

Potential Development of Sharia Tourism at Cheng Ho Mosque, Purbalingga

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the development of smart tourism in Purbalingga Regency, focusing on the Cheng Ho Mosque as the main destination. Smart tourism, which uses information and communication technology (ICT), aims to improve the tourist experience and the efficiency of tourism management. This research uses qualitative methods through observing, interviewing, and documenting to understand the potential and challenges of developing Sharia Tourism at Cheng Ho Mosque. Although it has bright prospects with government support, challenges such as limited human and financial resources and lack of collaboration among stakeholders still exist. Cheng Ho Mosque, which combines Chinese and Islamic cultures, offers worship facilities and educational tours but needs improvement in promotion and management. This study recommends increased government support, training of tourism managers, and the use of digital technology to increase tourist attraction.

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Introduction

Tourism is one of the strategic sectors in global economic development. In recent decades, the concept of tourism has diversified, along with the increasing awareness of the importance of meeting the needs of tourists based on cultural, religious, and lifestyle preferences. One growing trend is tourism based on Islamic values, better known as Sharia tourism. Shariah Tourism is a term used to describe travel activities that focus on Islamic principles. It encompasses many offerings, including establishing facilities that comply with Shariah law and providing services that align with halal food guidelines. In addition, the concept also includes destinations that emphasize worship activities and do not engage in activities that go against religious norms (Addina et al., 2020). This concept appeals to Muslim travelers and opens new avenues for businesses to expand into the global tourism market. The Global Muslim Travel Index data shows a positive trend, indicating

that around 230 million foreign Muslim tourists will visit Indonesia for tourism purposes by 2026 (Mastercard, 2019). The concept of sharia emerged in experiencing developments, including the sharia economy in Indonesia, and became an icon of the Muslim-majority country. One part of the sharia economy that has been introduced is the concept of sharia tourism, which is currently under development. The concept is an innovative approach to increasing tourism in Indonesia that emphasizes Islamic culture and values. The growing interest in tourism and Islamic themes is also related to the number of Muslims worldwide, which has now exceeded 1.5 billion and is predicted to increase to 2.2 billion by 2030 (Lugo et al., 2011). The Islamic tourism trend impacts the development and marketing of products aimed at Muslims. Muslim travelers' motivations are not necessarily religious, and they can participate in the same vacation experiences as non-Muslims, even within the boundaries of Islamic law. In addition, travel destinations do not necessarily have to be to locations that apply full Islamic law (Bazazo et al., 2017; Gelter et al., 2022). The practice of Shariah tourism is based on the halal principle, which states that all activities and product experiences offered must comply with Islamic teachings (Sudarsono et al., 2021)

Nevertheless, the challenges in the development of Islamic tourism are not few. This statement underscores the idea that Islamic tourism, despite its current development, is an emerging industry that is still largely unstructured and lacks a comprehensive institutional framework (Neveu, 2010). Islamic tourism is growing rapidly in Indonesia. Government support and awareness is increasing. The Shariah-based tourism industry has bright prospects, but there are still complexities. Stakeholders need to focus on improving marketing management and the use of technology for smart tourism, which allows travelers to access and provide information about tourist destinations easily. Therefore, collaboration between the government, businesses, and communities is needed to optimize tourism potential.

. Islamic tourism in Indonesia is growing rapidly, with government support and increased awareness. The Shariah-based tourism industry has bright prospects, with technology playing an important role in introducing tourist attractions and providing easy access to destination information. Smart tourism is considered a rational progression from conventional tourism, thus becoming the basis for industry and consumer transition towards innovation and technology orientation. This transition is triggered by the widespread adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the tourism sector (Gretzel et al., 2015). The concept of smart tourism brings improvements in traveler experience, community well-being and overall destination competitiveness. Enhancing the tourist experience, resource management efficiency and destination competitiveness by prioritizing sustainability are the principles of smart tourism. Islamic tourism can use technology to enhance the tourist experience, maximize the efficiency of resource management, and improve the overall competitiveness of the destination by applying the concept of smart tourism. Smart tourism development can be linked to Islamic tourism development in several ways. The concept of destination smart tourism is widely regarded as an important instrument in enhancing the competitiveness capacity of a destination (Koo et al., 2016). . Smart Tourism based on Shariah principles can optimize the tourist experience by integrating digital tools and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This approach improves

resource management, sustainability and the overall traveler experience by promoting a more efficient, connected and personalized travel experience.

