

# Development of Sharia-Based Ecotourism in Pagar Alam City (Potential and Strategy in Utilizing Natural Resources Sustainably)

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## ARTICLE INFO

### *Keywords:*

Ecotourism Development;  
Sharia-based ecotourism;  
Natural Resources.

### *Article history:*

Received 2024-04-04

Revised 2024-05-18

Accepted 2024-06-20

## ABSTRACT

Sharia integration in ecotourism means combining the basic principles of ecotourism such as nature conservation and local community empowerment with sharia rules. The development of ecotourism in Pagar Alam is a strategic opportunity, not only to increase the income of local communities, but also to support environmental conservation efforts and cultural heritage. In addition, with the increasing interest in sharia-based tourism, Pagar Alam has a great opportunity to attract Muslim tourists through the development of ecotourism destinations that are in accordance with Islamic principles.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the important industries in the City of Pagar Alam. In line with this, ecotourism is one of the tourism activities that tourists like. Ecotourism can be defined as one of the concepts that focuses on conservation, preservation and has social and economic benefits, with the development of the ecotourism industry, this is believed to be the cause of the increase in the number of travel agencies involved in ecotourism. As a result, the increasing number of tourism institutions in the ecotourism industry will certainly have a negative impact if they do not strictly adhere to the correct ecotourism practices.

The goal of ecotourism is to provide sustainable tourism where tourists enjoy their visit without causing a negative impact on the location while the community benefits from the industry. However, sustainability can only be achieved if it is realized by truly implementing ecotourism practices. Ecotourism providers are one of the important stakeholders that can do this to facilitate sustainability. However, without following the right ecotourism practices, they will experience this that will definitely contribute to the destruction of ecotourism resources. With the growing concern about the negative impacts of the ecotourism industry, it is necessary to follow sustainable tourism guidelines. The importance of this research is that it can contribute indirectly to the conservation of ecotourism areas in Pagar Alam. (Jaini et al., 2012)

The city of Pagar Alam, located in South Sumatra Province, enchantes with abundant natural wealth. The diversity of its ecosystem, forests, and natural beauty make this city a potential destination

for ecotourism development in South Sumatra, The global shift towards sustainable tourism is increasingly encouraging the importance of managing tourism potential by paying attention to sustainability and sharia values. Therefore, this research is directed to explore the potential and design a sharia-based ecotourism development strategy in Pagar Alam City and this research also aims to identify the potential of ecotourism in Pagar Alam City and design a sharia-based development strategy in order to utilize natural resources in a sustainable manner.

The growth and disparities in the size and nature of the ecotourism sector and its relevance to broader questions regarding conservation and development have prompted many researchers to focus on the impact of ecotourism in relation to local economic benefits, changes in the socio-cultural attributes of the population and society. community and protection of the natural environment. Analysis of these impacts often refers to tourism development models that assume stages or cycles of evolution that reflect the number of visitors and the perceived attraction of a destination. The assumed similarities between ecotourism activities and the early stages of this model have been used to highlight the potential of ecotourism to open up new destinations for the subsequent development of mass tourism and the need for adequate planning and management in this process. However, this assumption requires a reassessment given the current uncertainty of the travel market related to global political events. Furthermore, the proliferation of ecotourism activities requires that the evaluation of impacts related to ecotourism considers the extent to which a particular type of ecotourism is aligned with the destination environment. (Clifton & Benson, 2006)

By combining the potential of sharia-based ecotourism, it is hoped that the potential of these natural resources can be utilized sustainably and this research is also expected to contribute to the preservation of nature and culture in Pagar Alam City through the development of sustainable ecotourism. Community Empowerment: By embracing sharia values, this research is also expected to help in empowering local communities and improving their welfare.

Against this background, research on Sharia-Based Ecotourism Development in Pagar Alam City will provide a strong foundation to support sustainable tourism development and in accordance with sharia principles in this region. This research can be categorized as descriptive and exploratory research. With a combination of descriptive, exploratory, qualitative, and applied approaches, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the potential of ecotourism and design a development strategy that is in accordance with sharia principles concretely.

## 2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach to understand the phenomena that occur in natural resource management and the tourism industry. The data collection techniques used include in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document analysis. The interviews were conducted to explore the views, experiences, and understandings of relevant stakeholders, including natural resource managers and tourism industry players. In addition, observation will provide direct insight into the implementation of policies or practices in the field. The analysis of the document will support by providing additional context, either from written policies, reports, or other secondary data relevant to this study.

