

Assessing Mon Ceunong Waterfall as an Emerging Nature Based Tourism Destination: A 4A Approach

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Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji potensi pengembangan Air Terjun Mon Ceunong sebagai destinasi wisata berbasis alam yang sedang berkembang di Indrapuri, Aceh Besar, Indonesia. Dalam konteks Aceh sebagai provinsi yang menerapkan Syariat Islam, destinasi ini memiliki peluang unik untuk mengintegrasikan nilai wisata alam dan pariwisata halal. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif melalui kajian literatur sistematis, dengan memanfaatkan artikel ilmiah, dokumen resmi pemerintah daerah, portal pariwisata, dan konten yang dihasilkan pengunjung. Analisis dilakukan menggunakan kerangka 4A pariwisata secara analitis untuk mengkaji keterkaitan antar dimensi dan dampak kolektifnya terhadap daya saing destinasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Air Terjun Mon Ceunong memiliki daya tarik alam yang kuat, namun kekurangan pada dimensi aksesibilitas, fasilitas, dan layanan pendukung secara signifikan menghambat perkembangannya. Penelitian ini mengisi kesenjangan literatur mengenai destinasi ekowisata perdesaan yang sedang berkembang di wilayah dengan identitas budaya dan keagamaan yang khas, serta menawarkan rekomendasi berbasis bukti untuk pengembangan destinasi yang berkelanjutan di Aceh.

Abstract

This article assesses the tourism development potential of Mon Ceunong Waterfall, an emerging nature based tourism destination in Indrapuri, Aceh Besar, Indonesia. Situated within the unique socio cultural context of Aceh a province governed under Islamic law (Syariat Islam) the destination presents distinctive opportunities for integrating nature based and halal tourism values. The study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach through systematic literature review, drawing on peer reviewed articles, official tourism portals, regional government documents, and visitor generated content. The analysis is structured using the 4A tourism framework (attraction, accessibility, amenities, ancillary services), applied analytically to examine the interrelationships among these dimensions and their collective impact on destination competitiveness. The findings reveal that Mon Ceunong Waterfall possesses strong intrinsic natural appeal and experiential value; however, deficiencies across the remaining three dimensions particularly weak accessibility infrastructure, inadequate amenities, and limited institutional governance significantly constrain its competitive positioning. Critically, this study demonstrates that weaknesses in one dimension create cascading effects across others, thereby limiting overall destination performance. This research fills a gap in the literature on emerging rural ecotourism destinations in religiously and culturally distinctive regions, and offers evidence based recommendations for sustainable and inclusive destination development in Aceh.

Kata Kunci :

Aceh Besar, Moncenong Waterfall
Nature based Tourism, Rural tourism,
Sustainable Tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing sectors in the global economy, contributing significantly to employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and regional development (Pranata, Fadhillah, et al., 2026). In recent decades, the tourism industry has undergone a substantial transformation, shifting from mass tourism toward more sustainable, experience oriented, and nature based tourism models. This transition is largely driven by increasing environmental awareness, changing tourist preferences, and the growing demand for authentic and less commercialized travel experiences (UN Tourism, 2019).

Nature based tourism, in particular, has gained considerable attention as it emphasizes environmental conservation, local community involvement, and sustainable resource management . Destinations such as waterfalls, forests, rivers, and mountainous landscapes are increasingly recognized



as valuable tourism assets that can support rural development while preserving ecological integrity (Nugroho et al., 2023; Razalia et al., 2021; Uzir et al., 2020) However, the success of nature based tourism depends not only on the existence of natural attractions but also on the availability of supporting elements such as accessibility, infrastructure, and institutional management (Harahsheh et al., 2020).

As one of the countries with the highest biodiversity and cultural richness in Southeast Asia, Indonesia possesses substantial potential for developing nature based tourism (Choudhary et al., 2024). The government has actively promoted tourism as a leading sector for national development, encouraging the diversification of destinations beyond well established tourism hubs. Nevertheless, many regions in Indonesia still face challenges in optimizing their tourism potential due to limited infrastructure, inadequate promotion, and weak governance (Koerner et al., 2024).

