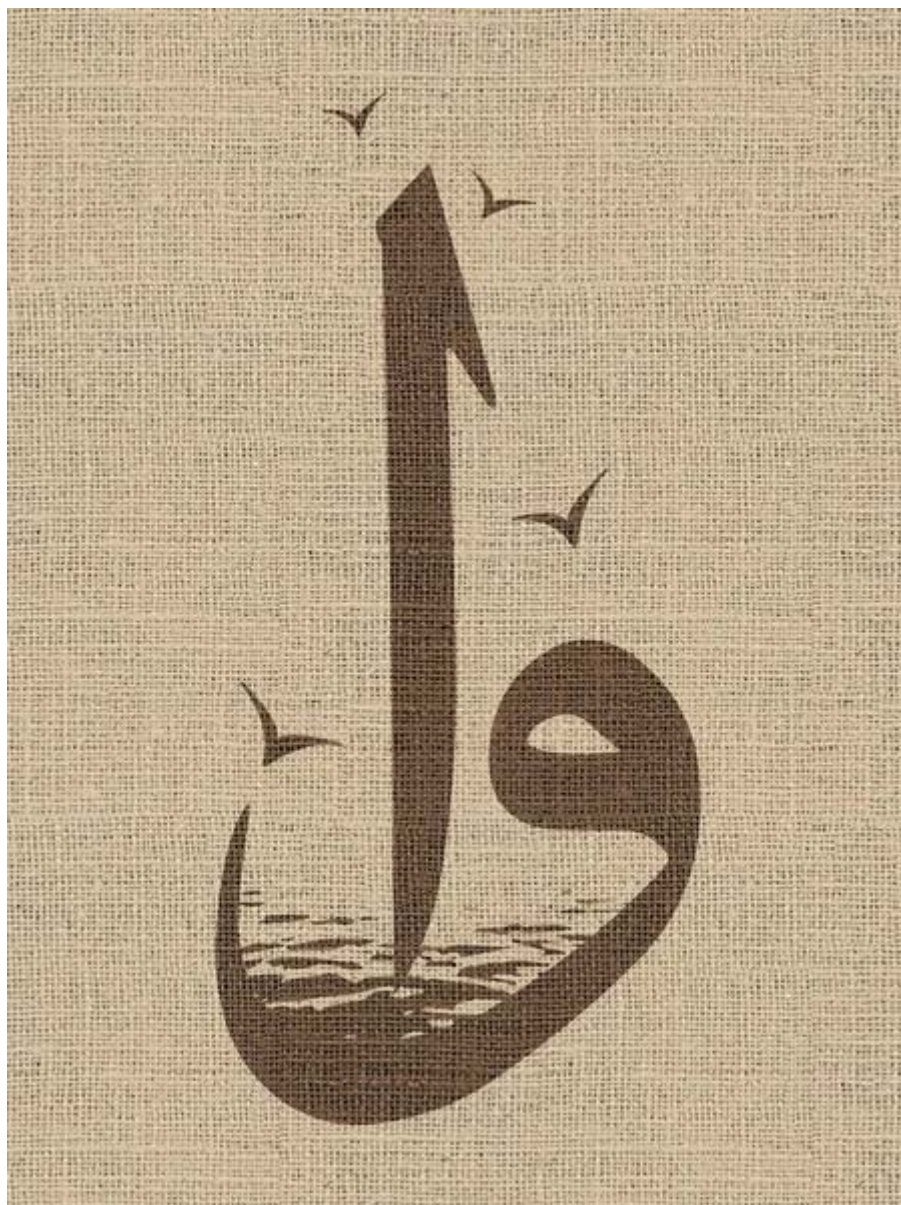


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Zamzam Water as an Added Value for Hajj and Umrah Experience: From A Medical Tourism Perspective

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Abstract

This study examines Zamzam water as an integral component that enhances the Hajj and Umrah experience, particularly from a medical tourism perspective. By adopting an interdisciplinary lens, the paper explores the sacred and therapeutic roles of Zamzam water through the convergence of Islamic theology, scientific inquiry, and behavioural analysis. Framed within the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the research investigates how pilgrims' health-related intentions and spiritual motivations contribute to their engagement with Zamzam water during pilgrimage. The study incorporates recent scientific findings that support its mineral and antimicrobial properties and proposes an empirical framework for collecting qualitative and quantitative data from pilgrims. Moreover, Personal observation is a key method within qualitative research and an important component of an empirical framework. The study further discusses how the integration of Zamzam into pilgrimage narratives offers unique opportunities for health-oriented religious tourism, experience design, and destination branding in Makkah.

Keywords: Zamzam water, Hajj, Umrah, religious tourism, medical tourism, sacred healing, Theory of Planned Behaviour, pilgrimage experience, Makkah

Introduction: Contextualizing Zamzam Water in Religious Tourism

Zamzam is the name of the sacred well in the city of Makkah that has provided water to billions of Muslim pilgrims over the past four millennia. Deeply entrenched in Islamic theology and prophetic tradition, Zamzam water is believed to possess unique healing and spiritual properties. During Hajj and Umrah, the consumption and ritual use of Zamzam water constitute essential aspects of

pilgrimage experiences. Pilgrims drink, bathe in, and carry Zamzam water back to their home countries as a sacred souvenir of their spiritual journey.

While the spiritual significance of Zamzam has been widely discussed in theological and historical literature, this paper aims to investigate Zamzam water from a broader interdisciplinary perspective incorporating religious, scientific, and tourism-related frameworks. The study explores how Zamzam functions not only as a spiritual symbol but also as a cultural and medicinal element that contributes to the religious tourism experience in Makkah Al-Mukarramah.

To enhance the relevance of this study within the religious tourism field and study further explore how Zamzam contributes to the perceived value and healing potential of pilgrimage experiences. Pilgrimage is a key form of religious tourism, defined by Jafari (2000), and Polus et al. (2022) as a journey to sacred places driven by faith and spiritual motivation. The integration of Zamzam into this journey elevates the religious and emotional intensity of the pilgrimage, allowing for a more personalized and transformative travel experience.

In addition, to reviewing historical and religious narratives, the study develops a more balanced analysis by incorporating recent scientific studies on the chemical composition and health benefits of Zamzam water. The study also proposes a theoretical framework grounded in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Harahap et al. (2024), which helps explain the motivations behind Zamzam water consumption and its implications for enhancing tourist behaviour and destination satisfaction.

Finally, the study proposes a future empirical direction by designing a qualitative survey to gather Muslim tourists' insights on how Zamzam shapes their pilgrimage experiences and perceived health benefits. These insights are necessary for understanding the intersection between spirituality, health, and tourism, and for developing strategic implications for managing and enhancing religious tourism in Makkah.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Religious and Historical Context of Zamzam

Zamzam water is deeply rooted in Islamic history and is associated with Prophets Ibrahim, Ismail, and Muhammad (peace be upon them), as well as Hajira. Its origin story, frequently narrated through hadith and Qur'anic verses (e.g., Q14:37, Q21:30), constructs a rich religious narrative that shapes the spiritual significance of Zamzam within pilgrimage rituals. Pilgrims perform the Sa'i ritual, to

commemorate the story of Hazrat Hajira (alayhi as-salam) search for water between the hills of Safa and Marwa, which is central to the embodied religious experience in Makkah. For the past 4000 years, billions of individuals have consumed water from the Zamzam well. Pilgrims consume and cleanse themselves with Zamzam water during the annual Hajj ceremony. The Qur'an asserts in Q21:30, 'And We have produced from water every living thing; will they not then believe?' Zamzam is an eternal, unique miracle, and countless millions of Muslims have utilized this sacred water throughout history. Zamzam, due to its religious significance, holds a distinctive identity as the holiest and most sacred water in Islamic history, if not in the entire globe. Muslims hold that this water possesses unique therapeutic qualities. The well of Zamzam was hand excavated, and it has a depth of about 30.5 meters and a diameter from 1.08 to 2.66 meters, Boshra et al. (2021). The pilgrims, throughout their stay in Makkah and Madinah, consume Zamzam water and bring it back for their families and friends upon their return. Zamzam water has been scientifically and chemically validated to possess ingredients advantageous for the stomach, liver, intestines, and kidneys. Emoto (2005) asserts that "The quality and purity of Zamzam water are unparalleled by any other water on this planet." This study will commence with the Islamic perspective on life as exemplified by Prophet Muhammad, followed by an examination of the scientific properties of Zamzam water and the advantages of water consumption for pilgrims visiting Makkah. The research will ultimately examine the distinctive characteristics and benefits associated with Zamzam water, as referenced in Islamic tradition.

Zamzam Water in Religious Tourism

Religious tourism is one of the fastest-growing tourism niches, with destinations like Makkah serving millions of visitors annually. According to Bozonelos and Raj (2020, p.1), the act of pilgrimage involves with their "body, mind and soul, with their time, possessions and the temporary sacrifice of all ordinary comforts and conveniences which a person normally enjoys". Its spiritual purity and perceived health benefits elevate the consumption of Zamzam from a routine act to a sacred ritual. Individuals consistently want comfort, quiet, and remedies for ailments, seemingly due to their appreciation for life. Anas bin Malik said that the Messenger of Allah stated, "The progeny of Adam (i.e., humanity) ages, and concurrently, two desires age with them: the affection for wealth and the aspiration for longevity" Al-Bukhari (2003). Individuals endure the hardship of traveling to the most remote locations on Earth to satisfy their existential pursuits or seek solutions. Religious travel

is frequently associated with the pursuit of serenity and solace. It aids in alleviating stress and the pressures of daily life routines. It offers an environment for contemplation, relaxation, and the activation of self-realization. The desire for an improved life, devoid of illness and affliction, contributes to the valid motivations for religious tourism. The Zamzam episode is approaching. It is perfectly suited for this location. The research seeks to examine the assertions that Zamzam water intake serves as a natural remedy and to delineate its therapeutic characteristics. Numerous Muslims travel to Makkah to undertake Umrah and Hajj annually, with the highest influx occurring between the months of Ramadan and Dhu al-Hijjah. Visitors revere Zamzam water as holy and transport it home after their visit. The subject of sacredness and holiness pertains to the essence of humanity since Adam. The pursuit of the sacred, the eternal, the metaphysical, spiritual sustenance, healing energy, and the essence of life are fundamental motivations for pilgrimage, a phenomenon that has persisted throughout human history and religious practices. Numerous pilgrimage places exist worldwide, each associated with distinct beliefs. Jafari (2000: 498) states the following: Religious tourism typically manifests in three forms: as pilgrimages, involving both group and individual visits to sacred sites; as large-scale assemblies commemorating significant religious dates and anniversaries; and as tours of notable religious locations and edifices integrated into a tourist itinerary, irrespective of the tour's timing. Humans have frequently undertaken various religious journeys in their relentless pursuit of the sacred and the attainment of a long-desired condition of tranquillity for the mind and soul. Cousineau (1998) depicts the pilgrim as “a curious soul who traverses uncharted territories, crosses fields, engaging with the earth, driven by a destination and a purposeful heart.” Cousineau (1998) affirms the concept of discovering the sacred by asserting that “any traveller can convert any journey into a pilgrimage with a dedication to uncovering something sacred along the way.”

In destinations like Lourdes (France) or the Ganges (India), sacred waters are integral to tourist experiences, offering parallels to Zamzam. As suggested by Raj and Morpeth (2021), such sacred resources serve both as cultural capital and tourism assets. Similarly, Zamzam water contributes to place branding for Makkah and reinforces the sanctity and attractiveness of the site.

Scientific Perspectives on Zamzam Water

Recent research continues to validate claims about Zamzam’s chemical uniqueness. Nauman et al. (2014) and Khalid et al. (2023) emphasize its rich mineral content, antibacterial properties, and

positive health implications. Laboratory tests reveal high electrical conductivity and resistance to microbial contamination. Al-Zuhair et al. (2021) found potential therapeutic uses in nephrology and gastroenterology, aligning with anecdotal claims of healing.

However, rigorous interdisciplinary analysis remains limited. This paper advocates for further biomedical, chemical, and nutritional research to substantiate the physiological benefits attributed to Zamzam water.

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Pilgrimage Motivation

To frame the pilgrimage behaviour associated with Zamzam consumption, the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Harahap et al. (2024), and Ajzen (1991) is introduced. TPB posits that human behaviour is shaped by three determinants: attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Applied to Zamzam:

- **Attitude:** Pilgrims believe Zamzam heals and purifies, enhancing their motivation to drink and share it.
- **Subjective Norms:** Religious communities and family traditions reinforce the sanctity of Zamzam.
- **Perceived Behavioural Control:** Access to Zamzam at multiple points during Hajj/Umrah facilitates ritual compliance.

Battour and Ismail (2022) and Ibrahim et al. (2021) apply TPB to explore religious tourism motivations, showing that spiritual intention and religious conformity strongly influence tourism-related behaviours. This study extends this framework to the ritual consumption of Zamzam, positioning it as both a behavioural outcome and a reinforcing spiritual act.

Methodology and Empirical Design

The original ethnographic approach remains valuable for capturing the experiential depth and cultural significance of Zamzam water. However, to respond to the call for empirical rigor, this study incorporates a proposed mixed-methods framework combining qualitative and quantitative techniques.

Ethnographic and Secondary Research

The initial phase follows Bernard's (2006) ethnographic methodology, relying on secondary literature and field observations. Islamic texts, historical narratives, and prior tourism studies help situate the religious significance of Zamzam in context.

Proposed Observational Approach

To collect primary data, this study adopts a personal observation methodology, emphasizing the direct witnessing and recording of pilgrim behaviour and interactions with Zamzam water during their pilgrimage to Makkah. Observations will be conducted in naturalistic settings—such as the Grand Mosque, Zamzam distribution points, and relevant transit hubs (e.g., Jeddah and Madinah airports) allowing for an immersive understanding of the role Zamzam plays in the lived religious and emotional experience of pilgrims.

The observational focus will include:

- Pilgrims' motivations for seeking out and consuming Zamzam, inferred through verbal expressions, ritual gestures, and social interactions (e.g., group prayers or shared drinking rituals).
- Perceived health and spiritual effects, as reflected in visible signs of emotional response (e.g., tears, expressions of gratitude or relief) and verbalized testimonies overheard in communal settings.
- Modes and frequency of consumption, including how pilgrims collect, store, and share Zamzam water throughout the pilgrimage.
- Communal and affective behaviour, such as encouraging others to drink Zamzam or engaging in prayer while drinking.
- Indicators of long-term behavioural intentions, such as verbal commitments to return, share Zamzam with family, or recommend the pilgrimage to others.

Discussion: Tourism Implications and Managerial Insights

The integration of Zamzam water into the religious tourism experience in Makkah holds significant implications for both tourism management and destination development. As an intangible cultural asset deeply rooted in Islamic faith, Zamzam represents not only a religious practice but also a unique value proposition for pilgrimage tourism. The study outlines key tourism implications and provides strategic recommendations for stakeholders. The primary link between religion and tourism is evident in pilgrimages, which are journeys driven by religious beliefs and have been significant in most faiths. Zamzam water is primarily associated with the annual Muslim pilgrimage, and its consumption is integral to the pilgrimage rituals. These rituals also extend to the frequent Muslim visits to Makkah for Umrah, which can occur at any time throughout the year. It is inherent to humanity to seek the sacred while embarking on religious trips. This has always been the case and will continue to be. Themes like as emigration and terrestrial exploration are addressed in both the Qur'an and Islamic traditions. (O Humanity, We have fashioned you from male and female and established nations and tribes so that you may recognize one another. Verily, the most esteemed among you in the eyes of God is the most virtuous. Indeed, God is All-Knowing and Well-Acquainted.) Q 49:13. He is the one who rendered the earth manageable for you; so, traverse its terrains and partake of His sustenance, for to Him belongs the Resurrection. Q67:15. (Was not the earth of God sufficiently vast for you to travel therein?) Q4:97. The term 'emigration' in the subsequent hadith clearly implies a type of journey, which can be interpreted as a form of religious tourism. The concept of intention, elaborated upon below, relates to Zamzam water, which is consumed with specific intentions, as will be discussed later. Abu Hafs Omar bin Al-Khattab, may God be pleased with him, reported: I heard the Messenger of God, may God's prayers and peace be upon him, state: "Actions are evaluated based on intentions. Therefore, each individual will be responsible for their intentions. Whoever emigrates for God and His Messenger, their emigration is for God and His Messenger. Whoever emigrates for a worldly gain or to marry a woman, his departure is for the purpose he intended", Al-Bukhari (2003). The Messenger of God (PBUH) stated three unequivocal supplications: the supplication of the downtrodden, the supplication of the traveller, and the supplication of a father for his child, Tirmidhi, (1970) The preceding hadith is intricately connected to religious tourism, as it elucidates its motivations and incentives; the deliberate, systematic movement of humanity on Earth parallels the unwavering, rhythmic motion of the universe and all that Allah has created. He is the creator of the night, the day, the sun, and the moon; all celestial bodies traverse their orbits. Q21:33.

