

## Comparing Places of Worship as Tourist Destinations Based on Architectural Attraction: An Analysis on the West Indonesian Protestant Church (GPIB) Marga Mulyo, Yogyakarta

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### Abstract

Religious-heritage tourism in Indonesia has predominantly highlighted temples and mosques, leaving Protestant heritage sites such as the Western Indonesian Protestant Church (GPIB) Marga Mulya underrepresented in both scholarship and tourism promotion. This study aims to assess and compare the tourism potential of GPIB Marga Mulya, the oldest Protestant church in Yogyakarta, with other architecturally significant places of worship in Indonesia, to inform sustainable heritage-tourism strategies. Using a comparative qualitative descriptive approach, the research applies SWOT analysis, supported by literature review, field observation, and interviews with church stakeholders, to evaluate historical value, architectural features, accessibility, and visitor engagement. Findings show that while GPIB Marga Mulya benefits from a central Malioboro location and rich Dutch colonial heritage, it is constrained by limited promotion, inadequate visitor facilities, and diminished visual prominence. In contrast, sites such as Cut Meutia Mosque in Jakarta and Santo Petrus Cathedral in Bandung leverage active programming, segmented community outreach, and event-based attractions to strengthen their tourism appeal. This study contributes to expanding the scope of religious-heritage tourism research to include Protestant sites and offers practical recommendations for positioning strategies, though its conclusions are limited to five case studies within the Indonesian context.

**Keywords:** swot analysis; religious tourism; place of worship, strategic communication

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background

The Special Region of Yogyakarta is one of Indonesia's most prominent cultural destinations, recognised for its heritage, creative economy, and diverse attractions (Irianto, 2024; Mutiah, 2024). Its status as a national tourism destination renders it an appealing location for visitation. The province presents a diverse array of tourist attractions, encompassing historical monuments, shopping venues, natural beauties, and distinctive landmarks. Historically, Yogyakarta houses two royal palaces and two of Indonesia's largest temples, both of which are remarkably well-preserved. Its tourism portfolio spans monumental temples, royal palaces, cultural performances, and traditional markets, supported by a strong identity as a centre of Javanese culture. Official tourism statistics consistently place Yogyakarta among the top domestic and international visitor destinations in Indonesia, underscoring its strategic role in the national tourism economy (Anggraini, 2024; Ari, 2024; Iqbal, 2019; Jamil, 2024; Priatmojo, 2024).

Religious sites form a significant component of Yogyakarta's tourism appeal, ranging from UNESCO-listed Buddhist and Hindu temples such as Borobudur and Prambanan (Miksic et al., 2012; Soekmono, 1976) to historic mosques like the Great Mosque of Kauman (Rianingrum, 2021). While these sites are well-documented in both academic literature and promotional campaigns, Protestant heritage sites—despite their historical and architectural value—remain largely absent from tourism narratives.

The Western Indonesian Protestant Church (GPIB) Marga Mulya, established during the Dutch colonial period in the early 19th century, is the oldest Protestant church in Yogyakarta (Setyaningrum, 2023). Located on Malioboro Street, the city's primary tourism corridor, the church embodies Dutch colonial architectural

features and holds nearly two centuries of historical continuity. Despite this, its visibility as a tourism asset is limited, with most visitors attending for worship rather than heritage appreciation (Maftuhin et al., 2012).

Existing studies on Yogyakarta's religious-heritage tourism have prioritised Buddhist, Hindu, and Catholic sites (Miksic et al., 2012; Rianingrum, 2021), leaving a gap in understanding the tourism potential of Protestant heritage. This underrepresentation is significant given the broader heritage tourism discourse, which emphasises diversity, authenticity, and the integration of underexplored narratives into destination branding (Aulet & Vidal, 2018; Bhowmik, 2021).

Heritage tourism concept highlights the role of historical value, authenticity, and visitor engagement in sustaining cultural sites (Belk & Hsiu-yen Yeh, 2011; Eraqi, 2006). Strategic communication frameworks, meanwhile, provide tools for positioning and promoting destinations through targeted messaging and stakeholder engagement (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Mahoney, 2023; Nirwana et al., 2024; Steyn, 2004; Susanti et al., 2023; Vieira & Li, 2024). Integrating these perspectives enables a holistic approach to enhancing the visibility and appeal of heritage sites such as GPIB Marga Mulya.

This study aims to assess and compare the tourism potential of GPIB Marga Mulya with other architecturally significant places of worship in Indonesia. This mapping is executed through comprehensive study to examine the business and communication strategies that GPIB Marga Mulya has utilized to date. (Boca, 2015; Gevorgyan & Tovmasyan, 2021; Is Natonis, 2017; Kotler & Keller, 2016; Limbasiya, 2015; Susanti et al., 2023).

Using a comparative qualitative descriptive design, it applies SWOT analysis (Benzaghta et al., 2021; GÜREL & TAT, 2017) supported by literature review, field observation, and stakeholder interviews to evaluate historical significance,

architectural features, accessibility, and promotional strategies.

The study contributes to religious-heritage tourism scholarship by expanding the scope of analysis to include Protestant sites, addressing a notable gap in Indonesian tourism research. Practically, it offers evidence-based recommendations for destination marketing practitioners seeking to diversify urban heritage portfolios and strengthen the positioning of underrepresented religious sites. While the findings are limited to five case studies, they provide transferable insights for heritage tourism development in comparable contexts. The findings of this research also are anticipated to function as a reference for GPIB Marga Mulya.

