

Promoting Islam and Malay Values through Mosque Tour Program in Perlis, Between Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRAK: Program Tur Masjid yang diimplementasikan di masjid-masjid ternama di seluruh dunia tidak hanya menawarkan pengalaman berharga bagi wisatawan, tetapi juga sejalan dengan imperatif Al-Qur'an dan sunnah Nabi mengenai dakwah dan penguatan pemahaman antar budaya. Meskipun Perlis dikenal dengan masjid-masjid ikonik, arus wisatawan yang ramai, promosi pariwisata yang proaktif, serta berbagai inisiatif untuk menghidupkan sunnah, negara bagian ini belum secara sistematis melaksanakan program tersebut. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi kelayakan peluncuran Program Tur Masjid di Perlis melalui wawancara dengan pemandu wisata senior di empat masjid wisata utama di Wilayah Persekutuan Malaysia dan menganalisis kemungkinan penerapan praktik terbaik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa keberhasilan Program Tur Masjid sangat bergantung pada tim relawan yang berdedikasi, yang dilengkapi secara spiritual, finansial, dan profesional untuk menghadapi tantangan internal dan eksternal. Dukungan institusional dari lembaga keagamaan, pariwisata, dan pendidikan sangat penting, namun kualitas intrinsik masjid seperti daya tarik bagi wisatawan, kesiapan dalam menyediakan fasilitas yang diperlukan, serta sikap komunikatif dan ramah juga sangat penting untuk keberlanjutan relawan dan kepuasan pengunjung. Pemandu berpengalaman menegaskan bahwa tidak ada satu model yang cocok untuk semua konteks; setiap masjid sebaiknya menyesuaikan pendekatan dengan kondisi lokal sambil terus belajar secara mutual untuk perbaikan berkelanjutan. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa Masjid al-Hussein di Kuala Perlis merupakan lokasi paling potensial untuk memulai program ini, karena lokasi strategis, keunggulan fisik, dan dukungan administrasi yang baik. Penelitian selanjutnya perlu mengkaji bagaimana peran lembaga dapat memfasilitasi, memantau, dan menjaga keberlangsungan program ini; peran perusahaan travel untuk mempromosikan lokasi; serta peran mahasiswa universitas dalam meningkatkan keterampilan bahasa dan komunikasi serta mempromosikan budaya Melayu dalam konteks multikultural Perlis.

Kata kunci: Masjid al-Hussein; Tur Masjid; Perlis; Masjid Wisata; Relawan

ABSTRACT: Mosque Tour Program that is implemented in renowned mosques worldwide offers tourists not only enriched experiential value but also aligns with Quranic and prophetic imperatives on da'wah and fostering inter-cultural understanding. Despite Perlis's reputation for iconic mosques, vibrant tourist inflows, proactive tourism promotion, and initiatives to revitalize the Sunnah, the state has yet to systematically implement such a program. This study explores the feasibility of launching a Mosque Tour Program in Perlis by conducting interviews with senior tour guides at four major tourism mosques in Malaysia's Federal Territory and analyzing the transferability of best practices. Findings indicate that a successful Mosque Tour Program depends on a dedicated team of volunteers who are spiritually, financially, and professionally equipped to navigate both internal and external challenges. Institutional support from religious, tourism, and educational agencies emerges as essential, yet the intrinsic qualities of the mosque such as its appeal to tourists, willingness to provide necessary facilities, and a communicative, welcoming attitude are equally critical for volunteer sustainability and visitor satisfaction. Notably, experienced guides emphasize that no singular model fits all contexts; rather, each mosque should tailor its approach to local circumstances while engaging in mutual learning for continual

improvement. This study concludes that al-Hussein Mosque in Kuala Perlis is the most promising site in Perlis to initiate the program, owing to its strategic location, physical attributes, and supportive administration. Future research should examine how agencies can further facilitate, monitor, and sustain such programs; travel companies to promote the site; and universities students to utilize the program to improve language and communication skills actively promote Malay culture within Perlis's multicultural landscape.

