

The Impact of Covid 19 and Commodification on Tourism Religious Islam: From Spiritual for Experience Tour

Impact of Covid 19 and
Commodification on
Tourism

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1757

Submitted:
1 OCTOBER 2023

Accepted:
21 NOVEMBER 2023

ABSTRACT

Governments around the world are deeply concerned about how difficult it is for Hajj pilgrims to halt their travel movements during COVID-19 restrictions and national lockdown periods. This pandemic has had a significant impact on pilgrimage tourism in Mecca because since 2020, gatherings at pilgrimage sites have been prohibited. In other words, the Saudi government expanded the hospitality, tourism, and telecommunications sectors in general and modernized Mecca's tourism infrastructure in particular, turning it into a modern city, to take advantage of the increasing demand for religious tourism and to maximize economic benefits (Pecenoni et al., 2012). The desire for increased luxury and comfort suggests that the Hajj has evolved into a more "branded" commercial event. This study also points to the need for further investigation to fully understand the nature of Hajj monetization for religious tourism in general. The spiritual congregation experience is transformed into a counter-experience, a tourist attraction. Additionally, the spiritual congregation experience is transformed into a tourist attraction, a rival experience. violates and endangers the principles of the Hajj pilgrimage and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad SAW which prioritizes equality, modesty and not showing off. The aim of this report is to begin to discuss the impact of the commodification of the Hajj. The results of pilot research (focus group) on Hajj pilgrims in England over the previous three years are discussed specifically in this report. According to this research, the Hajj has become a commodity, at least for those who undertake it; not only is the experience more "touristy".

Keywords: Hajj, pilgrimage, tourism, commodification, COVID-19 restrictions

ABSTRAK

Pemerintah di seluruh dunia sangat prihatin tentang seberapa sulitnya bagi jemaah haji untuk menghentikan perjalanan mereka selama pembatasan COVID-19 dan periode lockdown nasional. Pandemi ini telah berdampak signifikan pada pariwisata ibadah di Mekah karena sejak tahun 2020, pertemuan di tempat-tempat ibadah haji dilarang. Dengan kata lain, pemerintah Arab Saudi memperluas sektor kepariwisataan, kehospitalitasan, dan telekomunikasi secara umum, dan memodernisasi infrastruktur pariwisata Mekah khususnya, menjadikannya kota modern, untuk memanfaatkan meningkatnya permintaan pariwisata religius dan memaksimalkan manfaat ekonomi (Pecenoni et al., 2012). Keinginan akan kenyamanan dan kemewahan yang lebih tinggi menunjukkan bahwa Haji telah berkembang menjadi suatu acara komersial yang lebih "bermerek". Studi ini juga menunjukkan perlunya penyelidikan lebih lanjut untuk sepenuhnya memahami sifat moneter Haji untuk pariwisata religius secara umum. Pengalaman berkumpul secara spiritual berubah menjadi suatu pengalaman berlawanan, suatu daya tarik wisata. Selain itu, pengalaman berkumpul secara spiritual berubah menjadi suatu daya tarik wisata, suatu pengalaman bersaing. Melanggar dan membahayakan prinsip-prinsip ibadah haji dan ajaran Nabi Muhammad SAW yang menekankan pada kesetaraan, kerendahan hati, dan tidak berpameran. Tujuan dari laporan ini adalah untuk memulai pembahasan mengenai dampak komodifikasi Haji. Hasil penelitian awal (kelompok fokus) pada jemaah haji di Inggris selama tiga tahun terakhir dibahas khusus dalam

JIMKES

Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen
Kesatuan
Vol. 11 No. 3, 2023
pp. 1757-1765
STIE Kesatuan
ISSN 2337 – 7860

INTRODUCTION

In the framework of religious tourism, what is meant is recreational travel, sightseeing, or individual or group travel for a specific purpose. Traveling on pilgrimages is not a new practice, as it is predicted in both the Koran and sacred texts (Timothy et al., 2006). There are two main reasons why followers of certain religions go on pilgrimages: the first and most common reason is to satisfy their curiosity. Pilgrimage is a religious act that involves the implementation of religious rituals such as gathering to pray and make sacrifices, therefore pilgrimages are carried out for spiritual and material needs (Vukonic, 1996). The scope and size of tourism driven by religious beliefs has expanded. Currently serving as.