### **Research Objectives**

This research aims to assess and compare the tourism potential of the Western Indonesian Protestant Church (GPIB) Marga Mulya in Yogyakarta with other architecturally significant places of worship in Indonesia, using a comparative descriptive qualitative approach and SWOT analysis, in order to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and to formulate strategic communication recommendations that enhance its positioning within the religious-heritage tourism sector.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Communicating the Heritage Value**

The approach of marketing communication strategy can be applied to enhance the closeness between the audience and places with high heritage value, in this context, places of worship. Heritage value can be informed through the strategic process of translating a site's tangible and intangible historical assets into coherent, audience-centered messages. Drawing on strategic communication theory, this construct focused on aligning organization's vision and heritage objectives with public outreach mechanisms to shape visitor

perceptions and motivations (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Mahoney, 2023; Steyn, 2004; Vieira & Li, 2024). Effective heritage communication ensures that architectural distinctiveness, archival narratives, and symbolic meanings are not only preserved but also made accessible and engaging for diverse tourist segments.

By focusing on marketing communication, organizations can expand the application of persuasive elements and media. Key channels and techniques for heritage communication include digital platforms (official websites, social media), interpretive signage, printed brochures, guided-tour scripts, and event programming. Research on church marketing highlights how digital engagement—through regular social media updates, multimedia storytelling, and interactive online features, can significantly increase visitor awareness and intention to visit (Foster, 2020; Jung, 2023; Mitova et al., 2021; Shebalina & Shebalin, 2021). In the broader creative-tourism context, narrative-driven content and co-creative experiences position heritage sites as culturally vibrant destinations (Gato et al., 2022).

The addition of creativity in message construction, combined with appealing heritage values, can enhance the effectiveness of message delivery. The storytelling approach, and authenticity cues can foster emotional connection, social meaning, and repeat visitation (Aulet & Vidal, 2018; Belk & Hsiu-yen Yeh, 2011; Bhowmik, 2021). By embedding local narratives, community voices, and interpretive frameworks into messaging, sites can move from static monuments to living heritage experiences.

In our analytical framework, the analysis focuses on three interrelated dimensions: heritage value, programme and engagement, and communication. The communication dimension is operationalized by examining how effectively heritage sites convey their narratives and meanings to audiences. This involves assessing the presence and clarity of heritage narratives

across digital platforms such as websites and social media, evaluating the quality and interpretive depth of on-site signage and printed materials, and analyzing how heritage storytelling is embedded within event and programme descriptions. Collectively, these indicators illustrate how communication strategies enhance visitors' understanding, appreciation, and connection to heritage. Testing this dimension across the five case studies will reveal how well each church or mosque converts its historical and architectural assets into compelling tourism propositions.

### Religious Tourism Studies

Religious tourism encompasses a spectrum of traveler motivations, from pilgrimage to heritage tourism. The architectural and historical significance drive visitation, and cultural or creative tourism, which emphasizes participatory programs and community engagement (Belk & Hsiu-yen Yeh, 2011; Liutikas, 2015; Rojas-Méndez, 2013). Pilgrimage tourism foregrounds spiritual experience, as seen in global contexts such as the Vatican (Kislali et al., 2016), while heritage tourism focuses on preservation and interpretation of historic sites, exemplified by Borobudur and Prambanan in Indonesia (Miksic et al., 2012; Soekmono, 1976). Cultural-creative tourism integrates heritage value with dynamic programming, demonstrated by community activities at the Great Mosque of Kauman (Rianingrum, 2021) and Cut Meutia Mosque (Masjid Cut Meutia, 2024).

Global studies document the economic and social impacts of religious tourism across diverse settings, from Morocco (Yasin et al., 2011), Egypt (Eraqi, 2006), Bulgaria (Mitova et al., 2021) to Korea (Jung, 2023), underscore the role of strategic communication in amplifying heritage appeal (Aulet & Vidal, 2018). In Indonesia, research on religious sites highlights digital marketing and programming as levers for visitor engagement (Susanti et al., 2023). Yet Protestant heritage churches,

including GPIB Marga Mulya, remain largely unexamined despite their historical and architectural value (Setyaningrum, 2023; Nugraha & Hardika, 2023).

Addressing this gap, the present study applies a three-part analytical lens to five places of worship. By comparing GPIB Marga Mulya with other architecturally significant churches and mosques, the research tests how historical assets, on-site activities, and strategic messaging converge to shape tourism potential. Findings will inform positioning strategies for underrepresented Protestant heritage sites within Indonesia's religious-heritage tourism sector.

### METHOD

A comparative qualitative descriptive research approach is utilized to delineate the distinctive tourism attractions within places of worship (Bungin, 2011). This study uses SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis as its methodology. This method utilizes the SWOT framework to analyze the growth of places of worship. (Gürel & Tat, 2017). Although not a new concept, the use of SWOT analysis by scholars with various adaptations and modernizations across different contexts demonstrates its continued relevance today (Benzaghta et al., 2021; Elavarasan et al., 2020; Helms & Nixon, 2010; Namugenyi et al., 2019; Nugraha & Hardika, 2023; Yusuf et al., 2022). According to Ghazinoory et al., (2011), SWOT analysis has proven beneficial in business mapping processes, as well as in other programs across various conditions, including tourism (Dafa Rizky Prayoga et al., 2022; Gevorgyan & Tovmasyan, 2021; Kulakoğlu-dilek et al., 2018; Nugraha & Hardika, 2023). Relating the concept of SWOT analysis to this research, the SWOT analysis can be applied in tourism mapping (Ghazinoory et al., 2011; Goranczewski & Puciato, 2011).