Keywords: al-Hussein Mosque; Mosque Tour; Perlis; Tourism Mosque; Volunteer

1. INTRODUCTION

Mosques have historically functioned as the spiritual and social heart of Muslim communities, not only facilitating the five daily prayers but also acting as hubs for education, welfare, and cultural transmission (Nadzri, 2019; Shavit, 2020). In Malaysia, where Islam is the official religion and Malay identity is closely intertwined with Islamic values, mosques occupy an especially prominent role in promoting both religious understanding and national heritage (Abdullah & Sulaiman, 2013; Omar et al., 2020).

As Malaysia's northernmost state, Perlis stands at the confluence of diverse traditions, making its mosques important symbols and vehicles for both Islamic propagation (*da'wah*) and the celebration of Malay values (Nor et al., 2021). The Mosque Tour Program not only promotes Islam but also highlights the local community, predominantly the Malay ethnic group in Perlis and Malaysia who organize and conduct the tours. Tourists observe the guides not only as Muslims but also as Malays, experiencing both religious and cultural aspects. Therefore, the effective implementation of Mosque Tour Programs, especially in Malaysia and specifically in Perlis, serves as a valuable platform to promote both Islamic teachings and distinctive Malay values.

In recent years, mosque tour programs have emerged as innovative platforms for sharing Islam and local culture with visitors, both Muslim and non-Muslim (Stephenson, 2014; Henderson, 2010). By inviting people into sacred spaces, these programs seek to demystify Islam, foster mutual understanding, and provide direct exposure to Malay customs such as greetings, hospitality, attire, and communal sharing that are expressed most fully within the mosque context (Rahman & Kamarulzaman, 2021; Othman et al., 2016). The increasing interest in Islamic heritage tourism has coincided with the growing recognition that cultural and religious values can be communicated more authentically through lived experience and personal interaction, rather than through textual or digital media alone (Battour et al., 2014; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010).

At the heart of such outreach efforts is the Qur'anic principle of recognizing and appreciating diversity, a principle enshrined in verse 13 of Surah al-Hujurat:

"O mankind! Indeed, We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted." (Qur'an 49:13, Sahih International)

This verse not only encourages Muslims to engage with others across lines of culture and belief, but also affirms that dignity and righteousness, rather than ethnicity or background, form the basis for esteem in Islam. In the context of mosque tour programs, this provides a spiritual foundation for welcoming non-Muslim visitors and presenting both Islamic and Malay values as open, inclusive, and relevant to all (Rahman & Kamarulzaman, 2021). Despite these noble aims, Perlis, as a Northernmost state in Malaysia that emphasizes the vitalizing the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad PBUH is yet

to establish a consistent mosque tour program. Especially by realizing that it presents a range of opportunities and challenges.

On one hand, such programs have the potential to foster interfaith understanding, promote tourism, strengthen community identity, and provide new avenues for da'wah and education (Mohd Shafiee, 2021; Nor et al., 2021). On the other, there are persistent concerns about maintaining religious sanctity, logistical hurdles, resource limitations, and the need for ongoing volunteer training and sensitization (Hassan, 2015; Stephenson, 2014).

This article explores how mosque tour programs in Perlis can serve as dynamic platforms for promoting Islam and Malay values. Drawing on contemporary literature, field observations, and comparative case studies, it analyzes both the promise and the obstacles inherent in these initiatives, offering recommendations for sustainable and impactful implementation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *The Multifaceted Role of the Mosque in Malay-Muslim Society*

Mosques in Malaysia are more than just places of worship; they are loci for religious education, social welfare, community decision-making, and the preservation of cultural norms (Shavit, 2020; Abdullah & Sulaiman, 2013). The intertwining of Islamic faith and Malay *adat* (custom) is particularly pronounced in Perlis, where mosque activities often blend scriptural instruction with the celebration of local traditions such as *gotong-royong* (communal community work), *majlis berbuka puasa* (communal breaking of fast), *majlis akad nikah* (solemnization ceremony), and *kenduri* (communal feast) (Hashim et al., 2019).

