

## **IDENTIFICATION OF HERITAGE AND HISTORICAL TOURISM CHARACTERISTICS IN THE CANDI BRAHU TOURISM AREA, BEJIJONG DISTRICT, MOJOKERTO REGENCY**

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### **Abstract**

Brahu Temple is one of the historical relics located in Bejijong District, Mojokerto Regency, holding significant value in the context of Javanese history and culture, particularly as a legacy of the Majapahit Kingdom. Its presence not only reflects classical architectural elements but also embodies spiritual and social meanings, making it highly relevant for development as a heritage and historical tourism destination. The concept of heritage and historical tourism emphasizes the preservation of cultural heritage while providing educational experiences for visitors regarding the historical values embedded within. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with a field research approach, where data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants, including tourism area managers, community leaders, and visitors. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. In the data reduction stage, interview results were categorized according to main themes such as historical aspects, cultural values, and tourism management. The data display stage involved organizing information into matrices and descriptive narratives to enhance clarity. The final stage, conclusion drawing, was carried out iteratively with verification to ensure data validity. The findings indicate that Brahu Temple holds substantial potential for further development through the strengthening of historical narratives, tourism governance, and integration with local cultural values. In conclusion, the identification of heritage and historical tourism characteristics at Brahu Temple underscores the importance of synergy between cultural heritage preservation and sustainable tourism development strategies, aiming to deliver educational, spiritual, and economic benefits to both local communities and visitors.

**Keywords:** Heritage Tourism; Historical Tourism; Brahu Temple; Miles and Huberman; Mojokerto.

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### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Heritage tourism and historical tourism are forms of travel that emphasize understanding and appreciating the cultural and historical legacy of a region (Correra, 2026). These activities offer not only recreational experiences but also educational and reflective ones for visitors, playing a vital role in strengthening collective awareness of cultural identity (Almuqataf, 2026). Through visits to historical sites, tourists can grasp the values of the past that shape present-day society (Oberio, 2026). Therefore, proper management of historical destinations is key to sustaining these values. One crucial aspect of such management is the conservation of historical areas, including temples, aimed at protecting cultural assets from physical damage and the erosion of meaning (Sidhimantra et al., 2026).

Sites like temples often face pressures from urbanization, mass tourism, and limited public understanding of their historical significance (Becherini et al., 2016). With well-planned

conservation, these sites can remain intact and serve as intergenerational learning spaces, while also opening economic opportunities through sustainable culture-based tourism (Caponetti et al., 2021). Involving local communities in the conservation process is essential to maintaining the authenticity and long-term viability of these areas (Fuad Nasrullah et al., 2024; Kesavaperumal et al., 2020). Indonesia is widely recognized for its rich historical heritage, ranging from inscriptions and palaces to temple complexes scattered across the archipelago (Behera & Mishra, 2025). This wealth reflects the diversity of cultures and civilizations that once flourished in the region, including the legacy of the Majapahit Kingdom in Mojokerto (Briliana, 2024).

One prominent site is Candi Brahu, located in Bejijong Village, Trowulan Subdistrict, Mojokerto Regency (Maulina et al., 2024). Built from red bricks, the temple has a distinctive shape, differing from Central Javanese temples typically made of andesite stone (Brilliant et al., 2022). According to several sources, Candi Brahu is believed to have served as a cremation site for Majapahit kings, although no definitive archaeological evidence has been found (Febriani et al., 2025). The surrounding environment also holds high cultural value, with local traditions still connected to the Majapahit legacy (Ardhala et al., 2016; Firman & Wahyu, 2025). The tourism potential of this area is significant if developed through a history- and culture-based approach (Correra, 2026; Rodrigo et al., 2023; Shen et al., 2008).

Research into the characteristics of heritage and historical tourism in the Candi Brahu area is urgently needed, especially in the context of preservation and destination development. This study can identify key elements that shape the area's appeal, including physical aspects such as architectural structures and landscapes, and non-physical aspects like cultural values, historical narratives, and traditional practices. Mapping these characteristics allows tourism managers to design more effective and context-sensitive promotional and conservation strategies. Research also plays a role in building strong and inclusive historical narratives, offering visitors meaningful and authentic experiences. Moreover, the findings can serve as a foundation for public policy in culture-based tourism development.