A very important segment of the global industry (Sharpley, 2009). History shows that religious travel and pilgrimages were a major economic driver. From ancient times to the present, religious ritual travel has been a profitable industry. In particular, sacred sites visited by local residents will gain the greatest financial benefits from increasing tourist numbers (Sizer, 1999). As noted by the UN World Tourism Organization, "300 to 330 million tourists visit the world's major sites annually" (UNWTO, 2014), pilgrimage tourism is estimated at 155 million annually worldwide (ARC, 2011). The UN World Tourism Organization states that '300 to 330 million tourists visiting major world sites every year' (UNWTO, 2014). The COVID-19 pandemic at that time was a serious health emergency and brought uncertainty and negative impacts to almost all sectors throughout the world. The main pilgrimage tourism destinations were forced to close during the pandemic, this caused a socio-economic disaster in business due to the lack of visitors or pilgrimage tourists to these destinations (Raj & Griffin, 2020).

In December 2019, Wuhan, China, the capital of Hubei province, reported the first case of the Covid-19 pandemic (Buckley, 2020). This virus pandemic has caused many problems in the fields of work, health, global economy and tourism. The high number of illnesses proves how difficult it is to contain the virus when it can easily spread to various locations (Raj & Griffin, 2020). As a result, Covid 19 has had many negative impacts and has raised public concerns about travel services and the Hajj pilgrimage. Due to the impact of COVID-19, a number of religious tourism destinations, including Jerusalem, Mecca, Vatican City, Mahabodhi Temple in India, and Lumbini, which usually attract millions of pilgrims, have been negatively impacted. The economic disaster due to the impact of COVID-19 was the cause (Ali & Cobanoglu, 2020). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates that the tourism industry will lose more than 100 million jobs in 2020 as a result of past disasters, which have reduced revenues by \$2.8 trillion and the loss of approximately 100 million jobs in 2020 from the tourism industry. According to Prasrain (2015), the decline in tourist arrivals during the Maoist insurgency in 1996–2006 and the 2015 earthquake were the worst in 2020. Tourist traffic, both domestic and foreign, fell 80.78% during the Covid 19 epidemic compared to the previously (Prasrain, 2021).

This research paper examines the findings of previous research on Hajj pilgrims carried out in England during the previous three years. Based on this research, the pilgrimage has become a commodity, at least for those who undertake the journey. This is no longer just an experience; the focus is now on "tourism," and pilgrims are looking for what matters most—luxury and comfort. This report takes into account the results of previous research that done in English to pilgrims Hajj in three year this last time. This study also implies that further investigation is needed to fully understand the significance and commercialization of the Hajj for religious travel in general.

This luxury commodity has greatly influenced the fundamental shift in human values that has occurred. Because they are considered something to be guarded, sacred artifacts

and sites may not be as highly valued as they once were. However, this raises a crucial problem that has not received much attention in previous research. Currently, it is difficult to see how commercialization has affected the religious tourism experience. This knowledge gap requires further investigation, what causes it? Has the holy purpose and spiritual pilgrimage of pilgrims become a commodity? If so, then the behavior of Hajj pilgrims has shifted towards materialism. Mecca offers upscale hotel services, state-of-the-art tourism facilities and information technology. The community insists that pilgrims make the pilgrimage turn their spiritual experience into a tourist attraction in the future. The current gatherings are competing with each other and somewhat endangering the equality and simplicity of the principles. The permissibility of pilgrimages as religious spiritual journeys may be reduced or destroyed by the increasing materialistic economic uncertainty in today's pilgrims' spiritual experiences, turning them into more traditional luxury tourism experiences and, consequently, creating a different pilgrimage or social tourism market. identity, such as 'Brand' Hajj pilgrims and unbranded 'Simple Hajj' pilgrims. In line with the above suggestion, if the Muslim community's spiritual progress is linked to commodification, commercialization, and materialism, then the Saudi government's claim that the Muslim community needs to recognize the comprehensive spiritual outcomes of this journey is unclear. According to Shepherd (2002), this means that when a destination or event is sold on the tourism market, the destination or event becomes a commodity (a product or benefit that has financial value) and, as a result, incurs a cost of authenticity in the eyes of tourists. Therefore, the main aim of this report is to clarify how much of the pilgrims' spiritual experience in Mecca is commercialized and transformed into a more touristy experience, as well as how genuine and engaging they find the journey.

