
Living the Message: Embodied Da'wah and Religious Tourism Innovation at the Sunan Muria Pilgrimage Site

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Abstract

This study investigates da'wah bil hal through religious tourism service innovations at the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb Foundation, addressing the limited scholarly attention to how practical service improvements can function as a medium for Islamic proselytization. Using a qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach, the research captures the lived experiences of pilgrims to explore how specific innovations shape their spiritual engagement, sense of comfort, and overall safety during visitation. Rather than merely listing developments, this study analyzes how architectural enhancements, spatial reorganizations, and management reforms collectively foster a conducive environment for da'wah by embodying Islamic values of hospitality, cleanliness, and communal care. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on religious tourism and Islamic communication by demonstrating that service-oriented innovations, when guided by spiritual intent, can reinforce religious identity and deepen pilgrims' spiritual experiences. This research advances the understanding of da'wah bil hal as a contextual, experience-based form of Islamic outreach embedded in contemporary pilgrimage practices.

Keywords

Embodied Da'wah; Religious Tourism Service Innovation; Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb Foundation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Religious tourism holds a strategic position in Indonesia, not only as a medium for spiritual strengthening and cultural preservation, but also as a driver of local economic growth (Agung et al., 2024; Maćkowiak, 2015; Mahendra, 2024; Ayorekire et al., 2020). In this context, the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb complex, located in Colo Village, Kudus Regency, Central Java, serves as a significant pilgrimage destination within the Walisongo network. As a symbol of Islamic propagation in Java, it attracts tens of thousands of visitors monthly, especially during Islamic months such as Shawwal, Dzulhijjah, and Rajab. However, this popularity brings mounting challenges in delivering adequate spiritual, administrative, and logistical services to a growing and diverse group of pilgrims.

Despite various improvements initiated by the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb Foundation (YM2SM), the academic discussion on religious tourism management at this site remains limited in



scope. Prior studies have primarily focused on aspects such as halal tourism for economic growth (Cahya et al., 2020), visitor satisfaction and facilities (Syahputra, 2022), and historical narratives of Walisongo (Anasom et al., 2018). These works, while valuable, often neglect a crucial dimension: service innovation that integrates Islamic values (*da'wah bil hal*) to improve the spiritual, social, and experiential aspects of religious tourism.

This gap is particularly relevant given the increasing demands for professionalized, inclusive, and value-based tourism management. Religious tourism should not only fulfill functional needs but also serve as a medium for moral education and community empowerment (Bahri Soi et al., 2023; Mahavarpour et al., 2023). Theoretical perspectives on service innovation emphasize that innovation is not merely technological (Gallouj, 2018; Heidari et al., 2018), but includes dimensions of organizational reform, service delivery, human interaction, policy, and cultural meaning, especially in the religious context.

Drawing on this framework, this study seeks to investigate how YM2SM innovates its services to address these complex expectations. YM2SM's initiatives ranging from visitor management and beggar regulation, to community economic empowerment, to religious service facilitation reveal how service innovation intersects with Islamic values and local socio-cultural dynamics. However, these efforts have not been thoroughly analyzed through an academic lens, particularly regarding their implications for *da'wah bil hal*, sustainability, and visitor experience.

Thus, this research aims to answer a central question: How do service innovations implemented by the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb Foundation enhance spiritual fulfillment, comfort, and safety for pilgrims, while also functioning as a form of *da'wah bil hal*? By foregrounding this question, the study positions itself within the intersection of religious tourism, service innovation theory, and Islamic missionary practices. Through this lens, the research contributes not only to filling a conceptual gap but also to offering practical insights for managing religious tourism in a culturally grounded and spiritually enriching manner.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach, which is appropriate for exploring the lived experiences and service innovation practices at the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb Foundation (YM2SM) in Kudus Regency. The phenomenological approach enables the researcher to investigate how pilgrims, community members, and destination managers perceive and interpret innovations in religious tourism services in their socio-religious context. The focus is on understanding the meaning and essence of participants' experiences, rather than generating generalizable conclusions (Creswell, 1998). To align with the phenomenological tradition, this study incorporates key techniques such as *epoché* (bracketing) where the researcher suspends personal biases to approach the data openly and the reduction of meaning units during the analysis phase to identify significant themes from participants' narratives. This process helps ensure that findings reflect the authentic lived experiences of informants in relation to service innovation and *da'wah* practices.