The province of Aceh represents a unique and analytically compelling case in the Indonesian tourism landscape. As the only province formally governed under Islamic law (Qanun Aceh), tourism development here is shaped not only by geographic and infrastructural factors but also by religious governance, community norms, and halal tourism standards. Aceh's tourism identity is deeply intertwined with Islamic values, which influence visitor dress codes, prayer facility provisions, and the types of activities permitted at tourist sites (Pranata, Fitri, et al., 2026). Scholars have highlighted Aceh's potential as a leading halal tourism destination in Southeast Asia, given its combination of natural beauty, Islamic heritage, and post tsunami reconstruction that has modernized parts of its infrastructure. Aceh has significant opportunities to develop integrated tourism models that encompass eco tourism, rural tourism, and halal tourism (Hariyani et al., 2026; Ruiz Muñoz et al., 2025). However, tourism development in Aceh remains geographically and institutionally uneven, with activity concentrated in a few established destinations while many rural and emerging sites including Mon Ceunong Waterfall remain underutilized, poorly managed, and disconnected from provincial tourism governance frameworks (Liu Lastres et al., 2020).

One such emerging destination is Mon Ceunong Waterfall, located in Indrapuri, Aceh Besar Regency. This destination offers a distinctive combination of waterfall scenery and river based tourism experiences, characterized by clear water, natural rock formations, and a relatively pristine environment. Its rural setting and low level of commercialization provide a unique value proposition aligned with current tourism trends that prioritize authenticity, tranquility, and environmental sustainability (Morrison et al., 2025).

Despite its promising attributes, Mon Ceunong Waterfall has not yet been developed into a well established tourism destination. Preliminary observations from various online sources and media reports indicate several key challenges, including limited accessibility due to inadequate road conditions, lack of basic amenities, minimal promotional activities, and insufficient institutional support. These limitations suggest that the destination has not yet reached its full potential and requires a more systematic and integrated development approach (Ismail & Rohman, 2019)

In tourism studies, destination development is often analyzed using comprehensive frameworks that consider multiple dimensions of tourism systems (Krittayaruangroj et al., 2023). One widely used approach is the 4A framework, which includes attraction, accessibility, amenities, and ancillary services (Koerner et al., 2024). This framework provides a holistic perspective in evaluating the readiness and competitiveness of a tourism destination (Ismail & Rohman, 2019). While previous studies have extensively applied the 4A framework to established destinations, there is still limited research focusing on emerging rural tourism sites, particularly in less developed regions such as Aceh.

This gap highlights the need for a more in depth, theory driven analysis of newly emerging destinations like Mon Ceunong Waterfall. While existing studies have applied the 4A framework to established destinations, very few have examined its analytical utility in the context of rural, religiously governed, and institutionally underdeveloped regions. The uniqueness of Mon Ceunong Waterfall lies not merely in its natural scenery, but in its location within Aceh a province with a distinctive Islamic governance framework that shapes tourism regulations, visitor expectations, and community participation. This socio religious context adds a layer of complexity that standard destination assessments rarely address. Understanding how the 4A dimensions interact and mutually constrain one another in such a context is essential for formulating effective, culturally responsive, and sustainable development strategies.

Therefore, this study aims to critically assess the tourism development potential of Mon Ceunong Waterfall through an analytical application of the 4A framework, moving beyond descriptive profiling toward theoretical interpretation and practical implication. Specifically, the research objectives are: (1) to identify and critically evaluate the main attraction qualities of the destination and their alignment with contemporary ecotourism and rural tourism demands; (2) to analyze accessibility conditions and their implications for visitor reach and destination competitiveness; (3) to evaluate the quality and adequacy of amenities in relation to visitor satisfaction and environmental sustainability; (4) to examine the role of ancillary services and institutional governance in shaping destination development; and (5) to analyze the interrelationships among these four dimensions and their collective influence on the destination's competitive positioning within the Aceh halal and nature based tourism landscape.

The significance of this study is threefold. Theoretically, it extends the application of the 4A framework beyond descriptive tourism inventorying toward a more analytical and relational interpretation of destination competitiveness, particularly in underdeveloped rural settings. Contextually, it contributes to the underexplored intersection of nature based tourism, rural development, and Islamic tourism governance in Aceh, a region whose halal tourism agenda and post tsunami recovery trajectory make it a compelling case for destination development research (Hariani et al., 2026; Liu Lastres et al., 2020). Practically, the findings offer evidence based insights for policymakers, local communities, and tourism stakeholders seeking to develop sustainable, culturally sensitive, and competitively positioned tourism destinations.

