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THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM ON CULINARY MSME EMPOWERMENT
(A Case Study in Surabaya)

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the impact of religious tourism on culinary micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) empowerment around Al-Akbar National Mosque Surabaya, including supporting and inhibiting factors and stakeholder perceptions. A descriptive qualitative approach was used through observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and source triangulation involving one mosque manager, three culinary MSME actors, and three visitors. Religious tourism creates market opportunities and stimulates economic activity, particularly on weekends and during religious events, but the benefits remain uneven and have not developed into sustainable business empowerment. Major constraints include fluctuating customer flows, limited business development, the absence of integrated empowerment programs, vendor arrangement, and cleanliness. The findings indicate that sustainable MSME empowerment depends on the interaction of visitor intensity, business readiness, amenity quality, and institutional support rather than visitor growth alone.

Keywords: Religious tourism; culinary MSMEs; empowerment; sustainable tourism; Al-Akbar National Mosque

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is widely associated with local economic activity because visitor expenditure circulates through accommodation, transportation, retail, food and beverage services, and small businesses. In destination economies, this circulation is often discussed through multiplier effects: expenditure made by visitors may generate direct sales for local firms and can subsequently support employment, procurement, and other forms of local economic exchange. Nevertheless, the existence of tourism demand does not by itself ensure that benefits are distributed evenly or converted into long-term improvements in community capability. Sustainable tourism therefore requires attention not only to the volume of visitation, but also to who is able to participate, how local businesses capture value, how destination amenities are managed, and whether institutional arrangements enable local actors to strengthen their capacity over time.

Religious tourism represents an important setting for examining this relationship because sacred destinations combine spiritual purposes with movements of people, consumption, services, and community interaction. Visitors to mosques, shrines, pilgrimage sites, and other faith-based destinations require food, beverages, transportation, information, and

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other amenities during their stay. Recent research confirms that religious tourism can stimulate local business opportunities and socioeconomic development. Srivastava, Nigam, and Tripathi (2024), for example, identify religious tourism as a development multiplier with implications for infrastructure and local communities. In a more specific Indonesian mosque context, Sutisna, Sopiah, and Salam (2024) found that Al-Jabbar Mosque generated business potential, employment opportunities, and multiplier effects for surrounding micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). These studies demonstrate the economic potential of religious visitation, but they also raise an important question: whether increased economic activity becomes sustained empowerment for the businesses that depend on the destination.

The sustainability perspective is particularly relevant because religious destinations are not purely commercial spaces. Their management must balance worship functions, visitor experience, community interests, environmental quality, and local livelihoods. Cifci, Akova, Rasoolimanesh, and Ogretmenoglu (2023) show that residents' perceptions of tourism impacts shape support for development in a faith destination, indicating that economic gains are only one dimension of destination sustainability. Research at the Tomb of Sunan Muria similarly emphasizes that community participation, human resources, amenities, and stakeholder involvement are important for sustainable religious tourism (Mubasyaroh, Maghfirah, & Dewi, 2024). More recently, Pramezwary, Juliana, Yuliantoro, Hulu, and Teguh (2026) demonstrate that amenities and ancillary services can remain constrained by infrastructure, fragmented governance, and uneven service standards even where religious attractions are strong. These findings suggest that the quality of the institutional and service environment determines whether visitor flows produce durable local benefits.

Culinary MSMEs occupy a strategic position in this relationship. Food and beverages are basic visitor needs, but culinary services also function as destination amenities that contribute to convenience, perceived value, and the overall tourism experience. The relevance of amenities is also reflected in mosque-tourism research in Media Wisata. Disuma, Athoillah, Supriatna, and Shaleh (2025) found that attraction, accessibility, and amenities collectively shaped interest in visiting mosque destinations in West Java, even though their individual effects varied. From the business side, tourism MSMEs require knowledge, adaptability, and management capability to translate market opportunities into performance. Iqbal, Yanuarni, Mawardi, and Astuti (2023) show the importance of knowledge management and adaptability for tourism SME recovery, while Kusasih, Purwanto, and Agung (2025) report that knowledge management is positively related to tourism MSME performance. Thus, the presence of demand is only one component of a wider empowerment process.

