

Optimizing The Use of the Madurese Language in The Development of Religion Tourism at Syaikhona Kholil, Bangkalan

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Abstract

There is a lot of potential of Syaikhona Kholil, a religious tourism in Bangkalan in attracting both domestic and foreign tourists. By providing a unique cultural appeal and promoting local identity, speaking Madurese might improve tourism (Sukardi, 2022). However, despite having a large vocabulary, Madurese is still underused in this regard. Through local language and cultural exchange, this research seeks to maximize the use of Madurese in religious tourism at Syaikhona Kholil. This strategy encourages the preservation of Madurese culture while increasing visitor participation (Purnama, 2023). To evaluate the influence of language on visitor experience, the study included stakeholder interviews, site surveys, and visitor surveys. The main objectives of this study are to identify the extent to which Madurese is used in the development of religious tourism at Syaikhona Kholil, assess the impact of its use on the tourist experience, and develop optimal strategies to increase the use of Madurese in the tourism sector. Findings are expected to significantly contribute to the enhancement of religious tourism in Bangkalan, especially through language and cultural preservation.

Keywords: *Madurese language, religious tourism, language optimization, Syaikhona Kholil, tourism development*

Abstrak

Wisata religi Syaikhona Kholil di Bangkalan memiliki potensi besar untuk menarik wisatawan melalui integrasi budaya lokal, terutama Bahasa Madura. Bahasa Madura menawarkan daya tarik budaya yang unik, namun penggunaannya dalam sektor pariwisata masih minim. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengoptimalkan penggunaan Bahasa Madura untuk memperkaya pengalaman wisatawan, serta mendukung pelestarian budaya. Dengan menggunakan wawancara, observasi lapangan, dan survei wisatawan, penelitian ini menilai dampak penggunaan bahasa lokal dan merumuskan strategi integrasinya dalam pariwisata. Temuan penelitian diharapkan berkontribusi pada pengembangan wisata religi berbasis budaya lokal di Bangkalan.

Kata Kunci: *Bahasa Madura, wisata religi, optimasi bahasa, Syaikhona Kholil, pelestarian budaya*

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INTRODUCTION

Religious tourism in Indonesia, particularly in Bangkalan, holds immense potential to enhance the local economy and promote cultural heritage. One of the prominent destinations is the Syaikhona Kholil shrine, revered not only by the people of Bangkalan but also by Muslims across the nation. As noted by (Noor M. , 2020), religious tourism significantly contributes to regional economic growth through increased visitor numbers, which benefits local businesses such as food vendors and souvenir shops.

Despite this potential, the use of the Madurese language in the tourism sector remains minimal. Madurese serves not only as a communication tool but also as a vital symbol of local identity and cultural heritage (Sukardi, 2022). Its integration into tourism can enhance visitor experiences and strengthen the cultural connection to Bangkalan. However, as (Purnama A. , 2023) suggests, the lack of local language usage in interactions often limits the authenticity of the tourist experience. Unfortunately, many guides and vendors at Syaikhona Kholil rely exclusively on Indonesian, sidelining Madurese, which could otherwise serve as a unique cultural attraction.

The current underutilization of Madurese in religious tourism presents a challenge to preserving local culture and offering distinctive visitor experiences. Strengthening the role of Madurese could provide long-term benefits, not only by boosting the authenticity of the site but also by reinforcing local pride and safeguarding the linguistic heritage for future generations (Hasbullah M. , 2021). Furthermore, optimizing Madurese usage could distinguish Bangkalan as a unique cultural destination, attracting tourists seeking immersive experiences beyond physical landmarks (Wijaya, 2022).