Through academic and participatory approaches, this research is expected to make a tangible contribution to cultural heritage preservation in Mojokerto. Identifying the characteristics of heritage and historical tourism will strengthen Candi Brahu's position as a leading destination that is not only visually appealing but also rich in educational value. By involving local communities, regional governments, and scholars, the area can be managed collaboratively and sustainably. This study also opens pathways for developing tourism models that honor history and empower communities.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a non-positivistic paradigm and is grounded in a rationalistic method. This approach focuses on constructing theoretical concepts and conducting literature reviews as the basis for deriving meaning and drawing conclusions about the phenomena under study. The rationalistic approach enables the researcher to build conceptual understanding through logical reasoning, which is then reinforced by analysis results and discussion of field findings (Widya & Santoso, 2024). Thus, the research is not solely based on empirical data but also emphasizes the reasoning process to uncover deeper meanings of the research object.

This approach is applied to identify the characteristics under study using Miles and Huberman's data analysis model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion

drawing (Intissar & Rabeb, 2015; Schwandt, 1986) . The data analysis process was carried out through manual coding and reduction using Microsoft Word and Excel to systematically organize and categorize interview data. The main informant in this research is the caretaker (*juru kunci*) of Candi Brahu, who possesses in-depth knowledge of the temple's historical background and characteristics. The informant was deliberately selected using purposive sampling to ensure that the data obtained are relevant to the research focus and provide a comprehensive understanding of the cultural and historical context under study.

In addition, this research also employed a literature study method to strengthen the theoretical foundation and interpretive framework. The literature study involved a systematic review of academic journals, books, and institutional reports to identify key concepts, theoretical developments, and relevant empirical findings related to cultural heritage, architectural semiotics, and local wisdom. Following the guidelines proposed by Webster and Watson (2002) and Snyder (2019), the review process was conducted through database searches, synthesis of previous findings, and critical comparison between sources. This process ensured that the study was grounded in up-to-date and credible knowledge, providing a solid analytical basis for interpreting the field data within the broader scholarly discourse.

### C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### Characteristics of Religion and Culture

Candi Brahu is one of the Majapahit Kingdom's remains that exhibits strong characteristics of a Buddhist place of worship. Archaeological findings reveal various artifacts such as metal statues, jewelry, and brick structures resembling stupas, indicating Buddhist ritual activities in the Trowulan area. Its architectural elements, which are simple and lack the elaborate Hindu-style reliefs, also reinforce this assumption (Abadiyah & Pamungkas, 2014). Furthermore, the name "Brahu," which is believed to have originated from the term "Wanaru" or "Warahu" mentioned in the Alasantan Inscription dated 939 AD, signifies the continuity between religious and historical elements during the Majapahit era (Wijaya, 2023).



**Figure 1.** Brahu Temple in Bejjong, Mojokerto

**Source:** Documentation Researcher, 2025

Functionally, Candi Brahu continues to serve as a religious site for Buddhist practices. Following restoration between 1995 and 2011, the temple has been reused for major Buddhist celebrations such as Vesak and Asadha by the Buddhist community of Trowulan (Abadiyah & Pamungkas, 2014). This phenomenon indicates that the spiritual values of the site have not ceased as mere historical symbols but continue to live on as part of an active religious heritage

preserved by local communities. Such ritual activities also reflect an adaptation of Buddhist traditions in modern society while maintaining their sacred authenticity (Rukmana et al., 2023).