The issue is highly relevant in Surabaya, where Al-Akbar National Mosque functions not only as a place of worship but also as a center for religious, educational, social, cultural, and tourism activities. The mosque area includes supporting culinary and MSME facilities. Visitor activity tends to increase on weekends, public holidays, Ramadan, Islamic holidays, and during religious events such as Tabligh Akbar, Qiyamul Lail, and Jalan Sehat. These recurring peaks create visible commercial opportunities for food vendors. However, the initial field evidence in this study indicates that higher visitor activity does not necessarily correspond to stable income growth or meaningful business development for all culinary MSMEs. This discrepancy makes Al-Akbar National Mosque an appropriate case for examining the difference between tourism-generated opportunity and sustainable empowerment.

Previous studies provide several important points of comparison. Sutisna et al. (2024) explain the trickle-down and multiplier effects of religious tourism at Al-Jabbar Mosque. Iswanto, Aji, Sudarmiatin, and Firmansyah (2024), studying MSMEs in the Sunan Ampel religious tourism area of Surabaya, emphasize entrepreneurial literacy and business strategy as conditions for competitiveness. Mubasyaroh et al. (2024) focus on community

responses, amenities, and sustainable development at Sunan Muria. Mbulu, Rossi, Erfinda, and Salsabila (2023) demonstrate that institutional roles can support MSME, culinary, and religious tourism development through community empowerment. Fitrianto, Halim, and Mcmichael (2024) likewise show that collaborative local institutions can use tourism development as a vehicle for economic empowerment. Taken together, these studies establish that religious tourism may open markets, while business capabilities, community participation, and institutional support influence the sustainability of the resulting benefits.

A gap nevertheless remains in explaining the situation in which visitor activity grows periodically but culinary MSME empowerment remains limited. Much of the existing discussion emphasizes positive economic effects, destination development, entrepreneurial capability, or community participation as separate issues. Less attention has been given to the interaction between visitor intensity, MSME readiness, amenity quality, and institutional support within a single mosque-based tourism setting, particularly by triangulating the perceptions of destination management, business actors, and visitors. This distinction is important because temporary increases in transactions during crowded events should not automatically be treated as evidence of empowerment. Empowerment implies improved capability, greater independence, better access to opportunities and resources, and the capacity to sustain or develop the business beyond short-lived demand peaks.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the impact of religious tourism on local culinary MSME empowerment in the area of Al-Akbar National Mosque Surabaya, identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and examine the perceptions of mosque managers, MSME actors, and visitors. The study's novelty lies in conceptualizing sustainable culinary MSME empowerment as an outcome that is contingent on four interconnected conditions: visitor intensity, business readiness, amenity quality, and institutional support. The contribution is therefore not limited to confirming that religious tourism creates economic opportunity. It explains why increased visitation can coexist with stagnant or declining business outcomes and identifies the institutional and destination-level conditions required for temporary market opportunity to develop into more sustainable empowerment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious tourism can be understood as travel connected to faith, worship, pilgrimage, spiritual motivation, religious heritage, or participation in activities centered on sacred places. Although spiritual motivation differentiates religious tourism from many leisure forms of tourism, religious destinations operate within a broader destination system. They require accessibility, visitor management, amenities, services, information, and coordination among institutions and communities. The economic dimension emerges because visitors consume goods and services during their journeys. In this sense, a religious destination can create a local market without changing its primary sacred function. The empirical literature supports this view: Srivastava et al. (2024) describe religious tourism as a multiplier for development, while Sutisna et al. (2024) document new business and employment potential around a major mosque. However, multiplier effects describe circulation of economic activity; they do not necessarily establish that each local enterprise becomes stronger, more independent, or more competitive.

For this study, empowerment is therefore treated as a process rather than a single increase in sales. Suharto (2017) associates empowerment with expanding access, opportunities, capacity, and the ability of communities to manage their lives more independently. In a tourism context, Rahman and Natalia (2025) similarly position community independence as a central expression of empowerment because it reflects the ability to manage local potential without excessive external dependence. Hasdiani, Mulyono, and Abimbowo (2024) show that participation in tourism-based empowerment can produce changes in

income, employment, skills, and involvement in decision-making. Aguzman, Pratiwi, Eni, and Sasongko (2024) also demonstrate that community empowerment can mediate the relationship between social entrepreneurship orientation and tourism-village sustainability. These perspectives indicate that empowerment should be assessed through business development capacity and independence, not through visitor volume alone.