Purbalingga Regency, a regency in Central Java, focuses on sharia tourism and the development of regional technology infrastructure, aligning with Purbalingga's Dinkominfo's ultimate goal of creating a smart city (Dinkominfo, 2018). As a result of increasing urbanization, cities and urban areas face new problems. These include socioeconomic, health, education, tourism and transportation issues. At the same time, an increasingly modern society has many expectations. These include comfortable living and working conditions, adequate public spaces, and easy-to-manage public services. In order to improve the smart city, Purbalingga Regency is currently making various changes. All areas related to public services will be equipped with advanced technology. The aim is to accelerate the delivery of services to the community. According to the E-Government Governance Section at Dinkominfo, the implementation of smart city in Purbalingga is not easy in accordance with the Purbalingga Smart City Master Plan. It requires the involvement of the government, the private sector, and the community. Before realizing a smart city, some things need to be developed, such as a Smart Government based on its performance. The Tourism Office wants to move immediately to realize it so that it is not left behind, but it has not been fully realized. The priorities of the Purbalingga regional development program plan in the smart city program, one of which is in the tourism sector, are stated in Article 4 of Regent Regulation No. 57 of 2019. Smart tourism and smart cities are two things that are closely related because the development of smart tourism is based on the concept of smart cities. Smart city is based on infrastructure to improve and enhance the interconnection of each subsystem. Through technological development combined with culture and innovation, smart tourism aims to promote tourism services, improve tourism management, and expand tourism scope (Buhalis, 2019). The symbiotic relationship between smart cities and smart tourism is crucial in creating a better living and traveling experience. The development of smart tourism depends on strong smart city infrastructure and innovation. In contrast, integrating smart tourism can encourage attracting more tourists, stimulating the local economy and promoting the sustainability of tourism. Some obstacles in the development of Smart City include the Covid-19 pandemic which requires a large budget. The planned elements to be included in Purbalingga Smart City are smart government, tourism, etc. Smart tourism is one of the pillars of smart city, and is also an important part of smart living (Pratama, 2014) (Jafari & Scott, 2014). Smart tourism can be described as a comprehensive tourism platform that provides efficient information and services for tourists. Dinkominfo, in collaboration with the Tourism Office, has developed a comprehensive tourism platform in Purbalingga, focusing on smart cities and smart living. The site features new tourist attractions, both natural, cultural, and village tourism, with plans to build 51 new sites to develop Purbalingga tourism (BPS, 2020).

One of the attractions related to Islamic culture and history is Cheng Ho Mosque Purbalingga. This mosque is one of the tourist destinations in Purbalingga that can become an icon of Islamic-based cultural tourism with its uniqueness and local wisdom. The Purbalingga Cheng Ho Mosque, located in Selaganggeng Village, Mrebet District, Purbalingga Regency, Central Java, is a popular tourist destination known for its unique Islamic culture and history. Built-in 2005, it is one of the

ten Cheng Ho mosques in Indonesia, in addition to other famous mosques such as those in Surabaya, Kutai Kartanegara, Batam, Banyuwangi, Gowa, Samarinda, Banjarmasin, Jambi and Palembang (Metanasi, 2017). The Cheng Ho Mosque in Purbalingga, a fusion of Chinese, Arabic, and Javanese Islamic architecture, displays cultural tolerance between ethnicities. Inspired by the mosque in Surabaya, it attracts tourists from all over the world. Purbalingga Regency received the fifth-highest number of tourist visits, highlighting the importance of developing and managing tourist attractions (BPS, 2020). This data is a benchmark for the Purbalingga Regency government in developing and managing Purbalingga Regency tourism objects, especially the Cheng Ho Mosque Purbalingga Tourism Object.

