sustainable and more widespread, further assistance is needed in the form of routine training, the establishment of community-based halal tourism institutions, as well as regulatory and promotional support from local governments. Synergy between business actors, religious leaders, and tourism stakeholders is very important to maintain the consistency of halal service standards and increase the competitiveness of Setonogedong's religious destinations as part of the national halal tourism network.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the people of Setonogedong, especially the managers of the Syaikh Wasil religious area, the takmir of the Auliya Mosque, the local community, as well as all religious leaders and residents who have actively participated in every stage of this service activity. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Bani Fattah Jombang Islamic Religious Institute for its support, facilitation, coordination, and program financing.

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