METHOD STUDY

According to (Smith, 1992), From Religious Tourism to Tourism as Religion, the relationship between tourism and spirituality can be understood as a continuum starting from religious tourism to tourism as religion. On the one hand, Smith claims that this was an impetus for the commodification of the Qurashi's religion. Islamic Religious Tourism: Through the Centuries, from Spiritual Experiences to Muslim Pilgrimage Tourism (Ahmed, 1992). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia receives approximately US\$16 billion in revenue annually from the Hajj pilgrimage. In the last three years, the government has spent more than \$35 billion to improve pilgrimage facilities and diversify them to optimize economic benefits from religious tourism (Vijayanand, 2012). The KSA government claims that the economic impact of religious tourism is much greater than the impact of other businesses in the country, except the oil sector (Fleischer, 2000).

Nevertheless, there are currently discussions regarding oil demand and prices (Wong, 2016). Additionally, to improve hospitality and tourism infrastructure, the Saudi government has allocated \$88 billion for the development of religious tourism. By the end of 2015, there will be 343,000 branded hotel rooms, up from 250,000 rooms in 2011 (HVC Hotel Survey 2012). Aljazira Capital (2015) reveals that hotel shares have entered double-digit growth due to religious tourism, despite the global recession (Collier International, 2011). This trend was triggered by an increase in the number of Hajj pilgrims by 6% every year. Just from religious tourism events, the KSA government generated US\$9 billion in 2010 and an additional \$16 billion in 2012 (Travel Talk Middle East, 2010) Twelve million pilgrims visited city holy Mecca And Medina every the year (Al Arbiyah News, 2012), And amountthe estimated will increase become 17 million on year 2025. With growth facility Which produced, a number of commentator start mention Mecca as 'Vegas Middle. East' (Taylor, 2011; Wainwright, 2015). Proof This shows that the KSA government has realized the economic value of religious tourism, by learning from other religious tourism destinations such as France (Tourist travel annual - 4,608,000, control share market 16.2%) Rome (Journey annual - 4,360,000, holding 15.3% market share) Spain (Annual travel - 2,634,000, holding 9.3% share market) (Mintel, 2012).

Commodification It can be said that issues such as the commodification of pilgrimage travel, its objective and subjective authenticity, and the weakening of spiritual experiences and values are driven by the increasing presence of modern branded tourism commodities in religious destinations and in the lives of pilgrims. Thus, as Henderson (2010) notes, selling a destination as a tourism product results in increased travel demand, which in turn leads to more tourism experiences International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Volume 5(i) 2017 ~ 91 ~. But as Smith (1992) points out, the graph is only an interpretation of what is currently thought, and is subject to change. According to (Swatos et al., 2002), pilgrims carry out typical tourist activities apart from religious rituals. For example, tourists buy tour packages that include visits to holy places and holy cities that have ties to a particular religion. Furthermore, Gupta (1999) emphasized that it is important to look at the problem more broadly.