Enhancing the Pilgrim Experience

Zamzam water enhances the emotional and spiritual resonance of the pilgrimage journey. Tourists who consume Zamzam associate their experience with healing, purification, and divine connection, thus increasing the perceived value of their visit. Tour operators and religious institutions can capitalize on this by designing immersive pilgrimage packages that incorporate Zamzam-focused rituals, storytelling sessions, and guided reflections on its spiritual significance.

Health and Wellness Tourism Potential

With growing global interest in health and wellness tourism, the curative narratives surrounding Zamzam offer an opportunity to position Makkah as a destination that caters to spiritual and physical well-being. Marketing strategies can emphasize the water's scientifically studied properties such as high mineral content and antimicrobial resilience without compromising religious reverence. Collaborations with wellness researchers and health professionals can help develop credible wellness offerings centered around Zamzam. One of the most significant advantages experienced by pilgrims visiting the holy shrine is the benefit of Zamzam water, which they consume to receive its blessings and the accompanying supplication. God Almighty created it for the faithful in this revered and delightful location at His holy Mosque. Zamzam water is a miraculous source of blessings, goodness, benefits, immortality, and perpetual flow. Millions have profited from its water in Makkah and the surrounding areas, as well as from the annual pilgrimage and Umrah undertaken by millions of pilgrims each year. Zamzam is not simply a water source; it embodies a profound narrative of faith, attesting to and examining this belief for all who observe it, while honouring the devout woman assured of her Lord's mercy, virtues, and benefits. Hadiths state that Zamzam water is esteemed and sacred. In a hadith authenticated in the Sahih, the Prophet remarked on Zamzam water: "Indeed, it is a blessing, akin to sustenance, as it nourishes and serves as a remedy for ailments" (Muslim). This hadith demonstrates its merits as a nourishing sustenance, a remedy for ailments, and a source of blessings. Bukhari and Muslim both affirm that the Prophet consumed Zamzam water and stated, "It is blessed; it serves as sustenance for the hungry and a remedy for the ill." The Prophet stated, "The water of Zamzam is beneficial for its intended purpose," Ibn Majah, (2007). Ibn Abbas conveyed that the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated, the water of Zamzam is beneficial for any intention one has while consuming it. If one drinks it in pursuit of healing, Allah will grant healing. If one drinks it to alleviate hunger, Allah will fulfil that

hunger. If one drinks it to satisfy thirst, Allah will quench that thirst. Zamzam is a well excavated by the angel Gabriel, through which Allah satisfied the thirst of Isma'il. This was documented by Al-Daraqutni, (2004) who further stated, "If you consume it in pursuit of sanctuary with Allah, Allah will grant you refuge." Ibn Abbas, may God be pleased with him, would pray to Allah each time he consumed Zamzam water. "O Allah! Bestow upon me advantageous knowledge, abundant sustenance, and recovery from all ailments." The Prophet stated: "The finest water on earth is Zamzam water; it serves as nourishment and a remedy for ailments," Muslim, (2006). Sahih Muslim reports that the Prophet addressed Abu Dharr, may God be pleased with him, who had remained near the Kaaba and its coverings for forty days and nights, subsisting solely on Zamzam water. "What is the duration of your presence here?" Abu Dharr, may God be pleased with him, reported: "I have resided here for thirty days and nights." The Prophet inquired, "Who has been providing you sustenance?" He stated, I have consumed solely Zamzam water, and I have gained sufficient weight to develop abdominal folds. I do not experience fatigue or weakness from hunger, nor have I lost weight." The Prophet stated: "Indeed, it is a blessing; it is sustenance that nourishes," Muslim, (2006). Ibn al-Qayyim (1998) stated: My companions and I sought healing through Zamzam water and witnessed remarkable phenomena. I pursued healing from several ailments, and I was cured by the will of Allah. I observed an individual who sustained himself with it for several days, exceeding half a month, without experiencing hunger; he engaged in Tawaaf with others in the same manner. He informed me that he exclusively ingested Zamzam water for forty days, during which he possessed the vigour to engage in sexual relations with his wife, fast, and do Tawaaf multiple times. It was reported that upon drinking from the Zamzam water, Ibn Abbas stated: "O Allah, I beseech You for advantageous knowledge, abundant sustenance, and recovery from all ailments."

Electrical Properties and Impact on Diseases

Nauman et al. (2014:671) assert that Zamzam is distinctive in its inherent properties as it is characterized as "hard carbonated type water." It has been demonstrated that microbial growth is absent in the water from the Zamzam well. They verified (ibid: 671) that Zamzam water offers protection against various ailments, including congenital disorders, nephrogenic issues, and diabetes. This phenomenon was validated using multiple approaches,

including radioimmunoassay, nanotechnology, crystalline electron microscopy, particular refractive index, number of single oscillators, and optical parameters assay.

Zidan Hamdi et al. have introduced the subsequent research at the 16th Scientific Symposium for Hajj, Umrah, and Madinah Visit, Scientific Portal for 1437 AH. The electrical properties of Zamzam water were experimentally analysed at the Electrical Power laboratory at AlJouf University, Saudi Arabia, with the following conclusions: Experimental findings indicate that Zamzam water exhibits higher conductivity than that observed in commercial samples. A sample of Holy Zamzam water from the Haram Mosque exhibits higher conductivity than Zamzam bottled water available in stores. If the voltage-current (V-I) characteristics of any other water sample closely resemble those of Zamzam water, it indicates that the water is potable. If the curve deviates significantly from the Zamzam water curve, it indicates that the water is unfit for consumption.

Muslims always recognize the significance and sanctity of Zamzam water during their Hajj and Umrah rites. The distinctive attributes of Zamzam water have consistently conferred a sense of pride above all other types of water throughout history. Muslims consistently undertake this solemn pilgrimage to Makkah to personally witness its sanctity. We have personally saw and encountered this during my pilgrimage and Umrah journeys, as have many Muslims. Multiple studies have been undertaken to assess the impact of Zamzam water on specific ailments, including cancer and dental caries, as noted by Nauman et al. and Al-Zuhair et al. (2006). Nauman et al. assert that Research encompassing human, plant, and animal studies has demonstrated significant potential advantages of Zamzam in combating numerous human diseases and malignant tumours. The assessment verifies the equilibrium of minerals and nutrients in Zamzam water. Shehadeh, (2001) states the therapeutic properties of Zamzam water are widely recognized, and it is frequently utilized by Muslims to alleviate stomach discomfort, skin diseases, and ocular conditions. Some revered scholars in Makkah utilize Zamzam water as their sole remedy. Repeatedly, we have heard in mosques, during the wudu ablution in preparation for congregational prayers, Muslims express a desire for their wudu to be from Zamzam: “men Zamzam,” which signifies “May you attain wudu using Zamzam water.” The concept of the sanctity and magnificence of Zamzam water is profoundly established in Islamic literature, substantiated by various accounts of individuals having their prayers fulfilled, including requests for healing, well-being, and success in life, among others. Bekdash, (2008) asserts that numerous individuals afflicted with ailments have been divinely favoured by being healed through the sanctity of Zamzam water, from maladies deemed incurable and beyond the

expertise of medical practitioners. I have learned about the subsequent events when perusing the website Islamic Remedies (accessed May, 19, 2025 <http://islamicremedies.webs.com/zamzamhealingwater.htm>)

Yusria Abdel-Rahman Haraz reported being afflicted by an ocular ulcer. It caused her an intense headache that was unresponsive to medication. She was on the verge of losing her sight in the damaged eye. She consulted a renowned physician who recommended an injection to alleviate her headache; however, it would also impair the affected eye, resulting in vision loss in that eye. Mrs. Yusria possessed unwavering confidence in the mercy of Allah. She contemplated undertaking Umrah and implored Allah for her healing. She arrived at Makkah and performed Tawaf; the lack of crowds allowed her to spend an extended period near the Zamzam water. She cleansed her eyes. Upon her return to the hotel, she discovered that her afflicted eyes were healed, and the ulcer had vanished. This event serves as confirmation of the Hadith stating, "Zamzam water fulfils the purpose for which it is consumed; if one drinks it for healing, Allah grants healing; if for satiety, Allah provides satisfaction; and if for thirst, Allah quenches thirst" Al-Daraqutni, (2004). Numerous incidents substantiate the veracity of the Prophet's assertions regarding the sacred essence of Zamzam water. Dr. Farooque Antar narrates his own account. He states that a stone in his ureter had impacted him, and the physician was unable to remove or eliminate it without surgical intervention. However, he deferred the procedure on two occasions. In the meantime, he undertook Umrah and implored Allah for healing without the necessity of surgery. He consumed Zamzam water and performed two Rakaats of prayer. He experienced discomfort in his ureter and rushed to urinate, ultimately expelling the stone and achieving relief without the need for surgical intervention. The physicians attending to Dr. Farooque were astonished by this. A man from Yemen enjoyed reading the Qur'an from a little Mushaf. As he aged, he discovered that he could no longer read the Qur'an readily from that book due to deteriorating eyesight. He learned about the water of Zamzam and its efficacy in achieving the intended purpose for which it is consumed. He performed Hajj and consumed Zamzam water. He commenced reading from that little Mushaf of the Qur'an effortlessly and without any visual impairments. He attained his desires due to his confidence and belief in the Prophet's teachings. The water of Zamzam serves the intended purpose for which it is consumed. He possessed unwavering confidence and profound faith in the Qur'anic verse wherein Allah states, "When My servants inquire about Me, I am indeed near; I respond to the supplicant's prayer when he calls upon Me; therefore, they should respond to My call and have faith in Me so that they may

follow the righteous path.” Question 2:186. Malti-Douglas (2001) recounts an incident of a woman who was cured of cancer by consuming the holy water of Zamzam. The episode in Mecca is framed inside a complex intertextual theological discourse that Leïla enhances with verses from the Qur'an and citations from the hadith, among other sources (ibid.:99). The religious aspect coexists with the corporeal, both delineating and augmenting it. The discussion over the Deity encompasses this matter. Upon entering the sacred realm of Mecca, Leïla implores God: “I have approached you, O Supreme and Omnipotent Healer.” She elaborates on her affliction, a perilous cancer, which has rendered physicians ineffective, and she earnestly requests divine intervention for her healing. This explicit invocation of the supreme religious authority connects the Deity directly to the realm of medicine. The physicality in Mecca initially manifests alongside the spiritually. This essential combination of corporeality and spirituality is perpetually reinforced. Leïla adheres to a regimen consisting solely of bread, an egg, and Zamzam water. This austere regimen simultaneously emphasizes both the corporeal and the spiritual aspects. Leïla is hardly solitary in her endeavour to curtail her dietary cravings while engaging in the religious ritual. It is not coincidental that the spiritual and the corporeal are both integral components of Leïla's discourse in Makkah, a fact that becomes evident on the fifth day of the regimen. On this day, Leïla perceives a formidable force compelling her to examine the lumps on her body; yet, she disregards this need and resumes drinking the water of Zamzam. Consuming is inherently a physical activity; but, partaking of the holy water of Zamzam transcends mere corporeality, encompassing a spiritual dimension as well. The study examines the domain of the sacred and its connection to the lives of individuals across all religions, with particular emphasis on the use of Zamzam water by Muslims for healing purposes.

Interpretive Infrastructure and Education

Pilgrims often interact with Zamzam in practical ways (drinking, washing, carrying it home) without fully understanding its historical or scientific background. Enhancing interpretive infrastructure at Zamzam distribution points via multilingual digital displays, mobile apps, or virtual reality (VR) experiences can foster deeper engagement and increase satisfaction. Educational materials could bridge spiritual beliefs with empirical findings, creating a more holistic and enriching tourist experience.

Policy and Sustainability Considerations

Given the high demand for Zamzam water during peak pilgrimage seasons, its management must balance religious accessibility with sustainability. Authorities could implement smart water dispensing systems, encourage responsible consumption, and regulate souvenir volumes to prevent misuse. Sustainable management of Zamzam contributes not only to environmental conservation but also to long-term destination reputation.

Destination Branding and Competitive Advantage

Zamzam water provides Makkah with a competitive edge in the global religious tourism market. It differentiates the city through a unique offering that cannot be replicated elsewhere. Promoting Zamzam as part of a broader narrative about sacredness, healing, and community fosters emotional loyalty among pilgrims and encourages repeat visitation.

Conclusion: Integrating Sacred Heritage with Contemporary Tourism Practices

Zamzam water, with its sacred origin, enduring religious symbolism, and reputed healing properties, occupies a central place in the Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah. While deeply rooted in Islamic tradition, this paper has expanded the scope of discussion to incorporate scientific research, behavioural theory, and tourism management perspectives. By grounding the study in the Theory of Planned Behaviour, we have identified the motivational and cultural drivers that influence Zamzam consumption, bridging religious intention with structured behavioural analysis.

The inclusion of recent scientific findings validates several claims about the chemical and health-related uniqueness of Zamzam, offering potential pathways for further interdisciplinary research. More importantly, by proposing an empirical framework that includes surveys and qualitative interviews, the study lays a foundation for future data-driven explorations of pilgrim perceptions and behaviours.

Touristically, Zamzam serves as a cornerstone of religious experience and a powerful tool for destination branding. Strategic management of Zamzam-related activities ranging from infrastructure and education to sustainability and health tourism integration can significantly enhance both visitor satisfaction and long-term spiritual engagement.

Ultimately, this study positions Zamzam not only as a divine legacy but also as an experiential touchstone capable of enriching religious tourism in Makkah. A continued interdisciplinary and empirical focus will allow scholars and policymakers alike to deepen our understanding of how sacred heritage can shape meaningful and transformative travel in the 21st century.

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A Total Quality Management Approach to Enhance Halal Kitchen Standards: Study Case in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia

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Abstract

Indonesia, home to the world's largest Muslim population, has a strong foundation to lead in halal tourism. Lombok, located in West Nusa Tenggara, stands out as a flagship destination in this sector. It gained global recognition in 2015, being awarded both the World's Best Halal Honeymoon Destination and the World's Best Halal Tourism Destination. However, challenges remain in maintaining standardised, high-quality halal kitchen practices across hospitality establishments. This study adopts a Total Quality Management (TQM) framework to improve halal kitchen operations in Lombok. It aims to identify operational gaps, map the root causes of non-compliance, and develop an integrative improvement model. A qualitative approach was employed, using in-depth interviews and observations conducted in selected halal-certified hotels and culinary establishments. Thematic analysis was supported by visual tools. A fishbone diagram identified root causes across manpower, material handling, methods, and management systems, while a mind map was created to present innovative improvement strategies. Findings reveal that the integration of TQM principles significantly enhances hygiene, documentation, staff competence, and customer confidence in halal culinary services. The study offers a practical framework to guide hospitality practitioners and policymakers in improving halal kitchen standards and strengthening the global competitiveness of Indonesia's halal tourism sector.

Keywords: Halal Kitchen, Total Quality Management, Lombok, Halal Tourism, Hospitality Standard

Introduction

The halal food market represents a critical and rapidly expanding segment of the global economy, catering to the dietary and ethical preferences of over 1.9 billion Muslims worldwide (The Business Research Company, 2025). In addition, it increasingly attracts non-Muslim consumers who prioritise sustainability, ethical sourcing, and high-quality food practices (Ahmed et al., 2024). Halal kitchens, as pivotal nodes in this value chain, must adhere to stringent Islamic dietary laws, such as avoiding cross-contamination with non-halal substances and ensuring ethical slaughter practices. Beyond religious compliance, these kitchens are also expected to meet universal quality standards in areas such as food safety, hygiene, and customer satisfaction. This dual compliance requirement often creates operational complexities, particularly in multicultural and globalised settings.