For some people, traveling has become a necessity. The Purbalingga Regency Government prioritizes smart tourism in the tourism sector, particularly in Purbalingga Cheng Ho Mosque. This innovative strategy aims to attract more tourists to this mosque, which has uniqueness, aesthetic appeal, and cultural attractions, thus making it a popular tourist destination. Purbalingga Cheng Ho Mosque is the first cultural acculturation mosque in Central Java. It contains toilets, a library, a girls' dormitory, a kindergarten school, and various activities such as recitation, wedding ceremonies, and Barongsai performances as a hallmark of Chinese holidays and birthday celebrations. In order to maintain the authenticity of the Purbalingga Cheng Ho Mosque identity itself in the future, the potential of this mosque must be supported by good preservation by utilizing technology.

Research Methods

This research uses qualitative research methods using interviews with reliable informants. This research was conducted at the location of Cheng Ho Mosque. The Youth, Sports and Tourism Office of Purbalingga Regency is responsible for overseeing the management of Cheng Ho Mosque in Purbalingga. The Communication and Informatics Office of Purbalingga Regency is responsible for developing smart city technology, especially in the tourism sector. The mosque serves as a research site in the field of tourism technology, specifically related to smart tourism. This process includes collecting data from informants and then selecting informants and parties involved in this research to identify solutions to the problems in this research. Informants who serve as data sources (key informants) in this research are the management of Cheng Ho Purbalingga Mosque, Purbalingga Regency Tourism Office (Destination Development and Tourism Human Resources Division), Purbalingga Regency Communication and Information Office, and tourists.

Table 1. Data of Informants in this Study

Source of Information	Role
Source of Information 1	Deputy Manager of Cheng Ho Mosque
Source of Information 2	Development Section of Purbalingga Tourism Office
Source of Information 3	Communication and Informatics Office of Purbalingga Regency
Source of Information 4	Travelers
Source of Information 5	Travelers
Source of Information 6	Travelers

Data collection was carried out by direct observation of the research object at Cheng Ho Purbalingga Mosque by observing the condition and existence of tourism as one of the destinations in the development of smart tourism based on Islamic tourism. Interviews were also used in this study to obtain more detailed answers. Documentation is used in research to assist researchers in collecting, storing, and organizing data obtained during research. Documents that will be used for this research are official documents in the form of institutional information or interview results such as transcripts, files, photos, books, newspapers, and so on related to this research, namely regarding smart tourism-based Islamic tourism. Data was collected by directly observing the research object at the Cheng Ho Purbalingga Mosque, focusing on the condition and existence of tourism as a destination in smart tourism development based on Islamic tourism. To get more detailed answers, researchers also conducted in-depth interviews. Documentation plays an important role in research, facilitating the collection, storage, and organization of data obtained during the research process. Documentation for this study includes a variety of official documents, including institutional information, interview transcripts, data, photographs, books, and newspapers, all of which pertain to the investigation of Islamic tourism-based smart tourism.

Data Analysis Technical triangulation, or data validity test, checks data from various techniques, sources, and time. In this research, source and technical triangulation are the two types of triangulation used. Source triangulation validated data from different sources used as research informants.

Results and Discussion

Potential for Smart Tourism Development in Purbalingga Regency

The interview with the Destination Development and Tourism Human Resources section of the Purbalingga Tourism Office said that Purbalingga, one of the destinations in the Destination Development sector, experienced a decline in tourism due to the pandemic. Nonetheless, the city is focusing on developing new tourist attractions and tourist facilities, including tourist villages and tourist villages developed by the private sector, to maintain its stable tourism trend. The Head of Tourism of Purbalingga's Dinporapar emphasized the need for support in tourism facilities, infrastructure, sales, management, attractions, marketing, and site development in Purbalingga, with the local government and Central Java Province funding destination development. Purbalingga, a region in Indonesia, has 23 tourist villages managed by various public and private companies. The Tourism Office assists human resource development through training and tourist visit reports. The Cheng Ho Mosque, managed by the PITI of the community, is the main focus of the office.