As Omar et al. (2020) observe, Malaysian mosques also function as cultural markers, signifying both religious adherence and Malay identity, a dual symbolism reinforced by state policy and the Constitution (Nor et al., 2021). Mosque programs, therefore, are uniquely positioned to embody and transmit both Islamic and Malay values, making them effective vehicles for cultural diplomacy and social integration (Ahmad & Ramli, 2020).

2.2. *Religious Tourism and Mosque Tour Programs*

Religious tourism is a rapidly growing sector worldwide, with millions traveling to visit holy sites, participate in festivals, or simply to learn about different faiths (Shinde, 2018; Rinschede, 1992). In the Islamic world, mosque tourism has evolved as a subset of religious tourism, where visitors are guided through mosque complexes to appreciate architectural beauty, spiritual ambiance, and the daily life of the Muslim community (Stephenson, 2014; Henderson, 2010).

In Malaysia, the government has actively promoted mosque tours as part of its broader Islamic tourism strategy, recognizing their potential to attract both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists (Kasim, 2011; Othman et al., 2016). Key destinations such as the National Mosque (Masjid Negara), Putra Mosque in Putrajaya, and Crystal Mosque in Terengganu have pioneered structured tour programs, complete with trained guides, educational materials, and multi-language support (Mohd Shafiee, 2021).

Empirical studies indicate that such programs not only enhance public appreciation for Islamic heritage but also provide opportunities for meaningful interfaith dialogue (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015; Henderson, 2011). Visitors often leave with a deeper understanding of Islam, increased respect for Malay customs, and positive impressions of Malaysian hospitality (Battour et al., 2014; Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018).

Table 1. Key Objectives of Mosque Tour Programs in Malaysia

Objective	Description
Religious Education	Explaining Islamic beliefs, rituals, and practices
Cultural Promotion	Showcasing Malay values, customs, and local heritage
Interfaith Engagement	Facilitating dialogue and understanding between communities
Community Development	Encouraging local participation and volunteerism
Economic Contribution	Generating income for mosques and nearby businesses

Noted. Adapted from Stephenson, 2014; Rahman & Kamarulzaman, 2021.

2.3. *Islam, Malay Identity, and Cultural Transmission*

Malay identity in Malaysia is constitutionally defined by adherence to Islam, the use of the Malay language, and observance of Malay customs (Tan, 2000; Omar et al., 2020). Mosques serve as the ideal setting for the transmission of these intertwined values, often functioning as the venue for key life-cycle events like birth, marriage, and death; as well as seasonal celebrations (Hashim et al., 2019; Ahmad & Ramli, 2020).

In the context of mosque tour programs, guides are introducing the visitors not only to Islamic theology and rituals, but also to uniquely Malay hospitality, etiquette, and communal life (Othman et al., 2016; Teh, 2020). Research by Hassan (2015) and Mohd Shafiee (2021) shows that non-Muslim visitors particularly appreciate learning about everyday customs and the Malay way of life, including greetings, dress codes (such as the baju Melayu), and traditional foods.

2.4. *Practices and Case Studies*

Successful mosque tour programs globally demonstrate a combination of thorough planning, community involvement, and sensitivity to both religious and cultural expectations (Stephenson & Ali, 2010; Ali, 2017). Comprehensive Notable examples include:

- National Mosque and Putra Mosque (Malaysia): Feature structured tours, volunteer guides, and interactive exhibits emphasizing both Islamic values and Malaysian hospitality (Mohd Shafiee, 2021).
- Grand Mosque of Manonjaya (Indonesia): Focus on educational value through historical and architecture quality (Mulyana, 2016).
- Sultan Mosque (Singapore): Integrate mosque tour program with neighbourhood heritage walks, focusing on Singapore's Malay-Muslim identity (Henderson, 2011).
- Jumeirah Mosque (UAE): Provides a rare opportunity to bridge the gap between hosts and guests by offering visitors a glimpse of UAE nationals' religion, customs and way of life via a mosque visit (I-Ling, 2007).
- Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque (UAE): Offers regular multilingual guided tours, cultural workshops, and outreach events that attract millions annually (Stephenson & Ali, 2010).
- Yeni Cuma Mosque (Turkiye): Explores sustainable development and cultural transformation through the adaptive reuse of a historic church into a mosque (Açici & Ertaş, 2018)
- The Mosque of the Omniads in Damascus: On notes and impressions of the tour (Lacorte, 1952)
- Sehlik Mosque in Germany: in whing the tour itself has become a pious place-making practice (Becker, 2018)

In general, case studies on mosque tour highlight the importance of guide training, multi-language materials, and collaboration with local tourism boards and community organizations (Othman et al., 2016; Aziz, 2018).