The economic significance of halal kitchens is underscored by the rapid growth of the halal food industry, whose market value exceeded \$2 trillion globally in 2023 and is projected to grow at an annual rate of 6% (The Business Research Company, 2025). This growth reflects the increasing purchasing power of Muslim consumers in regions such as Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, alongside growing interest from non-Muslim markets (Wilson & Liu, 2011). Halal kitchens serve as the cornerstone of this value chain, translating halal principles into culinary products that meet diverse consumer expectations. As the sector's economic potential continues to expand, robust operational frameworks are essential to support sustained growth and foster consumer trust.

Lombok Island, part of the West Nusa Tenggara Province in Indonesia, is recognised for its potential as a leading halal tourism destination. This was notably acknowledged in 2015, when the World Halal Travel Summit awarded Lombok two prestigious titles: the World's Best Halal Tourism Destination and the World's Best Halal Honeymoon Destination. The development of halal culinary businesses is a key component of this initiative, aiming to serve both domestic and international Muslim tourists. However, the growth of the halal culinary sector in Lombok remains suboptimal. Several challenges hinder progress, including inadequate planning and poor coordination between culinary entrepreneurs and governmental bodies. Effective scenario planning is therefore essential to address these issues and to prepare for future developments in the halal culinary sector (Risipwati et al., 2019).

A critical element in overcoming these challenges is the implementation of halal kitchens. Halal kitchens are designed to comply with Islamic dietary laws, ensuring that food is prepared and served according to halal standards. This involves adhering to specific guidelines for ingredient sourcing,

food preparation, and kitchen management to prevent contamination with non-halal substances. Demand for halal kitchens is growing globally, driven by the rising Muslim population and the increasing popularity of halal-certified products. These kitchens operate within a complex regulatory landscape, where compliance with Islamic dietary laws must align with international food safety standards such as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and ISO 22000. Scholars such as Tieman and Ghazali (2014) emphasise that integrating halal certification with these global systems can streamline operations and minimise redundancies. Total Quality Management (TQM), a proven framework for continuous improvement, customer satisfaction, and organisational excellence, offers a strategic approach to harmonise these dual frameworks enhancing consistency, quality, and efficiency in halal kitchen operations.

Despite Lombok's potential, halal kitchens face significant challenges in maintaining halal integrity across diverse supply chains. Variability in halal certification standards between countries and limited traceability within global food systems pose serious compliance risks (Ahmadiyah et al., 2021; Ahmed et al., 2024). A TQM-driven approach emphasising supplier collaboration and transparent auditing can help mitigate these risks. For example, blockchain technology has emerged as a promising tool for enhancing supply chain transparency and ensuring halal integrity (Sabir et al., 2021). These innovations not only strengthen compliance but also build consumer trust.

Customer trust in halal certification plays a pivotal role in the industry's success. Studies by Bazin et al. (2024) indicate that consumer perceptions of authenticity and quality significantly influence purchasing behaviour. By adopting TQM principles, halal kitchens can prioritise customer feedback, implement continuous improvement cycles, and reinforce confidence in halal certification systems. These efforts align with the broader aim of fostering customer loyalty in an increasingly competitive market, where demand for halal food continues to grow.

The human resources component of halal kitchens is equally vital in upholding standards. Effective staff training programmes, grounded in TQM principles, ensure that employees understand and implement halal requirements alongside quality management practices (Haris & Nashirudin, 2019). Furthermore, cultivating an organisational culture of accountability and continuous improvement empowers staff to maintain standards and innovate within the halal framework. A well-trained workforce contributes significantly to operational consistency and excellence.

Integrating halal principles with modern culinary trends also presents opportunities for market differentiation. Innovative menu development incorporating local flavours while maintaining halal compliance—can attract a broader customer base. TQM’s focus on customer needs and process optimisation supports such innovation, enabling halal kitchens to balance tradition with creativity. As Rusmiati (2024) suggests, halal cuisine has the potential to act as a platform for cultural exchange and global culinary tourism, further solidifying its relevance in the international marketplace.

The halal kitchens play a vital role in meeting the dietary needs of Muslim consumers by adhering to stringent halal standards. The successful implementation of Halal Assurance Systems, effective Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and strategic business practices is essential to maintaining compliance and achieving success in the halal food industry (Satria et al., 2022; Sucipto et al., 2020). As demand for halal products continues to rise, the sector presents ample opportunities for innovation and expansion (Ahmed et al., 2024; Ahmadiyah et al., 2021).

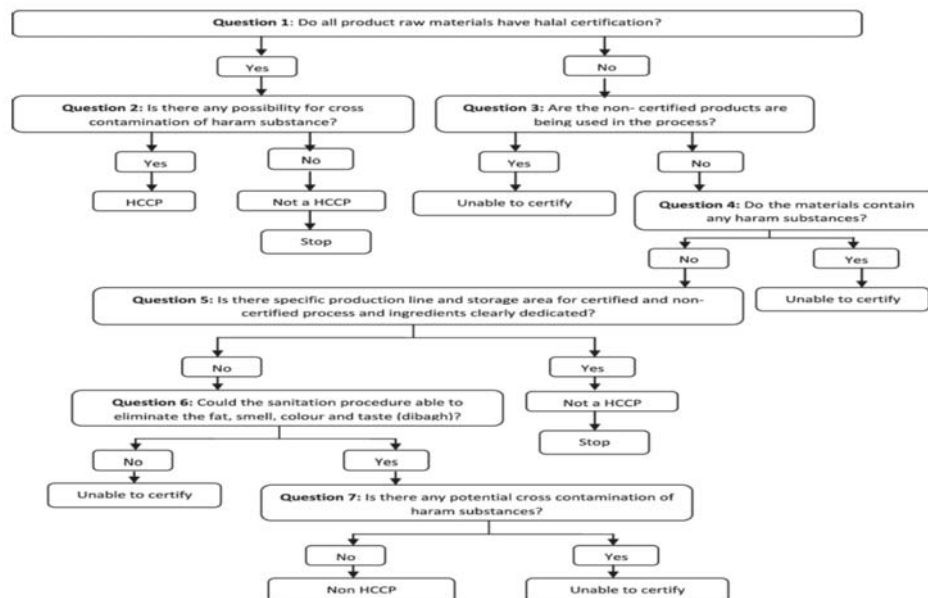
This research explores the application of TQM principles in halal kitchens, focusing on their potential to harmonise religious compliance with quality-driven culinary practices. By addressing operational inefficiencies, enhancing compliance with halal standards, and fostering innovation, TQM offers a strategic pathway to elevate the overall dining experience. The study seeks to answer key questions surrounding operational efficiency, challenges, and opportunities in integrating TQM into halal kitchens, contributing valuable insights to this dynamic and evolving industry.

Literature review

Halal Kitchen Concepts and Standards

Halal kitchens operate under strict guidelines encompassing ingredient sourcing, preparation methods, and hygiene standards. Studies by Prawiro and Fathudin (2023) emphasise that halal certification extends beyond food, encompassing ethical sourcing and environmental sustainability. These standards ensure compliance with Islamic dietary laws while also meeting the growing demand for ethically produced food. However, the global standardisation of halal certification remains a challenge due to variations in interpretation among certifying bodies (Janah & Adinugraha, 2022). Addressing this inconsistency is crucial to maintaining consumer trust and ensuring operational efficiency. One of the measurement frameworks used in Halal Critical Control Point (HCCP) is illustrated in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Halal Critical Control Point Flow Chart



Source: Prihanto, (2020)

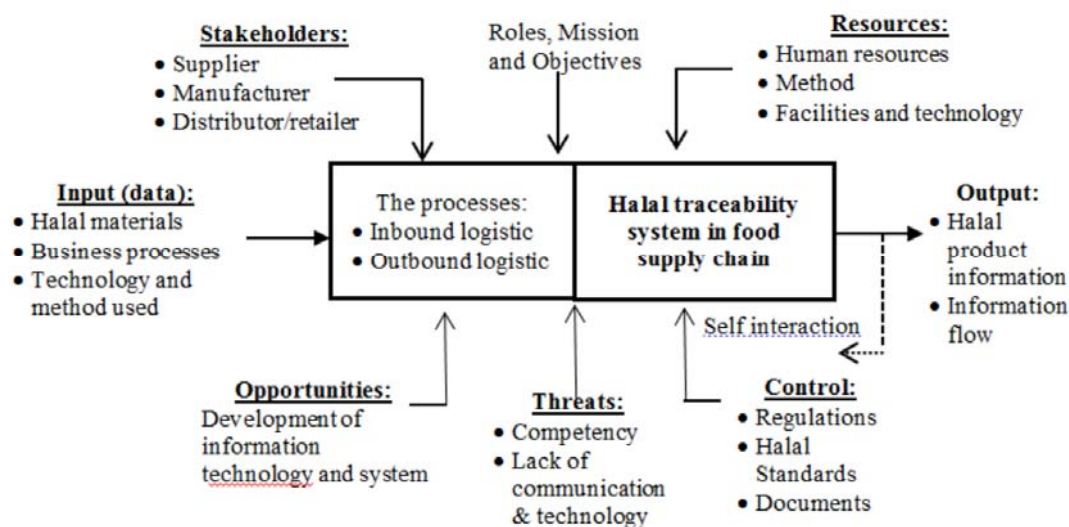
The systematic evaluation of food safety certification processes, particularly within halal-certified production environments, highlights the complex interplay between religious requirements and modern food safety protocols. The decision-making framework illustrated in the flowchart demonstrates a sophisticated, multi-layered approach to ensuring both product integrity and regulatory compliance. This comprehensive system begins with a fundamental assessment of raw material certification and advances through several critical control points, including cross-contamination risks, production space segregation, and sanitation effectiveness.

At the core of this framework is the integration of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles, which serve as a pivotal determinant in the certification process. This highlights the industry's emphasis on preventive, rather than reactive, measures in food safety management. The flowchart's structure underscores the importance of systematic validation procedures, particularly in facilities where both halal and non-halal products may coexist. It reflects the food industry's evolution towards more integrated certification systems that address both religious and safety requirements.

This integration mirrors the increasing complexity of modern food production, where traditional food safety concerns must be balanced with consumer demand for religious compliance. The sequential nature of the decision-making process, supported by multiple verification points, illustrates the rigorous approach needed to maintain halal certification while ensuring overall product safety.

Such a comprehensive approach to certification and safety management marks a significant advancement in food safety protocols, especially in environments handling products with specific religious considerations. It demonstrates the industry's commitment to upholding high standards in an increasingly globalised market. Insights by Kusri (2021) indicate that the halal food industry has experienced substantial growth, with the global market expected to reach approximately USD 4.18 trillion by 2028, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10.8% from 2023 to 2028.

Figure 2: Halal Traceability System in Food Supply Chain



Source: Usman et al, (2018)

Moreover, the rise of globalised markets demands robust traceability systems for halal kitchens, necessitating the incorporation of advanced technologies to enhance compliance and operational monitoring. Blockchain technology, for instance, has been proposed as a means of ensuring traceability and transparency within halal food supply chains (Usman et al., 2018). Figure 2 illustrates a comprehensive framework for halal food traceability, demonstrating how technological integration not only improves compliance but also enhances consumer confidence through verifiable data on sourcing and handling processes.

The figure 2 outlines a holistic approach to halal traceability in the food supply chain, encompassing key stakeholders (such as suppliers, manufacturers, and distributors), essential inputs (including halal materials, business processes, and technological methods), and critical processes (such as inbound and outbound logistics). Of particular importance is the framework's identification of both opportunities and threats: the development of information technology systems presents opportunities for enhancement, while competency gaps and communication challenges pose potential threats to system integrity.

The framework is further strengthened by robust control mechanisms, including regulations, halal standards, and documentation requirements, which create a self-interacting feedback loop for continuous improvement. This systematic integration of stakeholder involvement, resource allocation, and control measures reflects the evolution of halal certification from a solely religious requirement into a comprehensive quality assurance system. The output components focused on halal product information and the flow of information demonstrate the system's commitment to transparency and traceability across the entire supply chain.

This modernised approach to halal traceability represents a significant advancement in religious food certification. It effectively addresses the complex demands of global food supply chains while maintaining strict adherence to religious requirements. The framework's emphasis on technological integration and systematic monitoring aligns with contemporary food safety protocols, preserving the integrity of halal certification and establishing a robust system capable of meeting both religious and commercial demands within the modern food industry.

Total Quality Management (TQM)

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management philosophy focused on achieving customer satisfaction through continuous improvement (Deming, 1986). It emphasises a systematic approach involving employee training, process optimisation, and performance monitoring. Rooted in principles of customer-centricity, TQM fosters a culture of excellence that enhances operational efficiency and product quality (Juran, 1988).

The applicability of TQM extends across industries, with its integration in food services offering notable benefits. As noted by Semić et al. (2023), TQM implementation in food operations enhances consistency, reduces waste, and ensures compliance with safety standards. These principles are

particularly relevant for halal kitchens, where stringent compliance with both religious and global standards is paramount.

In addition to process optimisation, TQM emphasises the role of leadership and employee engagement. Studies by Karim et al. (2020) and Perdana (2020) highlight that effective leadership fosters a culture of accountability, while continuous training ensures employees are equipped to uphold quality standards. This dual focus on human and procedural elements makes TQM a comprehensive framework for operational excellence in halal kitchens.

TQM in Halal Food Operations

Existing research by Semić et al. (2023) highlights the potential of TQM in halal food manufacturing but lacks detailed exploration of its application within kitchen settings. This study bridges the gap by focusing on halal-certified kitchens, where operational complexity is heightened by the need for real-time compliance with diverse quality standards while maintaining religious integrity throughout the production process.

Research by Karim (2020) and more recent studies from Semić et al. (2023) underscore the effectiveness of TQM in aligning halal food operations with international standards such as HACCP and ISO 22000. The integration of these frameworks within halal kitchens can streamline processes, minimise redundancies, and enhance compliance through systematic quality control measures. However, the lack of standardized TQM models tailored specifically for halal operations remains a limitation warranting further investigation, particularly in light of emerging technological capabilities and evolving consumer expectations (Perdana, 2020).

Furthermore, customer feedback mechanisms, a key component of TQM, play a pivotal role in the continuous improvement cycles of halal kitchens. By systematically gathering and analysing feedback through digital platforms and advanced analytics, businesses can identify areas for improvement, tailor their offerings to meet consumer needs, and enhance overall satisfaction (Sucipto et al., 2021). This approach not only improves service quality but also reinforces trust in halal certification systems, ensuring sustained consumer loyalty in an increasingly competitive market. Recent studies by Semić et al. (2023) demonstrate that organisations implementing comprehensive TQM frameworks in halal operations experience significantly higher customer

satisfaction rates and improved operational efficiency, particularly when integrated with modern quality management tools and digital monitoring systems.

The integration of TQM principles with halal requirements has evolved beyond basic compliance to become a strategic advantage in the global halal food market (Usman et al., 2018; Rusmiati, 2024). This evolution reflects the industry's growing recognition of the need for systematic quality management approaches that address both religious requirements and contemporary food safety standards while maintaining operational efficiency (Rusmiati, 2024).

Method

A qualitative approach was adopted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the operational dynamics and challenges within the halal kitchen discourse in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. Following the perspective of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (1994), this approach emphasises exploring phenomena in their natural settings, enabling researchers to capture detailed and contextual insights. Qualitative research is particularly suited for understanding complex processes, such as the integration of Total Quality Management (TQM) into halal kitchen operations, as it prioritises depth of understanding over generalisability.

Data collection in this study utilised three primary qualitative methods to ensure triangulation and enrich the data:

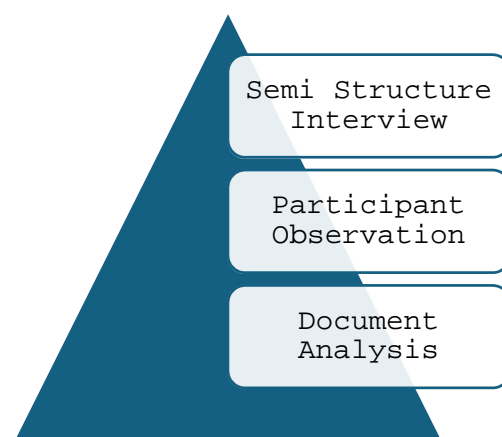


Figure 3: Triangulation Process

Source: Miles & Huberman, (1994)

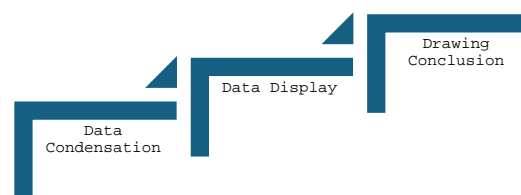
Fifteen participants, mainly domiciled in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, were interviewed, including chefs, kitchen managers, and representatives from halal certification bodies in the Republic of Indonesia. This method allowed for flexibility, enabling participants to elaborate on their experiences while ensuring that key topics—such as compliance challenges, quality assurance practices, and the role of TQM—were consistently addressed. The semi-structured format aligned with Miles and Huberman’s (1994) emphasis on iterative data collection, allowing the researcher to refine questions based on emerging themes.