Adopting a business and management approach, this study integrates

SWOT analysis with mapping concepts from the fields of marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2016) and management, specifically the 4P method (4P and the 6M method) (Arhas & Suprianto, 2019; Boca, 2015; Limbasiya, 2015). This study, however, only incorporates two aspects of the 4P framework, as price and promotion are less relevant in the context of this research. Meanwhile, the 6M method, which stands for Material, Method, Man, Machine, Money, and Market (Arhas & Suprianto, 2019; Boca, 2015; Limbasiya, 2015), serves as a tool to facilitate the mapping or development of a company's business performance.

This study employs a comparative qualitative-descriptive design to evaluate the religious-heritage tourism potential of five architecturally significant places of worship in Indonesia. Other than GPIB Margo Mulyo as the base comparison, cases were selected according to these criteria: colonial architectural distinctiveness, documented visitor popularity by more than 1000 reviews on Google, and historical significance by over 100 years or UNESCO designation. The final case list comprises: GPIB Marga Mulya (Yogyakarta), Santo Petrus Cathedral (Bandung), Cut Meutia Mosque (Jakarta), and the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Ganjuran (Bantul). Fieldwork took place between April and August 2024. Each site was observed over a continuous with daily observation sessions of 6–8 hours to document architectural features, spatial layout, visitor amenities, and interpretive elements. Photographic records and field-notes captured both built-environment details and visitor behaviors.

Semi-structured interviews ( $n = 24$ ) supplemented observations. Informants included church or mosque officials ( $n=10$ ) community or congregational leaders ( $n=4$ ), and regular visitors ( $n=10$ ). Interviews lasted 30–60 minutes and followed a standardized protocol covering five thematic sections: (1) perceptions of historical and architectural value; (2) experiences

with on-site programmes and community events; (3) awareness and evaluation of current communication and marketing efforts; (4) visitor motivations, expectations, and satisfaction; and (5) recommendations for enhancing heritage engagement and tourism appeal. In addition, brochures, official reports, websites, and social-media content were collected and reviewed to contextualize each site's communication strategy.

In addition to fieldwork, the study incorporated a targeted literature review to define the analytical constructs. Sources included heritage tourism theory (Belk & Yeh, 2011; Eraqi, 2006), strategic communication frameworks (Mahoney, 2023; Steyn, 2004), and religious tourism studies (Liutikas, 2015; Rojas-Méndez, 2013). These informed the operational definitions of heritage value, programme/engagement, and communication.

Data analysis unfolded in two linked stages. First, interview transcripts and observational notes were coded thematically to identify patterns across the three constructs of the analytical lens, heritage value, programme/engagement, and communication. Second, a structured SWOT analysis was conducted for each site, following the protocols of Benzaghta et al. (2021) and Gürel & Tat (2017). Internal strengths and weaknesses were mapped onto heritage value dimensions (e.g., architectural uniqueness, historical depth), and external opportunities and threats were aligned with programme/engagement (activity range, inclusivity) and communication (messaging channels, narrative clarity). This integration ensured that strategic insights emerged directly from site-specific data.

To ensure trustworthiness, findings were triangulated across observations, interviews, and document reviews. Member checks with key stakeholders validated interpretations, and reflective journaling documented decision points in the analysis. Ethical approval was granted by the [University] Ethics Committee, and all

participants provided informed consent, with measures in place to respect confidentiality and cultural sensitivities.

The selected places of worship for this research include GPIB Marga Mulya, Cut Meutia Mosque, Saint Peter's Cathedral Church in Bandung, GPIB Kediri, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church (HKTY). The selection of these places of worship was determined by criteria including Dutch architectural influence, popularity, and historical relevance. The SWOT analysis method can be utilized to delineate the strengths and weaknesses of any place of worship. Furthermore, elements that emphasize their distinctions will be delineated in the data results and discussion.

This research employs data collection methods such as literature review, observation, and interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The literature is derived from academic publications and reputable online sources pertaining to the chosen places of worship as samples. Utilizing GPIB Marga Mulya as the principal reference, direct observation was undertaken from a business and marketing standpoint to enhance the analysis. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with the church pastor and various staff members at GPIB Marga Mulya as supplementary data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study delineates and examines each example place of worship utilizing the SWOT framework in conjunction with the 6M idea (Arhas & Suprianto, 2019; Benzaghta et al., 2021; Boca, 2015; Goranczewski & Puciato, 2011; Gürel & Tat, 2017; Limbasiya, 2015). Five houses of worship were examined: GPIB Marga Mulya, Cut Meutia Mosque, Saint Peter's Cathedral Church in Bandung, GPIB Kediri, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church (HKTY). The analytical data provided in this description has been filtered to ensure its relevance for comparing the strengths

and weaknesses of the places of worship. This data thereafter forms the basis for the discussion and conclusions.