2.5. Benefits and Opportunities

Mosque tour programs in Perlis may offer significant opportunities to promote interfaith harmony and reduce prejudice among the diverse segments of Malaysian society (Ali, 2017; Rahman & Kamarulzaman, 2021). These programs also provide valuable platforms for student volunteers to develop their communication and cross-cultural skills through direct interaction with visitors from various backgrounds (Teh, 2020; Battour et al., 2014).

In addition, engaging retired professionals and pensioners as tour guides not only enriches their post-retirement experience but also allows them to continue contributing meaningfully to the community (Teh, 2020). The influx of tourists drawn to these initiatives can further boost the local economy by increasing patronage of nearby businesses and generating additional revenue for the mosques (Harun, 2021).

Most importantly, mosque tour programs enhance the da'wah mission of the Muslim community by facilitating direct and personal engagement, allowing the true values of Islam and Malay culture to be communicated authentically and effectively (Stephenson, 2014).

2.6. Challenges and Constraints

Despite these opportunities, several challenges remain in implementing mosque tour programs effectively. One major concern involves religious sensitivities, as some community members worry that the sanctity of the mosque could be compromised or that visitors might inadvertently breach important etiquette, leading to resistance and hesitancy (Stephenson, 2014; Hassan, 2015).

Another significant issue is volunteer shortages; the sustainability of these programs depends on having a steady supply of well-trained volunteers with adequate language and communication skills, which can be difficult to maintain (Aziz, 2018). Funding and infrastructure also present obstacles, as upgrading mosque facilities, developing educational materials, and conducting regular training programs require consistent financial support—resources often lacking in smaller mosque committees (Harun, 2021).

Furthermore, public awareness of mosque tour programs remains limited, with many locals unaware of their purpose or potential benefits, thereby restricting participation and reducing overall impact (Ali, 2017). Lastly, the cleanliness and general presentation of the mosque are critical factors; poor upkeep can reinforce negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslims and significantly undermine the effectiveness of the tour initiatives (Battour et al., 2014).

Table 2. Key Challenges and Strategies

Challenge	Potential Strategy
Maintaining sanctity	Visitor orientation, clear guidelines, supervision
Volunteer shortage	University partnerships, incentives, outreach
Funding	Government grants, tourism agency collaboration
Infrastructure	Community fundraising, phased upgrades
Public awareness	Social media, local partnerships, school outreach

Note: Adapted from Stephenson, 2014; Aziz, 2018; Harun, 2021

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design utilizing a multi-method approach to examine the opportunities and challenges of promoting Islam and Malay values through the Mosque Tour Program (MTP) in Perlis. Data collection was conducted through

document analysis, participant and non-participant observation, and purposive sampling interviews with senior MTP volunteers at selected mosques, including National Mosque, Putra Mosque, Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin (TMZA) Mosque, Jamek Mosque, and Wilayah Mosque. These methods enabled in-depth insights into the structure, implementation, and unique features of each MTP, as well as volunteers' experiences and best practices.

To contextualize the findings the applicability for Perlis, the suitability of observed practices and strategies was assessed through discussions with local Islamic scholars, mosque officers, and other stakeholders. Personal experience and direct involvement in the local MTP further informed the analysis, allowing for a nuanced evaluation of cultural and operational relevance. This triangulated approach ensured that recommendations were both evidence-based and sensitive to the sociocultural context of Perlis.