Observations were conducted in three halal-certified kitchens to document real-time workflow, quality assurance practices, and adherence to halal and TQM standards. This immersive method provided a nuanced understanding of operational practices and challenges, offering data that complemented the self-reported information from interviews. Following Miles and Huberman (1994), observational notes were systematically coded and analysed to identify recurring patterns.

A thorough review of halal certification guidelines, operational manuals, and quality assurance policies was conducted. This method provided an additional layer of data to corroborate findings from interviews and observations. By analysing these documents, the study captured the formalised standards and procedures underpinning halal and TQM compliance.

Data was analysed using thematic analysis, guided by the principles of Miles and Huberman (1994). This involved the following steps:

Figure 4: Thematic Principles Approach



Source: Miles et al, (1994)

1. **Data condensation:** Initial codes were generated from transcripts, observation notes, and documents, focusing on themes such as compliance, workflow efficiency, and customer satisfaction.
2. **Data display:** Emerging themes were visualised through matrices and charts to identify relationships and contrasts, facilitating an iterative refinement of the analysis.
3. **Drawing conclusions:** Patterns were synthesised into overarching themes that addressed the research questions, ensuring a robust interpretation grounded in the data.

The study employs Deming's Total Quality Management (TQM) philosophy as the analytical framework to interpret the findings. Deming's principles, emphasising continuous improvement, customer satisfaction, and process optimisation, provide a structured lens through which to evaluate how halal kitchens manage dual compliance with halal standards and global quality expectations. For instance:

Figure 3. Structure of TQM

Continous Improvement	Customer Satisfaction	Process Optimalization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Data were analyzed for practices that exemplified iterative enhancements in workflow and compliance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Insights from interviews and observations were used to assess how halal kitchens integrate feedback to build trust and meet consumer expectations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Observational data and operational manuals were examined to evaluate how TQM principles are implemented to streamline processes and minimize inefficiencies.

Source: Deming, (1986)

Table 1. Respondent Data

Respondent's ID	Role	Year of Experience	Type of Establishment	Key area of expertise
R1	Executive Chef	15	Halal-certified fine dining	Menu innovation and quality control
R2	Kitchen Manager	10	Halal-certified catering	Workflow optimization
R3	Certification Officer	8	Majelis Ulama Indonesia, the halal certification bodies in Indonesia	Compliance and auditing processes
R4	Sous Chef	7	Halal-certified hotel kitchen	Staff training and development
R5	Quality Assurance Manager	12	Halal food production facility	HACCP and TQM integration
R6	Restaurant Owner	9	Halal fast-casual dining	Customer engagement and feedback
R7	Line Cook	5	Halal-certified casual dining	Food preparation and hygiene
R8	Supplier Representative	6	Halal-certified food supply	Supply chain management
R9	Halal Auditor	10	Halal certification agency	Standards compliance evaluation
R10	Pastry Chef	8	Halal bakery	Innovation in halal desserts
R11	Customer Relations Officer	4	Halal dining services	Customer trust and satisfaction
R12	Operations Manager	11	Halal-certified food chain	Multi-branch quality consistency
R13	Food Technologist	9	Research and development	Ingredient analysis and sourcing
R14	General Manager	13	Halal-certified luxury hotel	Strategic management and branding
R15	Supply Chain Analyst	6	Halal logistics and distribution	Blockchain traceability systems

Source: Author, (2024)

Result analysis

Implementation Of TQM Principles

The findings triangulated from respondents R1–R15 highlight the multifaceted impact of TQM implementation in halal kitchens, emphasising the interconnected pillars of employee training, process optimisation, and customer focus. Participants consistently stressed the foundational importance of employee training in maintaining both halal compliance and quality standards. For instance, R1, an executive chef, described how empowering employees with comprehensive knowledge of halal principles and quality protocols fosters a proactive and innovative workforce. This perspective aligns with Deming's (1986) assertion that workforce development is essential for sustained quality improvement and is further supported by Ab. Talib et al. (2015), who highlight the critical role of employee competency in halal certification implementation. Likewise, R5 and R10 emphasised that structured training programmes are vital in equipping staff with the skills necessary to manage cross-contamination risks and uphold hygiene standards, reinforcing findings by Ris pawati et al. (2020) and Amalia et al. (2021) regarding training's role in organisational accountability and supply chain integrity.

Process optimisation, the second pillar, emerged as a critical area for integrating TQM principles with halal compliance. Respondents R3 and R9, both involved in halal certification, highlighted the challenges posed by complex supply chains and variability in halal certification standards across regions. They advocated for blockchain technology and digital traceability tools as key solutions for ensuring ingredient integrity and compliance, echoing insights from Perdana (2020) and Ahmadiyah et al. (2021) on the transformative potential of technology in halal supply chains. Furthermore, R8, a supplier representative, noted that collaborative supplier audits aligned with ISO 22000 and HACCP frameworks could streamline operations, minimise redundancies, and enhance overall efficiency. This observation aligns with Soon et al.'s (2017) comprehensive analysis of halal integrity in food supply chains and Vanany et al.'s (2024) evaluation of barriers in halal certification adoption.

The final pillar, customer focus, emerged as pivotal in building trust and sustaining market competitiveness. Respondents such as R6 and R11 pointed out that customer feedback mechanisms, including surveys and real-time reviews, are instrumental in understanding evolving consumer expectations, reflecting findings from Vanany et al. (2024) on Muslim consumers' awareness and perceptions. R12, an operations manager, shared how this feedback informs menu development and service enhancements, enabling businesses to innovate while remaining within halal boundaries.

These observations resonate with studies by Soon et al. (2017) and Vanany et al. (2019), which underscore the influence of perceived authenticity and quality on purchasing behaviour and manufacturer intentions. By systematically incorporating customer insights into continuous improvement processes, halal kitchens not only strengthen trust but also foster loyalty, reflecting Deming's (1986) emphasis on customer satisfaction as a core measure of quality and the comprehensive reviews by Vanany et al. (2019; 2024) of halal food consumption trends.

Together, these insights demonstrate how the synergistic integration of employee training, process optimisation, and customer focus can significantly enhance the implementation of TQM principles in halal kitchens. Employee training ensures staff are well-equipped to execute optimised processes, while customer feedback provides a roadmap for ongoing improvement. This interconnected approach addresses operational complexities and simultaneously bolsters the reputation and competitiveness of halal kitchens in a globalised market.

Discussion and Analysis

Challenges in TQM Implementation

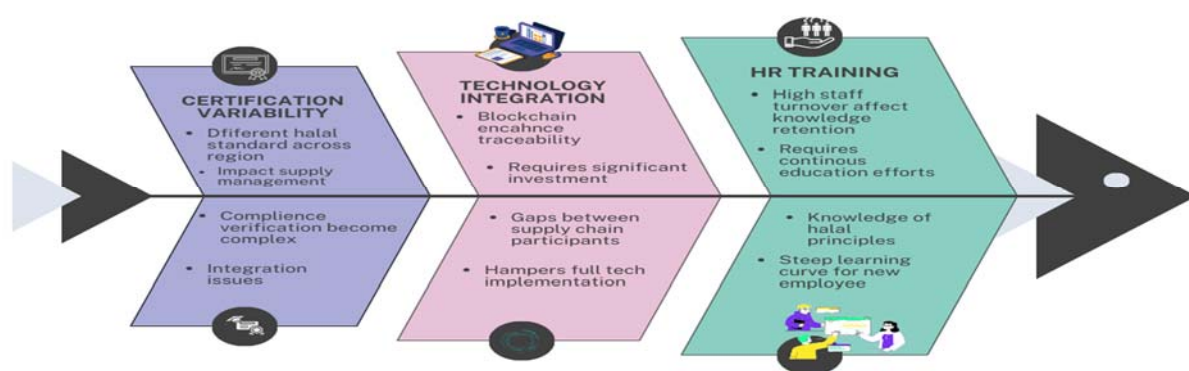
The implementation of TQM in halal kitchens presents several significant challenges, as identified through the research findings. Firstly, the variability in halal certification standards across different regions introduces complexity in maintaining consistent quality protocols. Observations from R3 and R9 highlight how this inconsistency affects supply chain management and compliance verification processes. This challenge is further compounded by the need to integrate multiple quality frameworks—such as halal standards, HACCP, and ISO 22000 without generating operational redundancies.

Training and knowledge management emerge as another critical challenge. Insights from R1 and R4 reveal that maintaining a workforce proficient in both TQM principles and halal requirements demands substantial resources and continuous education efforts. This challenge is especially pronounced in environments with high staff turnover, where knowledge retention becomes problematic. Furthermore, R5 notes that the technical complexity of modern quality management systems, combined with religious compliance requirements, creates a steep learning curve for new employees.

While technology integration offers potential solutions, it also presents implementation hurdles. R15's experience with blockchain adoption illustrates that although such technologies enhance traceability, their implementation requires significant investment and organisational change management. The digital divide among supply chain participants further hampers the full realisation of technological solutions, as noted by R8 and R13. Figure 4 presents a fishbone diagram illustrating the root causes of these challenges. Moreover, cultural and regional variations in interpreting halal requirements add another layer of complexity to implementing standardised quality management practices. Respondents R11 and R17 emphasise that local customs and religious interpretations often influence certification processes, creating additional difficulties for global operations. These cultural differences necessitate tailored training programmes and adaptable quality management frameworks to bridge gaps while ensuring compliance with local standards.

Finally, balancing cost-efficiency with compliance remains a persistent issue. R7 highlights how financial constraints in smaller halal kitchen operations make it difficult to invest in advanced quality management systems and ongoing staff training. Simultaneously, R14 points out that increasing consumer demand for transparency and high-quality halal products puts additional pressure on businesses to enhance their TQM practices while remaining economically viable. These competing priorities call for innovative approaches to streamline processes without compromising quality or compliance.

Figure 5: Fishbone diagram of TQM challenges in halal kitchen



Source: Author, (2025)

The fishbone figure 5 organises the root causes underlying the implementation challenges of Total Quality Management (TQM) within halal kitchens. This diagram complements the earlier narrative by providing a structured overview of the key obstacles faced in practice.

A prominent challenge illustrated is certification variability. This stems from differing halal standards across regions, which complicates supply chain management and renders compliance verification cumbersome. As discussed previously, the integration of multiple frameworks—halal standards, HACCP, and ISO 22000 without creating operational redundancies further intensifies this issue. Certification variability not only undermines operational consistency but also creates significant barriers to scalability, forcing businesses to navigate complex, region-specific requirements to maintain adherence to quality standards.

The technology integration category highlights the dual nature of technological advances in halal kitchens. While tools such as blockchain can enhance traceability and transparency, their adoption demands substantial investment and effective organisational change management. The diagram also draws attention to gaps between supply chain participants, reflecting the digital divide noted in the preceding narrative. This divide particularly impacts smaller operations or those in regions with limited access to technology, hindering seamless implementation and limiting the potential of advanced solutions to improve TQM processes.

Within the human resources and training section, the diagram emphasises critical workforce challenges. High staff turnover disrupts knowledge retention, complicating efforts to sustain a workforce proficient in both TQM principles and halal compliance requirements. Continuous education is necessary but resource-intensive. Additionally, the steep learning curve for new employees who must balance technical quality management knowledge with an understanding of religious compliance represents a major barrier to consistent quality management, as reiterated in the narrative.

Opportunities for Innovations

Despite the challenges, the research highlights several promising opportunities for innovation within halal kitchen operations. The integration of digital technologies, particularly in traceability and monitoring systems, offers significant potential to enhance both compliance and operational efficiency. For instance, R15's work with blockchain technology exemplifies how transparent, verifiable supply chains can be established, thereby strengthening consumer trust.

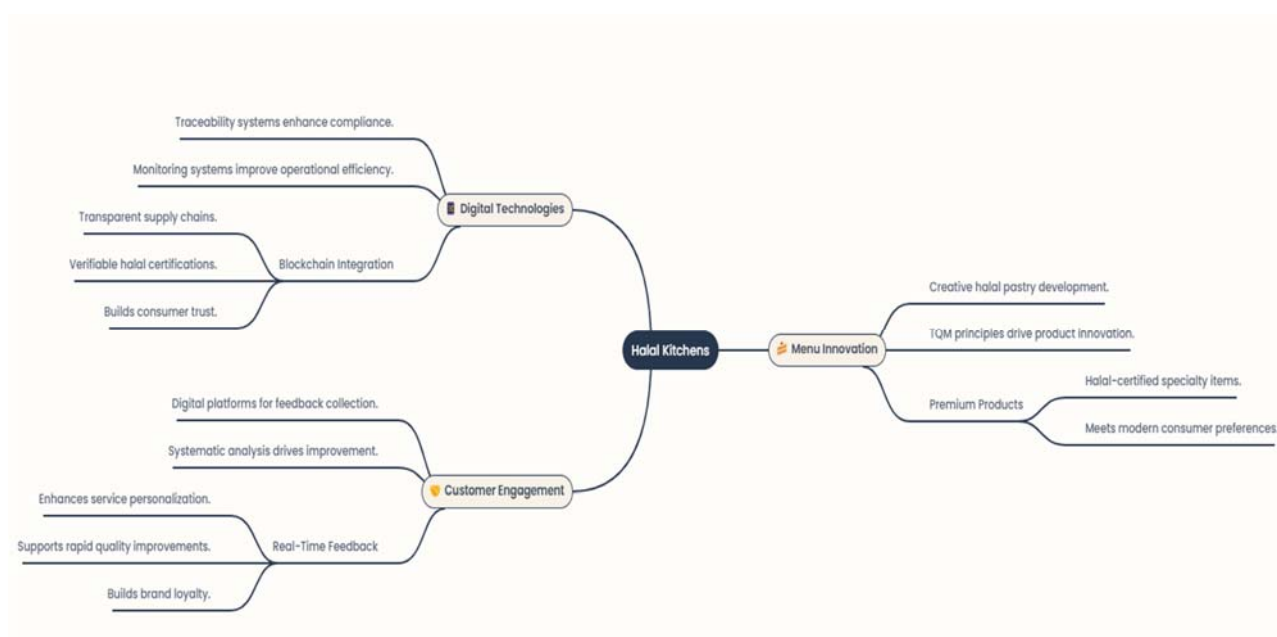
Menu innovation within halal guidelines presents another avenue for growth. Drawing from R10's experience in halal pastry development, the creative application of TQM principles can foster

product innovations that satisfy religious requirements while appealing to evolving consumer tastes. This aligns with the expanding market demand for halal-certified premium and specialty food products.

Furthermore, customer engagement through digital platforms emerges as a critical opportunity for service innovation. The insights shared by R11 and R6 demonstrate how systematic collection and analysis of customer feedback can fuel continuous improvement and cultivate brand loyalty. By integrating real-time feedback systems with quality management processes, halal kitchens can rapidly enhance service quality and offer greater personalization.

Figure 6 visually encapsulates these innovation opportunities in a mind map format, illustrating the interconnected pathways through which halal kitchens can advance operational excellence and market competitiveness.

Figure 6: Mind map of Innovation Opportunities



Source: Author, (2025)

The landscape of innovation in halal kitchens presents a strategic framework built on three fundamental pillars: Digital Technologies, Customer Engagement, and Menu Innovation, each uniquely contributing to operational excellence and market competitiveness. The Digital Technologies pillar acts as the foundation for modernizing halal kitchen operations by implementing advanced traceability systems that improve compliance monitoring. The integration of blockchain

technology ensures transparent supply chains and verifiable halal certifications, collectively fostering strong consumer trust. Research by Perdana (2020) underscores the critical role of such technological integration in maintaining halal integrity throughout the supply chain.