METODOLOGI

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design grounded in a systematic literature review to critically assess the development potential of Mon Ceunong Waterfall as an emerging nature based tourism destination in Indrapuri, Aceh Besar, Indonesia. The choice of a qualitative approach is theoretically justified: qualitative inquiry is particularly appropriate when the research aim is to generate interpretive understanding of complex socio spatial phenomena within their real world context, especially in early stage destination studies where the primary objective is conceptual mapping rather than hypothesis testing (Lim, 2025). This approach is also consistent with established practices in rural tourism and ecotourism research, where secondary and qualitative data frequently serve as the primary evidence base for analytical destination assessments. It is acknowledged that the reliance on secondary sources represents a methodological limitation; however, systematic secondary research is recognized as a legitimate and increasingly common method in tourism studies, particularly for destinations where primary data collection remains logistically challenging (Cheong et al., 2023). Future research should complement these findings with ethnographic fieldwork, semi structured stakeholder interviews, and visitor surveys to validate and enrich the analytical outcomes presented here (Cheong et al., 2023). By relying on secondary data, this study seeks to synthesize existing knowledge and publicly available information to construct a comprehensive overview of the destination's characteristics, challenges, and opportunities (Lim, 2025).

The data utilized in this study are derived from a range of secondary sources, selected through systematic and purposive procedures to ensure both relevance and credibility. Sources include peer reviewed journal articles on nature based tourism, rural tourism, ecotourism, halal tourism, and destination management; official tourism websites and regional government portals for Aceh Besar; online travel platforms; media reports; and visitor generated content including travel blogs and digital narratives. Collectively, these sources provide both analytical perspectives and experiential insights essential for understanding not only the structural dimensions of the destination but also visitor perceptions and place based characteristics. These diverse sources provide both analytical perspectives and experiential insights, which are essential for understanding not only the structural aspects of the destination but also the perceptions and experiences of visitors. The selection of data sources was conducted systematically to ensure both relevance and credibility, with specific inclusion criteria applied, such as alignment with the research topic, publication within the last five to ten years to ensure data recency, availability of substantial information related to tourism development, and reliability of the source based on authorship and institutional backing. Conversely, sources that lacked credibility,

contained unverifiable information, were duplicated across platforms, or were not directly related to the study objectives were excluded to maintain the rigor and integrity of the dataset.

The data collection process followed a structured procedure consisting of several stages, beginning with the identification of relevant literature through keyword based searches on academic databases and online platforms, followed by a screening process to assess the eligibility of sources based on predefined criteria, and culminating in the organization and classification of selected data into thematic categories. This systematic approach ensures that the data collection process is transparent, replicable, and aligned with established qualitative research practices.

The analysis of the collected data was conducted using thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative method that facilitates the identification, analysis, and interpretation of patterns within textual data. The analytical process involved several iterative steps, including data familiarization through repeated reading of the collected materials, initial coding to identify meaningful units of information, categorization of codes into broader themes, and interpretation of these themes in relation to the research objectives (Cheong et al., 2023). Through this process, key themes related to tourism development were identified, including destination attractiveness, accessibility conditions, availability of amenities, visitor experiences, and potential opportunities and constraints for future development.

To provide a structured and theoretically grounded evaluation, this study adopts the 4A tourism framework, which is widely recognized in tourism studies as a comprehensive tool for assessing destination readiness and competitiveness (Ismail & Rohman, 2019; Gajić et al., 2025). The framework conceptualizes destination performance as the product of four interrelated components whose combined functionality, rather than individual adequacy, determines overall competitiveness (Morrison et al., 2025). Critically, this study applies the framework not as a simple descriptive checklist but as an analytical lens for examining interdependencies: deficiencies in one dimension create cascading constraints on others, and strengths in one dimension cannot compensate for systemic weaknesses in another. The first component, attraction, refers to the inherent qualities that draw visitors, including natural features, uniqueness, and experiential value. The second component, accessibility, examines the ease of reaching the destination through transportation infrastructure, road conditions, and informational availability. The third component, amenities, encompasses the availability and quality of supporting facilities sanitation, food services, rest areas, safety infrastructure, and in the Aceh context, halal compliant provisions which collectively shape visitor comfort and satisfaction. The fourth component, ancillary services, covers institutional and organizational support: destination management, government involvement, promotional strategies, and community participation (Gajić et al., 2025; Morrison et al., 2025). By applying this framework analytically, the study assesses both the individual dimensions and their systemic interactions, enabling a more theoretically grounded and practically actionable evaluation of Mon Ceunong Waterfall as an emerging tourism destination.