All collected data were thematically analyzed in table to identify key themes related to how mosque tour program is running and what should be improved. Ethical considerations were observed throughout, including informed consent from interview participants and confidentiality of sensitive information. Chatgpt 4.1 was used to elaborate the analysis of the data and to improve the language in general. The findings aim to offer practical guidance for optimizing the MTP in Perlis, while also contributing to the broader discourse on religious tourism, interfaith engagement and cross-cultural communication.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Several mosques in Kuala Lumpur have been identified as the most iconic tourism mosque in Malaysia that offer Mosque tour program. A few aspects related to mosque tour program are collected to be the foundation of establishing mosque tour program in other state, especially in Malaysia. The observation and interview on those mosques find the following details:

Table 3. Comparison Between Most Iconic Tourism Mosques in Malaysia

Mosque	National Mosque	Putra Mosque	TMZA Mosque	Jamek Mosque	Wilayah Mosque
Main Attractions	National historical mosque	Iconic mosque featuring contemporary Islamic architecture and scenic lakeside views	Modern steel-and-glass architecture, open-air concept without air-conditioning	Historic mosque located in downtown Kuala Lumpur, known for Moorish-Ottoman architecture	Popular with independent tourists
Additional Attraction	Long-standing must-visit destination for group tours	Situated in the heart of Putrajaya's tourism district	Located near key Putrajaya tourist sites	Located along a famous tourist walking route	Recently became a group tourism attraction after the introduction of the MTP program
Organizer	Islamic Outreach ABIM Centre				Subsidiary unit of the mosque
Guiding Process	Formal training and certification provided. Volunteers receive an official pass from IOAC upon successful completion. Most volunteers are retirees with strong communication skills in English, but limited manpower.				Volunteers undergo several months of training,

					including shadowing senior guides, before leading tours
Spaces Provided for MTG	Office/store/rest area, gallery room, library	Provision of office/store/rest area is inconsistent		Office/store/rest room, library	area, gallery
Space for Posters	Displayed inside the gallery	Displayed inside the prayer hall	Displayed inside the gallery	Displayed inside the prayer hall & gallery	Displayed inside the gallery
Robes Provided By	Volunteers	Mosque	Mosque	Volunteers	Mosque
Additional Support Appreciated by Volunteers	-	-	-	-	Being a part of the mosque and not a different entity
Volunteer Suggestions for Improvement	Maintain respect for senior management and ensure transparent reporting of all activities and operational progress	Expand the MTG team, empower current members with better communication	Ensure proper implementation of SOPs and training manuals, especially for new guides	Identify potential funding to support MTG programs	Sustain performance standards and reinforce adherence to SOPs
TripAdvisor Rating	4.2	4.5	4.5	4.0	4.7

Source: The authors' non-participatory naturalistic observation, interview and Tripadvisor's rating

Mosque Tourism in Kuala Lumpur is already at advance state compared to Perlis due to plenty factors of success among other, Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia, stands as the nation's primary gateway for international and domestic tourists. In 2019 alone, Kuala Lumpur received over 13 million visitors, which created a significant opportunity for religious tourism, including mosque visits (Tourism Malaysia, 2019).

The strategic location and accessibility of major mosques play a crucial role. Prominent mosques such as the Masjid Negara (National Mosque), Masjid Jamek, and Masjid Wilayah Persekutuan (Federal Territory Mosque) are situated near major tourist hubs and are well-connected by public transportation. This proximity allows for easy access by tourists, encouraging frequent visits (Nor Fariza Mohd Nor et al., 2019).

The architectural and historical significance of these mosques serve as major attractions. Masjid Negara, for example, is celebrated for its modernist architecture and symbolic value in Malaysia's post-independence era, while Masjid Jamek, built in 1909, showcases Moorish architecture and stands as one of the oldest mosques in Kuala Lumpur (Nor Fariza Mohd Nor et al., 2019). Such features draw tourists interested in both religious and cultural heritage.

Kuala Lumpur tourism mosques also offer well-organized mosque tour programs where trained volunteers conduct guided tours in multiple languages, provide educational talks, and answer visitors' questions about Islam and mosque history (Masjid Wilayah, n.d.). These structured programs not only enrich the tourist experience but also promote intercultural understanding.