Data collection was carried out through three primary methods: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010; Studi et al., 2020). Interviews were conducted with purposefully selected informants who were directly involved in or affected by the innovations. These included the Chairman of YM2SM (Foundation) (Abdul Manaf), the Secretary (Amnan), the Head of Human Resources (Soleh), local religious and community leaders, traders, pilgrims, and residents. A purposive sampling strategy was used to ensure the selection of

information-rich cases relevant to the study's objectives. A total of 12 key informants were interviewed until data saturation was reached. Participant observation was conducted on-site to understand the everyday practices, interactions, and spatial arrangements around the mosque and tomb complex. The researcher documented behavioral patterns, service delivery mechanisms, and the symbolic elements embedded in service innovations. In addition, relevant secondary data such as articles, policy documents, organizational reports, and academic literature were analyzed to contextualize the primary findings.

To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, the study used triangulation across data sources and methods, as well as member checking, where preliminary findings were discussed with selected informants for validation. Ethical considerations were strictly maintained, including informed consent, confidentiality, and transparency in the research process. The data analysis process followed an inductive thematic analysis, beginning with open coding to identify key categories, followed by axial coding to explore relationships among themes. Data were analyzed manually and thematically, guided by phenomenological reduction principles. Researcher reflexivity was maintained through analytic memos and bracketing journals to minimize bias and enhance analytical clarity.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Innovations in religious tourism services for pilgrims, such as those carried out by the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb Foundation (YM2SM), can be analyzed through the theoretical framework of service innovation and tourist experience. According to the theory of service innovation, changes in service processes and products aim to improve the quality of customer experience (Mahavarpour et al., 2023); (Truong et al., 2020). In the context of religious tourism, the innovation includes various things of service that can increase spirituality, comfort, and security which greatly affect the satisfaction and loyalty of pilgrims (Education & Khan, 2022); (Hussain et al., 2023). Service innovations for pilgrims that have been carried out by the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb Foundation include:

3.1. Building Modification

In line with the theory of service innovation, improvements in physical infrastructure at religious tourism destinations aim to enhance the spiritual, emotional, and experiential satisfaction of visitors (Mahavarpour et al., 2023; Truong et al., 2020). At the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb Foundation (YM2SM), several physical service innovations have been implemented to accommodate growing visitor numbers and enrich their pilgrimage experience. These innovations not only reflect aesthetic and functional improvements, but also serve deeper religious and cultural functions that align with Islamic values of hospitality and communal care.

3.1.1. *Enhancement of the Entrance Gate Architecture*

The renovation of the main gate from a traditional Javanese style to an Islamic architectural design in 2014 reflects YM2SM's effort to visually represent Islamic identity while increasing aesthetic appeal. The new gate, with its cast dome and twin towers painted in bright Islamic colors, reinforces a sense of sacredness upon arrival and sets the tone for spiritual engagement (Fabio et al., 2016; French, 2007). Situated near the main parking area, the gate serves as a symbolic and functional threshold that enhances pilgrims' first impressions and supports destination loyalty through immersive design (Observation, 25-5-2025).

3.1.2. *Improvement of the Mosque Ornament*

The physical expansion of the mosque accommodating up to 300 pilgrims responds directly to the growing number of worshippers seeking space for daily prayers, especially during peak days like Friday Pahing or Legi Thursday. According to Mr. Amnan (Interview, 14-5-2025), capacity planning includes designated areas for men and women. Although previous renovations did not fully comply with heritage conservation standards, recent initiatives have prioritized preserving Sunan Muria's historical legacy. These efforts allow pilgrims to pray in a more spacious, structured environment, enhancing spiritual focus and physical comfort (Liro, 2021; Rinschede, 1992).