This distinction is especially important for MSMEs. Small enterprises often have limited capital, management systems, marketing capability, product development resources, and bargaining power. Tourism can create demand, but the enterprise must still be capable of responding to that demand consistently. Iswanto et al. (2024) identify entrepreneurial literacy as an important challenge for MSMEs in the Sunan Ampel religious tourism area, while Iqbal et al. (2023) show that knowledge management and adaptability matter for tourism SMEs operating under uncertainty. Kusasih et al. (2025) further demonstrate the relationship between knowledge management and tourism MSME performance. These studies support the concept of business readiness used in this research: the ability of an MSME to convert destination-generated demand into reliable quality, service, marketing, learning, innovation, and continued business development.

Amenity quality represents a second condition. Culinary MSMEs are part of the practical service environment that makes a destination usable and comfortable. Visitors evaluate not only the food itself but also price, service, cleanliness, physical arrangement, variety, accessibility, and convenience. Disuma et al. (2025) show the relevance of amenities within mosque tourism, while Pramezwary et al. (2026) argue that limitations in amenities and ancillary services can constrain sustainable religious tourism even when spiritual attractions remain strong. In the present case, culinary vendors therefore have a dual role. They are local economic actors seeking income and business growth, but they are also components of the destination experience. Problems of cleanliness, vendor layout, and product variety consequently affect both business competitiveness and visitor comfort.

Institutional support represents a third condition for sustainable empowerment. Empowerment is difficult to sustain when business actors are left to respond individually to fluctuating visitor flows without training, coordination, market development, quality standards, or collective promotion. Mbulu et al. (2023) find that village institutions have an important role in empowering tourism-related MSMEs and culinary activities. Fitrianto et al. (2024) show that collaboration among village institutions and community actors can mobilize local assets and distribute economic opportunity. In Media Wisata, Suleman and Pujiastuti (2026) demonstrate that tourism potential may remain underdeveloped when pentahelix collaboration is informal, coordination is weak, and policy or funding support is limited. Their findings are particularly relevant to the present case because they show that business opportunity and local potential require institutional mechanisms to become sustainable outcomes.

Sustainable tourism provides the overarching perspective linking these conditions. The concept requires destinations to consider the continuity of economic benefits together with social participation, cultural integrity, environmental quality, and responsible governance. Religious tourism research in Indonesia increasingly applies this perspective. Mubasyaroh et al. (2024) emphasize community participation and sustainable management at Sunan Muria; Pramezwary et al. (2026) connect service quality, community stewardship, and governance in religious tourism; and Fatkurrohman and Setianto (2026) highlight planning and management as central to sustainability at the Tomb of Sunan Kalijaga. These studies reinforce the argument that sustainable economic benefit depends on more than attracting crowds. It depends on the institutional and service system through which visitor activity is translated into local capability and long-term value.

Based on these perspectives, this study uses a four-part analytical lens. Visitor intensity refers to the timing and concentration of potential demand generated by religious tourism.

Business readiness refers to the capability of culinary MSMEs to capture and develop that demand. Amenity quality refers to the service environment represented by food availability, price, service, cleanliness, variety, and vendor arrangement. Institutional support refers to the presence of coordination, empowerment programs, training, facilitation, and stakeholder collaboration. The study does not treat these dimensions as a statistically tested causal model. Rather, they are used as an interpretive framework for explaining the qualitative evidence and for distinguishing temporary economic opportunity from sustainable MSME empowerment.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach because the research problem concerns how different stakeholders experience and interpret the economic effects of religious tourism and the conditions surrounding culinary MSME empowerment. The design was intended to capture the perspectives of destination management, business actors, and visitors rather than to estimate the magnitude of economic impact statistically. The research was conducted in the area of Al-Akbar National Mosque Surabaya for approximately one month in May 2026.

Informants were selected purposively on the basis of their direct knowledge of the research setting. Seven informants participated: one mosque manager, three culinary MSME actors, and three visitors. The mosque-management informant was the Head of Business Affairs at the Secretariat and had 23 years of work experience. The MSME informants represented culinary businesses operating in the People's Market area: a batagor vendor who had operated since 2022, a siomay vendor operating since 2013, and a vendor of bubur ayam, yellow rice, and nasi uduk operating since 2021. Visitor informants were included to provide an external assessment of the usefulness, affordability, service, product variety, cleanliness, and convenience of culinary MSMEs in the mosque area.

Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. These techniques were used to capture visitor-related business opportunities, changes perceived by MSME actors, supporting and inhibiting factors, the role of management, and visitor assessments of culinary amenities. The use of more than one data source was important because a manager may observe overall visitor activity, an MSME actor may experience changes in customers and income, and a visitor may evaluate the quality and usefulness of the service environment from a consumption perspective.