The Customer Engagement dimension transforms traditional service delivery through digital platforms that enable systematic feedback collection and real-time response mechanisms. This approach drives rapid quality improvements and enhances service personalization, reflecting a customer-centric focus. Findings from Lada et al. (2009) illustrate how contemporary halal kitchens are evolving to meet dynamic consumer expectations while upholding religious compliance.

Completing this transformative framework, the Menu Innovation pillar emphasizes creative product development, particularly in halal pastries, underpinned by TQM principles that stimulate innovation in premium and specialty halal-certified products. This pillar directly addresses the increasing sophistication of consumer preferences in the halal market, where modern consumers demand both strict religious adherence and high-quality offerings, as noted by Jusman et al. (2024) and Diana et al. (2023).

Together, these three pillars form a comprehensive approach to halal kitchen innovation, effectively balancing traditional religious requirements with contemporary operational excellence. This positions halal kitchens for sustained success in the rapidly expanding global halal food market, which is projected to achieve significant growth in the coming years.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that the successful integration of Total Quality Management (TQM) principles into halal kitchen operations requires a balanced approach addressing both technical and human factors. The findings reveal that, despite challenges related to standardization, training, and technology adoption, there are abundant opportunities for innovation and improvement. This study makes several important contributions: (1) it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the interplay between TQM principles and halal kitchen operations; (2) it identifies specific challenges and opportunities in implementing quality management systems within religious-compliant food environments; and (3) it offers practical insights for practitioners aiming to enhance operational efficiency while maintaining halal integrity.

Future research could focus on developing standardized TQM models specifically tailored for halal operations, investigating the impact of emerging technologies on halal kitchen efficiency, and exploring cross-cultural adaptations of TQM principles across diverse halal market contexts. The findings highlight that successful TQM implementation in halal kitchens requires continuous investment in employee training and development, integration of modern technology with traditional halal principles, and a strong emphasis on customer feedback and continuous improvement.

As the global halal food market continues to expand, adopting a systematic approach to quality management that respects religious requirements will become increasingly vital. This research provides a foundational understanding of how such integration can be effectively achieved, contributing both to theoretical knowledge and practical application in the field.

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Rethinking Religious Pilgrimage “Hajj” in The Nigerian Context: an Insight Towards Patriotism

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Abstract

This study examines the significance of the Hajj pilgrimage in Nigeria, highlighting its potential to foster patriotism among participants. It explores the interconnections between faith, national identity, and individual agency, demonstrating how the experiences and lessons of Hajj can strengthen a sense of national belonging and self-reliance. Using a qualitative approach, the research draws on the experiences of 50 participants collected through oral interviews and existing literature to illustrate the transformative impact of pilgrimage on civic values and community engagement in Nigeria. Each year, Muslims from Nigeria travel to Makkah to perform the pilgrimage, a rite that has both positive and negative implications. Its benefits include spiritual fulfilment, renewed faith, personal reorientation, and the reestablishment of one's relationship with Allah. However, the study also reveals challenges: some individuals exploit the pilgrimage route as an opportunity to leave Nigeria permanently, while others convert to Islam solely to obtain religious titles. The study critically reviews the motivations behind religious pilgrimage in relation to patriotism. Pilgrimage organisers incorporate themes of national pride and unity into their programmes, highlighting how the values acquired during Hajj can be channelled into community service and nation-building efforts.

Keywords: hajj, pilgrimage, patriotism, experiences, motivations, religion

Introduction

The Hajj pilgrimage, one of the five pillars of Islam, holds profound spiritual significance for millions of Muslims worldwide. In Nigeria, a country characterised by its diverse religious landscape and rich cultural heritage, the Hajj serves not only as a religious obligation but also as a catalyst for social cohesion and national identity. This study seeks to reexamine the Hajj in the Nigerian context, particularly its role in promoting patriotism among Nigerian Muslims. By understanding the pilgrimage's broader implications, we can appreciate its potential for fostering self-reliance and productivity in communities. Religious pilgrimage has historically represented a profound spiritual endeavour for adherents of global faiths, functioning as both an expression of devotion and spiritual rejuvenation. The Hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam, is an obligatory religious obligation for all Muslims who possess the financial means and physical capability (Esposito, 2011 and Raj, 20215).

In Nigeria, a nation characterised by a considerable Muslim demographic, Hajj embodies not merely a profound religious commitment but also an occasion of national importance, intertwining state support, political engagement, and economic consequences. In light of the nation's economic constraints, socio-political instability, and shifting national priorities, it is increasingly imperative to reevaluate the frameworks and motivations associated with religious pilgrimage, especially in relation to public funding and its congruence with patriotic duties.

Any journey made to a Holy site or place and associated with deity is a pilgrimage and whoever undertakes such a journey is a pilgrim. Pilgrimage functions for two things namely, one's presence at a holy or revered site and the actual exercise or performance of homage, adoration, praise, worship and all due honour to Allah. Homby (1974), averred a pilgrim is a person who travels to a sacred place for an act of religious devotion. The emphasis of this write up is on the Islamic pilgrimage (Hajj) as a religious rite and its implications on adherence of Islamic religion and Nigeria as a whole. This study is to reinforce the essence of Hajj pilgrimage within the Nigerian context, focusing on its potential to foster patriotism among participants. Also to document the negative and positive impact of Islamic Pilgrimage Hajj in Nigeria as well as to investigate the influence of religious pilgrimage "hajj" in the Nigerian context: an insight towards patriotism.

Islamic religion emphasis that all muslim must endeavor to partake in its religious rite at least once in a life time. Thus, Muslim are often very trilled to participate in this religious rite, however, some disgruntle elements amongst participants tend to abuse this beautiful religious rite for other purposes. This research serves as a medium to outline such negative practice by disgruntle element to included, escaping from the country, thus using pilgrimage to Makkah as an escape route, sponsoring of tout and political thugs to Makkah, using pilgrimage to Makkah as an avenue for multiple business enterprises, wrong element converting to Islam just for the purpose of pilgrimage to Makkah and several other wrong intents (Adebayo, 2020). This study calls for a rethink of the original intension behind "Hajj" to ensure the original motives behind pilgrimage to Makkah is achieved. Also, the study maintained that politicians should be discouraged from sponsoring pilgrims who in turn become political workers. The modern Nigerian Hajj experience frequently navigates the delicate balance between individual spiritual commitment and government-endorsed duty. Notwithstanding its spiritual underpinnings, the engagement of governmental entities across various tires, encompassing logistical organisation and fiscal support, prompts enquiries regarding the distribution of resources, fairness, and the overarching national interest (Oloyede, 2014).

Hajj is religious rite undertaken by Muslims from Nigeria to Makkah, and its yearly pilgrimage activity has engendered a noteworthy spiritual influence on participants and the general well being of Nigeria. The objective of this study is to assess the degree to which this particular movement has facilitated spiritual growth of participant thereby enhancing patriotic tendencies towards Nigeria. According to Bello and Bello's (2017) assertion, Hajj is playing a significant role in the advancement of religious events and spirituality in Nigeria. The prevalence of evangelical events, including conferences, seminars, and festivals held across various regions of the nation, serves as a clear indication of this phenomenon.

Literature Review

The theoretical underpinning of this study is rooted in the concepts of “social identity theory” proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1970) and “civic nationalism theory” proposed by Brubaker (1992) and Anderson (1983). Social identity theory posits that individuals derive part of their self-concept from their group memberships, which in this case includes both religious and national identities; the theory further emphasizes how individuals identify with social groups and how this identity influences behavior and intergroup relations. Civic nationalism theory emphasises the importance of shared values and civic engagement in fostering national unity. These theories align with the concern of this research which outlines the impact Hajj has on the participants and Nigeria as a whole. This framework will guide the analysis of how Hajj influences pilgrims' identities and their subsequent engagement with national issues.

Islam is an Arabic word, which means peace, submission and obedience. Technically, in religious sense Ismaila and Ayilara-Dindi (2007) described Islam as submission to the will of Allah and obedience to his law. The connection between the original and the religious meaning of the word is strong and obvious. Only through submission to the will of Allah and obedience to him and the obedience to his law, can one achieve true peace and lasting purity. Anyacho (2005) asserted Islam is an intensely monotheistic religion founded by Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) the word Islam means complete submission to the will of Allah and represents the doctrine preached by Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) to his followers, the Muslims. Homby (1974) further postulated Islam is faith, religion proclaimed by the prophet Muhammad to all Muslim and the entire Muslim world. From the assertion of scholars on Islam, one can simply deduced why all Muslim are obligated to partake in religious exercise Hajj to Mecca. The existing literature on Hajj primarily focuses on its religious and

spiritual dimensions. However, there is a growing body of research that explores its socio-cultural impacts. Scholars such as Adebayo (2015) and Mohammed (2018) have highlighted how the pilgrimage can enhance social solidarity and promote community development. Additionally, studies by Ibrahim (2020) have examined the intersection of religious practices and national identity, suggesting that Hajj can serve as a platform for cultivating patriotism. This literature review synthesises these findings, providing a foundation for understanding the multifaceted impact of Hajj in Nigeria.

Hajj is an Arabic word translated to mean pilgrimage to Makkah at least once in a Muslim's lifetime as one of the pillars of Islam. Muslims regard Makkah as the holy place, a place where God made many of his revelations known to the Prophet. They regard it as the center of the world, the most holy of all the holy places (Anyacho 2005). The Hajj to the Makkah is an important practice in Islam. The Hajj is a pilgrimage that occurs during the Islamic month of Dhu al-Hijjah in the city of Makkah and is derived from an ancient Arab practice. Every able-bodied Muslim is obliged to embark on a pilgrimage to Makkah at least once in their lifetime if they can afford it (Khan, 2006). When the pilgrim is around ten kilometers from Makkah, he is expected to dress in "ihram" clothing which consists of two white sheets, Kubeisy include walking seven times around the Kaaba, touching the Black Stone, traveling seven times between Mount "safa" and Mount "Marwah" and symbolically stoning the devil in Mina (Tabatabae, 2002). The pilgrim or the Hajj is honoured in his community. There is an incentive to perform the Hajj. Islamic teachers say that the hajj should be an expression of devotion to Allah not a means to gain social standing. The believers should be self-aware and examine their intentions in performing the pilgrimage, this should lead to constant strive for self-improvement (Malik 2002).

Anyacho (2005) reported that on the tenth of the month of Hajj, pilgrims are required to sacrifice an animal in the valley of Mina. The pilgrimage begins with the circling of the Kaaba, the large cubic stone structure in Makkah that Muslims face during their five (5) daily prayers. Pilgrims go to the near-by mount Arafat, where Islam's 7th century Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) gave his last sermon in A.D. 632, three months before his death. After the devil stoning ritual, pilgrims shave their hairs or clip a lock of hair and then return to Makkah for a final circling of the Kaaba (Malik, 2002). In his publication titled "Religion and Tourism," Stausberg (2011) proposed a framework for analysing the interrelationships between religion and tourism from the perspective of religious studies. Stausberg (2011) argued that although the current interpretation of the term "pilgrim" refers to a person who

undertakes a voyage to a sacred location or another religious endpoint, its etymological roots in Latin, peregrines, allow for more extensive connotations, such as the exploration of an unknown or non-indigenous individual. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the term "tourist" has its origins in the Latin word "tornus," which refers to a person who undertakes a circular journey, usually for recreational reasons, and returns to the starting point. This research is however, centered on religious touring of Nigerian pilgrims to Makkah. According to Smith's (1992) and Carla et al (2023) proposition, the conventional differentiation between pilgrims who embark on a spiritual quest and tourists who undertake a recreational trip conceals the fundamental incentives of travellers. The focus of this study pertains to the religious travel and pilgrimage undertaken by muslim pilgrims from Nigeria.

Sharman (2013) argues that religious pilgrimage and tourism, despite being commonly associated with spiritual quests and individual introspection, has historically been linked with economic benefits and secular interests. As per the author's assertion, religious sites have undergone modifications to accommodate the requirements of contemporary visitors. Lane (2023) stated that the modifications encompass the procurement of amenities such as parking lots, economical air travel, and bus transportation, in addition to the arrangement of food services and lodging options for both pilgrims and visitors. Notwithstanding these adaptations, the spiritual significance of these religious rites has been conserved. The latter, referring to religious pilgrimage and cultural tourism, also serve as a catalyst for the consumption of tourist goods and services such as souvenirs, traditional cuisine, artisanal products, and travel-related businesses such as tour operators and agencies. According to Trono's (2017) assertion, there has been an increase in promotional endeavours and cultural occurrences, including concerts, festivals, and shows. These affirmations, which are in part due to the socio-cultural evolution of the typical pilgrims/tourists, have led to a substantial restructuring of the affected regions, resulting in socio-economic and environmental consequences.

Hughes et al. (2013) argues that the incorporation of faith travel can augment the delivery of services and commodities to accommodate a heterogeneous range of tourists, consequently ameliorating the standard of living and overall quality of life of Indigenous populations. The aforementioned assertion presents significant proof that the Nigerian pilgrims/tourist to Makkah are instrumental in promoting national solidarity and identity According to Huang (2011), Oliveira and Silvia (2023) argues, the economic potential of faith tourism generates novel business ventures that are consistent with the goals of religious tourism, thereby leading to an enhancement of the regional economy, here lies the

reason why many participants in Hajj reinvent the religious exercise by engaging in business transaction during this auspicious religious rite for personal gains. This study calls for a rethink towards spirituality. Huang (2011) argues that the participation of a significant proportion of tourists/pilgrims in religious rituals has the capacity to stimulate economic development within the community. Idris (2019) asserts that the growth in the quantity of tourists/pilgrims has prompted the need for the augmentation of infrastructure at diverse holy sites and destinations to meet the escalating requirements of sightseers. To this end, World Bank (2019) maintained the influx of Nigerian pilgrims can boost local economies, particularly in areas related to travel, hospitality, and trade.

The yearly religious ceremony associated with Hajj is attended with enthusiasm by Muslims, It is noteworthy that individuals hailing from diverse regions across the world adhere to a rigorous schedule concerning the annual observance of the pilgrimage. The religious practice under consideration encompasses a variety of associated occurrences, including rituals, conventions, celebrations, seclusions, proselytising endeavours, awakenings, and other undertakings that are orchestrated by heterogeneous factions, The success of the Hajj pilgrimage is contingent upon the substantial assistance provided by hospitality, tourism, and travel agencies, which are tasked with accommodating the varied travel needs of both Nigerian pilgrims and international attendees at Mecca. The evident correlation between religion and pilgrimage and tourism studies is a strongly associated topic. To assert that religion and tourism are separate indicators would be an inadequate characterization. As per academic sources, the majority of religions integrate the custom of pilgrimage and travel, thus establishing equivalence between the two concepts. According to Rot et al. (2014), pilgrimage is a widespread practice observed in various religions. Hyde and Harman (2011), Kaelber (2006), Dora (2012), Okokwo and Eyisi (2020), and Nair and Baby (2022) have advanced the notion that religion plays a crucial role in driving tourism. The present study posits that the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca contributes to the economic development of the area.

Park (1994) and Pourtaheri et al. (2012) have underscored the importance of religious events, specifically pilgrimages, in religious hubs such as Makkah (Saudi Arabia), Jerusalem (Israel), Loreto (Italy), Lourdes (France), and Sabarimala Ayodhya (India). Karar (2010) expounded on the importance of religious tourism in Iran, emphasising its capacity to enhance the economic circumstances of rural areas through religious tourism. According to Pourtaheri et al. (2012) argument, the practice of religious tourism has the potential to bolster local economies by fostering

social and economic ties between rural households and tourists. This underscores the importance of religious tourism as a driver of economic development. According to Mu et al. (2007), Dengfeng, a city in China, draws in roughly 3.2 million tourists on a yearly basis, with the majority of these individuals, approximately 81%, being pilgrims who visit the Shaolin Temple or the Zhongyue Temple, both of which hold significant religious importance in Taoism. This exercise exerts an influence on the socio-economic framework of the community. According to Nbanefo's (2016) research, the economic importance of tourism and religious tourism in Nigeria was highlighted through the revelation that the country welcomed a total of 4037,808 visitors in 2013.