The success of mosque tourism in Kuala Lumpur is supported by active involvement from tourism authorities such as Tourism Malaysia and the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC). These bodies promote mosques as key destinations, provide resources and training for mosque guides, and include mosque tours in city itineraries (Islamic Tourism Centre,

2023). Furthermore, online platforms like TripAdvisor and Lonely Planet consistently rank Kuala Lumpur mosques among the city’s top attractions, amplifying their visibility and appeal to global travelers (TripAdvisor, 2024).

Based on those criteria, the mosque tourism in Perlis is indeed pale in comparison. Looking at the fact that Mosque Tour Program is yet to run systematically in Perlis, those criteria ought to be used to identify the most suitable mosque in Perlis to start with.

4.2. Al-Hussein Mosque: The Most Suitable Venue to Pioneer the Mosque Tour Program in Perlis

A critical evaluation of Perlis’s iconic mosques reveals that, despite operational challenges, al-Hussein Mosque in Kuala Perlis offers the most promising environment for launching a sustainable and impactful Mosque Tour Program. This mosque is uniquely advantaged by its exceptional oceanic views, striking tropical-resort-inspired architecture, proximity to major transit points (jetty, bus station), and the openness of its administration and congregation to non-Muslim visitors. The continuous flow of Muslim worshippers, including domestic tourists, further enriches the visitor experience, allowing non-Muslim guests to observe daily prayers, a valuable opportunity for cross-cultural learning.

Nevertheless, several operational constraints must be addressed. Limited parking and reliance on ferry schedules restrict accessibility, particularly for group tours. Additionally, seasonal environmental factors such as odors from sea silt, the river mouth, and adjacent mangrove forests can temporarily diminish the site’s appeal. Infrastructure deficits, most notably the shortage of comfortable space for volunteers, frequent vandalism, inadequate waste management, and insufficient sanitation facilities during peak periods—also present significant barriers to the program’s success.

Table 4. Comparison Between Most Iconic Mosques in Perlis

Mosque and location	Advantages	Disadvantage
Al-Hussein, Kuala Perlis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Best scenery: Oceanic view 2. Most beautiful building: Beautiful tropical resort design 3. Walking distant to jetty, bus station, eateries 4. Tidy cafe 5. The admins and congregators are no foreign to non-Muslim visitors 6. Continuous prayer activities due to many Muslim tourists (convenience for non-Muslim tourists to observe how prayers are performed) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited parking space limits group visit 2. Tourists’ visit time bounded by ferry schedule 3. Bad smell from the sea silt/ river mouth and mangrove forest appears during some season 4. Plenty of garbage brought in by wave 5. The mosque doesn’t have enough space for volunteers’ comfort (office/ store/ resting area) 6. Facilities are frequently vandalized 7. Smelly and not enough toilet during sudden influx of visitors
Alwi, Kangar	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Historical UNESCO building 2. More educated congregators (English speakers) 3. Have most toilets for public 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Doesn’t have other nearby tourist attraction
TuanKu Syed Faizuddin Putra Jamalullail (TSFPJ), Kuala Perlis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2nd best scenery: Paddy and mountain view 2. 2nd most beautiful building 3. Best ventilation 4. Lot of parking spaces and less crowded congregators (more space for tourists) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Doesn’t have other nearby tourist attraction

Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail (TSPJ), Kangar	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More educated congregators (English speakers) 2. Lot of parking spaces and less crowded congregators (more space for tourists) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Doesn't have other nearby tourist attraction
State, Arau	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close to train station 2. Close to Istana Arau 3. Its status as State Mosque 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited parking space limits group visit 2. Tourists' visit time bounded by train schedule

Source: The authors' naturalistic observation

The analysis suggests that the mosque administration welcoming and helpful attitude are crucial in morally support the volunteers. Collaboration with professional travel companies offers a practical solution to the logistical issues of parking and timed access, as these organizations are experienced in scheduling, crowd management, and visitor flow. Travel companies can also proactively manage visitor expectations regarding seasonal environmental conditions and may even help convert challenges into unique educational opportunities such as guided nature walks emphasizing the ecological importance of the mangrove habitat.