Data analysis followed the interactive qualitative model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), involving data condensation or reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Interview and observational information was organized around recurring themes, including visitor intensity, income and business development, supporting factors, inhibiting factors, amenity quality, management support, and stakeholder perceptions. The findings were then compared across informant groups. Source triangulation strengthened credibility by identifying points of agreement and difference among the mosque manager, MSME actors, and visitors. Consistent with the descriptive qualitative design, the analysis prioritizes patterns and explanations grounded in the informants' accounts rather than statistical generalization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings show that religious tourism at Al-Akbar National Mosque creates a real market for culinary MSMEs, but the strength of this market changes according to the timing of visitor flows. The mosque manager associated larger visitor numbers with greater purchasing potential for MSMEs and identified Tabligh Akbar, Jalan Sehat, Ramadan

activities, and Qiyamul Lail as important visitation-generating events. School holidays, the Hajj season, and Ramadan were also described as periods of higher activity. The manager summarized the relationship simply: 'the more visitors, the greater the purchasing power of visitors at MSMEs' (Mosque Manager, 2026). This evidence confirms the first stage of the tourism-economic mechanism: visitation produces potential demand in the destination area.

The experiences of the three MSME actors, however, show that potential demand does not become the same economic result for every business. The batagor vendor, operating for four years since 2022, described the business as generally functioning but reported declining income and no significant development. The siomay vendor, operating since 2013, stated that the business had previously performed well but that income had also decreased and development remained ordinary. The third vendor, selling bubur ayam, yellow rice, and nasi uduk since 2021, reported relatively stable income but no notable business development. These differences are central to the study because they demonstrate that a destination may generate crowds and transactions while some enterprises remain stagnant or experience decline.

This pattern is consistent with the multiplier potential identified by Sutisna et al. (2024) at Al-Jabbar Mosque, but it adds an important qualification. A multiplier effect explains how a tourism destination can create business and employment opportunities; it does not mean that each MSME will experience continuous growth. The Al-Akbar case indicates a conversion problem between opportunity and empowerment. Visitor intensity generates a market, but the market is concentrated in particular events and periods. When demand is uneven across weekdays and ordinary periods, businesses face uncertainty in daily sales. Therefore, the relevant question is not simply whether visitors spend money, but whether the enterprise has sufficient regular demand and capability to use those transactions as a base for continued development.

The evidence also supports the relevance of business readiness. Existing studies in tourism MSMEs show that knowledge, adaptability, and entrepreneurial capability are important for business performance (Iqbal et al., 2023; Kusasih et al., 2025). In the nearby Sunan Ampel religious tourism context, Iswanto et al. (2024) similarly identify entrepreneurial literacy and business strategy as issues affecting MSME competitiveness. The present study did not directly measure management knowledge or innovation and therefore cannot claim that those factors caused the reported income conditions. Nevertheless, the absence of significant business development among all three interviewed MSMEs indicates that visitor demand alone has not been sufficient to produce capability growth. This is precisely the distinction between economic participation and empowerment: businesses may participate in a tourism market without necessarily becoming more resilient, innovative, or independent.

Several factors help explain why the culinary MSMEs remain useful and economically relevant despite the limited development reported by the vendors. Supporting factors include the large number of visitors during religious events and holidays, the strategic position of vendors in or near the mosque area, affordable prices, friendly service, and product variety. These conditions make the MSMEs accessible to visitors who need meals, snacks, or beverages without leaving the destination. From the visitor perspective, the vendors reduce search time and travel distance, while from the business perspective, the location places the enterprise close to a recurring flow of potential customers.

Visitors consistently recognized these advantages. One visitor emphasized that food and drinks could be purchased without going far from the mosque area. A second visitor viewed the MSMEs as beneficial for the local economy and appreciated the availability of food, snacks, and beverages. A third visitor highlighted friendly service and reasonable prices. These responses demonstrate that culinary MSMEs function not only as income-generating

units but also as destination amenities. This finding aligns with Disuma et al. (2025), who identify amenities as part of the combined destination attributes shaping mosque-visitation interest, and with Pramezwary et al. (2026), who show that the quality of amenities and ancillary services matters in sustainable religious tourism.