3.1.3. *Modernisation of Souvenir Shops*

The modernization and expansion of souvenir shops near the tomb have added commercial vitality and functional convenience. These shops 175 in total serve as transitional spaces where pilgrims can rest and purchase religious souvenirs (Interview, Amnan, 14-5-2025). Beyond economic utility, these outlets contribute to the symbolic closure of the pilgrimage journey through ritual gifting and memory-making (Kaell, 2012; Hassan et al., 2022). By responding to pilgrims' emotional and material expectations, YM2SM aligns service innovation with both spiritual enrichment and economic development (Boon Liat et al., 2020; Sanz et al., 2019).

3.1.4. *Safety Access to the Tomb*

Improved road access particularly for motorcycle taxis (ojek) has transformed the physical experience of reaching the tomb, which is situated on the slopes of Mount Muria. Previously unpaved and slippery, the roads are now asphalted, and the stairways have been redesigned for safety and comfort, with adjusted step heights and better drainage materials (Interview, 14-5-2025; Observation, 25-5-2025). The increase in local motorcycle taxi drivers (from a few in 1989 to over 400 in 2023) also reflects YM2SM's integration of service delivery and community empowerment. These innovations reduce fatigue, risk, and stress for visitors, especially elderly or disabled pilgrims, while also boosting local employment.

3.1.5. *Providing Public Sphere*

One of the most socially impactful innovations is the provision of communal kitchens and celebration halls for pilgrims performing "selamatan" or religious thanksgiving rituals. These facilities enable pilgrims to cook, eat, and share religious milestones with their families on-site, reflecting a high level of responsiveness to visitor needs. According to field observations and interviews (25-5-2025), this service fosters familial bonding and deepens spiritual engagement, turning the tomb site into a place of both ritual fulfillment and emotional reflection. For example, pilgrims like Mr. Ratno from Jepara choose this location to celebrate healing and pray for work blessings illustrating how service facilities enhance affective ties and recurring visitation.

Taken together, these innovations illustrate a deliberate effort by YM2SM to integrate physical improvements with spiritual experience. Unlike generic religious tourism sites, the innovations at YM2SM emphasize personalized, participatory, and value-driven service delivery. The findings show that infrastructural improvements are not only about aesthetics or convenience, but also about creating sacred spaces that foster emotional resonance, community inclusion, and spiritual renewal.

Furthermore, these innovations contribute to destination loyalty, as evidenced by repeat visitors and ritual-based engagement patterns. By embedding Islamic values such as cleanliness, hospitality, and sincerity in their service systems, YM2SM operationalizes da'wah bil hal a form of religious propagation through exemplary actions. These actions influence not just the functional experience of pilgrims but also their emotional and moral perceptions of the destination.

Future studies may compare similar innovations across other Walisongo tombs to understand whether such integrative models are replicable or uniquely contextual to YM2SM. Nevertheless, YM2SM provides a compelling case where service innovation is both an operational strategy and a medium of spiritual communication, shaping how religious destinations function in a modern tourism economy.

3.2. Operational System Services

An important dimension of service innovation implemented by the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb Foundation (YM2SM) is the extension of service operation hours from a limited daytime schedule to a full 24-hour cycle. This non-physical or intangible service innovation represents a significant shift in the delivery model, enabling greater accessibility, inclusivity, and flexibility for a diverse range of pilgrims. It aligns with service innovation theories that emphasize not only product transformation but also process-oriented change to improve the overall user experience (Truong et al., 2020; Mahavarpour et al., 2023).

Historically, the operational hours at the site were constrained, with services running only between 07.00 to 16.00, closing during midday and evening (Interview, Amnan, 14-5-2025). However, as the average monthly number of pilgrims surged to 30,000 visitors, with peak seasons during Islamic months such as Shawwal, Dzulhijjah, and Rajab, YM2SM strategically extended operations to function around the clock, incorporating security personnel and dedicated information officers.

From a service quality perspective, this change enhances core elements outlined in the SERVQUAL model particularly in terms of reliability (consistent access), responsiveness (meeting visitor time preferences), and empathy (understanding the unique temporal needs of pilgrims from various regions). Pilgrims who arrive in the late afternoon or evening, especially those traveling from outside Kudus, Jepara, or Pati, now have full access to the tomb site and associated services without time constraints thus preserving the spontaneity and emotional depth of their spiritual journey.