Smart Development

While the inhibiting factor is that there are not many presentations presented on the web, there is no standard of usefulness for the community. Not all people can access information from the internet. The majority of information delivered is still one-way. The first application is Daku Tahu, which presents data on tourist and hotel visits. For the benefit of this website, not every

community can access it. In addition, tourism promotion uses other existing media, among others, using data owned by the agency and carried out with the responsibility of all parties.

In addition to the DakuTahu website, one of the technologies in the tourism sector, especially for data on tourist visits and hotels, the Purbalingga Regency Government also provides an official website-based portal, especially for the tourism sector. Tourism in Purbalingga Regency is very possible to grow rapidly with the existence of various tourism potentials and tourism development efforts. For this reason, the Purbalingga Regency Youth, Sports, and Tourism Office conducts promotional activities not only through the use of a smart tourism base but also through the use of promotional media through brochures and tourism catalog books named "Purbalingga Memikat". The aim is to increase the number of tourists visiting the area actively. Other websites are provided by the Regional Government of Purbalingga Regency, such as sipintas (<https://http://sipintas.purbalinggakab.go.id>). In addition, 45 tourist attractions in Purbalingga Regency have been recorded in the tourist visit report. 20 tourist attractions are managed. Mapping the potential for smart tourism-based tourism development in Purbalingga Regency can be analyzed as the district has many potential superior tourism assets that will continue to be developed to support the regional economy. Tourism development is also supported through promoting, coaching, and training tourism stakeholders (Hidayah et al., 2022). Purbalingga Regency is also one of the regions that has begun to focus its regional development on smart cities. Many obstacles are faced in the development of Purbalingga Smart City. Purbalingga Smart City is only in the first stage of smart government or e-government. Overall, all elements of a smart city in Purbalingga Regency have not used technology. In the tourism sector, Purbalingga smart city has used technology in the form of the tourism agency's website and social media to promote information about Purbalingga destinations. Currently, some websites provide tourism information in the Purbalingga Regency established by the Ministry of Tourism.

Potential Development of Cheng Ho Mosque

The potential of Cheng Ho Purbalingga Mosque offers a uniqueness that is different from mosques in general, according to the results of interviews with the management of Cheng Ho Purbalingga Mosque. This mosque cannot be compared with other cultural heritage sites because it has different cultural characteristics. According to the Deputy Manager of Cheng Ho Purbalingga Mosque, Cheng Ho Purbalingga Mosque has the potential for tourism development derived from the story of Cheng Ho itself. The Chinese Muslim community recognizes Cheng Ho as a legendary name. Cheng Ho is a figure who has become an object of worship by the Chinese Muslim community. According to historical records, Cheng Ho, whose name is recorded to have traveled worldwide seven times, crossed the archipelago. He built mosques in Ancol-Jakarta, Cirebon, and the most famous one in Semarang. So, the potential of the Cheng Ho mosque can be used for Sharia tourism.

Purbalingga's Cheng Ho Mosque, an interesting site due to its unique characteristics, can potentially develop into a significant Sharia tourism destination. The Deputy Manager of the mosque highlighted the historical significance of Cheng Ho, a legendary figure who traveled

around the world seven times, establishing mosques in Ancol-Jakarta, Cirebon, and Semarang. The mosque's integration into the tourism sector showcases Sharia practices through its unique architectural features and ornaments, attracting tourists' and merchants' attention. The uniqueness of the mosque has attracted many merchants and visitors. Cheng Ho Mosque was originally a worship center, but on the other hand, the Chinese mosque is used as a regional tourist attraction. Thus, the mosque still has a sharia side. The sharia side of the mosque is shown through practices such as the implementation of istighosah. While from the tourist attraction itself, the Cheng Ho mosque is visited by many tourists. Some tourists perform prayers, stop for a moment, or rest. With so many people stopping by this mosque, more and more people are doing business, and many traders are not far from the mosque.

One visitor from Cipaku Mrebet Village stated that tourists also see the distinctiveness of this mosque, which can be seen from its architectural design and ornaments. Cheng Ho Mosque has unique characteristics that reflect Chinese cultural heritage.