This study aims to explore the use of Madurese in the Syaikhona Kholil shrine as a tool for cultural preservation and tourism enhancement. Specifically, it seeks to identify the extent of Madurese language usage, evaluate its impact on tourist experiences, and propose strategies for its effective integration into religious tourism. By doing so, the research contributes to developing sustainable cultural tourism in Bangkalan.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach, using three main methods to gather in-depth insights into the use of the Madurese language at the Syaikhona Kholil religious tourism site in Bangkalan. First, interviews were conducted with site managers and tourists to understand their perspectives on the role and impact of Madurese in tourism interactions. Second, field observations were carried out to directly observe how the local language is applied in daily tourism activities and how it enhances the visitor experience. Lastly, a survey was administered to tourists to evaluate the impact of Madurese usage on their perceptions during their visit, assessing the extent to which the local language strengthens their cultural experience (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Data collected from these methods were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach to understand the influence of Madurese on the development of religious tourism in Bangkalan.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

This study reveals several findings based on interviews and field observations regarding the use of Madurese in developing religious tourism at the Syaikhona Kholil site. The findings highlight perspectives from various stakeholders, including tourism managers, visitors, and local communities.

1. Perspectives of Tourism Managers

Tourism managers at Syaikhona Kholil acknowledge the potential of using the Madurese language to enrich tourist experiences but admit that it is not yet a priority. Mr. A. Rasyid, a manager at the site, stated:

"Mendengar Bahasa Madura saat berkunjung kesini membuat saya merasa memasuki budaya Madura."

"It feels more intimate when I hear Madurese being spoken. It connects me to the cultural essence of the site."

The lack of training specific to the professional use of Madurese was identified as a major barrier. Managers expressed interest in developing language skills among local guides but cited limited resources and support as constraints.

2. Perspectives of Local and Non-Local Tourists

Feedback from tourists varies depending on their familiarity with the Madurese language. Local tourists, such as Ibu Siti, expressed a deep appreciation for hearing Madurese during their visits, remarking:

"Mendengar Bahasa Madura ketika saya berada disisni membuat saya lebih menghargai atas budaya Madura."

"Hearing the Madurese language during my visit made me appreciate Madura's heritage more deeply."

On the other hand, non-local tourists like Bapak Yudi reported difficulties understanding the language, stating:

"Kalau hanya Bahasa Madura tanpa terjemahan, saya tidak paham. Tapi kalau ada Bahasa Indonesia juga, itu baru saya paham. Sebenarnya saya suka kalau lagi denger orang sini ngomong Bahasa asli mereka, tapi ya gitu saya"

"If it's only in Madurese without translation, I can't understand it. But with Indonesian alongside it, I can follow. I like hearing the local language, but I just don't get it."

This feedback indicates a need for bilingual or multilingual solutions to make the cultural aspects of Madurese accessible to a broader audience.

3. Perspectives of Local Community Members

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Local vendors and guides understand the significance of using Madurese but often avoid it due to concerns about comprehension. Ibu Aminah, a vendor, shared:

"Kami seringkali lebih nyaman pakai Bahasa Indonesia, karena khawatir wisatawan tidak paham. Tapi kalau untuk pengunjung lokal, saya masih sering pakai Bahasa Madura."

"We often prefer using Indonesian, fearing tourists might not understand us. But with local visitors, I still frequently use Madurese."

This suggests that while locals value their language, they lack the confidence and resources to use it consistently in tourism settings.

4. Information and Promotion Media

Field observations reveal a critical lack of information boards, brochures, or other media at the Syaikhona Kholil site. Visitors are left without essential resources to learn about the site's history, cultural significance, or practical guidelines for their visit. Furthermore, there is no digital infrastructure, such as mobile applications or official websites, to compensate for the lack of physical resources. This gap in information provision limits the ability of the site to effectively communicate its cultural and historical value to both local and international audiences.

Discussion

The findings suggest that the significant potential of integrating the Madurese language into tourism activities at Syaikhona Kholil. However, several barriers must be addressed to maximize its impact on cultural preservation and tourism development.