In addition to the features of worship, pilgrims and pilgrimages are also involved in aspects of sightseeing, travel, and transportation; These activities have similarities with visiting different religious places and shopping. the service aspect, almost everything that is done in tourism. Based on existing research (O'Connor, 2014; Osborne, 2014) and other research indicating the existence of this work, the spiritual experience and authenticity of the journey, as well as the location of the Mecca workers, is currently being questioned. ; In particular, with the increasing consumption of material commodities by the Mecca mosque and its attendants, this makes the spiritual life of the mosque more meaningful. For example, O'Connor (2014) highlights attention to responses in Mecca: In 2011, Esa, a 37-year-old Muslim pilgrim born and raised in Hong Kong, performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. Esa stayed at Jam Gadang Mecca, an exclusive megahotel with 24-hour butler service, during the Hajj pilgrimage. Esa saw most of the congregation praying in a luxurious, air-conditioned room with a view of the Kaaba, instead of the hassle of traveling to the Grand Mosque. This became a turning point in Esa's life, as he felt guilty for choosing such a hotel, which had destroyed the purpose of his religious trip as well as his spiritual experience and subjective sense of authenticity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thus, Smith (1989) see also (Turnbull, 1981), proposes that although pilgrims and tourists have the same basic requirements for traveling (extra income, free time, etc.), differences between tourists and pilgrims can be identified in terms of meaning. or personal meaning. beliefs attached to each activity (Sharpley, 2009). However, this study shows that we are witnessing the privatization of the Hajj rather than finding gradual differences. This is because the increasing commodification of Mecca and the Hajj actually increases the urge for materialistic consumption among Hajj pilgrims, which ultimately directs their spiritual experience in a more touristic direction. The authors acknowledge that there is still room for interpretation with this paradigm. The Pilgrim/Tourist Continuum Adapted from (Smith, 1989) describes the various reasons, encounters, and actions of pilgrims and tourists. Interests and behavior may change from pilgrim to tourist, or vice versa, without the individual realizing it (Smith, 1989).

Differences (Pearce, 1991). According to previous research, pilgrims to Mecca were pious and unrelated to tourism (Raj, 2007), thus placing A and B on a continuum. However, the main focus of this research is how Islamic Hajj pilgrims change from A and B to C (Haji-Plus, motivated by religious tourism products) or D (Hajj Brand, Religious Tourism which is a Tourism Commodity in One unity, reflect proof in works (O'Connor , 2014) And etc Which recommend that change behavior And activity pilgrims Hajj to world material Mecca and focus on the spiritual experience of the trip, which was blessed by Allah to they. More Far Again, need noted that, No only technology Which push para pilgrim For behave like tourist, However all over experience luxury branded hotels around the Grand Mosque in Mecca, contribute to and transform the spiritual experience of pilgrims into a more tourism-oriented experience. According to Irfan al-Alawi (2013), there has been a shift in the behavior of the congregation after the establishment of the Jam Gadang Mecca Hotel. The congregation no longer shows the same spirituality and

now worships the Clock Tower more than the Kaaba. God's Abode (Batrawy, 2014, p. 1). One of the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) seems to contradict the following behavior of pilgrims: Hajj is not for show or for personal fitness (Raj & Morpeth, 2007). In Smith's continuum, most evidence suggests that the pilgrims to Mecca probably fell into category C, and the addition of D is gaining increasing attention. Evidence shows that pilgrims are cheated by luxury hotels and tourism commodities, and that they also behave like hedonistic tourists due to their heavy reliance on SMART technology, which violates the morals of the Hajj and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which are centered on equality, interests, and diligent in worship. These developments cast doubt on the authenticity of the pilgrimage and turned the spiritual experience of pilgrimage into a more commercial one. Therefore, the question that arises is how deeply the commodification process is ingrained in Mecca, a holy place. Study of the Commercialization of Mecca and the Hajj The transformation of ancient Mecca and the Hajj into modern tourist locations aimed at customers offering the latest spiritual commodities will be based on an understanding of commercialization in tourism (York, 2001). To demonstrate unnecessary commodification and its impact on the legitimacy of holy places and rituals, we will first discuss the history of Mecca and its religious pilgrimage.

Tourism becomes a commodity when national traditions, celebrations, and rituals are transformed into tourist attractions, staged to attract visitors, and shaped to fit the needs of market-driven influence operations (Mitchell, 2000). Commercialized religious tourism forces regions and destinations to engage in materialistic marketing, which involves the sale of tangible and intangible cultural artifacts. In essence, commercialization turns the development of culture and identity into a means of profit. According to (Britton, 1991), commodification facilitates the creation of additional economic prospects for domestic investors. Therefore, the commodification of the Hajj pilgrimage due to enormous commercialization has robbed pilgrims of their spiritual and subjective objective assets in this materialistic arena. Although Muslims appear to be performing prayers, the materialistic actions of the pilgrims during the Hajj seem to contradict themselves and they lack the sense of spiritual devotion to Allah and self-denial of rudeness and hatred that is the main focus of the ritual (Bagli 2015). Religion has become more individualistic as a result of the privatization of religion and private business, where spirituality and religion are often referred to as "New Age" (York, 2000; Einstein, 2008).

