

## ISLAMIC COMMUNICATION IN TOURISM: MUSLIM IDENTITY AND ISLAMIC PUBLIC SPHERE AT PUNCAK WAKILA, INDONESIA

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### *Abstract*

*Studies of Islamic communication today have predominantly focused on issues of authority, media, and da'wah, while scholarly attention to Islamic communication within public spaces remains limited, including tourism sites as spaces that reveal Muslim interaction and identity. This study employs a qualitative method based on visual observation and documentation of social activities taking place in the tourism area. The findings show that Puncak Wakila functions as an informal Islamic public sphere characterized by collective social interaction, visible expressions of Muslim identity, and communication practices embedded in everyday public life. This tourism area serves not only as a recreational destination but also as a social space in which religious identity gains meaning through public interaction and participation.*

**Keywords:** *Islamic Communication, Islamic Public Sphere, Puncak Wakila.*

### **Abstrak**

Study komunikasi Islam hari ini mayoritas pada kajian otoritas, media, dan dakwah, sementara membaca komunikasi Islam dalam ruang publik masih terbatas termasuk tempat wisata sebagai ruang yang memperlihatkan interaksi dan identitas Muslim. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis observasi visual dan dokumentasi terhadap aktivitas sosial yang berlangsung di kawasan wisata tersebut. Hasil penelitian bahwa Puncak Wakila berfungsi sebagai ruang publik Islam informal yang ditandai oleh interaksi sosial kolektif, ekspresi identitas Muslim yang terlihat, serta praktik komunikasi yang melekat dalam kehidupan publik sehari-hari. Kawasan wisata ini berfungsi sebagai tempat rekreasi dan ruang sosial tempat identitas keagamaan memperoleh makna melalui interaksi dan partisipasi publik.

**Kata Kunci:** Komunikasi Islam, Ruang Publik Islam, Puncak Wakila.



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## A. INTRODUCTION

Public space has long been recognized as a central arena in which social interaction, communication, and collective identities are formed, expressed, and reproduced. Classical discussions of the public sphere are most prominently associated with Jürgen Habermas, who conceptualizes the public sphere as a communicative domain where private individuals come together to discuss matters of common concern and contribute to the formation of public opinion.<sup>1</sup> The public sphere functions as an intermediary space between private life and political authority, allowing critical debate to influence broader social and political processes. Within this framework, communication occupies a central position because rational-critical discussion is regarded as the foundation for democratic participation and social legitimacy.

Despite its enduring influence, the Habermasian model has been criticized for its tendency to assume a secular separation between religion and public life. Such assumptions are insufficient for explaining contemporary societies in which religious values remain deeply embedded within social interaction, cultural practices, and public communication. Asad argues that secular frameworks often overlook how religious traditions continue to shape public reasoning and collective identities in modern societies.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Turner maintains that religion remains an important source of moral authority and social engagement, particularly in communities where public life cannot be fully detached from religious worldviews.<sup>3</sup> These critiques suggest that the public sphere cannot be understood solely through secular liberal assumptions but must also account for culturally specific forms of public participation.

The limitations of secular public sphere theories have encouraged scholars to explore alternative conceptualizations that better capture the realities of Muslim societies. A key contribution is Eickelman and Anderson's concept of the Islamic public sphere. They argue that Muslim public life is increasingly shaped through diverse communicative spaces where religious meanings, moral values, and collective identities are continuously debated, expressed, and communicated.<sup>4</sup> Rather than being confined to mosques, religious schools, or formal institutions, Islamic discourse increasingly circulates through everyday

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<sup>1</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Translated by Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence. (MIT Press: 1989). 1-5.

<sup>2</sup> Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, (Stanford University Press, 2003). 181-201

<sup>3</sup> Bryan S. Turner, *Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularisation and the State*, (Cambridge University Press, 2011). 67-85

<sup>4</sup> Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, eds., *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere. 2nd ed.* (Indiana University Press, 2003). 1-18

interactions, social networks, media practices, and public encounters. The concept therefore refers not merely to religious communication, but to broader processes through which Muslims participate in public life while drawing on Islamic ethical frameworks. Recent studies in Indonesia further demonstrate that Islamic public spaces continue to evolve through interactions between religion, popular culture, and public participation, reflecting the dynamic character of contemporary Muslim public life.<sup>5,6</sup>

Scholarship also suggests that Islamic public spheres in Indonesia are increasingly shaped by the interaction between religion, public communication, popular culture, and everyday social participation. Rather than being confined to formal religious institutions, Islamic public life increasingly emerges through diverse social spaces where religious values become publicly visible and socially meaningful.<sup>7,8,9</sup> These developments indicate that Islamic public spheres are not static arenas but dynamic communicative environments through which Muslim identities, moral values, and collective belonging are publicly articulated within contemporary society.