The revised flow of pilgrim movement illustrates the operational impact of this innovation. Visitors now begin their journey by entering the guest hall, signing a guestbook, and queuing in an orderly system regulated by trained foundation officers. Pilgrims pass through sequential spiritual spaces from the tombs of Sunan Muria's companions and family to the main tomb itself which is relatively narrow and requires batch-based entry due to space limitations. Post-prayer, they exit via the southern route, access Sunan Muria's heritage water source (believed to grant prayers), and then proceed to the shopping and resting area, which remains open throughout the day and night (Observation, 25-5-2025).

While the expansion of service time enhances user satisfaction and spiritual fulfillment, it also raises key challenges for foundation management. Continuous operations require sustainable human resource allocation, including shift rotations, nighttime security, and cleanliness maintenance. Moreover, infrastructure strain and waste management become critical considerations for ensuring the site's longevity and environmental health. Although current observational data suggests that crowd control remains effective, the absence of formal visitor satisfaction data before and after implementation limits the ability to quantify the innovation's full impact.

Comparative reflection reveals that 24 hour operations are relatively rare among Javanese Islamic pilgrimage destinations, making YM2SM's case particularly noteworthy. At other tombs such as Sunan Bonang or Sunan Kalijaga services often remain limited to daytime hours due to logistical constraints. Thus, YM2SM sets a precedent for flexible service models in heritage religious tourism,

blending spiritual hospitality with modern operational standards.

Going forward, the foundation may benefit from monitoring tools such as feedback surveys, digital counters, or visitor satisfaction indices to assess how this service innovation contributes to pilgrim loyalty, revisit intention, and spiritual depth. Moreover, structured evaluations of staff workload, cost implications, and community perceptions would strengthen the strategic planning behind such extended service hours.

3.3. Open and Transparant Management

Administrative and organizational innovation refers to changes in the internal structures, processes, and governance mechanisms of an organization aimed at improving efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness (Daft, 1978; Mintzberg, 1983). In the context of the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb Foundation (YM2SM), this innovation manifests in the transition from a patrimonial, heir-based management system to a community-based foundation model. This transformation represents not only a change in bureaucratic structure but also a significant moment of grassroots-driven organizational reform.

Previously, the management of the tomb was controlled by descendants of Sunan Muria, who exercised hereditary authority without formal accountability. Over time, this system began to show signs of dysfunction, including lack of community benefit-sharing, irregular financial practices, and minimal transparency in decision-making. These conditions prompted the emergence of a bottom-up reform movement in Colo Village, known locally as the "Colo Citizen Reform", initiated in response to increasing dissatisfaction with the legacy governance model.

The pivotal moment occurred on Wage Thursday, July 23, 1998 at 09.00 AM, when 17 concerned residents later known as "Team 17" mobilized to challenge the status quo. They presented formal complaints to institutional bodies, including the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD), the State High Court, and ultimately the Supreme Court. The movement succeeded legally, with verdicts affirming that the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb complex is a state-recognized cultural heritage site and thus not under private ownership. The court's decisions laid the legal foundation for joint ownership and community-managed governance (Interview, Abdul Manaf, 27-5-2025).

This institutional breakthrough catalyzed the formation of the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb Foundation (YM2SM), which now operates with a formalized administrative system, independent leadership, and a broader base of stakeholder participation. The foundation structure reflects elements of what Mintzberg refers to as a "professional bureaucracy", emphasizing division of labor, rule-based governance, and task specialization. Moreover, the organizational innovation has had multidimensional socio-economic impacts:

Financial management is more accountable, with funds allocated for maintenance, infrastructural upgrades, and local welfare. YM2SM has channeled portions of its income toward community-based religious education, the construction of madrasas, prayer rooms, and support for orphans, widows, and underprivileged residents, especially before major religious holidays (Interview, Amnan, 27-5-2025). The new structure also supports inclusive employment, recruiting local residents as staff, traders, and service providers, thereby reinforcing community ownership of the tourism economy.

