

STRATEGIC HERITAGE MANAGEMENT AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: A CASE STUDY OF 'AISYIYAH IN KOTAGEDE, YOGYAKARTA

Uswatun Hasanah^{1*}, Eka Handriani²

¹Accounting Departement, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Indonesia

²Universitas Darul Ulum Islamic Centre Sudirman GUPPI

*Email corresponding author: uswatun.hasanah@unsoed.ac.id

Abstract

This study evaluates cultural heritage management and women's economic empowerment through the 'Aisyiyah movement in Kotagede, Yogyakarta, utilizing the 6A Tourism Framework and United Nations Tourism (UN Tourism) sustainable tourism standards. Through qualitative participatory observation, the research finds that while the organization possesses strong social capital and significant historical assets, its management faces critical barriers in accessibility and supporting facilities. Physical constraints, such as poor drainage systems, restricted access for large-scale group vehicles, and supply chain inefficiencies for local Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), hinder the realization of sustainable tourism. Notably, the study identifies a lack of integrated prayer facilities (mushalla), accessible toilets, and efficient etalases for both silver crafts and local culinary specialties (oleh-oleh) as major sources of "time leakage" for visitors. This paper recommends an inter-generational collaboration model between senior 'Aisyiyah leadership and youth wings to bridge digital literacy gaps and professionalize site management. By adopting a "Progressive Islam" (Islam Berkemajuan) lens, the study proposes a transformation toward resilient, weather-adaptive, and worship-friendly heritage tourism.

Keywords: 'Aisyiyah, Inter-generational Synergy, Kotagede, Progressive Islam, 6A Tourism Framework.

Citation: Hasanah, U. & Handriani, E. (2026). Strategic Heritage Management and Women's Empowerment: A Case Study of 'Aisyiyah in Kotagede, Yogyakarta. *Soedirman Accounting, Auditing, and Public Sector Journal (SAAP)*. 5(1):33-37.

INTRODUCTION

'Aisyiyah, a Muhammadiyah autonomous women's organization established on May 19, 1917, in Kampung Kauman, Yogyakarta, carries a vision of "Progressive Islam" (Islam Berkemajuan) that is inclusive, rational, and transformative (Nashir, 2015; PPA, 2022). Since its inception, 'Aisyiyah has been a faithful partner in the Muhammadiyah movement, focusing on the liberation and empowerment of women in the fields of education, health, and social welfare. While the organization's "cradle" is Kauman, the district of Kotagede holds a unique theological and historical position as the former capital of the Islamic Mataram Sultanate (Rindasih, E., Izzudin, M., and Baiquni, M. 2022). In Kotagede, Javanese tradition and Muhammadiyah reform have synergized for over a century, creating a "Muhammadiyah town" identity that blends royal history with modernist Islamic activism (Nakamura, 2012).

Kotagede is widely recognized as a premier cultural heritage destination, characterized by its "*Catur Gatra Tunggal*" spatial ideology, which integrates the palace (*kraton*), the market (*pasar*), the mosque (*masjid*), and the public square (*alun-alun*). Beyond its physical structures, Kotagede's allure lies in its intangible heritage, most notably the legendary silver craft industry dating back to the 16th century and its unique culinary heritage, such as *kipo*, *ukel*, *banjar*, *bakpia*, and *roti kembang waru*. The Kotagede Branch Leadership of 'Aisyiyah (PCA Kotagede) has sought to institutionalize this potential by establishing the 'Aisyiyah Cultural Education Tourism (ACET) unit

and creative service initiatives like MS Production, which offers traditional costume rentals and photography services.

Despite these significant socio-cultural assets, the management of these heritage sites faces persistent challenges. On February 1, 2026, a delegation from the Provincial Leadership of 'Aisyiyah (PWA) Central Java, specifically the Council for Economics and Employment (MEK), conducted a visit to Kotagede. The group pivoted their focus toward PCA Kotagede's economic ventures after heavy rain prevented their visit to Kauman. This shift accidentally exposed critical gaps in the site's infrastructure and operational resilience. Visitors found themselves "trapped" in the secretariat, revealing that the site was spatially and logistically disconnected from local MSMEs and lacked immediate supporting facilities for basic needs, including worship, sanitation, and the primary activity of purchasing heritage souvenirs and local culinary specialties (oleh-oleh) (Arif, Putra, and Khan, 2023).