The same visitor evidence also identifies weaknesses in the amenity environment. Visitors suggested improvements in cleanliness, vendor arrangement, and product variety. The mosque manager likewise identified waste, vendor organization, and cleanliness as issues requiring attention. These concerns are important because they connect destination quality directly to MSME empowerment. Clean and well-organized vending areas can improve visitor comfort and the credibility of local food services; weak arrangement and hygiene can reduce the attractiveness of the culinary area even when prices and service are considered favorable. In other words, amenity quality influences both the tourism experience and the ability of MSMEs to retain and expand demand.

A more fundamental constraint concerns institutional support. The mosque manager stated that there was no specific empowerment program because MSME management was handled by a private party. This arrangement does not mean that no management exists, but the field evidence indicates that business facilitation has not yet developed into an integrated empowerment mechanism. The interviewed MSMEs did not report significant business development, and there was no evidence in the collected data of a regular program connecting the vendors with structured training, product development, marketing assistance, financial capability building, or coordinated promotional activities. The consequence is that business actors benefit from the location and visitor flow but largely confront the challenge of development at the level of the individual enterprise.

The institutional gap is consistent with a broader body of tourism-empowerment research. Mbulu et al. (2023) demonstrate that institutional actors can directly support MSME and culinary-tourism development. Fitrianto et al. (2024) show how local collaboration can mobilize community assets and create economic programs, while Suleman and Pujiastuti (2026) warn that tourism potential is difficult to optimize when stakeholder collaboration remains informal and coordination is weak. These studies help explain why the Al-Akbar findings should not be interpreted merely as a marketing problem for individual vendors. Sustainable empowerment requires an enabling system in which destination managers, the party managing the MSME area, local government or relevant agencies, academic or training institutions, and the MSME actors themselves can coordinate business development while respecting the mosque's religious function.

Source triangulation clarifies the different but complementary viewpoints in the case. The mosque manager sees the macro opportunity: more visitors mean greater purchasing potential. The MSME actors see the micro reality: customer flows and income can fluctuate, and the businesses have not developed substantially. Visitors see the service value: the MSMEs are useful, affordable, and convenient, but aspects of cleanliness, arrangement, and product variety can improve. None of these perspectives invalidates the others. Instead, their combination demonstrates that tourism impact depends on the level of analysis. A destination can show increased economic activity at the aggregate level while individual enterprises still experience unstable or limited outcomes.

This finding strengthens the conceptual distinction between opportunity, benefit, and empowerment. Opportunity exists when religious activities bring potential customers into the area. Benefit occurs when a business receives sales, income, or other advantages from those customers. Empowerment is a deeper and more durable outcome: the business gains capacity, independence, improved market access, and the ability to develop over time. Rahman and Natalia (2025) emphasize independence as an important marker of tourism-based empowerment, while Aguzman et al. (2024) demonstrate the role of empowerment in linking entrepreneurial orientation to tourism sustainability. In the Al-Akbar case,

opportunity and some immediate benefits are visible, but the limited development reported by MSMEs indicates that empowerment remains incomplete.

The sustainability implications extend beyond income. Religious tourism must preserve the quality and meaning of the destination while enabling community benefits. Mubasyaroh et al. (2024) show that sustainable religious tourism depends on community participation, amenities, and coordinated development. Fatkurrohman and Setianto (2026) similarly emphasize planning and management in a religious destination. For Al-Akbar National Mosque, better vendor arrangement and cleanliness would support the environmental and service dimensions of sustainability; business development assistance would support the economic dimension; and participatory coordination with MSME actors would support the social and governance dimensions. These are interdependent rather than separate interventions.

The overall synthesis can be expressed as a four-condition pathway. First, visitor intensity creates the size and timing of market opportunity. Second, business readiness determines how effectively individual MSMEs can capture, retain, and develop that opportunity. Third, amenity quality shapes whether visitors perceive the culinary area as convenient, clean, varied, and worth using. Fourth, institutional support determines whether improvements are coordinated and whether MSMEs receive the capacity-building needed to move beyond day-to-day selling. A weakness in any one condition can reduce the transition from visitor activity to sustainable empowerment. This framework explains why crowded religious events can coexist with stagnant business development without treating the two observations as contradictory.

Practically, the findings suggest that empowerment should be designed around the actual rhythm of religious visitation. Training alone would be insufficient if it is disconnected from visitor patterns, while events alone would be insufficient if MSMEs cannot develop products, service standards, promotion, and operational capacity. A coordinated program could therefore focus on regular business mentoring, product and menu development, food-service hygiene, vendor-area organization, simple financial management, digital promotion, and joint marketing during high-visit religious events. The field data do not establish which intervention would produce the greatest effect, so these suggestions should be treated as management implications rather than tested outcomes. Their purpose is to connect the observed constraints with feasible areas of institutional response.