Despite these advances, the reformed structure is not without potential tensions. While the original patronage-based system has been dismantled, the risk of elite capture or new informal hierarchies remains. Further research might explore whether accountability mechanisms (such as

public audits or participatory planning) are robust enough to prevent the consolidation of power among new local elites. Questions also arise around the sustainability of leadership rotation, transparency in financial reporting, and conflict mediation between stakeholders.

In conclusion, the administrative and organizational innovation at YM2SM exemplifies how civic agency, legal recourse, and community mobilization can transform the governance of religious heritage sites. More than a structural reform, this case reflects a paradigm shift in religious tourism governance from inherited privilege to participatory stewardship grounded in both cultural preservation and socio-economic empowerment.

3.4. Visionary Goal

Conceptual innovation refers to the transformation of foundational ideas, vision, mission, and strategic objectives within an organization, enabling it to respond more effectively to changing internal and external environments (Bryson, 2018; Kaplan & Norton, 1996). In the case of the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb Foundation (YM2SM), this form of innovation is evident in the shift from an unstructured, informal governance model to a goal-oriented and programmatically driven institution. This transformation represents a deliberate effort to professionalize religious tourism services while enhancing institutional coherence and stakeholder accountability.

The conceptual innovation was initiated through the articulation of five core institutional goals, which now guide the foundation's operational priorities. First, securing and preserving the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb as a National Cultural Heritage Site. Second, managing the religious site in accordance with the Islamic principles of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah. Third, ensuring service accessibility for pilgrims at all times. Fourth, harmonizing the interests of site managers, the government, and the local Colo Village community. Fifth, contributing to national spiritual development based on Islamic teachings.

To operationalize these goals, the foundation implemented four strategic programs, including: collaborating with heritage agencies for site preservation and rehabilitation, conducting da'wah and internal communication with staff and pilgrims, implementing a 24-hour service schedule supported by rotating staff, conducting permissible business activities to support the foundation's sustainability. The institutionalization of strategy is further codified in the foundation's Articles of Association and Bylaws (AD/ART), particularly Chapter IV, which outlines the formation of dedicated departments to manage specific domains:

1. Development and Infrastructure,
2. Personnel and Human Resources,
3. Religious and Social Affairs,
4. Public Relations and Information, and
5. Logistics and Household Affairs.

Additional provisions include the designation of key personnel such as site custodians (locksmiths) and their deputies (YM2SM AD/ART, 27-5-2025). This formal structuring reflects an alignment with strategic planning models for non-profit organizations, such as Bryson's framework that emphasizes stakeholder involvement, mission clarity, and strategic responsiveness (Bryson, 2018). It also suggests an implicit adoption of Balanced Scorecard principles, where clear goals are linked to measurable activities and accountability lines (Kaplan & Norton, 1996).

Despite these structural advances, the actual impact of these conceptual innovations remains underexplored. While there is evidence of enhanced service accessibility and community engagement,

further empirical assessment is needed to determine how these changes have affected pilgrim satisfaction, governance transparency, and local economic development. For example, do pilgrims report more organized and fulfilling experiences? Do local residents perceive greater inclusion in decision-making processes or benefit more economically from religious tourism activities?

Furthermore, potential challenges and tensions warrant critical reflection. Has formalization increased bureaucratic rigidity or reduced grassroots participation? Are the strategic plans adaptable to changing religious tourism trends and visitor demographics? In summary, the conceptual innovation at YM2SM marks a significant advancement in institutional maturity and strategic clarity. However, to fully substantiate its effectiveness, ongoing evaluation and feedback mechanisms should be integrated ensuring that the foundation's vision remains responsive, inclusive, and aligned with both religious values and community needs.

3.5. Stipulation of Administrative Regulation

Policy innovation refers to the introduction of new policy mechanisms, instruments, or regulatory frameworks that transform the way institutions address problems or deliver services. At the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb Foundation (YM2SM), policy innovation is evident in the formulation and implementation of structured, strategic, and community oriented policies marking a significant departure from the previously informal and patrimonial management model.

The Third Consultative Council (Majlis Musyawarah III) of YM2SM serves as a key milestone in institutionalizing policy direction. It introduced programmatic innovations that extend beyond routine administration to include integrated governance, local empowerment, and targeted welfare distribution. The documentation outlines general work programs, such as the organization of administrative tools (agenda books, inventory records, performance manuals), as well as special work programs that include the formulation of staff duties, coordination of pilgrimage service pickets, and performance monitoring across operational divisions.