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, this study applies several strategies commonly used in qualitative research. Data triangulation is employed by comparing and cross checking information obtained from multiple sources, thereby reducing the risk of bias and enhancing the credibility of the analysis. In addition, a consistent and systematic coding process is applied throughout the thematic analysis to minimize subjectivity and ensure analytical rigor. The study also emphasizes critical evaluation of data sources, prioritizing information from reputable and authoritative platforms to strengthen the reliability of the findings.

This study recognizes several methodological limitations. The exclusive reliance on secondary data constrains the empirical depth and representativeness of the analysis compared to studies incorporating primary methods such as ethnographic observation, stakeholder interviews, or structured visitor surveys. The limited volume of academic publications specifically focused on Mon Ceunong Waterfall further restricts analytical granularity. Nevertheless, this study provides a theoretically grounded and systematic preliminary assessment that establishes an evidence base and conceptual foundation for future empirical research. Subsequent studies are strongly encouraged to incorporate mixed method designs combining field observations, semi structured interviews with local communities and government officials, and visitor satisfaction surveys to validate, deepen, and contextualize the findings presented here, particularly with respect to community based tourism governance and halal tourism integration in Aceh.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of Mon Ceunong Waterfall as an emerging nature based tourism destination reveals a structurally imbalanced condition in which high natural potential coexists with significant structural and managerial deficiencies. Rather than treating these four dimensions in isolation, this study applies the 4A framework analytically to examine how attraction, accessibility, amenities, and ancillary services interact and mutually condition one another ultimately shaping the destination's competitiveness within Aceh's broader halal and nature based tourism landscape. This integrative reading of the framework is consistent with Morrison et al. (2025), who argue that destination performance should be understood not through individual attribute inventories but through the relational dynamics among key tourism system components. The following analysis proceeds through each dimension before synthesizing their interactions.



Figure 1. Tourists enjoying Mon Ceunong Waterfall. The image illustrates the waterfall's multi level cascade and clear water, demonstrating the site's core attraction qualities: natural scenery, water clarity, and the opportunity for direct environmental engagement. The absence of built infrastructure in the frame reflects the low commercialization level of the destination.

From the perspective of attraction, Mon Ceunong Waterfall possesses strong intrinsic qualities rooted in its natural landscape and environmental character. The destination features a multi level cascade system with relatively clear water, framed by dense vegetation, natural rock formations, and a riparian ecosystem that enables direct visitor interaction with the natural environment (see Figure 1). Visitors can engage in swimming, river exploration, nature photography, and passive recreation activities that align with the experiential and sensory dimensions increasingly valued in contemporary nature based tourism (Morrison et al., 2025). The relatively low visitor density further cultivates a perception of exclusivity and tranquility, positioning the site as an authentic nature retreat distinct from over commercialized destinations. Importantly, in the context of Aceh's halal tourism framework, the natural and serene environment of Mon Ceunong aligns well with Islamic tourism preferences, which emphasize clean, family friendly, and spiritually restorative natural spaces (Hariani et al., 2026; Harahsheh et al., 2020). This alignment represents a significant and underutilized competitive advantage that has not yet been formally incorporated into the destination's branding or marketing. However, the absence of interpretive infrastructure including ecological signage, cultural storytelling panels, or guided nature education programs limits the depth of visitor engagement. This gap is analytically significant: interpretive elements are not merely supplementary amenities but are central to transforming a scenic site into a meaningful ecotourism destination (Krittayaruangroj et al., 2023). Without such elements, the destination risks being perceived as a recreational swimming spot rather than a distinctive ecotourism asset, reducing its long term competitive differentiation.



Figure 2. Tourists swimming at Mon Ceunong Waterfall. This image evidences the experiential dimension of the attraction the site supports active water based recreation in a natural setting. The natural rock formations and clear water quality visible here represent key elements of the site's intrinsic appeal, consistent with ecotourism attraction criteria (Krittayaruangroj et al., 2023).

In terms of accessibility, the findings reveal that both physical and informational access to Mon Ceunong Waterfall remain significantly constrained, creating a pronounced gap between the destination's natural appeal and its practical reachability. The site is located in a rural area of Indrapuri with limited connectivity to major road networks; the approach route involves uneven terrain and partially unpaved sections that present challenges particularly for families, elderly visitors, and mobility impaired tourists (see Figures 3-5). This physical inaccessibility is not merely a logistical inconvenience but a structural barrier with measurable implications for market reach and visitor diversity. The tourism literature consistently demonstrates that accessibility is a critical determinant of destination competitiveness: a destination that is physically difficult to reach will attract narrower visitor segments, reduce repeat visitation likelihood, and struggle to scale beyond word of mouth discovery (Koerner et al., 2024; Morrison et al., 2025). Informational accessibility is equally problematic. The absence of clear directional signage and inconsistent digital mapping representation create planning uncertainty that can deter prospective visitors at the pre trip decision stage. In the context of Aceh's halal tourism positioning, this is particularly consequential: Muslim family travelers a primary target segment typically prefer well organized, clearly signed, and family safe destinations (Hariani et al., 2026). The current accessibility deficit thus directly undermines Mon Ceunong's alignment with this strategically important visitor segment. Paradoxically, the destination's remoteness also constitutes an attraction element contributing to its environmental integrity and sense of exclusivity. Managing this tension between accessibility improvement and wilderness preservation is a central challenge for future destination planning and requires careful, phased infrastructure investment guided by ecological carrying capacity assessments.