### 1. GPIB Marga Mulya

The GPIB Marga Mulya edifice is situated at Marga Mulya St. No. 5, Special Region of Yogyakarta. GPIB Marga Mulya is geographically surrounded by GPIB Jemaat Bethel Magelang to the north, the Indian Ocean to the south, GPIB Jemaat Griya Mulya Purworejo to the west, and GPIB Jemaat Penabur Solo to the east. The precise date of the founding of GPIB Marga Mulya is not known. Nevertheless, extant documents, including baptismal records regularly preserved from 1830 to 2022, demonstrate that the church existed significantly earlier (Setyaningrum, 2023). The inaugural Church Council meeting occurred on December 14, 1830, establishing it as the oldest documented archive (Setyaningrum, 2023). No historical records or papers elucidating the precise creation date of the church have been located, resulting in the inference that GPIB Marga Mulya predates 1830. GPIB Marga Mulya was 167 years old on October 15, 2022.

The historical account of GPIB Marga Mulya originated in the Dutch colonial period. During that period, the indigenous Dutch, primarily Protestant Christians, necessitated places of worship (Setyaningrum, 2023). Thus, the congregation employed the private homes of members and educational institutions provided by the Keraton government (Setyaningrum, 2023).

The growing group need a more appropriate place of worship. Beginning on January 24, 1857, worship services and religious activities were relocated from school buildings and private residences to the Residency Hall. (Setyaningrum, 2023). Notwithstanding financial difficulties, the church accomplished the construction of the edifice on October 13, 1857, in alignment with the Church Council's resolution. (Setyaningrum, 2023).



**Figure 1.** Screenshot of Instagram Account GPIB Marga Mulya which provide worship schedule (Source: GPIB Marga Mulya Instagram account)

GPIB Marga Mulya actively manages its social media presence, consistently disseminating information such as worship schedules (Figure 1). The church's young organization is very engaged on social media, publicizing numerous events they orchestrate. The operating hours of GPIB Marga Mulya correspond with its religious activities. Services occur at 6:00 AM, 9:00 AM, and 6:00 PM. Beyond these hours, the church edifice seems inaccessible to the public, rendering it less appealing for tourists to enter the church premises, despite the absence of limitations on entry (GPIB Marga Mulya, 2024). However, according to official accounts (Rocky, personal communication, June 19, 2025), many tourists do not pay attention to the church and tend to pass by it. Meanwhile, international tourists visit the church with specific interests, such as data related to colonial-era marriages.

GPIB Marga Mulya is situated in the center of Yogyakarta City. This role is exceptionally strategic, particularly in relation to the tourism industry. Nonetheless, various factors inhibit the complete optimization of the church's site. The initial aspect is the enhancement of the church structure, including modifications to the

walls, canopies, and the front walkway. The eastern wall of the church, functioning as the primary entrance, was altered by the addition of brick-red ceramic tiles. This alteration diminishes the Western architectural significance of the chapel. Furthermore, the canopy installed in the graveyard, designed to offer practical shade for attendees, creates the perception of a confined and relatively dim space, particularly given the high sunshine prevalent in this region on clear days. Moreover, the sidewalk, which has progressively risen over the years, accentuates the feeling of constriction and obscurity in the churchyard. The church's nearness to the towering and vibrant Hamzah Batik building further emphasizes this perception. Notwithstanding this, the principal church edifice has been conserved, retaining a robust Dutch architectural atmosphere.

Upon reviewing the Instagram account of GPIB Marga Mulya, @gpibmargamulya, it is evident that the content disseminated to the congregation primarily pertains to worship-related information. This is apparent from the numerous posts detailing worship schedules, daily devotionals, and other religious activities. This strategy seeks to preserve connectivity and

engagement among congregants in the church's everyday activities. The church guarantees that congregants remain informed and can engage in religious activities by delivering regular information regarding worship services. The youth organization is also active on social media, with a distinct Instagram account, @gp\_mm\_yogyakarta.

Another element that can function as a tourist attraction for GPIB Marga Mulya is its assemblage of historically significant artifacts. The church's extensive history has yielded significant antiquities utilized in worship, including a collection of tea-pots and a pulpit from the colonial period. Remarkably, all of these extant objects remain in contemporary use. The church retains scrupulously kept marriage archives alongside physical things. These archives periodically draw visitors from the Netherlands seeking to trace the genealogy of their ancestors who formerly lived in Yogyakarta.

## 2. Cut Meutia Mosque

Cut Meutia Mosque, located at Jl. Cut Meutia No. 1, Menteng, Central Jakarta, is one of the historical legacies from the Dutch colonial era. Initially, this complex served as the office of an architectural and development firm named Naamloze Vennootschap (NV) De Bouwploeg, founded by Pieter Adriaan Jacobus Moojen (1879–1955) (Minarwati, 2013). Moojen and his company played a significant role in the development of the Gondangdia area in Menteng, a region now known as one of Jakarta's elite neighborhoods. Before functioning as a mosque, the building underwent several changes in purpose. During the Dutch East Indies period, it was not only used as the headquarters of the architectural firm but also served as a government post office and a railway office (Minarwati, 2013; Setiawan & Hardoyo, 2011). These shifts illustrate the social and economic dynamics of Batavia, the old name of Jakarta, during the colonial period.