The findings also contribute theoretically by qualifying a simple multiplier-effect interpretation of religious tourism. The study supports the proposition that visitation is a necessary economic input but not a sufficient condition for empowerment. In qualitative terms, sustainable MSME empowerment is better understood as a conversion process in which destination-generated demand must pass through enterprise capability, amenity quality, and institutional support. This interpretation complements studies that emphasize local participation and stakeholder collaboration (Mbulu et al., 2023; Fitrianto et al., 2024; Suleman & Pujiastuti, 2026) and helps explain why benefits may remain temporary or uneven even in a destination with recurring religious events.

Table 1. Summary of source-triangulated findings

Dimension	Triangulated evidence
Visitor intensity	Purchasing opportunity rises with visitor numbers; peak periods occur during religious events, Ramadan, holidays, and other high-visit occasions.
MSME outcomes	Two actors reported declining income and one stable income; all three described limited or no notable business development.
Amenity quality	Visitors value convenience, affordable prices, friendly service, and product availability; cleanliness, vendor arrangement, and product variety require improvement.

Institutional support	No specific integrated empowerment program was reported; stronger coordination and capacity building are needed.

The case also illustrates the value of triangulation for tourism-impact research. If the analysis relied only on the mosque manager, the conclusion might emphasize rising purchasing opportunity. If it relied only on business actors, it might emphasize declining or stable income and limited development. If it relied only on visitors, it might emphasize affordability and convenience. By comparing all three groups, the study demonstrates that religious tourism has a positive but conditional economic role. The destination creates a market, the visitors value the culinary service, yet the MSMEs still require stronger business and institutional conditions for that market to generate sustainable empowerment.

CONCLUSIONS

Religious tourism at Al-Akbar National Mosque Surabaya contributes positively to local culinary MSMEs by creating recurring market opportunities, particularly on weekends, holidays, Ramadan, and during major religious activities. The mosque manager associates higher visitation with greater purchasing potential, and visitors consider the culinary MSMEs useful because they provide accessible, affordable food and beverages within or near the mosque area. However, the experiences of the three MSME actors show that these opportunities have not translated into uniform or sustained business growth. Two vendors reported declining income, one reported relatively stable income, and all three indicated limited or no notable business development.

The supporting conditions are strategic location, event-related visitor flows, affordable prices, friendly service, and product variety. The main inhibiting conditions are fluctuating customer numbers, limited business development, the absence of an integrated empowerment program, and issues of vendor arrangement, waste, and cleanliness. Triangulation therefore indicates that the impact of religious tourism is positive but suboptimal and uneven. The study's central contribution is the argument that sustainable culinary MSME empowerment should not be inferred from visitor growth alone. It depends on the interaction of visitor intensity, business readiness, amenity quality, and institutional support.

For destination management, the implication is to move from event-dependent economic opportunity toward coordinated capacity building. Collaboration among mosque-related management, the party responsible for the MSME area, relevant government agencies, academic or training institutions, and MSME actors could support business mentoring, service and hygiene standards, vendor-area improvement, product development, financial management, and promotion. Such measures would help align local economic benefits with the broader principles of sustainable religious tourism.

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This research is limited by its descriptive qualitative design, a small purposively selected group of seven informants, and approximately one month of fieldwork. The findings are therefore intended to explain the case rather than represent all MSMEs or all religious tourism destinations. Future research could use a larger sample, longitudinal observation across ordinary and peak religious periods, and mixed methods combining turnover trends, visitor expenditure, business-capability measures, and stakeholder interviews. Such research would allow the proposed four-condition pathway to be tested more systematically.

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DECLARATIONS

Competing Interests

The author declares that there are no competing interests related to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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Research Ethics

This study employed a qualitative research approach involving interviews with seven informants, consisting of one mosque management representative, three culinary MSME operators, and three visitors to Al-Akbar National Mosque Surabaya. Formal ethical approval was not required under the applicable institutional procedures. All informants voluntarily agreed to participate in the research after being informed of its purpose. The confidentiality of participants' personal information was maintained throughout the research process.

Generative AI Disclosure

The author used ChatGPT (OpenAI) solely to assist in formatting the manuscript according to the journal's prescribed template. The tool was not used for data collection, data analysis, or the generation of research findings. The author reviewed the AI-assisted formatting and assumes full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the manuscript.

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