To analyze the collected data, this study uses *content analysis* techniques . This technique allows researchers to extract relevant information from the results of interviews and existing documents, then identify the main patterns or themes that emerge. With this approach, researchers can uncover a deeper understanding of the relationship between natural resource management and the development of the tourism industry, as well as the challenges and opportunities faced by these industry players.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Potential for Sharia Ecotourism Development in Pagar Alam

The development of ecotourism in Pagar Alam is a strategic opportunity, not only to increase the income of local communities, but also to support environmental conservation efforts and cultural heritage. In addition, with the increasing interest in sharia-based tourism, Pagar Alam has a great opportunity to attract Muslim tourists through the development of ecotourism destinations that are in accordance with Islamic principles. The city of Pagar Alam, with its mountainous topography and tropical forests, has a huge natural ecotourism potential. Some of the important natural resources that support the development of ecotourism in this area include: Various types of tourism, including

##### 1) Nature Tourism

- a. **Mount Dempo:** This mountain is one of the highest mountains in South Sumatra, with a height of 3,159 meters. The development of ecotourism in Mount Dempo can take advantage of the concept of *low-impact tourism*, where climbing, trekking, and camping activities are carried out by preserving the environment. This approach is in line with sharia principles that encourage Muslims to preserve Allah's creation and protect the environment from damage.
- b. The Number of **Waterfalls (Curup)** in Pagar Alam: Pagar Alam has several famous waterfalls, such as Curup Mangkok, Curup Maung, Curup Dew, Curup seven memories, Curup Shedpingahan and other waterfalls. In the development of sharia ecotourism, the management of waterfalls must consider aspects of environmental conservation and provide Muslim-friendly facilities, such as places of worship, halal food, and recreational areas that separate male and female tourists.

##### 2) Cultural Tourism

- a. **Besemah Traditional House:** This traditional house of the Pagar Alam community reflects the culture and architecture typical of the Besemah Tribe. Visitors can learn about the culture and customs of the local community.
- b. The Oldest Mosque in South Sumatra: **The Pardipe Mosque** built by Puyang Awak since 1479 AD is known as the oldest mosque in Jagat Besemah Libagh Semende Panjang and Southern Sumatra.
- c. **Besemah Annual Festival:** This event is a cultural festival that is often held to introduce the art of dance, music, and traditional clothing of Besemah. This festival attracts tourists who want to see the cultural richness of Pagar Alam firsthand.

##### 3) Megalithic Historical Tour: Pagar Alam is famous for its megalithic sites scattered in several locations, such as in Tanjung Aro. These carved large stones have high historical value and show the ancient civilization that once existed in this region.

##### 4) Recreational Tourism

- a. **Green Paradise:** This destination provides natural pools, parks, and picnic areas, making it perfect for travelers who want to relax in the great outdoors.
- b. **Cemerlang Asri:** This flower garden is designed for leisurely recreation, where visitors can enjoy the scenery of the neatly arranged flowers and the beautiful backdrop of Mount Dempo.

##### 5) Agricultural and Plantation Tourism

- a. **Gunung Dempo Tea Garden:** The tea plantation at the foot of Mount Dempo is a popular destination in Pagar Alam. Visitors can see the process of planting to tea picking, as well as enjoy the view of the green and spacious tea garden.
- b. **Coffee Plantation Tours:** Some coffee plantations offer tours and experiences for visitors to learn about the coffee production process, from planting to processing coffee beans.

- 6) **Adventure Tourism** is a type of tourism that offers challenging activities and exploration in the outdoors. This type of tourism usually prioritizes activities that spur adrenaline, such as hiking, *trekking*, or rafting, including Offroad sports which are currently starting to be in demand by tourists who visit Pagar Alam.

In essence, Pagar Alam offers many choices of types of tourism, ranging from natural tourism, culture, history, to ecotourism. The city's beautiful natural potential and rich culture allow it to develop different types of tourism that are not only entertaining, but also educational and sustainable. With good management, each type of tourism can be developed to improve the welfare of the community and preserve local nature and culture.

Cultural resources in Pagar Alam are also important assets to be developed in sharia ecotourism. The local culture and wisdom here are in harmony with Islamic values, and can provide educational and spiritual tourism experiences, including:

- 1) **Cultural Heritage of the Besemah Tribe**, the Besemah people have the Besemah language which is used in daily conversations. This language has a distinctive vocabulary and accent and reflects the uniqueness of the local culture. The customs of the Besemah tribe include their way of living their daily lives, ranging from agriculture, traditional ceremonies, to their attitude towards the environment.
- 2) **The Megalithic site**, Megalithic Pagar Alam shows the existence of an ancient community that has a certain belief system and way of life. Many of these stones are believed to have spiritual value and were used in traditional ceremonies in the past, which could indicate the mindset, values, and way in which people respected nature and ancestors.
- 3) **Besemah Traditional House**, Every element in the design of this traditional house reflects the values and philosophy of life of the Besemah Tribe, such as harmony with nature, family, and simplicity. This traditional house is also a cultural tourism attraction for visitors who want to see local cultural heritage firsthand.
- 4) **Traditional Arts and Crafts**, such as besemah dance and woven crafts and carving arts.