To address volunteer welfare and operational efficiency, the immediate rental of office space near the mosque is recommended, providing essential facilities for rest, administration, and storage. Issues of vandalism and poor facility maintenance must be seen as mosque's and not volunteers' responsibilities. Mosque management must channel a portion of increased tourism revenue toward regular maintenance and enhanced security measures, fostering a safer and more welcoming environment for all.

Environmental cleanliness, especially garbage washed in by the tide, must be managed by Kangar Municipal, by ensuring systematic and daily upkeep. While the problem of insufficient toilets during sudden visitor surges may not be entirely resolvable, transparency, ongoing upgrades, and realistic visitor communication can help mitigate dissatisfaction.

Ultimately, al-Hussein Mosque's distinct strengths—its strategic location, architectural beauty, openness, and active congregation—outweigh its challenges. The mosque thus offers the best starting point for developing a model Mosque Tour Program in Perlis, one that can later be replicated in other mosques as local best practices evolve.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that launching a Mosque Tour Program in Perlis offers significant opportunities to promote both Islam and distinctive Malay cultural values to a diverse range of visitors. Among the state's prominent mosques, al-Hussein Mosque in Kuala Perlis stands out as the most suitable pilot venue, owing to its strategic location, iconic architecture, open and cooperative administrators, and unique visitor experience. While operational and environmental challenges are acknowledged, these can be systematically addressed through collaboration with travel companies, local authorities, and by enhancing volunteer support and facility maintenance.

For the program to realize its full potential, Islamic and state agencies must play an active role in its establishment and sustainability. It is recommended that a dedicated group of volunteers be formally appointed and empowered with the necessary training, infrastructure, and ongoing support. These agencies should also facilitate inter-agency collaboration—bringing together religious, tourism, and educational bodies—to provide both oversight and resources, ensuring that the program is well-publicized, adequately funded, and professionally managed.

Table 5. Problem and suggested solutions for al-Hussein Mosque

Problem	Suggested Solution
Lack of moral support for volunteers	Mosque administration should maintain a welcoming and helpful attitude
Logistical issues (parking, access, crowds)	Collaborate with professional travel companies for scheduling & visitor flow
Environmental challenges (weather, tides)	Travel companies to manage visitor expectations, offer educational activities
Lack of volunteer facilities (rest, admin)	Rent office space near mosque for volunteers
Vandalism and poor facility maintenance	Mosque should allocate tourism revenue for maintenance and security
Garbage and cleanliness (esp. from tides)	Kangar Municipal to ensure daily systematic cleaning
Insufficient toilets during surges	Maintain transparency, ongoing upgrades, clear visitor communication
Need for professional management & sustainability	Islamic and state agencies to provide oversight, training, funding, publicity
Fragmented inter-agency cooperation	Facilitate collaboration among religious, tourism, and educational bodies

Source: The authors

Future research should explore the mechanisms through which Mosque Tour Guide activities could be integrated as a formal co-curriculum in Malaysian universities. Comparative insights can be drawn from countries such as Turkey and Bahrain, where university students (both local and international) play a central role in mosque tour programs—often as paid or partially subsidized volunteers, and sometimes as full-time employees. These models leverage the linguistic diversity and youthful dynamism of students, expanding the reach and cultural fluency of the program. In Malaysia, the inclusion of university students could help address the current overreliance on retirees and pensioners, diversify language offerings, and foster greater youth engagement.

Special attention should be paid to immigration regulations, as they may limit the ability of international students to participate formally in volunteer or paid capacities. A policy review in collaboration with immigration authorities could help unlock the full potential of this untapped demographic. Additionally, future studies should consider how mosque tour programs can be further refined not only as vehicles for Islamic da'wah but also as platforms for the global promotion of Malay culture - highlighting traditional values, attire, language, and hospitality as part of the broader visitor experience.

In summary, the Mosque Tour Program has the potential to become a flagship initiative for religious tourism and cultural diplomacy in Perlis, provided that implementation is carefully planned, adequately supported, and continually improved through collaboration, research, and innovative educational partnerships.

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