Importantly, special policy activities reflect a deeper level of policy innovation:

1. Monthly operational funding support to Colo Village officials;
2. Structured disbursement of donations to religious and educational institutions;
3. Transparent engagement with government agencies such as Muspika, KUA, TNI/Polri;
4. The establishment of community proposal mechanisms for requesting support;
5. Institutionalized honorariums for community elders;
6. Development of regulated donation boxes benefiting social, religious, and village institutions.

Such activities signal a paradigmatic shift from ad-hoc, individual-based decision-making toward systematized, participatory, and accountable policy implementation. In addition, YM2SM has expanded its infrastructure and personnel development policies, including: preservation and renovation of religious heritage structures; maintenance of utilities and physical facilities; regulated management of retail spaces (stalls and kiosks) within YM2SM's premises; workforce regulation, discipline enforcement, and capacity-building programs for employees.

These policy changes illustrate a strategic realignment that prioritizes community welfare, heritage conservation, and service quality in religious tourism. However, while the structure and scope of these programs are well-documented, several questions remain regarding their novelty and

actual impact.

To move beyond mere description, it is important to identify which of these policies are genuinely innovative. For instance, the integration of local village operations into YM2SM's budgeting framework, and the creation of a proposal-based community support system, represent distinct innovations in participatory governance not commonly found in traditional religious institution management. These approaches enhance transparency, foster shared ownership, and build trust between stakeholders.

Nevertheless, implementation challenges must also be acknowledged. Issues such as ensuring equitable distribution of aid, avoiding elite capture, and managing administrative overload may emerge. Furthermore, there is limited evidence presented on the outcomes or effectiveness of these policies whether they have measurably improved pilgrim satisfaction, local economic development, or preservation outcomes. A more robust analysis would also benefit from comparative insights. For example, positioning YM2SM's policy practices within the broader landscape of religious tourism governance in Indonesia such as at other "wali" tomb sites like Sunan Bonang or Sunan Ampel could reveal how YM2SM functions as a local policy innovator or lags behind in certain dimensions. In summary, YM2SM's policy innovations represent a significant step toward professionalized religious tourism governance, but future assessments should critically evaluate their effectiveness, sustainability, and replicability across other contexts.

3.6. Networking Expansion

Systemic innovation refers to the establishment of structured, cross-sectoral collaborations between an organization and external stakeholders such as public institutions, local communities, and private actors to improve governance and service delivery (Mulgan & Albury, 2003). In the context of the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb Foundation (YM2SM), this form of innovation marks a critical departure from the previously insular, heir-led management style toward a networked governance model that integrates various institutions into the management of religious tourism.

This transformation was driven by multiple structural and operational challenges, including the extensive loss of historical authenticity during unregulated renovations, inadequate attention to pilgrim safety and comfort, and the absence of cooperation with government bodies and local stakeholders. Recognizing these deficiencies, YM2SM began forging partnerships to address systemic shortcomings and promote a more sustainable and accountable form of religious tourism governance. The following collaborative efforts exemplify the systemic innovation undertaken by YM2SM :

Educational and Cultural Institutions: The foundation now coordinates with the National Education Office and the Tourism and Culture Office, primarily to facilitate research permits and manage visits by educational institutions and media. Though currently limited to reactive administrative support, these interactions lay the groundwork for more structured educational tourism and knowledge-sharing in the future.

Antiquities and Heritage Preservation Agencies: YM2SM collaborates with the Antiquities Service to record and protect cultural assets. The foundation submits renovation proposals, contributes to the drafting of a master plan for the mosque and tomb complex, and helps identify historically significant objects and locations. This cooperation is essential in preventing further degradation of heritage elements and improving regulatory compliance.

Village Government (Colo Village): As local authorities and community representatives, the village government supports YM2SM through administrative coordination, mediation, and ensuring

that local community interests are integrated into tourism development. This includes correspondence for permit approvals and fostering harmonious relations between the foundation and villagers.