Building on this perspective, Göle emphasizes that contemporary Muslim visibility in public life should not be interpreted simply as a reaction against modernity. Instead, Muslim actors increasingly express and maintain their identities within modern public spaces, creating new forms of interaction between religious commitment and contemporary social realities.<sup>10</sup> Public spaces become sites where Muslims seek recognition, express belonging, and engage with wider social transformations. Consequently, the presence of Islamic symbols, values, and communication practices within public settings reflects the continuing public visibility and social expression of Muslim identity rather than a static expression of religious doctrine.

Further studies demonstrate that Islamic public life extends beyond formal religious activities. Muslim identity is increasingly expressed through everyday practices that occur within ordinary social settings such as markets, cafés, parks, recreational spaces, and tourism destinations. This perspective resonates with the growing scholarship on everyday Islam, which seeks to understand how Muslims experience, interpret, and enact religious values in

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<sup>5</sup> Muhammad Anzor, "Post-Islamism and the Remaking of Islamic Public Sphere in Post-Reform Indonesia", *Studia Islamika*, 23(3), (2016), 471-515.

<sup>6</sup> Imam Ardhianto, "Contemporary Islamic Movement, Popular Culture and Public Space in Indonesia", *Archipel*, 95, (2018), 45-70.

<sup>7</sup> Zuly Qodir, "Public Sphere Contestation: Configuration of Political Islam in Contemporary Indonesia", *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 1 (1), (2011), 123-149.

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Anzor, "Post-Islamism ... 471-515.

<sup>9</sup> Imam Ardhianto, "Contemporary Islamic Movement... 45-70.

<sup>10</sup> Nilüfer Göle, *Islam and Public Controversy in Europe*, (Routledge, 2013), 7-13.

their daily lives. Rather than focusing exclusively on religious institutions or doctrinal debates, everyday Islam highlights the practical ways individuals navigate moral expectations, social relationships, and cultural norms within changing social contexts.

Elias argues that Islam should be understood not only as a theological system but also as a lived social reality embedded within everyday experiences and social interactions.<sup>11</sup> Religious identities are continuously reproduced through routine practices, interpersonal relationships, and cultural expressions that may appear ordinary yet carry important moral meanings. Similarly, Schielke criticizes approaches that portray Islam solely through grand ideological frameworks while neglecting the complexities and ambiguities of everyday life. According to Schielke, Muslim experiences are often characterized by adaptation, inconsistency, aspiration, and practical adjustment to diverse social circumstances.<sup>12</sup> This perspective is particularly useful for understanding how Islamic values are communicated and interpreted in non-formal public settings. Studies on everyday Muslim life suggest that religious commitment is often characterized by continuous efforts to reconcile moral aspirations, social expectations, and practical realities within changing social environments.<sup>13,14</sup>

The growing attention to everyday Islam also has important implications for the study of Islamic communication. Conventional approaches frequently associate Islamic communication with formal religious preaching, da'wah activities, religious education, or institutional communication. However, such perspectives may overlook the broader communicative practices through which Islamic values are expressed, shared, and communicated in everyday social encounters. Hirschkind's analysis of Islamic ethical practices demonstrates that communication is not limited to verbal messages but also involves moral dispositions, embodied practices, and ethical sensibilities that shape how individuals relate to one another within public life.<sup>15</sup> Islamic communication therefore encompasses a wider range of social interactions through which religious values become socially meaningful.

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<sup>11</sup> Jamal J. Elias, *Islam*, (Routledge, 2015), 214-230.

<sup>12</sup> Samuli Schielke, "Second Thoughts About the Anthropology of Islam, or How to Make Sense of Grand Schemes in Everyday Life", *Research in the Islamic Context: Approaches and Methods*, edited by D. Kloos and N. Kaptein, (Routledge, 2022), 42-68.