Each of these elements is not only part of the cultural identity of the local community, but also offers educational value and attractive tourism potential.



Figure 1. Hearing, sharing and discussion with the Acting Mayor of Pagar Alam, Assistant experts in economics, Head of the Tourism Office and Head of the Education and Culture Office of Pagar Alam City

### Potential for Sharia Ecotourism Development in Pagar Alam

- 1) **Understanding the Concept of Sharia Ecotourism:** Pagar Alam has a rich natural environment and a Muslim-majority culture, which opens up great opportunities to apply the concept of sharia ecotourism. The area is known for its mountainous landscapes, tea plantations, waterfalls, and megalithic sites, all of which have the potential to be developed as sharia-based ecotourism destinations.
- 2) **Integration of Local Culture with Sharia Ecotourism:** The Besemah community has local traditions and wisdom that support environmental conservation, such as sustainable farming patterns and respect for nature. This local wisdom can be integrated with the concept of sharia, where efforts to preserve nature are aligned with the principle of preserving the creation of Allah SWT. Visitors can

be invited to learn about local customs and culture as well as Islamic values in protecting the environment.

Holding cultural festivals that prioritize Islamic arts and culture is also one way to promote sharia ecotourism. For example, festivals that feature calligraphy art, qasidah music, or nature education activities based on Islamic values.

- 3) **Facilities and Infrastructure that Support Sharia Ecotourism: Provision of Worship Facilities:** such as prayer rooms and clean ablution places in various tourist attractions in Pagar Alam is very important to attract Muslim tourists. With the availability of places of worship, Muslim tourists can be more comfortable and feel cared for. **Halal Lodging and Halal Restaurant:** can increase the attraction for Muslim tourists. Halal lodging includes rules such as prohibition of alcohol, providing information on the direction of the Qibla, and halal menu options.
- 4) **The Role of Local Communities in the Development of Sharia Ecotourism: Economic Empowerment Through Local Products:** Local communities can be empowered to produce handicrafts, typical foods, or natural products that are marketed to tourists as souvenirs. With sharia principles, the products offered must be halal and tayyib (good), as well as depict the characteristics of local culture.

**Role of Environmental Educators:** Local communities can also be involved as environmental educators, for example as tour guides who provide education to visitors about the importance of maintaining cleanliness, environmental sustainability, and Islamic behavior during tourism. The involvement of local communities in tourism management can increase awareness and a sense of ownership of the surrounding environment.

- 5) **Islamic Values-Based Environmental Education:** The development of sharia ecotourism in Pagar Alam can include environmental education programs for tourists and local communities. This program aims to increase awareness about the importance of protecting the creation of Allah SWT, avoiding damage to nature, and respecting nature as a mandate that must be maintained.

**Implementation of Islamic Values in Tourism Practices:** Islamic values such as "*khalifah fil ardh*" (leaders on earth) that teach humans to protect the environment can be conveyed in the form of information boards at tourist attractions or through educational activities involving visitors. This environmental education can also be strengthened with hadiths that teach responsibility to the environment.

## B. Ecotourism Development Strategy in Pagar Alam

Pagar Alam, as one of the regions in South Sumatra, has great potential in developing sharia ecotourism. Given the characteristics of its nature, culture, and society, a proper and sustainable development strategy is essential to ensure that sharia ecotourism can provide economic, social, and environmental benefits. In this chapter, we'll explore some of the key strategies that can be implemented to achieve these goals.

- 1) **Natural and Cultural Resources Management.** The management of natural and cultural resources is an important aspect in the development of sharia-based ecotourism, as this approach emphasizes the balance between environmental conservation, respect for local culture, and meeting the needs of Muslim tourists.

### a. Sustainable Natural Resource Management

Natural resource management in sharia-based ecotourism emphasizes the principle of the caliphate or humans as guardians of nature, which is the basis for managing the environment sustainably. In the context of Pagar Alam, which has natural resources such as Mount Dempo, tea plantations, and waterfalls, this concept can be applied with a focus on environmental conservation and non-destructive utilization.

Al-Qaradawi (2001) explained that in Islam, humans are given the mandate to protect and care for nature as a form of responsibility to the Creator. This concept is known as the caliphate and is closely related to the preservation of nature that should not be overexploited.