According to one tourist from Karangtalun-Bobotsari Village, Cheng Ho Mosque is not unfamiliar, as it is often seen from street viewpoints. Cheng Ho Mosque is a distinctive and interesting place of worship. Through repeated visits, he realized the profound cultural diversity of Indonesia, as seen from the intricate blend of cultural influences in this mosque while still maintaining its Islamic identity. The incorporation of red in the interior and exterior of the mosque is particularly eye-catching, as it symbolizes the fusion of Islam and Chinese culture.

The Cheng Ho Mosque in Purbalingga is a great example of this unique blend. It differs from the characteristics of a typical mosque. The mosque's distinctive features, including its bright red exterior and intricate Chinese cultural ornaments, evoke the aesthetic sensibilities of a temple. This distinctive architectural combination has made the mosque a noteworthy tourist attraction that draws visitors from all over. Thus, in addition to its religious significance, the mosque also offers a unique destination for travelers seeking cultural enrichment. The presence of distinctive architectural features in tourist destinations has been shown to positively impact their overall image and appeal, making them more attractive to visitors and potentially increasing their popularity as tourist attractions.

Facilities

Some of the facilities provided by the Cheng Ho Mosque range from accommodation, food and drinks, toilets, and rest areas. Inside the mosque are electronic media facilities such as a sound system, parking lot, ablution place, and so on. According to the manager of Cheng Ho Mosque, there is also a residence behind the mosque. Initially, the building was used as the official residence of the Chinese Islamic Association of Indonesia (PITI) because PITI wanted to revive the mosque for students who needed a place to live. Behind the mosque, there are also people who do not have a place to live and who have access to the mosque, but in the end, many of them do not pay and even have problems. This mosque has a hafidz school, but it is a hafidz school that is not full 30 juz. There is also a kindergarten, TPQ, and a reading corner in the library, but the timing needs to be reorganized

Opinions related to facilities at the Cheng Ho mosque were also expressed by a tourist from Purbalingga City who said that for the third time visiting the Cheng Ho Mosque, the facilities provided were quite adequate for tourists. Next to the mosque, there is a place to rest for people who travel long distances so that people can stop for prayer as well as rest. One tourist from Mangunegara pointed out that traders provide plenty of food and drinks. The mosque also looks clean and well-maintained. Toilets and ablution places between men and women are separated, making it easier for tourists and not visible to other people who are not mahrams. The existing facilities or amenities have met the basic needs of visitors (tourists), starting from places to eat and drink, places to rest, clean mosques, well-maintained male and female toilets, and sufficient water. However, on the other hand, it is necessary to add more adequate facilities, because the provision of feasible facilities that do not conflict with Islamic law will certainly provide comfort to tourists.

Ease of Access

Regarding accessibility, according to the mosque manager, the road to Cheng Ho Mosque is quite easy because it is located on a large road with smooth conditions and is easily accessible. Meanwhile, tourists who have never visited Cheng Ho Mosque can easily access the map online. The location of the Mosque, which is on the edge of a large road with smooth asphalt conditions and a slightly cornered location, is prone to potential accidents, so tourists need to be careful with motorists who intend to stop at the Cheng Ho Mosque. Public transportation that passes Cheng Ho Mosque is also quite a lot because it is in an area that connects Pemalang and Purbalingga areas.

Tourism Technology Media

One of the strategies used by the Cheng Ho Mosque is to promote the mosque by letter or invitation. The mosque manager explains as far as he knows. Other than that, there is no specific promotional strategy. The mosque also plans to develop technology, which was previously delayed due to several controversies, including limited costs. Cheng Ho Mosque. Regarding funding, the Cheng Ho Mosque still relies on donations and infusions. One of the tourists said that the more tourists who know about the existence of this mosque, the better, especially if there is a smart tourism development. Cheng Ho Mosque is the main mosque, which will certainly benefit Muslim tourists; in addition to enjoying the architectural beauty of Cheng Ho Mosque, it also makes a place to worship in the middle of traveling.