<sup>13</sup> Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, (Princeton University Press, 2000), 21-45.

<sup>14</sup> Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, 2nd ed., (Stanford University Press, 2013), 13-26.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*, (Columbia University Press, 2006), 15-22.

From this perspective, communication among Muslims in public settings may reveal important dimensions of Islamic ethics, identity formation, and social belonging. Greetings, modest forms of self-presentation, collective interaction patterns, and expressions of mutual respect may all function as communicative practices through which Islamic values are enacted in everyday life. Consequently, understanding Islamic communication requires attention not only to religious texts and formal discourses but also to ordinary interactions occurring within diverse public environments.

Recent studies further demonstrate that Islamic communication increasingly develops through diverse public and mediated environments. Bhakti and Duhri show that Muslim piety and religious participation are continuously articulated through communicative interaction within contemporary public spheres, indicating that religious meanings are shaped through ongoing public engagement rather than through formal religious institutions alone.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, Hamzah et al. demonstrate that contemporary Islamic discourse is increasingly constructed, circulated, and interpreted through public communication, highlighting the dynamic relationship between religious expression, public participation, and communicative practice in contemporary Muslim society.<sup>17</sup> These studies reinforce the argument that Islamic communication extends beyond formal religious instruction and becomes visible through everyday communicative practices occurring across diverse social settings.

Recent studies on Islamic communication further emphasize the importance of multimodal communication in shaping contemporary Muslim public engagement. Ridho et al. demonstrate that Islamic messages are increasingly communicated through integrated combinations of visual, verbal, and digital interaction, enabling broader public participation in religious discourse. Their findings suggest that contemporary Islamic communication extends beyond formal preaching and increasingly operates through communicative practices that connect religious values with everyday social interaction and public engagement.<sup>18</sup>

A public setting that has received limited attention in this literature is tourism area.. Existing studies on Islamic communication largely focus on

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<sup>16</sup> Sufri Eka Bhakti and Saifuddin Duhri, "The Digital Public Sphere and Muslim Piety in Aceh: Rethinking Habermas' Conception of Communicative Action," *Islam Realitas: Journal of Islamic and Social Studies*, 8(1), (2022). 12-21.

<sup>17</sup> Ghufroon Hamzah, et al., "Evolving Dynamics of Moderate Islamic Discourse on Indonesian Social Media", *Fikri: Jurnal Kajian Agama, Sosial dan Budaya*, 9 (2), (2024), 410-424.

<sup>18</sup> Ali Ridho, et al, "Multimodal Strategies of Moderate Islamic Digital Da'wah on the Rukun Indonesia YouTube Channel", *Harmoni*, 24 (2), (2025). 380-407.

mosques, religious organizations, educational institutions, social movements, digital media, and online religious networks. By contrast, tourism research has predominantly focused on halal tourism destination branding, visitor satisfaction, and tourism management. Relatively little attention has been devoted to examining tourism sites as arenas where Muslim identity, public interaction, and Islamic communication are publicly expressed in everyday contexts. Tourism destinations increasingly function as social environments where cultural and religious identities are publicly expressed and communicated.<sup>19,20</sup>

Previous research conducted at Puncak Wakila also demonstrates that the site functions not only as a recreational destination but as a social arena where interaction, collective identity formation, and the production of shared meanings occur among visitors.<sup>21</sup> These findings suggest that the social significance of the destination extends beyond tourism activities and provides a relevant context for examining public communication and identity expression.

Recent tourism studies indicate that tourism environments increasingly serve as spaces for cultural expression, identity formation, and community interaction. In Muslim-majority societies, tourism destinations often function not only as recreational settings but also as arenas where religious values, cultural practices, and social norms remain publicly visible.<sup>22,23,24</sup> Consequently, tourism areas provide important contexts for examining the relationship between public interaction, religious identity, and communication practices.

This gap is particularly evident in Indonesia, where tourism destinations frequently serve as important social gathering spaces for Muslim communities. Tourism sites are not merely locations of recreation but also spaces where visitors interact, establish social relationships, express cultural identities, and reproduce shared moral norms. Such interactions create opportunities for the emergence of communicative practices that may reflect broader Islamic values and forms of

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<sup>19</sup> Hatem El-Gohary, "Halal Tourism, Is It Really Halal?", *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 19, (2016). 124-130.