It is essential to recognise that the discussion surrounding religious travel, pilgrimage, and tourism is incomplete without considering the spiritual motivation that drives the practice. The sacred location is commonly recognised for its ability to facilitate extraordinary events, cleansing, and rejuvenation of both the body and soul (Brumec, 2023). The observation of this factor holds significant importance as it plays a pivotal role in shaping the authentic inclination towards participating in religious pilgrimage rather than religious tourism. Kolyigit (2016) asserted that religious tourism/pilgrimage aims to rejuvenate the spiritual realm of the participants. The Hajj serves the purpose of exhibiting both therapeutic and exceptional properties. People with varied cultural backgrounds participate in Hajj in the religious, spiritual, and holy locations Makkah. The involvement of this particular demographic in such pursuits contributes to the enhancement of cultural diversity, cultural identity, and transnational culture. The above phenomenon can be explained by the yearly influx of tourists from various geographical regions who bring with them a variety of cultural artefacts such as food, clothing, attitudes, personalities, and dialects. According to Koeyigit's (2016) assertion, several factors have an influence on the flow of pilgrims to religious sites. The characteristics of these movements are dependent on a range of geographical factors, including but not limited to weather patterns, land features, religious and cultural characteristics, and the availability of resources. Hannam et al. (2006) have provided an extensive analysis of the significant political, economic, social, and cultural implications associated with religious tourism and pilgrimage. The authors have underscored the capacity of these endeavours to impact commerce and public health worldwide. As per their claim, pilgrimage is considered a significant and noteworthy topic owing to its vast territorial influence and magnitude. Akhata and Kreitman (2015) and Mroz et al. (2023) have posited that a relationship exists between religion and transnational movement, thus augmenting the discussion on transnational concerns in this study. Transnational concerns encompass the mobility and interplay of individuals across diverse geographical boundaries, whereas

religion pertains to the propagation of its tenets and the interactions of individuals across multiple locations.

Hajj Pilgrimage and Spiritual Journey

The Hajj pilgrimage, one of the five pillars of Islam, is a deeply spiritual journey that promotes religious unity and submission to Allah. At first glance, this may seem separate from notions of patriotism, which typically emphasize loyalty and devotion to one's nation. However, a closer examination reveals that the two concepts are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the Hajj experience can reinforce a form of constructive patriotism, grounded in ethical values, unity, and service to the homeland. Patriotism, understood as a love for and devotion to one's country, is not inherently in conflict with religious devotion. In Islam, the concept of *hub al-watan* (love for the homeland) is considered a virtue. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported to have expressed deep affection for his birthplace, Makkah, and later for Madinah, which became a central hub of Islamic identity (Al-Ahsan, 2016). The Hajj, performed in Makkah, thus becomes a moment for Muslims to reflect not only on religious values but also on broader responsibilities, including loyalty to their homeland. Moreover, the collective experience of Hajj brings together Muslims from diverse backgrounds, fostering a sense of global Muslim unity (Ummah). This global perspective often leads pilgrims to reflect on national unity, social justice, and moral leadership in their own countries (Kabasakal Arat, 2005). Pilgrims may return from Hajj with renewed ethical consciousness and a desire to contribute positively to their nation's development, linking patriotism to moral action inspired by spiritual transformation.

Hajj encourages a sense of discipline, order, and sacrifice, all of which are values that can translate into civic responsibility. A patriotism shaped by Islamic principles avoids blind nationalism and instead promotes justice, solidarity, and peace (Esposito, 2002). The Hajj pilgrimage offers an opportunity for believers to integrate religious devotion with a righteous form of patriotism, one that advocates for the well-being of society in accordance with Islamic ethics. Hajj is fundamentally a religious act, its implications extend to the social and political realms, where it can inspire a values-based patriotism rooted in justice, unity, and civic responsibility.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with Nigerian pilgrims who have recently completed the Hajj. Participants will be selected through purposive sampling to ensure a diverse representation of experiences. Through qualitative analysis of participant experiences adapted from 50 participants through oral interview and existing literature, these 50 participants were used in this research and this number was sufficient for this studies because they were adapted from five states in Nigeria, namely: kano, Kaduna, Sokoto, Kwara and Borno and each state had a representation of 10 participants giving a strong co-relationship for Hajj pilgrimage and patriotism. Data will be analysed thematically, focusing on participants' perceptions of Hajj and its influence on their sense of patriotism and community engagement. The interview questions were generated based on the study focus and was validated by expert in field of Islamic studies and pilgrimage.

Table of Interview

Table 1: Showing the Results of the 50 Interviews from Hajj Participants in Nigeria

Interviewee	No. of Respondents	Positive Reaction	Negative Reaction
Pilgrims from Kano	10	YES	-
Kaduna	10	YES	-
Sokoto	10	YES	-
Maiduguri	10	YES	-
Kwara	10	YES	-
TOAL	50		

Pilgrims from Kaduna State, Nigeria



Source: authors

Pilgrims from Kwara state, Nigeria



Source: Premium times-NAN (Nigeria)

Discussion and Findings

Positives Impact of Hajj for the pilgrims and Nigeria

Hajj as a religious rite, strengthens the faith of Muslims, brings them closer to the teaching of the Prophet and reminds them of their duty and the will of Allah. This enhances their faith in Allah consequently, encouraging a closer relationship with Allah. Hajj also creates an avenue for Muslims from all over the world to come together and interact as a family. It also enhances spiritual fulfillment of members. Circumnutating around the Kaaba (running seven times between two small hills around the Kaaba), kissing the black stone at the Kaaba, visiting Mount Arafat and the sacrifice of an animal in the valley of Mina all constitute religious activities that enhance spiritual fulfillment (Anyacho, 2005). Haleem (2005) averred that Spiritual fulfillment is the soul obligation of Hajj. Thus, it is a profound spiritual experience, allowing pilgrims to deepen their faith, seek forgiveness, and strengthen their relationship with God.

Pilgrimage to Mecca rejuvenates the practice of the old, such as the practices of Abraham to the Islamic tradition; the Kaaba was built by Abraham who was helped by Ishmael. According to the surah in Quran Abraham (AS) prayed in the Kaaba with the request: “Our Lord make us submissive to thee and of our seed a community - submissive to thee and show us our ways of worship and turn towards us to; thou only thou art the relenting the merciful” (Surah 2:128). BBC religion (2019) reported that unity and brotherhood are the major concerns of Hajj, ensuring pilgrims from diverse backgrounds come together, fostering a sense of unity and brotherhood among Muslims worldwide. This collective experience can strengthen communal ties. Thus, in traveling to Mecca, Muslims are emulating the practices of the prophet as well as the practices of their forebears. It is an avenue of rekindling the practice of the Prophets as well as submission to the will of Allah. It is also believed that pilgrimage to Makkah takes one from one spiritual state to another. Thus, those who have undergone this religious rite are adorned with new titles such as Alhaji and Alaja. It is a forum where Islamic leaders address and teach members from all over the world to be steadfast in doing the will of Allah.

Al-Azmeh (2009) speaking on the relevance of Hajj Al-Azmeh asserted that Hajj guarantees cultural exchange. In this light, he postulated that Hajj pilgrimage promotes cultural exchange, as Nigerians interact with Muslims from different countries, sharing traditions and practices, cultural exchange takes effect unequivocally, this conforms with theoretical framework of “social identity theory” proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1970) and “civic nationalism theory” proposed by Brubaker (1992)

and Anderson (1983). While social identity theory posits that individuals derive part of their self-concept from their group memberships, which in this case includes both religious and national identities; the theory further emphasizes how individuals identify with social groups and how this identity influences behavior and intergroup relations. The civic nationalism theory emphasises the importance of shared values and civic engagement in fostering national unity.

These theories align with the concern of this research which outlines the impact Hajj has on the participants and Nigeria as a whole. This framework guides the analysis of how Hajj influences pilgrims' identities and their subsequent engagement with all Nigerian. The World Bank report (2019) also buttresses the significance of Hajj to pilgrims and the country. Noting that economic benefits are one of the cogent significant of Hajj. According to its report, the influx of Nigerian pilgrims can boost local economies, particularly in areas related to travel, hospitality, and trade. More so, the impact of Hajj cannot be overemphasized, this assertion corroborates with the contentions posited by Nicolaides and Grobler (2017) that pilgrimage is often scrutinised as an expression of human conduct, thereby warranting an inquiry into the destinations that individuals frequent and the motives that underlie their visits. Furthermore, the marketing and promotion of tourism are widely regarded as pivotal factors in achieving prosperous tourism/pilgrimage expansion. The tourism industry has experienced a notable surge in both domestic and international travel, attributed to several factors such as religious and spiritual motivations.

Furthermore, it has been observed by the Nigeria international Airport that the annual pilgrimage to Mecca resulted in a rapid revenue generation to the country at the period of Hajj, exceeding the established standard rate of one to nine (1/9%). This study aims to establish a correlation between the annual Hajj pilgrimage and a noteworthy increase in the economic productivity of the nation. As of December 2022, it is anticipated that the operating cost for each tourist or pilgrim will be NGN 105,000 (where NGN 1 equals \$78,000 Nigerian Naira). During the period of the yearly Hajj pilgrimage, the gross profit amounts to NGN two billion Naira. Hence, it is evident that contributes towards the advancement of the nation economic and the overall economy of Nigeria. Orukpe (2017) findings outline, it can be inferred that the primary source of revenue for Med-View Airline PLC is its hajj operation, which generates significantly higher revenue compared to other periods. This overview demonstrates the positive impact of Hajj religious pilgrimage on the economic development of Nigerian. The findings of Karar (2010) corroborate further the significance of Hajj, which suggest that rural communities have the potential to stimulate their local economy by

promoting religious tourism. Pourtaheri et al. (2012) posited that religious pilgrimage can enhance local economies by establishing connections between rural households and pilgrimage homepage, thereby serving as a means of social and economic interaction.

An exercise of great interest that occurs frequently at the sacred sites at Makkah involves the allocation of goods and services within an economic framework. This exercise allows for the expansion of marketing strategies and inferences. In addition to conventional tourism offerings such as lodging, transportation, and accommodations, a diverse array of merchandise and services are available at pilgrimage destinations. These include the sale of religious artefacts and relics, as well as locally crafted arts, items, and objects. Moreover, a substantial number of Nigerian pilgrims avail themselves of the opportunity to procure artefacts and other goods. The practice of pilgrimage has significantly contributed to the transformation of the region. This statement confirms the scholarly notion that religious tourism/pilgrimage significantly contributes to the economic and social development of pilgrimage destinations. Abdel-Haleem (2005) opined that personal transformation is a noteworthy impactful attribute of Hajj. According to him, many pilgrims report significant personal changes, including increased patience, empathy, and a renewed commitment to Islamic teachings. This assertion by Abdel-Haleem goes a long way to prove Hajj is a potent element of personal transformation and rejuvenation. Hajj further contributes to community support system by encouraging all pilgrims to participate in collective activities that are beneficiary all and sundry. According to Esposito (2011), Hajj has excellent value for community support. Many pilgrims travel in groups organised by local mosques or community organisations, fostering a sense of camaraderie and support throughout the journey. Still on the benefits of Hajj to participants and Nigeria, Esposito (2011) inferred that Hajj present a serious opportunity for education and learning, he inferred that as pilgrimage provides opportunities for learning about Islamic teachings, history, and practices, often through lectures, workshops, and interactions with scholars, it helps to educate intending pilgrims on the basic tenets of Islam and international travel requirement. One who has participated in Hajj does not only gain spiritual gain but also international standards, regulations and principles. This knowledge gained during Hajj helps to reinvent the insight of someone who has participated in the pilgrimage to Makkah.

Hajj encourage Muslims to partake in performing charitable acts, during and after Hajj, many Muslims engage in acts of charity during Hajj, such as distributing food and helping the less fortunate, which enhances the spirit of giving and community service. Al-Azmeh (2009) asserted

although Islam emphasize alms giving, Hajj serves as a time when Muslim all over the world use the period to encourage and rethink their relationship with fellow human being, thus the need to give even more at the period of Ramadan and Hajj. Hajj reinvents the strength of family bonds, during this time, Hajj enhances family reunion, family ties and reconciliation. Hajj strength family bonds when pilgrims travel together, they can strengthen family ties, as families bond over shared experiences and spiritual journeys it stimulates bond and encourage reconciliation among various Islamic group. It can also foster communal and ethnic reconciliation. Esposito (2011) leaning words to above averred that Hajj serves as an inspiration for future generations. In his words, the experience can inspire younger generations to embrace their faith and participate in religious activities, fostering a sense of identity and belonging.

Challenges and Experiences of Pilgrims as a Precursor for Patriotism

It endangers the lives of people (pilgrims); the concentration of so many people in a small area has in the past proved a recipe for disaster. Fire and stampedes have claimed the lives of hundreds of people over the years. For instance, about 1,426 pilgrims died in 1990 and 244 died in 2002 (Malik, 2002). Crowd-Related Issues are a critical concern Al-Rashidi (2016) asserted that the sheer number of pilgrims can lead to overcrowding, which can result in accidents, injuries, or even fatalities during certain rituals. It serves as a breeding ground for religious and political terrorism because Muslims all around the World come together at Makkah for this religious rite.

Khan (2015) stated that organising travel, accommodation, and transportation can be complex and overwhelming, leading to stress for many pilgrims. This type of stress can make it difficult for the pilgrims to attain the spiritual objectives of the exercise which would be beneficiary to the participant and his country. This is why this research calls for proper organisation by pilgrims organising agencies so that it will make it seamless for pilgrims to attain the original intention behind Hajj.

Health Risks is a considerable challenge for the participants of Hajj. Affirming this critical challenge for Hajj participant is Memish and Al-Tawfiq (2014) stated that Large gatherings could pose health risks, including the spread of infectious diseases. Pilgrims may face challenges related to dehydration, heat exhaustion, and other health issues. This situation is also affirmed by pilgrim participant from Nigeria who recounted his experience during the Hajj, because of the crowd at Mecca, he contacted a disease during the period of Hajj to Makkah (Ahmed oral interview). Also

noted as a challenge of Hajj pilgrimage is financial burden. Ali (2019) postulated that the cost of performing Hajj can be a significant burden for many Nigerian families, sometimes leading to debt or financial strain. Some people go to the extent of using their gratuity and pension to partake in the pilgrimage only to come back beggars. This situation is terribly wrong and does speak well of Nigeria, this in fact cannot add to national development adds to national trauma and also leaves a damaging impact for the country who is already going through economic meltdown. To ameliorate and save the image of Nigeria, Muslims should adhere to the teaching of prophet Mohammed (PBUH) which says that one should embark on the religious rite once in a lifetime, only if one can afford it. However, most Muslims cease this opportunity of Hajj to travel every year for Hajj. This study advises that those who can afford this exercise more than once should help those who cannot. This will definitely show a sign of patriotism and love for one another, as a way of practicing the teachings of Allah.

Frauds and exploitation are another serious challenge encountered by Hajj pilgrims from Nigeria. Adebayo (2020) reports that some pilgrims fall victim to frauds related to travel agencies or service providers, leading to financial loss and dissatisfaction with their experience. This turn led to setback for the pilgrims tending to disrupt the participant level of participation in the pilgrimage with the aim to attain spiritual rejuvenation, therefore, not adding to the original intentions of Hajj to detriment of national patriotism and development. This research draws attention to this inadequacy for a better and patriotic achievement. Alshammari (2021) emphasized the importance of considering environmental concerns for pilgrims. He maintained that the massive influx of pilgrims can strain local resources and infrastructure, leading to environmental issues such as waste management challenges and increased pollution. A participant of Hajj pilgrimage 2023, posits that this is a critical concern as the region is usually littered and filthy which can lead to health hazards and crisis (Musah oral interview)

Similarly, cultural misunderstandings are often set in as a serious challenge during Hajj. Al-Ajmi (2013) confirming above posit that differences in cultural practices and behaviors among pilgrims from diverse backgrounds can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or conflicts. When this type of conflict occurs during Hajj, it constitutes distraction during the exercise and as such, participant tends to lose focus on the main reason of the Hajj pilgrimage to the detriment of the pilgrims and national patriotism. Also emphasizing the challenges of Hajj,

Al-Ajmi (2013) maintained that emotional stress and post-pilgrimage adjustment are what most pilgrims encounter as post-partum pilgrimage. According to him, the pilgrimage can be emotionally taxing due to the physical exertion involved, the challenges of travel, and the intensity of the spiritual experience, which can lead to anxiety or depression for some. Amzah a pilgrim from Kaduna state recounted his experience, though worthy in terms of spiritual qualities, he however, noted the aftermath is not worth recounting in terms financial involvement especially at this period of economic meltdown in Nigeria. he therefore advice those who cannot afford it to pray to Allah for grace before considering participating in the exercise, because of the numerous challenges experienced (Oral interview).