In terms of spatial orientation, Candi Brahu faces west, featuring a main chamber large enough to accommodate communal religious activities. This space is believed to have been used for meditation or ancestral veneration rituals (Rukmana et al., 2023). The presence of an open courtyard and an altar at the front of the temple represents the integration of symbolic and ritualistic functions. One informant stated:

*“Kami melakukan upacara Waisak di Candi Brahu setiap tahun bersama umat Buddha Trowulan, karena memang situs ini punya makna sakral sebagai tempat leluhur dan ritual.” - (A1).*

The statement by Informant A1 demonstrates that for the local community, Candi Brahu is not merely a historical relic but a living spiritual space. The phrase “makna sakral sebagai tempat leluhur dan ritual” shows that the temple functions as a bridge between the past and the present, where Majapahit’s religious values are preserved through contemporary Buddhist practices. This emphasizes the continuity of Candi Brahu’s spiritual role and highlights how religious-based cultural preservation is carried out across generations within the community.

### Characteristics of Historical and Heritage Tourism

Historical and heritage tourism is characterized by tourists’ motivation to experience, learn about, and appreciate artifacts, sites, or activities that represent authentic elements of the past and local culture. According to Zhu (2021), heritage tourism integrates “heritage, a way of imagining the past in terms that suit the values of the present, with travel to locations associated with enshrined heritage values.” Heritage elements can be tangible, such as historical buildings, monuments, and artifacts, or intangible, such as traditions, narratives, and local customs, that together shape the identity and attractiveness of a destination (Zhu, 2021).



**Figure 2.** The Inauguration of the Restoration of Brahu Temple  
**Source:** Documentation Researcher, 2025

Another characteristic of heritage tourism is its educational and reflective nature. Visitors engage not only in recreational activities but also in intellectual and cultural experiences aimed at understanding historical contexts, cultural expressions, and collective identities. Studies have identified key motivational drivers such as cognition (knowledge), communication (interaction), and social prestige (status) that encourage participation in heritage tourism (Karpova, 2014). Hence, successful heritage sites provide interpretive displays, guided explanations, and participatory activities that connect the past with contemporary life (Karpova, 2014).

Heritage tourism also emphasizes authenticity, continuity, and identity. Tourists seek experiences that reflect the genuine culture of the destination rather than commodified reproductions. The physical elements of the site, such as architecture, urban landscape, and archaeological remains, play a crucial role in establishing a sense of place and authenticity (Nassar et al., 2024). Local communities are often integral to preserving and interpreting these heritage sites, ensuring that their intangible values remain embedded in the tourism experience (Nassar et al., 2024).

Furthermore, historical and heritage tourism has significant socio-economic and cultural potential. Beyond entertainment, it contributes to community development, cultural preservation, and strengthening local identity. In many developing regions, heritage tourism has become a rapidly growing sector, attracting visitors through its distinctive historical and cultural appeal (Wondirad & Tolkach, 2024). However, this growth also poses sustainability challenges, such as the risk of cultural commodification, site degradation, and loss of local authenticity (Wondirad & Tolkach, 2024).

*“Candi Brahu ini tidak hanya tempat peninggalan sejarah, tetapi juga tempat spiritual bagi warga sekitar. Setiap batu dan ukiran punya makna, dan kami sebagai juru kunci menjaga agar pengunjung memahami nilai itu, bukan hanya datang untuk berfoto.” (A1).*

The statement by Informant A1, the caretaker of Candi Brahu, illustrates the community's deep commitment to preserving both the tangible and intangible values of the site. His emphasis on the spiritual and symbolic meaning of every element reflects the essence of heritage tourism, which goes beyond visual appreciation to include emotional and cultural understanding. This perspective reinforces that successful heritage tourism should not merely focus on economic benefits or visitor numbers but should foster awareness, respect, and education about the site's historical and cultural significance.

### **Supporting Facilities at Candi Brahu**

The supporting facilities at Candi Brahu have been developed quite well to accommodate the needs of visitors and enhance their overall experience. One of the key facilities available at the site is the gazebo area, which serves as a resting place for tourists. These gazebos are strategically placed around the temple complex, allowing visitors to relax while enjoying the peaceful atmosphere and the surrounding historical landscape. The presence of these shaded resting spots adds comfort for both local and international tourists who often spend time exploring the temple grounds.