Muria Motorcycle Taxi Association: YM2SM maintains partnerships with the motorcycle taxi (ojek) community to manage visitor transportation logistics. Joint activities include annual road maintenance, emergency response coordination (e.g., during landslides or floods), and escorting special guests. These collaborations improve last-mile accessibility to the tomb site and support local livelihoods.

Security Apparatus (TNI & POLRI) : The foundation engages Babinkamtibmas and Babinsa personnel to maintain site security and public order during peak pilgrimage seasons. This coordination strengthens crisis response, deters potential disturbances, and enhances the overall visitor experience.

These collaborations represent a strategic realignment in the foundation's governance model toward a multi-stakeholder approach, consistent with principles of participatory tourism development and public private community partnerships (Hall, 2008). Before the foundation was formed, management was closed off, lacking community engagement and institutional cooperation. Now, relationships are more open, coordinated, and focused on shared outcomes." (Interview, Amnan, 14-5-2025)

However, while these partnerships are promising, their formalization and long-term sustainability remain unclear. The existing arrangements appear largely ad hoc, with no evidence of shared indicators (KPIs), memoranda of understanding (MoUs), or joint planning frameworks that might institutionalize collaboration beyond individual events or personnel. There is also limited monitoring of impact metrics, such as improvements in visitor satisfaction, preservation outcomes, or economic spillovers to the local economy. To strengthen this systemic innovation, YM2SM could establish formal agreements and planning documents with strategic partners; Develop shared performance indicators and regular evaluation mechanisms; Facilitate inter-agency coordination meetings to align goals and manage shared resources; Study comparative cases such as Wali Songo heritage sites in Demak or Surabaya to benchmark best practices in religious tourism governance.

In conclusion, the systemic innovation at YM2SM represents an important step toward inclusive, collaborative, and responsive management of a key spiritual heritage site. With greater institutionalization and strategic planning, these partnerships can serve as a model for sustainable religious tourism in other parts of Indonesia.

4. CONCLUSION

Da'wah bil hal the propagation of Islamic values through tangible and exemplary actions has emerged as a strategic and contextually relevant approach in the practice of contemporary Islamic da'wah. Within the Sunan Muria Mosque and Tomb Foundation (YM2SM), this approach is manifested through a wide range of innovations in religious tourism services, encompassing both physical and non-physical domains. These include infrastructural improvements such as the architectural redesign of gates, mosque renovation, enhancement of road access, and the development of communal facilities as well as systemic and organizational reforms including administrative restructuring, policy updates, and inter-agency collaboration.

While these innovations conceptually align with Islamic ethical values such as "Amanah" (trustworthiness), "Ihsan" (excellence), and "Khidmah" (service) their effectiveness in generating measurable spiritual or behavioral transformation among pilgrims remains an open question. The

study assumes that improved services correlate with heightened spiritual experiences and religious awareness; however, this presumption lacks empirical substantiation. A more nuanced understanding is needed regarding how these innovations influence not only pilgrims' comfort and satisfaction but also their ritual commitment, ethical conduct, or community engagement.

In acknowledging this limitation, the researcher recommends a follow-up study focusing on the Evaluation of the Impact of Da'wah Bil Hal on the Social and Religious Transformation of Pilgrims. Such a study should aim to move beyond descriptive narratives by employing systematic and evidence-based methodologies. Suggested methods include: Quantitative surveys to measure changes in religious behavior (e.g., increased prayer frequency, zakat involvement, or Quran study post-pilgrimage); Qualitative interviews or focus group discussions to explore pilgrims' subjective spiritual experiences and their perceived transformations; Longitudinal tracking to identify sustained behavioral or attitudinal shifts among repeat visitors versus first-time pilgrims; Comparative analysis with other religious tourism destinations to contextualize the impact of YM2SM's innovations.

By embedding these innovations within a rigorous evaluative framework, future research can better assess whether *da'wah bil hal* at YM2SM not only enhances pilgrimage infrastructure but also fosters deep, lasting, and ethically grounded transformations in the religious lives of its visitors. This would contribute significantly to the scholarly discourse on da'wah in the modern era and provide a replicable model for Islamic institutions seeking to integrate service excellence with spiritual outreach.

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