During the Japanese occupation (1942–1945), the structure currently referred to as Cut Meutia Mosque had substantial functional transformations. It was transformed into the office of the naval military police (kempeitai) of the Greater Japanese Empire. This transition underscores the building's modification to accommodate the military requirements of the Japanese during their occupation. Subsequent to Indonesia's independence, the Indonesian government reused this 19th-century edifice once more. It was originally utilized as the office of the Ministry of Housing Affairs (Jahra & Marwoto, 2024). In 1964, its role transitioned to that of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Jahra & Marwoto, 2024). Prior to President Sukarno's resignation, the edifice was temporarily utilized as the secretariat of the Provisional People's Consultative Assembly (MPRS), highlighting its significance in multiple facets of Indonesian governance (Jahra & Marwoto, 2024).

A notable development transpired under Governor Ali Sadikin's administration in Jakarta. In 1987, the structure was formally converted into a provincial mosque (Heuken & Pamungkas, 2001; Jahra & Marwoto, 2024). This status was established by Jakarta Governor's Decree No. 5184/1987, dated August 18, 1987. This change signified a pivotal moment in the building's history, establishing it as a significant site of worship for Muslims in Jakarta. Consequently, Cut Meutia Mosque possesses considerable historical significance and embodies the social and political events that transpired in Indonesia during the 20th century. The building's transformation—from an architectural firm's office to a military headquarters, then to a government office, and ultimately to a mosque, exemplifies its versatility and adaptation to evolving circumstances.

The Cut Meutia Mosque in Jakarta functions as both a site of worship and a center for other community activities. The following information pertains to several frequent activities conducted at Cut Meutia



Mosque, as detailed on the mosque's media platforms, including its website and social media channels (Fieldnotes, August 11, 2024): (1) 3-in-1 Studies: This religious study session integrates three primary components: Quran recitation, religious lectures, and interactive conversations. The initiative seeks to enhance religious comprehension and reinforce connections among members; (2) Mothers Studies: This initiative is tailored for mothers, offering them a forum to explore and engage in discussions on diverse religious and quotidian subjects. It additionally functions as a medium to enhance connections among mothers within the community; (3) Monthly Studies: Conducted monthly, this religious study program is accessible to all congregations. The topics addressed encompass Quranic exegesis, Hadith, and contemporary challenges pertinent to Muslim life; (4) Ramadhan Jazz: A distinctive event at Cut Meutia Mosque, Ramadhan Jazz merges jazz music with the ambiance of Ramadan. This program seeks to engage youth and familiarize them with Islamic ideals in a more casual and entertaining environment; and (5) Orphan Course: Cut Meutia Mosque conducts educational programs for orphaned children, offering supplementary instruction and mentorship in diverse areas, encompassing religion, academics, and life skills. This initiative is integral to the mosque's endeavors to assist and empower orphaned youngsters within the community.

The Cut Meutia Mosque in Jakarta provides a range of services that encompass not only religious functions but also social and community support (Masjid Cut Meutia, 2024). The services offered encompass wedding ceremonies, allowing couples to formalize their marriages in a religious and dignified setting. The mosque provides guidance and support for individuals converting to Islam, facilitated by mosque scholars and the community. Cut Meutia Mosque offers ambulance services to facilitate emergency medical transfer, demonstrating its dedication to

humanitarian assistance and community health support. The mosque actively promotes Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to empower the local economy by providing training, mentorship, and resources to entrepreneurs (Masjid Cut Meutia, 2024). The mosque has a gastronomic section that offers a diverse selection of food and beverages, thereby bolstering the local economy through the engagement of small-scale traders. Additionally, the mosque features a multipurpose hall suitable for diverse activities, including conferences, workshops, and community events, furnished with appropriate amenities to support various meetings. Cut Meutia Mosque functions as a pivotal center that addresses the spiritual, social, and economic requirements of the community through its varied services.

Cut Meutia Mosque possesses numerous attributes that render it one of the most notable and attractive places of worship in Jakarta. Cut Meutia Mosque is situated in Menteng, Central Jakarta, a highly strategic location in the capital. according to the account of the visitors (Fieldnotes, August 11, 2024), this site is easily reachable for worshipers from all areas of the city, whether by private vehicles or public transit. Secondly, Cut Meutia Mosque possesses considerable historical significance, rendering it one of Jakarta's historic mosques. Initially a Dutch colonial edifice, it was subsequently converted into a place of worship. The distinctive architecture and extensive history draw visitors and historians eager to explore Jakarta's heritage and the evolution of Islam in Indonesia. This mosque symbolizes Jakarta's historical and cultural evolution, serving as a quiet witness to numerous momentous events in its surroundings.

The religious activities at Cut Meutia Mosque encompass not just congregational prayers but also serve as a center for many religious initiatives. Religious studies, seminars, and frequent Quranic recitations are conducted to deepen the awareness and knowledge of Islam among

congregants (Nurul, personal communication, August 11, 2024). The mosque regularly hosts special events at important Islamic holidays, including the remembrance of the Prophet's Birthday (Maulid Nabi), Isra Mi'raj, and different Ramadan festivities. These programs not only engage local congregants but also attract a broader audience aiming to enhance their religious understanding and build community connections.

### 3. Santo Petrus Cathedral Church

The Santo Petrus Cathedral Church in Bandung, West Java, is a historically noteworthy structure of considerable architectural merit. Established in 1922 and formally inaugurated on May 20, 1922, this church became the inaugural Catholic church in Bandung, signifying the birth of the Catholic community in the city (Febriana, 2014). The church's construction commenced during the Dutch colonial era in the Dutch East Indies, offering a significant historical backdrop for the edifice.