Similar to how private companies provide public facilities and services in the modern neoliberal economy, the Hajj is also for sale. The material and cultural resources of Islamic ritual were looted, reduced in size, and traded like commodities. The trend of neoliberalism encourages commodification to differentiate between the rich and the poor, giving rise to brands such as Haji and Haji-Simple and Haji-Plus. According to (Garuda, 2010), the Hajj pilgrimage is intended to be egalitarian for the one billion people on this planet, overcoming differences in racial, ethnic, national and socio-economic status. By treating all Hajj pilgrims equally before Allah and implementing the same dress codes, customs and prayers, differences can be reduced.

The image of the Hajj in the eyes of the public both at home and abroad changed in the late 1990s when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia understood the significant economic impact of religious tourism. Going to Mecca and performing the Hajj appears to be more than just a collection of current customs, values, and beliefs; Rather, they are symbolic items related to the congregation's socio-economic class, lifestyle requirements, humility, and enjoyment (White, 2005). According to White (2005), religious teachings, moral principles and values have been reduced to floating signs that can be used like any other because of the commodification of religion. As a result, they are lifted from their original context and placed in a cultural marketplace where they may be restricted to certain applications and practices. "indecent", making it vulnerable to commercialization. However, when financial values seep into cultural values, both will disturb the customs and heritage of the place, resulting in the erasure of the history and heritage of the place and launching the process of commercialization of sacred tourism (Picard et al., 1997).

When it comes to the Hajj, the truth of advertising has little to do with what is real and more to do with what the tour company thinks the pilgrims want to see. For example, Hajj operators who prepare Hajj packages often mention the implied legitimacy of the trips they provide. Therefore, to help potential pilgrims discover something new, travel agents advertise their packages both online and offline. Some of the slogans they use include: “discover the spirituality of Mecca”, “discover the 5 Star Hajj experience”, “Your Passport to Mecca”, “quality service”, “value for money & peace of mind”, “We bring you closer to the experience authentic spiritual,” and “offers not only spirituality but also an unforgettable religious experience. Authenticity And Experience Spiritual With consider discussion above, the high presence of inauthentic material commodities that are not necessary to cause undesirable impacts on the authenticity of the Holy City, religious rituals, and the spiritual experiences of pilgrims, but to what extent? Sharpley states: authenticity connotes traditional culture and origin, genuine taste, Which real or Which unique (Sharpley 1994:130). Likewise, the KSA government emphasizes that Hajj pilgrims must have a complete and distinct authentic spiritual experience while traveling (Collins, et al., 2010). Therefore, it is important to understand the notion of spiritual experience and authenticity in the context of tourism. This will provide a framework for understanding how Hajj pilgrims view their social identity (the Hajj), Hajj rituals, and their authentic experiences in modern Mecca. The relationship between researchers has been able to identify traditional, modern and authentic tourism since the 19th century (Sharpley, 1996). The concept of authenticity was taken up and used as a marketing technique by MacCannel (1989) and Boorstin (1962) in a comprehensive debate. For example, individuals are led to believe that they actually celebrate holidays by the way they are portrayed in the media. Authentic passwords or symbols, such as ancient worldviews or manual farming methods, or did the pilgrims wish to fully immerse themselves in an ancient society to experience a way of life that was otherwise unavailable or non-existent? exist in today's industrial society. Paying attention to the characteristics of “traditional” that are considered authentic, and “contemporary” that are considered inauthentic, is necessary to understand this (Sharpley, 1996).