<sup>20</sup> Lukmanul Hakim and Adeni, "Tourism Communication Model in Islamic Perspective", *Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure*, 3(2), (2022). 100-112.

<sup>21</sup> Muhammad Obie, "Social Dynamics and Tourist Experience at Wakila Peak, Muna Island: A Sociology of Tourism Perspective", *Jurnal Pariwisata Nusantara (JUWITA)*, 5 (1), (2026). 134-136.

<sup>22</sup> Mohamed Battour and Mohd Nazari Ismail, "Halal Tourism: Concepts, Practices, Challenges and Future", *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 19, (2016). 150-154.

<sup>23</sup> Hendri Hermawan Adinugraha, et al, "Halal Tourism in Indonesia: An Indonesian Council of Ulama National Sharia Board Fatwa Perspective", *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 12(6), (2021). 121-138.

<sup>24</sup> Aan Jaelani, "Halal Tourism Industry in Indonesia" *International Review of Management and Marketing*, 7(3), (2017). 90-107.

public participation. Understanding these processes is therefore important for expanding current discussions on Islamic communication beyond institutional and media-centered approaches.

Puncak Wakila on Muna Island provides an analytically significant context for examining these dynamics. As a popular tourism destination attracting visitors from diverse backgrounds, the site functions not only as a recreational space but also as a social environment where public interaction takes place. The visible presence of Muslim visitors, collective gatherings, modest forms of dress, and patterns of social interaction indicate the potential relevance of the site for examining the public expression of Muslim identity within everyday public life. Nevertheless, little scholarly attention has been devoted to understanding how such tourism areas function as Islamic public spheres and how Islamic communication emerges within these contexts.

Although previous studies have examined Puncak Wakila from the perspective of tourism sociology and tourist experience, little attention has been devoted to understanding how the destination functions as an Islamic public sphere and how everyday Islamic communication becomes visible within public interaction.<sup>25</sup> This gap highlights the need to explore the communicative and religious dimensions of public life within the tourism setting.

Based on these considerations, this study asks: In what ways are the Islamic public sphere and everyday Islamic communication manifested within the Puncak Wakila tourism area on Muna Island?. This study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it extends discussions of the public sphere by applying the concept of the Islamic public sphere to a tourism setting. Second, it connects the literature on everyday Islam with studies of Islamic communication, demonstrating how religious values are expressed through ordinary social interactions. Third, it highlights tourism area as an important yet underexplored arena in which Muslim identity is publicly expressed and communicated within contemporary Indonesian society.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach to examine the visibility of Muslim identity and everyday Islamic communication within the Puncak Wakila tourism area, Muna Island, Southeast Sulawesi. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study seeks to understand how Islamic values are publicly expressed through patterns of social interaction and visible communicative practices occurring within a tourism setting. The research site was selected because Puncak Wakila represents a growing tourism destination where individuals from

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<sup>25</sup> Muhammad Obie, "Social Dynamics ... 132-133.

different social backgrounds interact within a predominantly Muslim socio-cultural environment.

Data were collected through visual observation and documentation of activities within the tourism area. Visual observation was used to identify patterns of public interaction, visible expressions of Muslim identity, and forms of everyday communication observed within the tourism setting. Documentation in the form of photographs and publicly accessible visual materials was used to complement the observational data. The visual materials analyzed in this study consisted of publicly accessible photographic documentation depicting visitor activities, patterns of interaction, and visible expressions of Muslim identity within the tourism area. The photographs were obtained from publicly accessible social media posts depicting collective activities in open public settings and were analyzed solely for academic purposes. These methods are widely used to examine social interaction and public behavior within naturally occurring social environments. The data were analyzed thematically by identifying recurring patterns and meanings related to the Islamic public sphere, Muslim identity, and everyday Islamic communication. To enhance analytical credibility, interpretations were continuously compared across different visual observations and documentation sources through iterative thematic comparison across the visual materials.