The design of Santo Petrus Cathedral Church was conceived by Wolff Schoemaker, a distinguished Dutch architect (Febriana, 2014). Schoemaker created numerous additional historical edifices in Bandung, establishing him as a pivotal player in the city's architectural evolution. The church's architecture exemplifies the unique style of early 20th-century Dutch design, characterized by sophisticated and detailed detailing. Prominent architectural features consist of the towering structures adjacent to the main entrance, imparting a grand and robust aesthetic. Exquisite stained-glass windows embellish the church walls, projecting captivating light patterns within the structure and augmenting its hallowed and artistic ambiance. The elevated ceilings and intricate creative embellishments enhance the beauty and magnificence of the church's interior, ensuring that each corner is replete with enticing features.

By highlighting the aesthetic and distinctiveness of the neo-Gothic

architecture of Santo Petrus Cathedral Church, the church provides a singular experience for tourists interested in cultural and artistic heritage. Visitors appreciate the architectural aesthetics of the building while also acquiring a profound comprehension of the historical and cultural aspects of Catholicism in Bandung.

In 1950, *Gereja Santo Petrus* was designated as a cathedral, marking its significance as the primary church of the Archdiocese of Bandung (Komsos Katedral Santo Petrus Bandung, 2022). This elevation officially granted the church, titled Katedral Santo Petrus, affirms its status as a religious and spiritual hub for the Catholic population in Bandung. This alteration in status underscores the church's significance within the Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy in the area.

Santo Petrus Cathedral Church provides a diverse array of mass times to meet the spiritual requirements of its membership (Komsos Katedral Santo Petrus Bandung, 2022). Daily masses occur bi-daily between 6:00 AM and 5:00 PM. The weekend mass schedule is as follows: Saturday at 5:00 PM, and Sunday at 6:00 AM, 9:00 AM, 12:00 PM, and 5:00 PM. This adaptable schedule enables congregants to select the most suitable time for worship participation, facilitating their engagement in religious activities.

The Santo Petrus Cathedral Church in Bandung functions as a worship site for the Catholic population and a center for religious and cultural activities that draw tourists. The Unique Value Proposition (UVP) of this church is in its initiatives. The Santo Petrus Cathedral Church frequently hosts a variety of religious events, liturgical festivals, and particular rituals that may attract travelers. These events not only facilitate worship for congregations but also present significant experiences for anybody seeking to comprehend local religious and cultural dynamics. Daily masses occur every morning and evening, while weekend masses are conducted on Saturdays and Sundays with numerous sessions

to accommodate a larger congregation. Major dates in the Catholic liturgical calendar, including Christmas, Easter, and the Feast of Saint Peter, are frequently observed with solemn and celebratory celebrations. Weddings, baptisms, and funerals are often conducted at the church, providing travelers the opportunity to observe and comprehend Catholic religious customs.

Notwithstanding its numerous features, Santo Petrus Cathedral Church may possess deficiencies regarding amenities for travelers (Fieldnotes, April 22, 2025). For example, the church may be deficient in a well-equipped tourist information center, sufficient parking spaces, or amenities such as clean and accessible public restrooms. The restricted availability of structured tourism events or programs may provide a disadvantage for Santo Petrus Cathedral Church. Visitors desiring a more organized tourism experience may report diminished satisfaction in the absence of guided tours, historical exhibitions, or educational programs that offer profound insights into the church's history and architecture.

#### 4. GPIB Immanuel Kediri

On December 21, 1904, the cornerstone of this church was set by DS. J.A. Broers and officially opened by J.V.D. Dungen Gronovius. During the Dutch colonial era, the church was referred to as the *Kerkeraad van de Protestanche Gemeente te Kediri* (Muallifa, 2023; Safi'udin, 2024; Wasono, 2019). Preservation initiatives for *Gereja Immanuel* commenced following its classification as a cultural historic site in 2005, pursuant to Ministerial Decree No. PM.12/PW.007/MKP/05. The East Java Cultural Heritage Conservation Center has conducted various preservation initiatives, including partial repair from 2008 to 2010, an archaeological technical investigation in 2005, and documentation of the cultural heritage building in 2010 and 2019.

GPIB Immanuel Kediri, colloquially referred to as the "Red Church," was constructed by the Dutch government in 1904,

with J.A. Broers designated as its inaugural pastor (Safi'udin, 2023). The Red Church boasts a white interior, adorned with huge stained-glass windows at both ends. A balcony, formerly utilized by the choir and Dutch overseers, is situated over the entryway. The main pulpit is location has been redesigned to be more open than its former, more contained configuration relative to the congregation. A consistory room exists where the pastor prepares prior to giving the sermon. A bell was previously situated in the tower above the balcony; however, in the 1960s, it was lent to GPIB Batu Malang and has yet to be returned.

GPIB Immanuel Kediri upholds a consistent worship timetable to cater to its audience. The GP (*Gereja Pemuda* or Youth Church) service occurs every Saturday during the first and third weeks at 6:00 PM WIB. General worship sessions occur at 6:00 AM WIB and 9:00 AM WIB. Regrettably, this information is not disseminated on the church's Instagram social media site. Inconsistent and infrequent posts do not offer a profound impression or experience when viewing the GPIB Immanuel Kediri profile (Fieldnotes, 14 July, 2024). The church could ideally employ digital activities, including its Instagram account, to enhance the existing deficient historical information about itself.