Regarding amenities, Mon Ceunong Waterfall remains at an embryonic stage of facility development. Core supporting infrastructure including toilets, resting shelters, food and beverage services, waste management systems, and safety signage is either absent, minimal, or inadequately maintained. This deficiency affects visitor comfort, safety, length of stay, and overall satisfaction, all of which are established determinants of repeat visitation and positive word of mouth recommendation (Gajc et al., 2025; Ismail & Rohman, 2019). From an environmental sustainability perspective, the lack of waste management infrastructure is especially concerning. As visitor numbers grow organically through social media discovery, the ecological carrying capacity of the site risks being exceeded without managed facilities, potentially triggering irreversible environmental degradation a pattern recognized in emerging rural destinations across Indonesia (Koerner et al., 2024). In the context of Aceh's halal tourism requirements, the amenity deficit carries additional significance: halal tourism standards explicitly require prayer facilities (mushalla), clean and gender segregated sanitation, and halal certified

food services (Harahsheh et al., 2020; Ruiz Muñoz et al., 2025). The current absence of these facilities means that Mon Ceunong Waterfall fails to meet baseline halal tourism requirements, which substantially limits its appeal to observant Muslim visitors the primary tourist market in Aceh. Addressing this gap is therefore not merely a matter of visitor comfort but a strategic prerequisite for aligning the destination with Aceh's provincial tourism identity and regulatory framework.



Figures 3, 4, and 5. Access route conditions to Mon Ceunong Waterfall. These images document the physical accessibility challenges facing the destination: uneven road surfaces, narrow paths, and partially unpaved sections that constrain visitor reach and create safety concerns. These conditions are directly relevant to the accessibility dimension analyzed in this study, demonstrating the gap between the site's natural appeal and its practical reachability for diverse visitor segments.

The introduction of environmentally sensitive amenities such as eco toilets, designated rest areas with shade structures, halal food kiosks, mushalla (prayer spaces), and managed waste collection points would simultaneously improve visitor satisfaction, ensure halal compliance, and reinforce environmental stewardship. These interventions need not be large scale; indeed, low impact ecotourism infrastructure aligned with the natural aesthetic of the site is preferable, consistent with sustainable destination management principles (Krittayaruangroj et al., 2023).

From the perspective of ancillary services, the findings reveal that institutional support, governance structures, and promotional frameworks for Mon Ceunong Waterfall remain markedly underdeveloped. There is minimal evidence of coordinated destination management involving the Aceh Besar District Tourism Office, provincial level tourism authorities, or community based tourism organizations. This governance vacuum is analytically significant: the destination management literature consistently demonstrates that natural attractions alone are insufficient to sustain competitive tourism destinations without complementary institutional frameworks for planning, regulation, and promotion (Koerner et al., 2024; Morrison et al., 2025). In the absence of formal governance, Mon Ceunong Waterfall effectively operates as an unmanaged common resource, vulnerable to the classic "tragedy of the commons" scenario in which increasing informal visitor access degrades the very natural qualities that drive attraction. Promotional activities currently rely on informal word of mouth and user generated digital content, including social media posts and travel blogs. While such organic promotion can drive initial awareness, it lacks strategic direction, brand coherence, or market segmentation resulting in limited and largely uncontrolled visitor growth. The absence of a destination

brand identity aligned with Aceh's halal tourism positioning represents a missed strategic opportunity. Comparative cases from other Indonesian rural tourism destinations demonstrate that community based tourism organizations, when supported by local government capacity building programs, can substantially improve both governance quality and visitor experience (Krittayaruangroj et al., 2023). Community involvement at Mon Ceunong, while present in informal forms basic maintenance and informal visitor services has not yet been formalized into structured frameworks with defined roles, training, or economic benefit sharing mechanisms. Formalizing community participation within a halal tourism governance model would not only improve destination management but would also strengthen the socio economic case for conservation among local residents.