### **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Visual observations of Puncak Wakila indicate that the tourism area functions as an important social gathering space for visitors from different age groups and social backgrounds. The site provides an open environment where visitors can meet, interact, and spend leisure time collectively while enjoying the surrounding landscape. The visual documentation shows that social interaction constitutes one of the dominant activities within the tourism area. Visitors are generally observed sitting in groups around shared tables, engaging in conversations, taking photographs, and participating in various forms of informal social interaction.

The physical arrangement of the site appears to encourage collective rather than individual participation. Seating areas are organized in open spaces without visible physical barriers separating visitors from one another. This spatial arrangement enables frequent face-to-face interaction and facilitates social encounters among groups of visitors. The tourism area therefore serves not only as a recreational destination but also as a communal space where social relationships are maintained and strengthened through everyday interaction.

Figure 1 provides visual evidence of social interaction within the Puncak Wakila tourism area. The image was selected because it illustrates several observable features relevant to this study, including collective gatherings, patterns of public interaction, and visible expressions of Muslim identity among visitors. As a form of visual documentation, the figure provides empirical evidence of how everyday social activities are performed within the tourism environment.



Figure 1. Social Interaction and Visible Expressions of Muslim Identity<sup>26</sup>

Figure 1 shows that visitors predominantly engage in collective rather than individual activities. The image depicts groups of visitors occupying shared spaces, interacting around common seating areas, and participating in informal social communication. The visible presence of Muslim identity markers, particularly the recurrent visible use of hijab among female visitors, further indicates that religious identity remains publicly visible within the tourism setting. These observations suggest that the tourism area functions not only as a recreational destination but also as a social space where public interaction and cultural identities are expressed in everyday life.

The observed pattern is consistent with previous findings indicating that visitors use Puncak Wakila not only for recreation but also for social interaction, collective gathering, and the production of shared experiences.<sup>27</sup> The visual evidence presented in this study reinforces the argument that the destination functions as a socially meaningful public environment.

Visual documentation further indicates that the tourism site attracts a relatively diverse composition of visitors. Men, women, children, and youth can be observed occupying the same public space simultaneously. The presence of

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<sup>26</sup> Publicly accessible Facebook visual documentation uploaded by Jon Edek (March 2026).

<sup>27</sup> Muhammad Obie, "Social Dynamics ... 134-135.

family groups, friendship circles, and mixed-age gatherings suggests that Puncak Wakila functions as a socially inclusive environment in which different categories of visitors share a common recreational setting.

To provide a more systematic overview of the empirical observations, Table 1 summarizes the main patterns identified from the visual documentation analyzed in this study. The table highlights observable aspects related to public interaction, visible expressions of Muslim identity, and the social functions of the tourism area.

<b>Observation Category</b>	<b>Visual Evidence</b>
Collective gathering	Visitors sit and interact in groups around shared tables
Muslim identity	Hijab and modest dress are visibly present among many female visitors
Public interaction	Informal conversations occur in open communal spaces
Family participation	Adults, youth, and children occupy the same tourism area
Leisure activity	Recreation is combined with social interaction and group engagement
Open public setting	Physical arrangement encourages face-to-face interaction

Table 1. Visual Observation Findings at Puncak Wakila

As shown in table 1, the most prominent characteristics of Puncak Wakila include collective social interaction, the visible presence of Muslim identity markers, and the coexistence of recreational and social activities within the same public setting. These observations suggest that the tourism area functions not only as a leisure destination but also as a socially meaningful environment where public interaction and cultural identities become visible in everyday life. The patterns identified in the visual documentation provide the empirical basis for the subsequent discussion on Islamic public sphere and everyday Islamic communication.

One of the most visible characteristics observed within the tourism area is the prominence of Muslim identity markers among visitors. Visual documentation shows that many female visitors wear hijab while participating in recreational activities. The widespread presence of Islamic dress practices

indicates that visible markers commonly associated with Muslim identity remain present within the leisure-oriented environment.

The images also indicate that participation in tourism activities does not necessarily diminish the public expression of religious identity. Visitors appear to combine recreational activities with forms of self-presentation that remain consistent with broader cultural and religious norms. Islamic identity is therefore visible not only through clothing but also through the overall social atmosphere of the gathering.

In addition, visual observations suggest that public interaction within the tourism area generally occurs in a relatively orderly and socially regulated manner. Visitors occupy shared spaces collectively, engage in conversations within their respective groups, and participate in leisure activities without observable disruption to the shared public setting of confrontation or disruptive behavior. Although visual data alone cannot reveal the motivations behind such behavior, the documentation indicates the existence of socially accepted norms that guide public interaction within the site.