This study examines how religious women's organizations manage complex heritage sites amidst modern urban pressures and climatic risks. It aims to evaluate the current state of PCA Kotagede's heritage management through the lens of international tourism standards and the "Progressive Islam" ideology. By identifying the weaknesses in accessibility, supporting facilities, and inter-generational management, this paper seeks to provide a strategic roadmap for developing a resilient, worship-friendly, and technologically integrated heritage ecosystem.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Capital and Organizational Learning

Social capital within 'Aisyiyah is the primary engine of its grassroots movement. According to Robert Putnam (1993), social capital consists of trust, norms, and networks that improve the efficiency of society. In 'Aisyiyah, this is manifested through the value of *ukhuwwah* (sisterhood), which enables the rapid mobilization of resources and information between different hierarchical levels of the organization (Putnam, 2000). However, for a century-old organization, maintaining this capital requires constant adaptation through "Organizational Learning." Peter Senge's theory of the *Learning Organization* emphasizes that for an entity to remain relevant, it must master five disciplines: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning (Senge, 1990).

Organizational learning in 'Aisyiyah is often "adaptive" (reactive) rather than "generative" (proactive). While the organization manages modern charitable businesses, the digital era demands higher systems thinking to solve systemic inefficiencies, such as the disconnect between Kotagede's attractions and its supporting infrastructure. Senge (1990) argues that failure to see the "whole system" can lead to localized improvements that do not solve the actual "integration gap" experienced by visitors.

The 6A Tourism Framework and Sustainable Standards

A successful tourist destination requires an integrated experience rather than isolated attractions. There are 6 primary components that determine the attractive, accessibility, and sustainability of a tourist destination. The 6A Tourism Framework provides a comprehensive tool for this analysis (World Tourism Organization, 2004):

1. Attractions: The primary draw, including historical buildings and silver craft heritage.
2. Accessibility: The ease of reaching the site, which is often compromised in dense residential areas like Kotagede (Arif, Putra, and Khan, 2023).
3. Amenities (Supporting Facilities): Essential comfort facilities such as integrated prayer rooms (mushalla), accessible toilets, and land paving (Arif, Putra, and Khan, 2023).
4. Available Packages: The coordination of tours, transportation, and culinary experiences.
5. Activities: What visitors do, including costume rental, culinary tasting, and souvenir/food shopping (Arif, Putra, and Khan, 2023).
6. Ancillary Services: Supporting organizational services such as guides and information desks.

According to the UN Tourism, sustainable tourism must meet the needs of present tourists while protecting future opportunities. This requires infrastructure resilience to withstand shocks, such as extreme weather, without causing "time leakage" for the visitors (Cutter et al., 2008).

Progressive Islam and Cultural Dakwah

"Progressive Islam" (Islam Berkemajuan) views Islam as a catalyst for civilization and enlightenment (Nashir, 2015). This ideology promotes "Cultural Dakwah," which involves accommodating local wisdom—such as Kotagede's Mataram architecture and culinary arts—as mediums for modernizing Islamic values (Nashir, 2015). The "progressive" character must be reflected in management professionalism and the adoption of modern technology to provide a hospitable (*thayyib*) experience for visitors.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with participatory observation and document study methods (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The qualitative paradigm allows for an in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics and the "lived experiences" of the participants during their interaction with the heritage site (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Primary data were gathered through field notes during the PWA Central Java visit to PCA Kotagede on February 1, 2026. This observation specifically evaluated physical accessibility for large-scale group vehicles, the adequacy of supporting facilities (amenities)—including toilets and prayer spaces—and the efficiency of the local economic supply chain (Arif, Putra, and Khan, 2023).