The analytical synthesis of the four dimensions reveals a structurally interdependent set of challenges that cannot be addressed in isolation. Mon Ceunong Waterfall's strong natural attraction generates visitor interest, but this interest is immediately attenuated by the accessibility barrier, which reduces the pool of visitors who can physically reach the site. Among those who do reach it, insufficient amenities particularly the absence of halal compliant facilities compromise visitor experience and duration of stay, reducing satisfaction and likelihood of recommendation. Meanwhile, the absence of effective ancillary governance means that neither the attraction's qualities nor the accessibility and amenity deficits are being strategically managed or improved. This creates a self reinforcing developmental trap: low investment in governance leads to poor infrastructure, which limits visitor growth, which in turn reduces the economic case for investment. This dynamic is consistent with what Gajć et al. (2025) describe as a "competitiveness gap" in emerging destinations where natural potential is not translating into destination performance due to systemic deficiencies across the supporting tourism system. Critically, in the Aceh context, the failure to position Mon Ceunong explicitly within the provincial halal tourism framework means that the destination is not benefiting from the policy attention, promotional support, and tourism governance infrastructure that officially recognized halal tourism sites receive (Hariani et al., 2026). Repositioning the destination within this framework, while simultaneously addressing infrastructure deficits, represents the most strategically coherent development pathway available.

CONCLUSION

This study has critically assessed the tourism development potential of Mon Ceunong Waterfall in Indrapuri, Aceh Besar, Indonesia, through an analytical application of the 4A framework (attraction, accessibility, amenities, ancillary services), with particular attention to the distinctive socio cultural and Islamic governance context of Aceh as a Syariat Islam province. Moving beyond descriptive profiling, the analysis has examined how these four dimensions interact and collectively shape destination competitiveness. The destination possesses strong intrinsic natural appeal: its multi level cascade system, pristine riparian ecosystem, and tranquil rural setting offer experiential value that aligns with contemporary preferences for authentic, nature based, and spiritually restorative tourism experiences qualities particularly well suited to Aceh's emerging halal tourism identity and representing a distinctive competitive advantage not yet formally leveraged in destination planning or marketing.

However, the analysis reveals that structural deficiencies across the remaining three dimensions of the 4A framework collectively constrain this natural potential from translating into competitive destination performance. Accessibility barriers reduce the practical reachability of the site for the Muslim family visitor segment that constitutes Aceh's primary tourism market. Insufficient amenities particularly the absence of halal compliant facilities including mushalla and gender segregated sanitation mean the destination fails to meet the baseline requirements of Aceh's halal tourism standards. Most fundamentally, the absence of effective ancillary governance creates a self reinforcing trap in which limited institutional investment perpetuates infrastructure deficits, which in turn constrains visitor growth and economic justification for investment. These are not independent problems but structurally interconnected: improving one dimension without addressing the others will yield limited and unsustainable outcomes.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that the 4A framework, when applied analytically and relationally rather than descriptively and mechanically, yields richer explanatory insights into the systemic barriers facing emerging rural tourism destinations. The finding that natural attraction is insufficient without complementary development across all four dimensions extends and validates the framework's utility beyond established destinations. The study also

contributes to the underexplored intersection of Islamic tourism governance and nature based rural tourism, demonstrating that the halal tourism lens is not merely a marketing category but a governance framework with direct implications for destination infrastructure requirements and competitive positioning.

Practically, the study offers three concrete recommendations. First, the Aceh Besar District Government and the Provincial Tourism Office should formally incorporate Mon Ceunong Waterfall into the provincial halal ecotourism development plan, enabling access to governance support, promotional infrastructure, and development funding. Second, infrastructure investment should follow a phased, low impact ecotourism model: prioritizing access road improvement, halal compliant sanitation, prayer facilities, and interpretive signage in the near term, while avoiding over commercialization that could degrade the natural appeal that underpins the destination's attractiveness. Third, a community based tourism management organization should be formally established and supported through capacity building programs, equipping local communities to manage visitor services, maintain environmental standards, and capture economic benefit creating a governance foundation aligned with sustainable and community based tourism principles (Krittayaruangroj et al., 2023). Future research should prioritize empirical validation of these findings through primary data collection, including stakeholder interviews, visitor satisfaction surveys, and ecological carrying capacity assessments, to provide a robust evidence base for destination planning and policy design.

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