The visual documentation demonstrates that Everyday communication constitutes a central dimension of visitors' activities at Puncak Wakila. Conversations among friends and family members appear to be one of the dominant forms of interaction. Visitors are observed sitting together, exchanging information, sharing experiences, and participating in informal social engagement while enjoying the tourism environment.

The tourism area also functions as a setting where leisure activities intersect with everyday social life. Rather than serving solely as a sightseeing destination, Puncak Wakila appears to provide opportunities for maintaining social ties and reinforcing interpersonal relationships. Public interaction within the site therefore extends beyond recreational consumption and includes broader social functions associated with community life.

Furthermore, visual observations indicate that the tourism area provides a shared public environment in which social identities can be expressed and recognized. Through patterns of dress, group interaction, and collective participation, visitors contribute to the formation of a social atmosphere that reflects both recreational interests and broader cultural identities. These observations suggest that Puncak Wakila operates as more than a physical tourism destination; it also functions as a meaningful social space embedded within the everyday lives of its visitors.

### **Puncak Wakila as an Islamic Public Sphere**

The findings suggest that Puncak Wakila functions as both a tourism destination and a social arena where public interaction takes place within a

predominantly Muslim cultural environment. The visible presence of collective gatherings, shared public activities, and expressions of Muslim identity indicates that the tourism site operates as a communicative space through which social meanings are produced, communicated, and publicly shared. This observation supports Eickelman and Anderson's argument that the Islamic public sphere should not be understood solely through formal religious institutions but through broader communicative processes occurring within everyday social life.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike secular models of the public sphere that emphasize a distinction between religion and public participation, which often assumes a clear distinction between religion and public participation, the Islamic public sphere recognizes that religious values remain embedded within public interaction. The visibility of hijab, collective social engagement, and the maintenance of socially accepted norms within the tourism area demonstrate that religious identity remains publicly meaningful even within recreational settings. In this regard, Puncak Wakila illustrates how Muslim public life is continuously shaped through ordinary interaction rather than through formal religious authority alone.

This finding is consistent with Göle's argument that contemporary Muslim identity becomes increasingly visible within modern public environments characterized by mobility, diversity, and social interaction.<sup>29</sup> Tourism areas, cafés, shopping centers, and recreational sites have become important arenas where religious identities are expressed and publicly recognized. Consequently, the presence of Muslim identity within Puncak Wakila should not be interpreted as resistance to modern leisure culture but as an example of how Muslim actors integrate religious values into contemporary public life.

The findings also complement previous evidence showing that social interaction constitutes a central element of the Wakila Peak experience. Earlier research found that visitors actively engage in collective activities, shared experiences, and informal interaction that contribute to the social production of space.<sup>30</sup> The present study extends this understanding by demonstrating that such interactions also create conditions through which Islamic communication becomes publicly visible.

This finding is consistent with recent scholarship emphasizing that contemporary Islamic public life increasingly develops through diverse

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<sup>28</sup> Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, eds, "New Media ... 1-18

<sup>29</sup> Nilüfer Göle, "Islam and Public Controversy ...7-13

<sup>30</sup> Muhammad Obie, "Social Dynamics... 134-136.

communicative arenas. Bhakti and Dhuhri demonstrate that Muslim public participation and religious expression are shaped through communicative interaction within modern public spheres, while Hamzah et al. show that Islamic meanings are continuously produced and circulated through public discourse and social participation. Although these studies focus primarily on mediated and digital environments, the present study demonstrates that similar communicative processes also emerge through face-to-face interaction within tourism areas, thereby extending the empirical scope of Islamic public-sphere studies beyond digital contexts.

The growing diversification of contemporary Islamic public spheres is also reflected in recent studies highlighting the expanding role of public participation and communication in shaping religious discourse. Mahzumi et al. show that digital platforms increasingly function as arenas where Muslim communities articulate religious values, negotiate public concerns, and promote moderate understandings of Islam through communicative participation. Although their study focuses on digital activism, the present research demonstrates that similar processes of public religious expression and participation are also observable within face-to-face interaction in tourism environments such as Puncak Wakila.<sup>31</sup>

### **Everyday Islamic Communication Beyond Formal Religious Institutions**

The observations further indicate that Islamic communication extends beyond formal religious activities. Conventional approaches often associate Islamic communication with sermons, religious instruction, or institutional da'wah. However, the social interactions observed at Puncak Wakila suggest a broader understanding of communication in which Islamic values are expressed through everyday behavior, public interaction, and forms of social engagement.