According to Dasgupta (2000), sustainable management of natural resources also involves *an eco-efficiency* approach, which is efficiency in the use of resources to reduce environmental impacts, which is very suitable to be applied in ecotourism.

In its implementation, destinations such as Mount Dempo and tea plantations in Pagar Alam can introduce *a zero waste policy* and reduce the carbon footprint of tourism activities. For example, by implementing a ban on the use of plastic and providing good waste management facilities, visitors are invited to help protect nature. Education to visitors about the importance of nature conservation in accordance with Islamic teachings can also be done.

#### **b. Ethical Utilization of Local Culture**

The local culture in Pagar Alam, including local customs and wisdom, is an important part of the tourist attraction and must be managed by paying attention to ethics and respect for the local community. In the context of sharia ecotourism, the concept of 'urf (local customs or traditions that do not conflict with sharia) is very important in integrating local values into the tourism experience.

According to Nasution (2004), the concept of 'urf in sharia allows the integration of local culture as long as the culture does not contradict the teachings of Islam. This opens up opportunities to promote the local culture of Pagar Alam in sharia tourism activities.

Rifai (2012) also emphasized that the integration of local culture in tourism can improve the tourist experience and help preserve cultural heritage, as long as it is done in a way that respects the local community.

Examples of implementation in Pagar Alam can include cultural activities that introduce visitors to local traditions such as traditional dances, traditional ceremonies, or local handicraft skills. Tour managers can work closely with local community leaders to ensure that these activities are carried out in accordance with Islamic values and provide economic benefits to the local community.

#### **c. Ethical Utilization of Local Culture**

To support sharia-based ecotourism, environmentally friendly infrastructure is very important so that negative impacts on the environment can be minimized. This infrastructure includes facilities such as water management, clean sanitation systems, and renewable energy, which can support halal and environmentally friendly tourism experiences.

According to Honey (2008), good ecotourism must provide environmentally friendly infrastructure, including the use of renewable energy and effective waste management. This is in line with the principles in Islam that advocate cleanliness and resource efficiency.

In the context of sharia ecotourism, Haryati and Hermawan (2015) also mentioned that infrastructure development must pay attention to the needs of Muslims, such as the existence of worship facilities and sanitation systems that are in accordance with Islamic principles.

In Pagar Alam, the management of eco-friendly facilities can include the use of solar power in tourist sites far from conventional electricity, as well as the provision of clean water and comfortable places of worship. By providing this infrastructure, tourists can not only enjoy nature, but also meet their worship needs.

#### **d. Ethical Utilization of Local Culture**

One of the principles of sharia ecotourism is to ensure that the local community is actively involved in the management of tourist destinations. In this context, a participatory approach is urgently needed to ensure that local communities benefit directly from the existence of tourism and not just become spectators.

Inskeep (1991) explained that the success of ecotourism depends on the participation of local communities, which can be achieved by involving them in tourism planning and management.

Hasan (2014) also emphasized the importance of *al-ma'ruf* or mutual cooperation in Islam, which can be applied in sharia ecotourism by utilizing cooperation between the community, the government, and tourism managers.

In Pagar Alam, the community can be involved as local tour guides who provide explanations about the local culture and environment. In addition, training programs can be provided to the community so that they understand the principles of sharia ecotourism, both from the aspects of tourism services and environmental management.

The management of natural and cultural resources in the development of sharia-based ecotourism in Pagar Alam must be based on the principles of sustainability, respect for local culture, provision of environmentally friendly infrastructure, and active participation of local communities. By applying sharia principles such as the caliphate, 'urf, and al-ma'ruf, tourist destinations in Pagar Alam not only offer natural beauty, but also form an ethical and sustainable tourism experience, in accordance with Islamic teachings.

- 2) **Sharia Ecotourism Marketing:** Sharia ecotourism marketing in Pagar Alam should include a strategy that not only attracts Muslim tourists, but also reflects sharia values in nature and cultural conservation.

- a. Sharia Tourism Market Segmentation

**Domestic and International Muslim Tourists:** The main segmentation in sharia ecotourism in Pagar Alam is Muslim tourists, both domestic and international. The rapid growth of global halal tourism can be used to promote Pagar Alam as a Muslim-friendly ecotourism destination. Battour et al. (2017) stated that the main needs of Muslim tourists include halal food, worship facilities, and an environment that is in accordance with Islamic ethics.

**Family and Spiritual Ecotourism:** Marketing can target Muslim families, and tourists looking for spiritual experiences. Pagar Alam, with its natural wealth and historical sites, can offer tour packages that involve spiritual education about Islam and the relationship between humans and nature.