GPIB Immanuel Kediri, also referred to as the Red Church, situated in Kediri, East Java, possesses numerous intriguing attributes and dynamics. The architecture and setting of *Gereja Immanuel* provide a memorable impact as a meticulously preserved Dutch colonial structure, showcasing attention to detail in every aspect. The church's red hue, atypical for most ecclesiastical structures, enhances its aesthetic allure and distinctiveness. Located in the center of Kediri, the church is readily accessible, promoting engagement in religious events and tourism activities. The church offers sufficient parking facilities, facilitating convenience for those using private transportation.

### 5. The Sacred Heart of the Lord Jesus

Place of worship the foundation stone for Gereja Hati Kudus Tuhan Yesus (The Sacred Heart of the Lord Jesus Church) Pugeran was laid on November 5, 1933, and the church was consecrated on Sunday, July 8, 1934, by Father A. Van Kalken, SJ. (Pugeran, 1994). The church's blessing was dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Sacratissimi Cordis Iesu) as a manifestation of thankfulness for God's bountiful compassion towards the Society of Jesus, which had completed 75 years of service in the Dutch East Indies. Upon its consecration, Gereja Pugeran was designated as a parish church, distinct from the previously established Paroki Santo Fransiskus Xaverius Kidul Loji. Father A. Djajasepoetra, SJ (1894–1979), was designated as the inaugural parish priest of Paroki Pugeran in 1994. The church was conceived by Dutch architect J. TH van Oyen, with construction overseen by Father A. de Kuyper, SJ (Pugeran, 2021).

Situated at Jl. Suryaden No. 63, Suryodiningratan, Mantrijeron, Yogyakarta, the architectural design of Gereja HKTY Pugeran exhibits a diminished Dutch colonial influence, yet its construction during the colonial period. The church's porch and entrance are adorned with double-leaf doors exhibiting a European design, while the whole architecture embodies a more pronounced Javanese aesthetic. The church structure has signs of age and features a *pendopo*, a characteristic component of Javanese architecture, within its confines. This amalgamation fosters a distinctive and enchanting ambiance, mirroring the cultural assimilation that transpired during the colonial era.

Considering these characteristics, Gereja HKTY Pugeran serves not only as a place of worship but also as a significant symbol of cultural and historical integration in Yogyakarta. The presence of Javanese-language masses, architecture that illustrates cultural fusion, and its strategic location make this cathedral one of the city's notable landmarks.

The unique architectural appeal of Gereja HKTY Pugeran does not inherently align with the church's organizational efforts. The church management utilizes the facilities in a conventional manner, demonstrating a deficiency of innovation regarding the activities or programs offered. Beyond its construction, the church lacks distinctive features that sufficiently identify it from other churches. Locating information on the church's history is particularly difficult, especially in the context of tourism. The church's website, while beneficial, is deficient in regular updates.

### Discussion

From a tourism and commercial standpoint, renowned sites of worship have distinct attributes and developmental approaches. Among the five places of worship mapped in this study, it is obvious that each one leverages its religious activities as a positioning and foundation for expansion. The Cut Meutia Mosque in Jakarta, Gereja Santo Petrus in Bandung, and Gereja HKTY Pugeran have enhanced their current study programs. Cut Meutia Mosque, for instance, has expanded its study programs to accommodate to varied audiences, including the general public, youth, and moms. The attractive packaging, exemplified by the Ramadan Jazz event, enhances its allure to attract (Masjid Cut Meutia, 2024). Likewise, Gereja Santo Petrus upholds its customary mass services, liturgical ceremonies, and observances of significant religious holidays. Meanwhile, Gereja HKTY Pugeran focuses on cultural activities to develop stronger links with its flock. Thus, the first crucial idea is that places of worship can boost their appeal by improving their religious activities and study programs.

This research analysis is based on the significance of Dutch colonial architecture as a historical attraction. The results demonstrate that architecture significantly enhances visitor attraction. Nonetheless, exclusive dependence on architecture is not a viable long-term strategy for the

advancement of religious tourism. Upon examining other Dutch-themed halls of worship, it is evident that enduring benefits extend beyond mere architectural allure. To cultivate enduring engagement, places of worship must concentrate on elements that resonate with their intended audience or congregation. An illustrative instance is GPIB Kediri, which draws tourists predominantly for photographic endeavors. Consequently, its status as a tourist destination is weak, especially within local communities.

In comparison to recent studies, these findings offer a novel perspective on heritage tourism, which has conventionally prioritized the preservation of historical values (Bhowmik, 2021; Rahmat, 2022). Numerous studies emphasize the enhancement of architectural value as a crucial element (Sun et al., 2024; Tan & Kusumo, 2021). This research illustrates that architectural merit alone does not provide the foundation of a place of worship's tourism allure. Other research with analogous outcomes indicates that architectural features merely function as ancillary components in augmenting attractiveness (Aulet & Vidal, 2018). For frequent visitors or attendees, architectural elements can enhance the connection between the congregation and the church (Aulet & Vidal, 2018). Architectural components must be integrated with historical value and additional attractions, such as religious activities, to establish enduring appeal, so cultivating loyalty and incentives for return visits.