Discussion

The Cheng Ho Mosque in Purbalingga shows its potential as a major tourist destination, offering a unique blend of sharia and cultural tourism. The mosque provides a conducive environment for worship, follows Shariah law, and is conveniently located to facilitate Islamic events. It also provides halal facilities, hygienic ablution stations, and Islamic educational tours. The mosque's architectural design, which incorporates elements of Chinese and Islamic culture, is an attraction for travelers from different backgrounds. The mosque symbolizes the friendship between Islam and China and serves as a place to learn about cross-cultural history and tolerance.

The mosque's capacity for economic development is promising, and its potential to foster small businesses is a promising avenue to realize this potential. However, challenges such as inadequate promotion and suboptimal management of tourist facilities hinder its potential for tourism development, so it has not yet been realized due to the lack of strong support and management factors such as finance. The local government has also not fully provided guidance related to technology development. Introducing the Cheng Ho mosque to a wider audience can help. Technology is getting more sophisticated, so the existence of tourist places that are not yet widely known can be introduced through social media by displaying photos or videos via Instagram, Facebook, or TikTok. The public most easily accesses social media; thus, the potential to be recognized is even greater. Regarding smart tourism, the Cheng Ho Mosque in Purbalingga is part of the development in the context of Islamic tourism. Despite the unique mosque's attractiveness and the local government's commitment to promote smart tourism as part of a broader smart city, many challenges are still faced. These challenges include inadequate financial and promotional support from the government, which still hinders the implementation of smart tourism technology. Interviews with stakeholders showed that although the mosque has adequate facilities and good accessibility, implementing smart tourism technology is still pending. The local Youth, Sports, and Tourism Office promotes tourism through smart tourism bases and promotional media. Purbalingga district focuses on smart city development and has an official website portal for tourism data. Despite promoting tourism through smart tourism bases and other media, Cheng Ho Mosque has not fully utilized smart city tools due to limited human resources and also some people who are not tech-savvy. Most people who live in the city only have better knowledge of technology. The local government initiated the smart tourism initiative to revitalize the tourism sector. The initiative covers several aspects, including providing adequate infrastructure, financial support for tourism technology, establishment of policies and regulations, implementation of education and training programs, active promotion of destinations through digital platforms, and facilitation of collaboration with relevant stakeholders. With inadequate carrying capacity from the local government in the use of technology for tourism, the government, and related agencies need to make socialization about the introduction of tourism using technological assistance, and especially socialization is carried out to tourism managers who are not too familiar with the function of technology. Based on observations of the environment around the Cheng Ho Mosque with the presence of several merchants, it needs to be improved regarding the variety of products provided. For the guidance of the traders, there needs to be guidance from the relevant agencies. A more comprehensive development of Cheng Ho Mosque tourism increases the attractiveness to tourists, especially if it is associated with integrating sharia tourism and developing information technology and tourist facilities. These measures are designed to enhance the tourism experience for tourists and increase the competitiveness of the destination, thus encouraging the development of smart tourism.

Conclusion

The Cheng Ho Mosque in Purbalingga has considerable potential to become a model smart tourism-based tourism destination aligned with established Islamic tourism principles. The mosque has distinctive cultural and architectural features, as well as adequate facilities for visitors, but the integration of smart tourism technology is hindered by limited financial and human resources and inadequate government support. Nonetheless, Purbalingga Regency has made notable progress in the development of smart tourism-based attractions with support from the Central Java Government, as evidenced by the promotion of these attractions on various platforms. The results of this study also point to the importance of collaboration among stakeholders in maximizing the potential of Islamic tourism despite barriers such as understanding and currently inadequate infrastructure.

The results of this study indicate that the development of smart tourism and Islamic tourism at the Cheng Ho Mosque in Purbalingga has great potential to increase the tourist attraction of the area. However, to achieve this potential, stronger support from the government is needed, including investment in human resource development, infrastructure, and supportive policies, improved coordination among stakeholders, implementation of specialized training programs, and recruitment of information technology experts to optimally utilize digital technology. Future research should explore ways to overcome financial constraints and increase government support for implementing smart tourism technology.

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