- b. Digital Strategy and Branding

**Use of Social Media and Digital Platforms:** Sharia ecotourism marketing should leverage digital platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Muslim-friendly travel apps (such as HalalTrip or Muslim Pro). Promotional content must include the natural beauty of Pagar Alam as well as facilities and services that are in accordance with sharia.

Research by Pereira et al. (2014) shows that tourism promotion through social media is very effective in attracting tourists from certain market segments, especially the younger generation who are highly connected to digital technology.

**Branding as a Halal Destination:** Pagar Alam can take advantage of its image as a halal tourist destination, with branding that focuses on a clean environment, natural beauty, and sharia facilities. Promotion must also emphasize the value of spiritual education and a comfortable environment for worship. This branding will attract Muslim tourists who are looking for a destination that is in accordance with Islamic principles.

- 3) **Community Participation:** Community participation in the development of sharia ecotourism is the key to inseparable success. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is an ideal approach to ensure that local communities have an active role in ecotourism management in Pagar Alam.

- a. Local Economic Empowerment

**Halal Local Product Development:** Local communities can be empowered to produce food, beverages, and handicrafts that are in accordance with halal principles. These products can then be sold to tourists as part of the sharia ecotourism experience. Sutanto (2018) emphasized the importance of community empowerment in creating local products that have added value in the context of cultural and environment-based tourism.

**Ecotourism Training and Education:** To increase community engagement, training on sharia ecotourism management and environmental conservation education needs to be provided to local communities. They must also be trained in welcoming and serving tourists in accordance with Islamic values, including ethics in doing business and service.



b. Involvement in Tourism Management

**Halal Homestay Tour Guides and Managers:** Local communities can be involved as tour guides, especially for natural tourism and cultural history. In addition, the management of halal homestays can be an economic opportunity for local residents, by ensuring that the facilities provided comply with sharia principles, such as separate rooms for male and female tourists, as well as halal food.

**Partnerships with the Government and the Private Sector:** Communities can also engage in partnerships with local governments and the private sector, where they play the role of active partners in the management of local natural resources and culture. This partnership can encourage an increase in local community income while preserving the environment.

4) **Government Policy and Institutional Support:** The role of the government and related institutions is very important in realizing sharia ecotourism in Pagar Alam. Policies that support the development of sharia ecotourism will encourage the success of nature conservation, community empowerment, and marketing programs.

a. Sharia Tourism Development Policy

**Halal Regulations and Certification:** Local governments need to establish regulations that support the development of sharia ecotourism, including halal certification for lodging, restaurants, and local products. Halal certification bodies such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) must be involved in this process to ensure that sharia standards are complied with. Rita, Purnomo, and Suyanto (2019) mentioned the importance of clear regulations to ensure that halal standards are complied with in the tourism sector.

**Muslim-Friendly Infrastructure Support:** The development of Muslim-friendly infrastructure such as worship facilities in tourist attractions, halal eateries, and lodging that separates men and women, needs to be encouraged by the government to attract Muslim tourists. In addition, accessibility to tourist sites in Pagar Alam needs to be improved to attract more tourists.

b. Incentives for Ecotourism Business Actors: The government can provide incentives in the form of subsidies or tax breaks for business actors who invest in sharia ecotourism. This incentive will attract investors to build Muslim-friendly and sustainable tourist facilities in Pagar Alam



Figure 2. Presentation of programs and research results to youth and actors of Tourism Awareness of Pagar Alam City

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The potential for the development of sharia ecotourism in Pagar Alam is very large because it is supported by natural beauty, the cultural richness of the Pasemah Tribe, and Islamic values that can be integrated in every aspect of tourism. By optimizing natural and cultural resources and providing Muslim-friendly facilities, Pagar Alam can become a superior sharia ecotourism destination in South Sumatra. In addition, the involvement of local communities in sharia ecotourism is also very important to create economic sustainability and preserve culture and the environment.

The strategy for the development of sharia ecotourism in Pagar Alam is with sustainable natural resource management, respect for local culture, provision of environmentally friendly infrastructure, and active participation of local communities. By applying sharia principles such as *caliphate*, *'urf*, and



*al-ma'ruf*. Furthermore, with the marketing of sharia ecotourism by segmenting the sharia tourism market, both domestic and international, and developing digital and branding by utilizing social media and digital platforms. Also by involving community participation through the development of halal local products as well as ecotourism training and education for the community. The role of the government in terms of sharia tourism development policies, such as halal regulations and certification and the provision of incentives for ecotourism business actors is very important in the development of sharia ecotourism in Pagar Alam.

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