Hirschkind argues that Islamic ethical life is often reproduced through ordinary practices that cultivate moral sensibilities and social dispositions rather than through formal doctrinal instruction alone.<sup>32</sup> From this perspective, communication involves not only the transmission of information but also the enactment of ethical relationships among individuals. The relatively orderly social atmosphere observed at Puncak Wakila suggests that Islamic communication operates through everyday practices of social interaction that shape how individuals relate to one another in public settings.

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<sup>31</sup> Fikri Mahzumi, et al., "Cyber-Islamic Moderation in Indonesia: Digital Activism of Islami.co and IBTimes.id and Its Implications for Young Muslims." *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman*, 49(1), (2025), 22-49.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape...* 15-22

This interpretation is supported by studies showing that religious values are frequently communicated through routine interaction, symbolic behavior, and socially accepted norms rather than through explicit religious instruction alone.<sup>33,34</sup> Similar findings have been reported in studies of Muslim community interaction in Indonesia, where communication practices rooted in respect, social harmony, and cultural values contribute to the reproduction of religious meanings in everyday life.<sup>35</sup>

Islamic communication in the context of Puncak Wakila should not be understood merely as the transmission of religious messages. Rather, it emerges through everyday communicative practices that organize public interaction among visitors. Visible forms of modest self-presentation, collective participation, and socially regulated interaction indicate that communication functions as a medium through which Islamic values become socially recognizable in public life. In this sense, the dynamics of Islamic communication refer to the ongoing process through which religious meanings are reproduced, interpreted, and expressed through ordinary social encounters occurring within the tourism environment.

Previous research further indicates that visitors frequently interpret their experiences through social and emotional dimensions rather than through purely recreational motives.<sup>36</sup> This observation supports the present finding that everyday communication plays an important role in shaping how public interaction, collective belonging, and visible expressions of Muslim identity emerge within the tourism environment.

These findings broaden the understanding of Islamic communication by showing that that religious values may be communicated indirectly through patterns of interaction, public behavior, and collective participation. Such practices allow Islamic communication to remain socially meaningful even in contexts primarily associated with leisure and recreation. This observation expands existing discussions that often focus predominantly on formal religious institutions and organized religious communication.

This finding also supports recent studies emphasizing that Islamic communication increasingly operates through diverse communicative forms that

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<sup>33</sup> Jamal J. Elias, *Islam...* 21-45.

<sup>34</sup> Samuli Schielke, "Second Thoughts ... 42-68.

<sup>35</sup> Silvia Riskha Fabriar, et al, "Managing Cultural Diversity through Communication: A Face Negotiation Perspective on Muslim and Aboge Interactions in Wonosobo", *Islamic Communication Journal*, 10(1), (2025), 107-124.

<sup>36</sup> Muhammad Obie, "Social Dynamics ... 134-135.

combine verbal interaction, visual expression, and public participation in everyday social settings.<sup>37</sup>

### **Public Visibility of Muslim Identity in a Tourism area**

The visibility of Muslim identity among visitors suggests that tourism areas can function as arenas where religious identity is publicly expressed and socially recognized. The findings reveal that participation in recreational activities does not necessarily diminish public expressions of Muslim identity. Instead, visitors appear to combine leisure activities with forms of self-presentation that remain consistent with broader religious and cultural norms.

Göle argues that contemporary Muslim identity is increasingly expressed and made visible within public spaces characterized by modernity, mobility, and social diversity.<sup>38</sup> Such processes do not imply the abandonment of religious commitment; rather, they reflect efforts to reconcile religious values with contemporary lifestyles and social practices. The coexistence of tourism activities and visible expressions of Muslim identity at Puncak Wakila illustrates how religious identity remains publicly visible and socially meaningful within contemporary leisure environments.