In addition to resting facilities, the management of Candi Brahu has also provided trash bins in several areas within the complex. This facility plays an important role in maintaining the cleanliness and sustainability of the site, encouraging visitors to dispose of their waste properly. Regular cleaning by local caretakers ensures that the temple environment remains neat and welcoming. Such attention to cleanliness reflects the community's awareness of environmental preservation as part of heritage tourism management.

Candi Brahu also offers tour guide services that provide informative explanations about the temple's history, architectural structure, and religious background. These guides are usually local residents who have received training or possess traditional knowledge about the temple's heritage. Their presence not only helps visitors understand the historical significance of the site but also supports local community empowerment through tourism-based livelihoods.



**Figure 3.** Gaazebo Area's of Brahu Temple

**Source:** Documentation Researcher, 2025

Furthermore, visitors can find educational information boards around the temple area, displaying details about the historical background, restoration process, and cultural values associated with Candi Brahu. These visual explanations make it easier for tourists, students, and researchers to comprehend the temple's importance as part of the Majapahit legacy. The integration of resting facilities, cleanliness management, guided tours, and educational information reflects that the facilities at Candi Brahu are already well-organized, combining cultural preservation with educational and environmental awareness.

### **Discussion**

Candi Brahu stands as one of the most significant religious and cultural heritages from the Majapahit Kingdom, showcasing strong Buddhist characteristics. The temple's architecture, built predominantly from red bricks, presents a simple yet harmonious design that reflects the essence of Buddhist spirituality. The absence of ornate carvings or depictions of Hindu deities emphasizes its Buddhist identity, while the stupa-like structure symbolizes enlightenment and purity. These features collectively indicate that Candi Brahu was constructed as a sacred place for Buddhist worship and reflection.

Over time, Candi Brahu has continued to serve as a place for spiritual and cultural activities. The temple is not merely a historical monument but an active religious site where Buddhist rituals such as Vesak and Asadha are still conducted by the local community. This continuation of religious practices demonstrates the living nature of the site, where ancient traditions coexist with modern expressions of faith. The temple thus represents a bridge between the past and the present, showing how cultural heritage can remain meaningful in contemporary society.

The spatial layout of Candi Brahu also reflects its sacred function. The temple's westward orientation, central chamber, and open courtyard were designed to support meditation, prayer, and communal worship. The layout allows visitors to experience a sense of tranquility and spiritual connection while engaging with the temple's symbolic structure. Its surroundings, consisting of open landscapes and preserved natural elements, enhance the sacred atmosphere and offer a serene environment for reflection and devotion.

The community around Candi Brahu plays an important role in maintaining its sanctity and cultural significance. Local caretakers and residents are actively involved in the preservation of the site, ensuring that both its physical condition and spiritual values are sustained. Their

continuous involvement not only protects the temple from environmental degradation but also strengthens the sense of belonging and cultural identity among the people of Trowulan.

Overall, the religious and cultural characteristics of Candi Brahu highlight the harmonious integration of spirituality, tradition, and heritage preservation. The temple stands as a testament to the endurance of Buddhist values within the broader cultural landscape of Majapahit civilization. It embodies both historical memory and living faith, serving as a symbol of Indonesia's rich and diverse cultural identity that continues to inspire reverence, education, and cultural pride.

#### D. CONCLUSION

The identification of heritage and historical tourism characteristics at Candi Brahu reveals the temple's dual role as both a religious and cultural landmark. Its Buddhist architectural features and spiritual practices demonstrate the continuity of sacred traditions from the Majapahit era to the present day. The temple functions not merely as an archaeological relic but as a living site of worship and reflection, where historical narratives and cultural identities are preserved through ritual and collective memory.

The findings further show that Candi Brahu embodies the essential traits of heritage tourism authenticity, education, and cultural sustainability. The temple's management, supported by local communities, provides guided tours, educational information boards, and supporting facilities that enhance visitor experience while maintaining environmental and cultural integrity. This synergy between preservation and tourism development ensures that the site continues to offer both intellectual enrichment and spiritual inspiration.

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