To enhance enduring attractiveness, institutions of worship must fortify their distinct posture in defining their functions. For instance, Cut Meutia Mosque and Santo Petrus Cathedral Church emphasize activities within the place of worship as their primary allure and a method to cultivate congregant allegiance. Both places of worship cultivate initiatives that resonate with the broader community. Santo Petrus Cathedral Church conducts large-scale masses that draw significant crowds and engages in community events, including

independence day celebrations. The Instagram post of Santo Petrus Cathedral Church offers readily available information and highlights inclusivity. Simultaneously, Cut Meutia Mosque, emphasizing the development of Indonesia, implements more structured and organized activities based on the segmentation of its congregants. The mosque conducts women's study classes, youth initiatives such as Ramadhan Jazz, and programs for orphaned children. The mosque's Instagram feed predominantly features Quranic verses, enhancing its relevance to the broader Muslim community.

Emphasizing positioning is not an innovative idea in the realm of houses of worship. Positioning can be delineated across diverse contexts, including the principles espoused by the church (Elliott, 1998), church organization (Abreu, 2006), and pastoral services (Magezi & Nanthambwe, 2022). This research demonstrates that houses of worship can design positioning strategies to augment their attractiveness to target visitors. The necessity of enhancing positioning for churches, especially GPIB Marga Mulya, is increasingly evident when juxtaposed with competitors or churches of analogous traits. According to the investigation, Cut Meutia Mosque is distinguished as the place of worship with the most efficient utilization. Notably, in addition to its predominant Muslim population, Cut Meutia Mosque prioritizes spiritual themes and religious activities in its communications. In comparison to GPIB Marga Mulya, the information structure is not markedly distinct; nonetheless, Cut Meutia Mosque prioritizes programming that resonates with the broader populace, like Ramadhan Jazz, educational courses, and culinary events. Simultaneously, architectural knowledge is predominantly utilized for aesthetic images. Utilizing this data, GPIB Marga Mulya may enhance its positioning in several formats to augment visibility to audiences and visitors.

GPIB Marga Mulya is a church characterized by prominent Dutch architectural features, however it faces challenges in attracting tourists. As the oldest Protestant church in Yogyakarta, it has congregants from throughout the province. Nonetheless, its communication management need reevaluation, particularly for general visitors. GPIB Marga Mulya effectively administers information regarding worship services, both directly and via alternative communication platforms such as Instagram. To enhance its tourism allure, GPIB Marga Mulya must develop a positioning strategy that transcends architecture, appealing to a broader audience. At now, information on church services predominates both internal and external communication.

From the standpoint of digital communication, institutions of worship can utilize websites and social media to provide selected content. Details regarding worship schedules are crucial and ought to be broadly communicated. Places of worship may offer more comprehensive information on their websites; nevertheless, it must be meticulously organized to enhance user experience. Nonetheless, in light of contemporary technology improvements, social media represents the most expedient method for customers to obtain information regarding an organization. All the places of worship examined in this study already employ social media, though with differing degrees of regularity. An active social media presence might reflect the recent activities of the house of worship (Adi et al., 2024; Foster, 2020; Jung, 2023; Mitova et al., 2021; Shebalina & Shebalin, 2021).

GPIB Marga Mulya can capitalize on initiatives to enhance integration. This strategy corresponds with contemporary academic research on places of worship, which increasingly underscores the importance of integration. The development of places of worship, especially churches, should consider various elements that can serve as primary attractions. According to

Gato et al. (2022), places of worship can concurrently promote dimensions beyond the individual. In the context of GPIB Marga Mulya, collaboration with external entities can bolster tourism engagement and integration. This role must be managed innovatively and creatively to ensure effective marketing communication (Aulet & Vidal, 2018; Bhowmik, 2021; Gato et al., 2022; Mitova et al., 2021).

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that while architectural salience serves as the major attractor, drawing people through iconic forms and historical narratives, sustained engagement depends on programme diversity and smart communication. Through a comparative descriptive qualitative method and embedded SWOT analysis, GPIB Marga Mulya's Dutch-colonial past emerged as a high-entry asset, although its lack of cultural events and interpretive outreach inhibits repeat visiting. Conversely, sites with comprehensive programming and active digital presence demonstrated greater retention, demonstrating that heritage value alone cannot assure long-term tourism attractiveness.

Building on these observations, this research recommends five specific solutions. First, put multilingual interpretative signage and QR-enabled panels at major architectural details to overcome information gaps. Second, construct thematic, youth-led guided tours, covering colonial history, ritual practices, and community narratives, scheduled frequently and promoted through local DMOs. Third, curate on-site heritage corners with archive displays and interactive genealogy kiosks to deepen visitor interaction. Fourth, build specialized micro-sites in Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Mandarin providing timelines, virtual tours, and event calendars, with engagement analytics influencing continuing improvement. Finally, develop a year-round social media calendar alternating heritage stories, programme

highlights, and visitor testimonies, employing analytics to optimize content kind and timing.

These conclusions are restricted by the study's emphasis on six colonial-era worship venues in Java, all possessing established congregational structures and differing degrees of historical recognition. As such, transferability to freshly created towns, vernacular or non-colonial structures, and mega-sites under intense tourist demand may be limited. Future research should test the analytical lens across rural and non-colonial contexts, conduct longitudinal assessments of visitor behavior post-implementation, compare the effectiveness of digital versus physical interpretive media, and explore emotion-AI personalization and cross-faith heritage-trail collaborations to advance both theoretical understanding and practical outcomes in religious-heritage tourism.

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