1. Challenges in Using Madurese

One of the primary challenges is the lack of training and professional development for local stakeholders. As (Baker, 2011) highlights, structured language training is essential to ensure the effective use of local languages in tourism. At Syaikhona Kholil, the absence of such training leaves guides and vendors underprepared to utilize Madurese confidently. Addressing this gap through targeted workshops and capacity-building initiatives could empower locals to embrace their linguistic heritage in tourism activities.

2. Enhancing Tourist Experiences

The use of Madurese enriches the cultural experience for local tourists, aligning with (Hall & Page, 2014) assertion that local languages foster meaningful interactions. However, for non-local tourists, accessibility becomes a concern. The lack of bilingual or multilingual resources hinders their ability to engage fully with the cultural richness of the site. Developing media that combines Madurese with translations in Indonesian and English can bridge this gap and create an inclusive experience for all visitors.

3. Infrastructure and Resource Development

The absence of information boards and digital media at Syaikhona Kholil highlights a critical infrastructural shortfall. (Gracia, 2009) argues that multilingual

promotional materials and digital platforms are vital for enhancing a destination's appeal and accessibility. The development of visually engaging, multilingual signage and digital tools such as mobile apps or interactive guides could significantly enhance the site's ability to communicate its unique cultural narrative.

4. Contributions to Cultural Preservation

Integrating Madurese into tourism supports the preservation of local identity and heritage. (Sukardi, 2022) emphasizes that language serves as a critical tool for safeguarding cultural values in the face of globalization. At Syaikhona Kholil, using Madurese in narrating the site's history and conducting cultural events not only preserves the language but also deepens visitors' connection to the local culture. Because of this, the research outputs include information boards, X-banners, and directional signs, presented in Indonesian, English, and Madurese. These media aim to provide literature texts in three languages, local, national, and international, which are highly beneficial for visitors from diverse regions.

An educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information. (Tilden, 1977)

As Freeman Tilden stated, media is not only a tool for factual education but also a means to connect individuals, in this case, visitors, with the culture they are experiencing. Through banners and information boards created by the researchers, visitors can connect deeply with Madurese culture.



photo with banner and tourism manager



photo with information boards and tourism manager

5. Strategic Collaboration

Effective implementation of these strategies requires collaboration between government bodies, cultural organizations, and local communities. (Richards & Wilson, 2007) note that partnerships among these stakeholders are key to integrating cultural elements into tourism sustainably. For Syaikhona Kholil, establishing such collaborations can facilitate the provision of resources, training, and infrastructure necessary for the successful integration of Madurese into the tourism experience.

By addressing these challenges and implementing these strategies, the potential of Madurese as both a cultural asset and a tourism tool can be fully realized. This approach not

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only enhances visitor satisfaction but also ensures the preservation of Madurese and cultural heritage.

CONCLUSION

The findings show that the integration of Madurese in religious tourism at Syaikhona Kholil holds substantial potential as a cultural preservation tool and a means to enhance visitor experience. The current use of Madurese remains limited due to a lack of professional training and insufficient multilingual infrastructure. While local tourists perceive the language as a source of authenticity, non-local visitors require additional resources to fully appreciate its use in the tourism context.

Implementing Madurese in tourist interactions strengthens cultural identity and fosters meaningful connections between visitors and the destination. This aligns with (Hall & Page, 2014) view that local languages provide unique, immersive experiences. Furthermore, (Baker, 2011) emphasizes the need for a balanced approach that combines cultural depth with accessibility to accommodate diverse audiences.

To address existing challenges, the study recommends targeted training for tourism stakeholders, the development of multilingual materials, and strategic collaborations between local communities, cultural institutions, and tourism authorities. These efforts would ensure that Madurese is not only preserved but also effectively utilized as a central feature of Syaikhona Kholil's religious tourism. Ultimately, optimizing Madurese in religious tourism at Syaikhona Kholil contributes to the dual goals of enhancing tourist satisfaction and preserving cultural heritage. It represents a model for sustainable tourism development in culturally rich destinations like Bangkalan.

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