Khan (2015) further argue that regulatory hurdles also form part of the challenges experienced by pilgrims during the period of this religious rite. According to him, navigating visa requirements and regulatory processes can be daunting and may lead to delays or complications for pilgrims. When this occurs some prospective pilgrims either miss out or cannot truly or meet the obligation of the religious rite towards self-religious fulfillment and national development. Again, Al-Ajmi (2013) inferred that post-Pilgrimage Adjustment hinders pilgrims from actually contributing the impact derived from the Hajj after worth, he assert that after returning home, pilgrims may struggle with reintegrating into their daily lives, as the profound experiences of Hajj can leave them feeling disconnected from their pre-Hajj routines. As such many do not understand Hajj as to contribute what they have learnt from exercise to society. This is why this paper suggests that groups and government agencies should set community engagement programs that can help to establish initiatives that encourage Hajj returnees to share their experiences with local communities, fostering a culture of patriotism and self-reliance.

Also worthy of note is some participants tend to abuse the privilege of the religious site, by using the travel route as avenue to escape from Nigeria, some people even convert to Islam just to obtain a religious title, those at the zenith of leadership use such position to embezzle government money to fund pilgrims, thereby encouraging political sycophancy through sponsoring pilgrims, spending one's hard earned money for this religious rite. Further, participants see Hajj as an avenue to conduct business transactions, altering the original motives behind religious pilgrimage

Conclusion

This study aimed to critically analyse the changing importance of the Hajj trip within the Nigerian context, emphasising its capacity to foster a positive feeling of patriotism. Analysis of literature and qualitative interviews with Nigerian pilgrims, Islamic scholars, and pilgrimage board officials revealed that Hajj serves not only as a religious duty but also as a transformative social and moral experience that promotes national consciousness and civic responsibility. Interview results indicated that a considerable proportion of Nigerian pilgrims return from Hajj with an enhanced sense of moral discipline, empathy, and social consciousness. A multitude of attendees expressed that observing the variety and solidarity of the global Muslim community fostered in them a profound appreciation for Nigeria's multi-ethnic and multi-religious fabric. This corresponds with the research highlighting the universality of Islam and its capacity to foster inclusive ideals (Al-Ahsan, 2016; Esposito, 2002). Additionally, certain respondents articulated an increased sense of obligation to positively impact national development, referencing the ethical teachings of Hajj namely humility, accountability, and justice as foundational elements for civic involvement. Nonetheless, the investigation also revealed significant challenges. The politicisation and commercialisation of pilgrimage in Nigeria have, in certain instances, diminished its spiritual and moral significance. Several respondents expressed apprehension that governmental sponsorship of Hajj could obscure the distinction between religion and governance, resulting in a passive kind of religiosity devoid of the transformational purpose outlined in Islamic teachings. Literature substantiates this argument, cautioning against the simplification of religious rituals into state-sanctioned practices lacking ethical significance (Kabasakal Arat, 2005). Based on empirical findings and scholarly analysis, the researcher believes that re-evaluating the Hajj in Nigeria necessitates a strategic reorientation that highlights its ethical and civic components. This involves motivating pilgrims to perceive Hajj not merely as an individual spiritual expedition but as a catalyst for national rejuvenation. Religious institutions, governments, and educational entities must integrate Hajj experiences into overarching patriotic narratives that foster social cohesion, peace, and responsible citizenship. In conclusion, the Hajj trip, when appropriately contextualised within Nigeria's socio-political framework, can function as a potent catalyst for fostering a values-oriented patriotism. It encourages Nigerian Muslims to exemplify the global ethical principles of Islam in their service to the nation, so reconciling religious devotion with national allegiance in a diverse community.

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Integrating Spirituality in Islamic Tourism: Lessons from the Guru Sekumpul Commemoration in Indonesia

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Abstract

The tradition of *Haul Guru Sekumpul* in South Kalimantan is a religious phenomenon that attracts thousands of worshippers each year, reflecting the integration of local beliefs and the concept of *barokah* in Islamic teachings. This study adopts a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore the dynamics of this tradition, including its religious practices, beliefs in blessings, and their impact on local social and economic solidarity. The study's findings show that this tradition not only reinforces the Islamic identity of the community but also contributes to the development of Islamic tourism rooted in sustainable religious practices. By combining spirituality, local culture, and economic opportunity, *Haul Guru Sekumpul* plays a vital role in presenting an inclusive form of Indonesian Islam to the global stage. This research also offers insights for management of religious events that support the sustainable social and economic development of local community, while promoting sustainable Islamic tourism.

Keywords: Haul Guru Sekumpul, Barokah, Religious Traditions, Islamic Tourism, Local Beliefs

Introduction

The commemoration of Guru Sekumpul's death, also known as Guru Sekumpul's Haul, is one of the largest religious traditions in Indonesia, particularly in South Kalimantan. Each year, the event attracts thousands to millions of pilgrims, not only from the local area but also from various provinces across Indonesia and even from abroad (Armiah et al., 2023; Lantigimo & Afriliani, 2023). This event is highly anticipated by the community, as it serves not only as an occasion to honour a prominent religious figure but also as a spiritual opportunity for pilgrims to draw closer to Allah. This phenomenon illustrates the significant influence of Guru Sekumpul, a figure deeply respected and loved by the community (Khairuddin, 2023). Guru Sekumpul, or KH. Muhammad Zaini Abdul Ghani, was a revered Islamic scholar known for his profound knowledge, humility, and teachings

that resonated with a wide range of people. He is regarded as a wali (saint) by the community, believed to have had a special closeness to Allah. His influence extends beyond religious matters to social and cultural spheres, making the commemoration not merely a religious ritual but a broader social phenomenon that reflects and reinforces various aspects of people's lives (Abbas et al., 2019).

The uniqueness of Haul Guru Sekumpul lies in its fusion of religious values with local cultural elements. As part of the Islamic tradition in the Indonesian archipelago, the event reflects a syncretism between Islamic teachings and indigenous customs (Abbas et al., 2019; Haq & Wong, 2010; Pradana et al., 2023a). In the context of South Kalimantan, the community maintains a strong tradition of venerating religious figures as bearers of blessings (barokah). Thus, the Haul of Guru Sekumpul functions not only as an expression of religious devotion but also as a means of fostering social solidarity. Moreover, the event has a considerable economic impact on the local community through trade and service activities that flourish during the commemoration. Spiritually, the Haul Guru Sekumpul is regarded not merely as a remembrance of a religious figure's passing but as a moment of collective reflection for the congregation. Participants believe that Guru Sekumpul's blessings continue to flow even after his death (Humaidi et al., 2021; Seise, 2021). This belief motivates many to attend the event in the hope of receiving barokah, both in spiritual and material forms. It is this enduring belief that serves as one of the main attractions of the event and contributes to its continuous growth year after year.

This phenomenon also garners academic interest, as it reflects the distinctive religious dynamics characteristic of Indonesia. The annual haul (death commemoration) of Guru Sekumpul in Martapura, for example, attracts millions of pilgrims from across the archipelago, creating a unique intersection of Islamic piety, local cultural expression, and community-based economic activity. The event integrates ritual practices such as collective prayer, tahlil, and sholawat with acts of social solidarity, including mass feeding, communal work, and charitable giving, all coordinated through both formal religious institutions and informal spiritual networks. These features exemplify what scholars have described as the Islamisation of local tradition, wherein Islamic values are embedded within and adapted to indigenous cultural frameworks (Geertz, 1960; Wahid, 1989; Bizawie, 2016).

Such dynamics have drawn scholarly attention in the fields of anthropology, sociology of religion, and Islamic studies, particularly about how faith-based tourism events reinforce collective memory, religious identity, and socio-economic resilience in Indonesian Muslim communities. This tradition of hailing shows how Islam in the archipelago can adapt to local culture without losing the essence

of its teachings. Guru Sekumpul is a symbol of the success of Islamic da'wah that respects local wisdom while maintaining the sanctity of Islamic values (Abbas et al., 2019; Armiah et al., 2023; Khairuddin, 2023; Lantigimo & Afriliani, 2023).

The study of this tradition can provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between religion (Danarta et al., 2024; Feener & Fountain, 2018; Fisher & Rinehart, 2016; Timothy & Iverson, 2006), culture (Muttaqin, 2021; Pradana et al., 2023b; Timothy & Iverson, 2006), and society in the diverse context of Indonesia (Hutabarat, 2023; Nath, 2023; Pabbajah, 2012). Furthermore, this event shows how the role of religious leaders can transcend individual boundaries and become a driving force for the community. The Haul Guru Sekumpul is not only a testament to the community's affection for a scholar but also demonstrates how religious values can serve as a source of inspiration to strengthen social bonds and foster solidarity in a modern society that is often fragmented. This tradition, with all its spiritual and cultural richness, provides important lessons on how religion can be a source of strength for communities in the face of the challenges of the times.

The Haul Guru Sekumpul tradition's ability to serve as a meeting point between Islamic teachings and local cultural practices. From a religious perspective (Arjmand, 2004; Jácome et al., 2018; Moufahim, 2013; Rashid, 2018; Sholeh, 2008), this event reflects a profound appreciation for the concept of barokah and respect for scholars as the inheritors of the Prophet's legacy. This haul also demonstrates how religious rituals serve not only as a means of individual worship but also as a collective medium to strengthen the spiritual connection between humans and God, as well as between fellow humans. In the cultural context, this tradition embodies the richness of local wisdom that is harmoniously integrated with Islamic teachings, demonstrating how religion can adapt and evolve in a diverse social context.

From a social perspective, Haul Guru Sekumpul is a phenomenon that showcases the strength of community solidarity. Millions of people who attend each year create a unique social dynamic, where the interaction between the congregation, the committee, and the local community gives rise to strong social bonds (Achmad, 2022; Yozukmaz et al., 2020). In addition, the economic impact of this event is also significant, with increased trade and religious tourism activities during the haul. This shows that religious traditions not only function as spiritual expressions (Graham & Murray, 1997; Moufahim & Lichrou, 2019; Van Niekerk, 2018) but also as catalysts for the social and economic development of the community (Iswanto et al., 2020).

This research has broad relevance, not only in the academic realm but also as a reference for the sustainable management of religious traditions in Indonesia (Armiah et al., 2023; Timothy & Iverson, 2006). One of the fundamental questions in the Haul Guru Sekumpul tradition is how local beliefs and the concept of barokah, as an integral part of Islamic teachings, can be harmoniously integrated into this annual tradition. This phenomenon encompasses many dimensions, from its profound spiritual meaning to its influence on the social and economic dynamics of the local community. In the context of the people of South Kalimantan, the belief in blessings (*barokah*), which is believed to still flow from Guru Sekumpul even though he has passed away, is the primary foundation of congregational participation.

This research aims to explore in depth how the integration of local beliefs and the concept of barokah is manifested in the *Haul Guru Sekumpul tradition*. Specifically, this study wants: (1) to understand the patterns of public belief in Guru Sekumpul as a symbol of spirituality (Abbas et al., 2019; Armiah et al., 2023; Khairuddin, 2023; Lantigimo & Afriliani, 2023; Van Niekerk, 2018); (2) exploring the meaning of barokah in the context of the haul tradition; (Humaidi et al., 2021; Seise, 2021) and (3) analyze the impact of this tradition on social relations, community solidarity, and local economic development (Achmad, 2022; Quiroz-Niño & Murga-Menoyo, 2017; Yozukmaz et al., 2020).

This research contributes to the theoretical development of the sociology of religion by demonstrating how spiritual authority and religious symbolism become embedded in local tourism practices. It offers empirical support for the theory of “lived religion,” which emphasises how individuals and communities integrate religious meanings into daily life outside institutionalised frameworks. Furthermore, this research extends the discussions within the field of spiritual tourism by demonstrating that local Islamic traditions, such as hawl, serve not only devotional purposes but also function as mechanisms for social cohesion and sustainable development. The findings also enrich the discourse on *barokah* as a culturally specific form of religious capital that mobilises both emotional and economic engagement within Muslim societies.

Literature Review

Sustainable Islamic Tourism

The research of Islamic tourism has experienced significant growth in recent years, particularly with the emergence of the concept of sustainable Islamic tourism, which emphasises not only compliance

with Islamic principles but also environmental conservation, cultural sensitivity, and community well-being (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Mohsin et al., 2017). However, most of the literature remains focused on formal structures such as halal services, pilgrimage to sacred historical sites, and institutional religious tourism. There is a clear gap in exploring localised, culturally embedded Islamic traditions that also serve as sustainable tourism practices. This study aims to fill that gap by examining the *Haul Guru Sekumpul tradition in South Kalimantan, Indonesia, as a lived religious experience that reflects a dynamic, socially rooted form of Islamic tourism grounded in the concept of barokah* (blessing).

Islamic traditions across the Muslim world reveal significant diversity in the ways that religious teachings are practised (Ali, 2011; Moufahim, 2013; Seise, 2021). While core principles such as monotheism (*tauhid*), ritual worship, and almsgiving are universally recognised, their expressions vary across regions. In Indonesia, Islam has long coexisted with local cultures, resulting in hybrid practices such as *haul*, *tahlilan*, and *slametan*. The *Haul Guru Sekumpul* exemplifies this hybridity, celebrated annually by millions, it integrates Islamic devotion with Javanese and Banjar traditions in a way that is both sacred and communal.

Theoretically, this tradition can be understood through Clifford Geertz's concept of "local Islam," which emphasises how socio-cultural environments shape religious practices, and Talal Asad's critique of essentialist understandings of religion, which urges scholars to pay attention to the discursive and historical conditions that form religious experience. These perspectives challenge the assumption of a monolithic Islamic orthopraxy, highlighting instead how religious life is produced through everyday cultural interaction. In this view, the *haul* is not a peripheral or deviant practice but a legitimate and adaptive expression of Islamic spirituality embedded in a particular socio-historical setting.

One of the central elements in the *Haul Guru Sekumpul* is the collective belief in the spiritual power of Guru Sekumpul as a source of *barokah*. This mirrors what Max Weber termed "charismatic authority", a form of influence derived not from institutional position but from perceived spiritual gifts. Just as millions revere figures like Rumi in Turkey, Imam Reza in Iran, or saints at Ajmer Sharif in India and during *moussem* festivals in Morocco (Elias, 2019; Khan, 2010; Spadola, 2013; York, 2022), the followers of Guru Sekumpul see him as a living symbol of divine presence, even after his death. The pilgrimage to his *haul* is not only an act of remembrance but also a search for blessings and moral renewal.

Nonetheless, this form of veneration is not without criticism. Reformist and conservative Islamic groups often view such traditions as *bid'ah* (unwarranted innovations) or even as leading to *syirk* (polytheism), arguing that excessive attachment to religious figures violates Islamic monotheism. This tension is part of a broader dichotomy in the study of Islam, between “normative Islam,” which emphasises scriptural and theological purity, and “popular Islam,” which focuses on how religion is practised in everyday life. Scholars such as Ernest Gellner (1981) have noted that popular religious expressions often persist despite institutional opposition because they fulfil deep-seated social and spiritual needs within communities.

In this context, the *haul* tradition is best understood not simply as a religious ritual but as a multidimensional practice that sustains communal identity, fosters solidarity, and stimulates the local economy. During the *haul*, thousands of visitors support local businesses through trade, transportation, and temporary lodging, creating a cycle of mutual benefit between spirituality and development (Cheer et al., 2017; Yozukmaz et al., 2020). The concept of *barokah* operates here not only as a metaphysical belief but also as a form of religious capital that mobilises community participation and social cohesion.

By analysing the *Haul Guru Sekumpul*, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Islamic tourism. It argues that sustainable Islamic tourism must be redefined beyond formalistic or Middle Eastern-centric models to include grassroots, community-led religious events that are spiritually enriching and socially empowering. In doing so, this research reinforces theoretical approaches within the sociology of religion and Islamic studies that foreground lived religion, charismatic authority, and the integration of faith with local cultural systems.