The series of ‘religious sites and experiences’ proposed by Sharpley (2015) (Figure 2) can help identify genuine tourist sites, whether they have been commercialized or not, and what kind of experience they offer. Mecca is consistently shown to be in the second and third boxes of the continuum, where the commodification of destination identity and its transformation into the “Vegas of the Middle East” (inauthentic modern) is caused by the presence of luxury, tourism infrastructure, branded malls, and smart technology (Taylor, 2011). Furthermore, the topic of subjective and objective authenticity of tourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is explored due to the strong commercialization of modern travel, which has a negative impact on the subjective and existential (liminal) authenticity of pilgrims and changes spirituality to be more important. commercialized (modern, inauthentic) experience. It can also be said, logically, that commercialization impacts the spirituality of a place's native culture, making it difficult to determine whether the Hajj or Mecca journeys are real or not. On the other hand, it labels (and markets) various types of travel, including all-inclusive vacation packages. Most importantly, the conclusion that mass tourism is inauthentic is usually used to distinguish commodities from niche markets and niche tourism markets from mass tourism products (Trilling, 1974). There are variations, originating from two appeals to tourism-related authenticity. One is based on the clarity of cultural artifacts or events; it can be genuine and genuine or fake. The second invitation is based on a less obvious criterion: an authentic experience is one that is distinguished from additional inauthentic experiences by way of rest, travel, vacation, tourism or travel. Authenticity is sought because inauthenticity is associated with modern civilization and tourism. As a result, it is easier to understand how some travel and tourism experiences are classified as authentic; moreover, mass or package tourism is essentially one of its components hence inauthentic and a reflection of modern culture (MacCannell, 1989). Authenticity is considered a cultural item created in pre-modern society before the influence of modern Western culture.

Simply put, something can only be considered original if it was created or created without the use of modern tools or resources. Therefore, everything produced by modern technology, tools, ideas, or culture including society is inauthentic, according to anthropologists, as is everything that has been changed by modern civilization (Cohen, 1988). Considering the fact that developing country pilgrims are international journal of religious tourism and pilgrimage volume and volume of pilgrimage pilgrimage) international 5 (i) 2017 calls for the disbursement of pilgrims for branded expenditure, this is the maximum expenditure of all other types for tourists traveling around, research in the future The future may benefit from the use of expanded sample sizes and a separation between Hajj pilgrims in developing countries (majority Hajj participants) and Hajj pilgrims in developed countries (minority participation in Hajj) (Triantafillidou et al., 2009). As a result, it is likely that these types of religious tourism and holiday and cultural tourism are connected today (Rinschede, 1992). Technique The aim of this research is to critically investigate the extent to which the modern commodification of pilgrimage transforms the spiritual experience of Islamic pilgrims into a tourist experience. A qualitative exploratory research approach was used to achieve this aim. More precisely, because the main focus of this research is on the role, behavior and perceptions of Hajj pilgrims, the use of quantitative research methods will make it easier to collect more detailed information regarding the reasons, perspectives and behavior of Hajj pilgrims in relation to the social and cultural context in which they are located. wider. Hajj (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004). Six pilgrims who had completed the Hajj pilgrimage in the previous three years participated in focus groups held in the UK, along with a travel agency that organizes Umrah and Hajj. Focus groups help encourage honest conversations about a particular subject—here, the commercialization of the Hajj—while also pointing out new discussion topics that can be discussed, relevant to the research. Additionally, it allows the interviewer to dig deeper into the respondent's responses and ask questions about other participants (Saunders et al., 2003). To ensure that everyone in the focus group understands the subject matter, the goals and objectives of the research project are explained briefly at the beginning of the session.

CONCLUSION

The main aim of this research is to reveal the uncertainty and its truth, to the extent where, commodification or commercialization change experience spiritual para Mecca pilgrims became more tourist visitors, as well as their perception of the level of authenticity and attractiveness of the pilgrimage. This study estimates the impact of Covid 19 on pilgrimage tourism in Mecca. The results show that respondents agree that pilgrimage tourism in Mecca has been adversely affected due to the Covid pandemic which has resulted in an unprecedented economic crisis. Therefore, the community agrees that to reduce the impact of the corona virus, they must implement safety and hygiene protocols to reopen the religious tourism sector. The significance of this research is that the research findings will help authorities formulate health and safety protocols.

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