Secondary data were synthesized from scientific literature on heritage management, official 'Aisiyah documents, and historical accounts of Muhammadiyah in Kotagede (Nakamura, 2012). The analysis follows a descriptive-analytical framework using the 6A Tourism Framework cross-referenced with UN Tourism standards for sustainable tourism to measure the success level of the destination.

AI-assisted tools were utilized during the research development phase to assist in structuring the manuscript and providing preliminary identification of theoretical frameworks. All resulting analytical components and interpretations were critically reviewed, verified, and manually expanded by the authors to ensure academic rigor and contextual alignment with the fieldwork in Kotagede.

DISCUSSION

Research Findings

Field observations identified several critical points in the management of cultural tourism at PCA Kotagede:

1. **Vehicle Accessibility and Urban Density:** Kotagede's narrow streets, designed for an earlier era, make it inaccessible for large-scale group vehicles. This lack of accessibility creates significant friction for rombongan groups attempting to reach the heritage hub efficiently, often forcing them to walk long distances from remote parking areas.
2. **Supporting Facilities and Environmental Resilience:** Observation during heavy rain highlighted a failure in supporting facilities. Deep puddles hindered access to the traditional costume rental area. Notably, there was no mushalla (prayer room) integrated within the secretariat building. Furthermore, public toilets were found to be located far from the main activity center. The access to these facilities was unpaved and became slippery and muddy during the rain. This specific gap—the distance to both worship and sanitation facilities—resulted in a significant loss of efficient time for the group, as a tour group of visitors often lack sufficient time to reach off-site facilities during a tightly scheduled trip (Arif, Putra, and Khan, 2023). These findings indicate a destination that fails UN Tourism comfort standards for diverse visitors.
3. **Supply Chain Inefficiency for Souvenirs and Culinary Heritage:** One striking finding was the lack of an integrated "ready-stock" system for local traditional specialties (oleh-oleh). Because the

group was "trapped" by rain, they could not visit silver workshops or snack stalls directly. The manager had to manually call artisans to bring items to the secretariat. This "call-to-order" model resulted in a significant waste of time (inefficiency) as visitors waited for goods to arrive instead of being served through an on-site showroom (Arif, Putra, and Khan, 2023).

Analysis of the "Integration Gap" and Digital Literacy

The weaknesses identified stem from a lack of "Systems Thinking." In the 6A framework, the Attraction is high, but the Amenities and Accessibility are critically low (Arif, Putra, and Khan, 2023). This creates an "Integration Gap" where the economic benefits do not flow smoothly to the community because physical links are broken by rain. Furthermore, a "Digital Literacy Gap" exists; while MS Production taps into "selfie tourism," social media management is inconsistent (Mutiarra et al., 2023). Elderly 'Aisyiyah leaders often lack the technical skills to maintain a vibrant digital presence, which is essential for competing in the modern tourism market (Mutiarra et al., 2023).

Collaborative Strategy Recommendations

The synthesis of the aforementioned findings suggests that the current management of PCA Kotagede's heritage assets operates primarily on a reactive basis, where interventions are made only in response to immediate visitor demands or acute weather disruptions. To transcend the identified "integration gap" and "digital literacy gap," a more holistic and proactive management model is required—one that mirrors the "generative learning" discipline of a learning organization. The following collaborative strategy recommendations are designed to bridge these gaps by synchronizing physical infrastructure with social capital and technological innovation, thereby ensuring that Kotagede remains a flagship for Progressive Islam in the realm of community-based cultural tourism.