Methodology

This research uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological design. This approach was chosen because it aims to understand the deep meaning behind the tradition of Haul Guru Sekumpul and the integration of the concept of *barokah* in practice. Qualitative methods are well-suited to explore subjective experiences, beliefs, and interpretations of socio-cultural meanings that cannot be quantitatively measured (Creswell, 2013). The phenomenological design was chosen because its primary focus is to reveal the life experiences of traditional actors directly and authentically, thereby capturing to reveal the life experiences of traditional actors directly and authentically, thereby

capturing the essence of the meaning of barokah in the context of haul (Moustakas, 1994). This approach allows researchers to understand how individuals and communities live, interpret, and pass on the spiritual and social values contained in those traditions. The research was carried out in South Kalimantan with research subjects consisting of religious leaders, worshippers, and the surrounding community who have a central role in the implementation of the haul as well as an understanding related to the values of blessings produced.

Table 1: Informants and Their Purpose

Informant	Interview Objectives
Religious Leaders	To understand their views on the concept of barokah and their role in the haul tradition. (R1)
Congregation	To explore their personal experiences related to participation in the haul and the meaning of the barokah they receive. (R2, R3, R4)
Surrounding Community	To gain perspectives on the teachings and spiritual heritage passed on by Guru Sekumpul as well as their views on the role of the community in preserving this tradition. (R5)

The data collection techniques in this study include participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participatory observation was carried out with the direct involvement of researchers in haul activities to observe social dynamics and religious practices authentically. In-depth interviews are used to explore the views, experiences, and meaning of barokah from the informants, so that a deeper understanding of the tradition can be obtained. In addition, document analysis is carried out by examining literature, archives, and documents related to the teachings and history of Guru Sekumpul, in order to enrich the context and understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Data analysis was carried out with an interpretive approach, namely identifying patterns in the way worshippers and society integrate the concepts of faith and barokah in daily life. This approach allows researchers to explore the spiritual and social meanings that are formed and inherited in society (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The selection of qualitative methods with phenomenological design is based on the need to understand socio-religious phenomena in depth and contextually, in accordance with the objectives of this study. This method has been shown to be

effective in similar studies that explore spiritual meaning and experience in religious communities (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Smith et al., 2009).

Results and Discussion analysis

Charismatic Authority and the Notion of Barokah

Martapura, a city located in South Kalimantan, is known as a rich religious and cultural center, especially related to Islamic traditions. One of the most respected figures in Martapura is KH. Muhammad Zaini Abdul Ghani or Guru Sekumpul (died August 10, 2005 (aged 63)), a scholar who had a great influence in guiding the local community towards a more religious life. He is known for his wisdom, humility, and dedication to spreading the teachings of Islam in a friendly and inclusive way. Its influence is still strong today, especially through the tradition of *Haul Guru Sekumpul* which is held every year. The event is not only a spiritual pilgrimage but also connects people from various social and cultural backgrounds. Guru Sekumpul, with his blessed charm, has left a legacy that incorporates religious, social, and cultural values in the lives of the people of Martapura, making him an important icon in the religious history of South Kalimantan.



(Picture 1. The atmosphere of the Haul Guru Sekumpul Celebration, January 2025. Source from Informan R2)



(Picture 2. Photo KH. Muhammad Zaini Abdul Ghani or Guru Sekumpul, Source Informan R2)

This research found that the Indonesian people's belief in the blessing (*barokah*) of Guru Sekumpul is the core of the haul tradition that is carried out every year. The community believes that Guru Sekumpul, as a charismatic scholar, is able to be an intermediary of grace and blessings from Allah. According to religious figures at the tomb of Syeh Arsyad Al Banjari, R1 is

“... Presence in haul is not only seen as a form of respect but also a means to obtain spiritual peace, ease of sustenance, health, and a harmonious life. This belief is strengthened through the teaching of scholars who direct the congregation to make haul a collective moment in getting closer to Allah through the medium of goodness inherited by Guru Sekumpul.”(interview with the source, August 2024)

This belief in *barokah* is not only individual but also collective. Millions of pilgrims from different regions and even other countries came with the same goal, creating intense spiritual energy and close solidarity(Seise, 2021). The Guru Sekumpul family plays an important role in maintaining the continuity of this tradition, ensuring that the narrative of blessings remains relevant and accepted by the younger generation. The haul tradition of Guru Sekumpul reflects a harmonious blend of Islamic values and local culture(Abbas et al., 2019; Armiah et al., 2023; Khairuddin, 2023). One of its distinctive features is the provision of free consumption on a large scale by the local community. This practice not only reflects Islamic teachings about generosity (*infaq*) but also illustrates the spirit of mutual cooperation that has become part of the culture of the Banjar community. This haul ritual

also involves the reading of *maulid al-Barzanji*, remembrance together, and the respect of guests who come from various regions.



(Picture 3. photo of the tomb of Syech Arsyad Al Banjari, source from Researcher)

Moreover, many pilgrims bring souvenirs typical of their region to be distributed, which reflects the sense of mutual sharing and respect between pilgrims. This shows that local traditions have been harmonized with Islamic teachings, creating harmony that is not only felt by the local community but also attracts the attention of pilgrims from outside South Kalimantan. This tradition is not only about religious rituals, but also about building close social relationships through complementary cultural and religious values (Rahayu et al., 2015; Syarbini, 2011; Zainal, 2014).

Socio-Economic Impacts on the Local Community

The results of this research confirm that the integration of local beliefs with Islamic values in the Guru Sekumpul haul tradition not only strengthens the spiritual aspect (Cheer et al., 2017; Rohmawati & Ismail, 2017; Van Niekerk, 2018), but also becomes a means of building social solidarity (Achmad, 2022; Hutabarat, 2023; Yozukmaz et al., 2020). This tradition creates a collective space where the belief in barokah can be felt together, as well as being a place to bring together local culture with Islamic teachings. This tradition also strengthens the Islamic identity of the Banjar people, which is reflected in the way they maintain harmony between religious teachings and cultural heritage. Although this tradition has received wide appreciation, it is inseparable from

criticism. Some puritan Islamic groups consider the existence of local cultural elements as a form of deviation from the pure teachings of Islam. However, the local community is able to maintain a balance between respecting local traditions and Islamic values, making this haul an inclusive space that can be accepted by various groups. According to the pilgrims who attended R2,

“... Sharing with others is my way of loving Abah Guru Sekumpul, I am also present and at the same time carry out my promise to something I am doing, and I am sure it will be fulfilled.” (interview with the source, January 2025)

The integration of local beliefs and the concept of *barokah* in the Guru Sekumpul haul tradition provides new insights into how religious traditions can be social glue. The uniqueness of this tradition is not only relevant to local contexts but also contributes to the global discourse on the relationship between religion and culture. Haul Guru Sekumpul shows that religious traditions can be a space to strengthen social relationships, strengthen diversity, and create harmony in society. The concept of *barokah* is the core of the motivation of thousands of pilgrims who attend every year in the tradition of *Haul Guru Sekumpul*. For them, haul is not only to commemorate the death of Guru Sekumpul, but also an opportunity to obtain blessings in life. *Barokah* is seen as an abundant grace from Allah, which is conveyed through the medium of spiritual figures such as Guru Sekumpul. This belief creates a deep sense of spirituality, where attendance at the haul is seen as worship as well as devotion to a highly respected scholar. This belief according to R3, that

“... Anyone can take and also enjoy what I give and give alms, all this because I hope that Abah Guru Sekumpul, I came from far away to bring all this, and I am very happy when this is over.” (interview with the source, August 2024)



(Picture 4. Free feeding practice, source informant R2)

For many pilgrims, this blessing is not only manifested in inner peace, but also felt in tangible forms, such as the ease of sustenance, health, and harmonization of family life. Their presence in the haul is often seen as a hopeful step to beg for ease of living. The concept of barokah provides a strong emotional and spiritual bond, encouraging people from all over the region, even abroad, to participate in this tradition. Barokah is a symbol of spiritual unity that unites thousands of people in one common goal, which is to seek the blessings of life through religious traditions. According to the surrounding community, R5 that

"... More than just a spiritual tradition, *Haul Guru Sekumpul* has a far-reaching impact on local social and economic solidarity. Socially, this haul strengthens relationships between pilgrims from various backgrounds. Moments such as sharing food, dhikr together, and supporting each other during the implementation of the haul create an extraordinary atmosphere of togetherness. The congregation helps each other regardless of differences in social status or regional origin, showing that this haul not only strengthens the relationship between individuals and God, but also with fellow humans." (interview with the source, August 2024)

On the economic side, haul is a catalyst for local economic activity. Thousands of pilgrims who attended created economic opportunities for the local community. Small traders take advantage of this event to sell food, drinks, and souvenirs typical of haul (Jeniva & Tanyid, 2025; Quiroz-Niño & Murga-Menoyo, 2017). In addition, the provision of free consumption in large quantities by local residents is not only a form of worship but also creates a mutual cooperation-based economic wheel. Many local families provide accommodation, transportation, and logistics services for pilgrims, all of which contribute to the economic dynamics of the surrounding area. This haul tradition proves that the concept of *barokah* is not only limited to the spiritual dimension but extends to strengthen social solidarity and provide real economic benefits. The blessings sought by the congregation are felt collectively, both in the form of peace of mind and social and economic welfare. This tradition is an example of how religious practices can create far-reaching positive impacts, connecting spirituality, solidarity, and well-being in mutually reinforcing harmony.



(Picture 5. The condition of the road to Guru Sekumpul's tomb is full of trading places, source by Researcher)

The *Haul Guru Sekumpul tradition* is a unique manifestation of the combination of Islamic religious values with the local culture of the people of South Kalimantan. In this tradition, Islamic teachings about respect for deceased scholars are harmonized with Banjar culture which emphasizes mutual cooperation, generosity, and respect for guests. Rituals such as the recitation of *maulid*, joint dhikr, and special prayers at the tomb of Guru Sekumpul are the core of the event imbued with Islamic spiritual values. However, this religious element is increasingly meaningful through local practices such as the provision of free mass consumption, which reflects the social solidarity of the Banjar people. This interaction creates harmony that strengthens Islamic identity while preserving local culture. The use of the Banjar language in prayers and celebrations, as well as the hospitality shown by the local community, makes this haul not only a spiritual event, but also an inclusive social space. This combination shows that religion and culture do not have to compete but can complement each other by creating traditions that are rich in meaning and relevant to all levels of society.

For the people of South Kalimantan and thousands of pilgrims who come from various regions, Guru Sekumpul is a figure who goes beyond the role of ulama. He is seen as a spiritual figure who has an extraordinary closeness to Allah, so he is considered a blessing broker in their lives. This belief is not only based on religious teachings, but also on the collective spiritual experience they feel. Many pilgrims believe that being present in the haul can bring inner peace, ease of sustenance, and family harmony. As explained by R4,

“... Guru Sekumpul is also a symbol of unity. His personality who is known to be friendly, wise, and humble inspires many people to emulate his life. The presence of thousands of pilgrims from various regions and social backgrounds shows how Guru Sekumpul is able to transcend geographical and cultural boundaries, making this haul more than just a religious ritual, but also an event to strengthen social and spiritual ties.” (interview with the source, August 2024)

The *Haul Guru Sekumpul* tradition has a significant contribution to the development of Islamic tourism, both at the local and international levels. The presence of thousands of pilgrims from within and outside the country makes South Kalimantan an attractive spiritual tourism destination. This haul is not only a religious experience, but also introduces the richness of local culture, such as Banjar cuisine, traditional arts, and the hospitality of the local community. For tourists, this haul is a space to explore Islam through warm and inclusive traditions. For the local community, this tradition opens up economic opportunities through trade and service activities, such as the provision of food, lodging, and transportation. This haul tradition has succeeded in making religion an inclusive economic driving force, where spirituality and economics go hand in hand. Haul Guru Sekumpul offers a new paradigm in Islamic tourism. This tradition highlights the harmony between religious values and local culture, making it a tourism model that not only focuses on worship but also celebrates diversity. In this way, *Haul Guru Sekumpul* not only strengthens Islamic identity in Indonesia but also makes an important contribution to the global discourse on how religion can be a unifying force in the midst of cultural diversity.

The findings of this research directly align with the research objectives, particularly in revealing the multifaceted function of the *haul* tradition beyond its devotional dimension. *First*, the research demonstrates that the *Haul Guru Sekumpul* serves as a powerful social mechanism that strengthens community solidarity. Pilgrims from various regions gather in a shared spiritual atmosphere, creating temporary but intense communal bonds through collective prayer, shared meals (*sedekah*), and voluntary service (*gotong royong*). This supports the argument that local Islamic traditions, when practiced in large-scale public rituals, generate a form of participatory cohesion that reinforces both religious and social identity. *Second*, the economic implications of the *haul* are evident in the heightened commercial activity observed during the event. Local vendors, transport operators, and accommodation providers experience significant increases in income. This empirical finding confirms the role of *haul* as a culturally embedded model of *sustainable Islamic tourism*, where

religious practice catalyzes grassroots economic development. It offers a counterpoint to more commercialized or institutionalized models of Islamic tourism that often neglect the lived experience of local communities. *Third*, the research illuminates the concept of *barokah* not merely as a theological belief, but as a form of religious capital, a resource that mobilizes emotional, social, and material investments from participants. The desire to obtain *barokah* from Guru Sekumpul drives not only pilgrimage behavior but also philanthropic practices, donations, and collective rituals. This reinforces the idea that *barokah* operates as a motivating force within Muslim societies that intertwines spiritual aspiration with tangible action.

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings extend current debates in the field of spiritual tourism by highlighting the importance of local religious authority, cultural expressions, and indigenous spirituality in shaping tourism behaviour. The *haul* tradition offers an empirical case of what scholars describe as “lived religion” where faith is enacted in daily and collective life, not just within formalised doctrine. It also supports the relevance of Max Weber’s Theory of *charismatic authority*, as Guru Sekumpul’s spiritual influence persists and expands even posthumously, legitimised through ongoing popular devotion.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

The Haul Guru Sekumpul represents a compelling case of how Islamic values are not only preserved but also reinterpreted through the lens of local culture in South Kalimantan. Anchored in the concept of *barokah*, a spiritual blessing believed to emanate from the legacy of pious figures, this tradition attracts millions of pilgrims annually. Its spiritual magnetism is inseparable from local values such as cooperation, generosity, and communal solidarity, which are manifested in the hospitality, economic mobilisation, and collective rituals surrounding the event.

This ethnographic reality supports broader theoretical discussions in religious studies, particularly the dynamic interplay between “universal Islam” and “local Islam” as noted by scholars such as Talal Asad (1993) and Clifford Geertz (1960). The Haul Guru Sekumpul confirms that religious practice is always embedded in social context, where doctrine, culture, and identity coalesce to create a uniquely Indonesian form of lived Islam. Beyond its spiritual significance, the haul functions as a catalyst for socio-economic development. It enhances community cohesion, stimulates the local economy through religious tourism, and strengthens Islamic identity within a pluralistic society.

These findings resonate with previous studies (Fauzi & Battour, 2024; Perbawasari et al., 2019) that highlight the potential of religious events to integrate faith-based practices with sustainable economic and social benefits. As a model of inclusive Islamic tourism, the Haul Guru Sekumpul exemplifies how religious traditions can bridge spirituality, culture, and development. It offers a peaceful and culturally rich expression of Islam that can be positioned as a form of soft diplomacy in the global Islamic discourse.

The Haul Guru Sekumpul tradition illustrates how local Islamic practices can function as holistic systems that integrate worship, economic activity, and communal belonging. These findings underscore the significance of understanding the haul as a culturally specific and globally resonant model of spiritual tourism, contributing to broader academic discussions on sustainability, religious capital, and Islamic cultural heritage.

For future research, a comparative analysis of similar traditions, such as the Haul Sunan Ampel in East Java or Haul Tuan Guru Zainuddin in Lombok, could uncover both shared patterns and unique distinctions in how local communities sacralize religious memory. This could further deepen our understanding of how religious authority, social capital (Bourdieu, 1986), and collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992) function within Indonesian Islam. From a policy and practical perspective, managing religious events of this scale requires an integrative and sustainable approach that balances spiritual devotion, cultural preservation, and eco-friendly tourism planning. If managed inclusively and responsibly, the Haul Guru Sekumpul can serve as a global model for religious event-based community empowerment and a showcase of Islam Nusantara's harmony between tradition and modernity.

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