Similar patterns have been observed in other Indonesian contexts where Muslim identity remains publicly visible while simultaneously adapting to contemporary social settings. Studies conducted in Bali and within digital public spaces indicate that Muslim identity is increasingly expressed through everyday practices that combine religious commitment with participation in modern social life.<sup>39,40</sup> These findings reinforce the argument that the public visibility of Muslim identity should be understood as a dynamic process of adaptation and public expression rather than as a fixed or static religious expression.

In this context, tourism should not be viewed solely as an economic or recreational activity. It also represents a social arena where identities are publicly displayed, interpreted, and recognized by others. The findings therefore suggest that Muslim identity remains relevant within contemporary leisure environments and continues to shape public interaction even outside explicitly religious settings.

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<sup>37</sup> Ali Ridho, et al., "Multimodal Strategies ...", 380–407

<sup>38</sup> Nilüfer Göle, "Islam and Public Controversy ...", 7-13

<sup>39</sup> Ali Nurdin, et al., "Balinese Muslim Identity Construction: Symbol of Harmonious Communication Among Religious Adherents in Indonesia", *Technicum Social Sciences Journal*, 28 (2022), 303–318.

<sup>40</sup> Aqida Nuril Salma, "Politics or Piety? Understanding Public Piety and Political Expressions of Indonesian Muslims in Social Media", *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif*, 13 (2), (2019), 236–240.

### Everyday Islam and Public Life

The findings can also be interpreted through the perspective of everyday Islam. Elias argues that Islam is experienced not only through formal religious obligations but also through routine social practices and ordinary aspects of daily life.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Schielke emphasizes that Muslim lives are characterized by ongoing efforts to navigate moral aspirations, practical realities, and changing social environments.<sup>42</sup> These perspectives shift attention away from formal religious structures and toward the everyday contexts in which religious meanings are lived, interpreted, and expressed through ordinary social practices.

Recent studies on everyday Islam further demonstrate that religious commitment is often expressed through ordinary social practices rather than exclusively through formal religious rituals. Muslim individuals continuously integrate religious values into routine activities, interpersonal relationships, consumption practices, and public participation.<sup>43, 44, 45</sup> These perspectives reinforce the argument that Islamic values remain socially relevant because they are embedded within everyday life rather than restricted to institutional religious settings.

Viewed through this lens, the significance of Puncak Wakila lies not in its function as a religious institution but in its role as an ordinary public setting where Islamic identity remains socially visible. The tourism area provides opportunities for interaction, socialization, and public participation through which religious values become intertwined with everyday experiences. The observations therefore support the argument that Islam continues to shape public life not only through institutional authority but also through ordinary social practices occurring in diverse public spaces.

The findings ultimately demonstrate that Islamic communication, Muslim identity, and public participation are closely interconnected within contemporary tourism environments. Rather than representing separate domains, religion and leisure coexist within everyday social life and contribute to the formation of public spaces that are simultaneously recreational, cultural, and religious. This contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how Islamic public life operates within contemporary Indonesian society.

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<sup>41</sup> Jamal J. Elias, *Islam...*, 214-230

<sup>42</sup> Samuli Schielke, "Second Thoughts ...", 42-68.

<sup>43</sup> Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, (Princeton University Press, 2012), 56-78

<sup>44</sup> Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*, (Princeton University Press, 2006), 89-112

<sup>45</sup> Greg Fealy and Sally White, *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, (ISEAS Publishing, 2008), 201-225.

#### D. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Puncak Wakila functions not only as a recreational destination but also as an informal Islamic public sphere where public interaction, collective participation, and visible expressions of Muslim identity take place. The findings show that everyday Islamic communication is not limited to formal religious institutions, sermons, or organized da'wah activities, but is also expressed through routine social interaction in ordinary public spaces. In this context, tourism area becomes an important arena where Islamic values, cultural identities, and social meanings are communicated and reproduced in everyday public life.

The study contributes to Islamic communication scholarship by extending the discussion beyond institutional and media-centered approaches and by highlighting tourism area as an underexplored site of Muslim public life. Practically, the findings suggest that tourism development in Muslim-majority regions should consider not only economic and managerial aspects but also the cultural, social, and religious meanings embedded in public interaction. Although this study is limited to visual observation and documentation, it provides a framework for understanding how religion remains socially visible and publicly meaningful within contemporary leisure environments.

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