1. **Feeder System:** Establish a "Transit Hub" outside the dense zone. A dedicated feeder system (e.g., electric shuttles or traditional *dokar*) should transport groups from the parking area of large-scale group vehicles to the heritage sites.
2. **Integrated Worship and Sanitation Space:** Establish a clean, accessible mushalla and integrated toilets within the secretariat. This ensures that visitors can fulfill their religious and biological obligations without "time leakage" or navigating muddy paths.
3. **Ready-Stock Heritage Corner:** Convert the secretariat into a "Mini Heritage Mall" with a permanent stock of verified local MSME products—including silver crafts and traditional food (*kipo, ukel, roti kembang waru, bapia*)—to eliminate delivery wait times (Arif, Putra, and Khan, 2023).
4. **Inter-generational Digital Synergy:** Embrace youth wings (Nasyiatul 'Aisyiyah, Pemuda Muhammadiyah) as partners to manage social media and digital storytelling (Mutiarra et al., 2023).
5. **Paving and Drainage:** Implement land paving and modern drainage systems to mitigate weather risks and improve accessibility (Cutter et al., 2008).

CONCLUSION

The management of cultural heritage in Kotagede by PCA 'Aisyiyah relies on strong social capital but requires a shift toward generative organizational learning. Current approach to infrastructure and supply chain management results in economic leakages and "time leakage" for visitors. Professionalizing site amenities—including the provision of mushalla and nearby, accessible toilets—and implementing a feeder system for large-scale group vehicles will overcome physical constraints. Integrated MSME showcases and younger generation involvement in digital management will ensure the site remains competitive and enlightening, honoring history while embracing the digital future of Progressive Islam.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors express their sincere gratitude to Universitas Jenderal Soedirman (UNSOED) and Universitas Darul Ulum Islamic Centre Sudirman GUPPI (UNDARIS) for their institutional support. We extend our deepest appreciation to the Provincial Leadership of 'Aisyiyah (PWA) Central Java, particularly the Council for Economics and Employment (MEK), for facilitating the field observation. We also thank the Branch Leadership of 'Aisyiyah (PCA) Kotagede and Mitra Sejahtera (MS Production) for their hospitality and insights. Additionally, the authors acknowledge the use of generative AI tools for formal academic translation and refining the manuscript's clarity; all AI outputs were edited and verified by the authors.

REFERENCE

- 'Aisyiyah, Pimpinan Pusat. 2022. *Risalah Perempuan Berkemajuan*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Arif, Y. M., Putra, D. D., and Khan, N. 2023. "Selecting Tourism Site Using 6 As Tourism Destinations Framework Based Multi-Criteria Recommender System." *Applied Information System and Management (AISM)* 6, no. 1 (April): 7–12. <https://doi.org/10.15408/aism.v6i1.25140>.
- Buhalis, D. 2000. "Marketing the Competitive Destination of the Future." *Tourism Management* 21, no. 1: 97–116.
- Creswell, J. W., and Poth, C. N. 2018. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Cutter, S. L., Barnes, L., Berry, M., Burton, C., Evans, E., Tate, E., and Webb, J. 2008. "A Framework for Measuring Coastal Resilience to Hazards." *Global Environmental Change* 18, no. 4: 598–606.
- Mutiara, et al. 2023. "Strengthening the Role of Women in Progressive Dakwah in the Digital Era: Strategy for Empowerment and Literacy in Nasylatul 'Aisyiyah."
- Nakamura, M. 2012. *The Crescent Arises Over the Banyan Tree: A Study of the Muhammadiyah Movement in a Central Javanese Town, c. 1910s–2010*. 2nd enlarged ed. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Nashir, H. 2015. *Muhammadiyah: A Reform Movement*. Yogyakarta: Muhammadiyah University Press.
- Putnam, R. D. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rindasih, E., Izzudin, M., and Baiquni, M. 2022. "Kotagede Heritage City: Identification of Conservation and Preservation Based on Community Perspective." *Jurnal Pariwisata Pesona* 7, no. 1 (June): 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.26905/jpp.v7i1.7321>.
- Senge, P. 1990. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday.
- Wibowo, E., Nuri, and Hartadi. 2011. *The location of Catur Gatra Tunggal Heritage Sites in Kotagede, Yogyakarta*. Yogyakarta: Jogja Heritage Society.
- World Tourism Organization. 2004. *Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations: A Guidebook*. Madrid: World Tourism Organization.