THE BACKPACKER UMRAH PHENOMENON IN THE DIGITAL ERA: IMPACT ON PILGRIMS' SPIRITUALITY AND THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the phenomenon of backpacker umrah, which has gained popularity in the digital era, focusing on its opportunities, challenges, and impact on pilgrims' spirituality and the umrah travel business. Backpacker umrah allows pilgrims to organize their journeys independently using digital technology, such as ticket booking applications, accommodations, and worship information platforms. Employing a qualitative approach based on interviews and literature studies, the results indicate that umrah travel agencies can capitalize on these opportunities by developing strategies such as customized digital services, collaboration with backpacker communities, and offering more flexible umrah packages. Additionally, the study finds that technology has a dual impact on pilgrims' spirituality. On one hand, technology facilitates the implementation of worship; on the other hand, excessive reliance on technology can diminish the solemnity and spiritual meaning of the rituals. Therefore, it is crucial for pilgrims to maintain a balance between technology use and the essence of worship. This study provides valuable insights for the umrah travel industry in adapting to digital transformation while strengthening the spiritual dimensions of worship in the modern era.

Keywords: Backpacker Umrah, SWOT Analysis, Travel Business Impact

Abstrak: *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis fenomena umrah backpacker yang semakin populer di era digital, dengan fokus pada peluang, tantangan, dan dampaknya terhadap spiritualitas jamaah serta bisnis travel umrah. Backpacker umroh memungkinkan jamaah mengatur perjalanan secara mandiri menggunakan teknologi digital, seperti aplikasi pemesanan tiket, akomodasi, dan platform informasi ibadah. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif berdasarkan wawancara dan studi literatur, Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa biro travel umrah dapat memanfaatkan peluang ini dengan mengembangkan strategi seperti layanan penyesuaian digital, kolaborasi dengan komunitas backpacker, dan penyediaan paket-paket umrah yang lebih fleksibel. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa teknologi memiliki dampak ganda terhadap spiritualitas jamaah. Di satu sisi, teknologi memfasilitasi pelaksanaan ibadah, tetapi di sisi lain, ketergantungan yang berlebihan dapat mengurangi kekhusyukan dan makna spiritual. Oleh karena itu, penting bagi jamaah untuk menjaga keseimbangan antara penggunaan teknologi dan esensi ibadah. Penelitian ini memberikan*

wawasan penting bagi industri perjalanan umrah dalam menghadapi transformasi digital sekaligus memperkuat dimensi spiritualitas ibadah di era modern.

Kata kunci: *Umrah Backpacker, Analisis SWOT, Dampak bisnis Travel*

Introduction

The digital era has opened wide access for people to plan trips to the Holy Land independently, including in the context of traveling to perform Umrah.[1] Umrah as a form of spiritual travel that is in great demand by Muslims, especially in Indonesia, has now begun to experience a shift in its travel patterns.[2] echnological advances allow the emergence of the phenomenon of independent Umrah, which is when pilgrims choose to manage the entire process of traveling to Umrah independently without going through an official Umrah Travel Organizer (PPIU).[3] The principle of independent Umrah that most distinguishes it from Umrah in general lies in the freedom to determine the time and airline used based on the promo tickets obtained, so that this can reduce the cost for Umrah itself. In addition, it can decide to transit in several countries to get cheaper tickets. This is a fundamental difference between traveling through an authorized bureau that has service standards and legal responsibilities, and independent travel that is more flexible but has higher risks in terms of guidance and protection of pilgrims.[4]

The phenomenon of independent Umrah that has developed along with the advancement of digital technology has caused debate, especially regarding its influence on the spiritual dimension of worship. Although the process of planning and traveling to Saudi Arabia such as booking tickets, accommodation, and making visas is not included in the realm of Umrah worship by Shari'i because worship only begins when the intention of ihram at the miqat, the process still affects the spiritual readiness of pilgrims.[5] On the one hand, easy access to technology provides flexibility for individuals to plan trips more efficiently and economically. But on the other hand, it is feared that religious assistance and guidance in this independent travel model can reduce the deep understanding of the meaning of the worship being carried out.[6] This raises an important question, does a trip that is too focused on technical aspects and efficiency actually shift the intention of worship to become more touristy? Therefore, it is necessary to further examine how this backpacker travel pattern affects the religious experience and spiritual quality of pilgrims during Umrah.

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[1] Achmad Muchaddam Fahham, "Penyelenggaraan Ibadah Haji : Masalah Dan Penanganannya Hajj : Problems And Its Solutions," *Kajian*, 2015, 201–18.

[2] Anisa Hayati Rahman, "Dimensi Psikologis Dan Kepribadian Yang Terbentuk Dari Ibadah Umrah," *Modeling: Jurnal Program Studi Pgmi* 10, No. September (2023): 601–9.

[3] Philip L Pearce. *The Backpacker Phenomenon: Preliminary Answers To Basic Questions*. Department Of Tourism, James Cook University Of North Queensland, 1990.

[4] Menur Kusumaningtyas, "Umroh Backpacker: Prospek, Kendala Dan Strategi Pengembangannya," *Media Mahardhika* 16, No. 2 (2018): 230–37.

[5] Pitaya Pitaya, Ghifari Yuristiadhi Masyhari Makhasi, and Mohd Hafiz Hanafiah, "Not Only About Price but Also Lifestyle: Recent Phenomena of Backpacker Umrah In Indonesia," *Economica: Jurnal Ekonomi Islam* 12, no. 1 (2021): 75–96, https://doi.org/10.21580/economica.2021.12.1.7038.

[6] Hidayat Hidayat and Teguh Setiawan, "Iconity in Haji Backpacker Novel by Aguk Irawan MN" 297, no. Icille 2018 (2019): 143–47, https://doi.org/10.2991/icille-18.2019.31.

Several studies have shown that digital technology can simplify the administrative aspects of planning a trip to Umrah. However, there are concerns that the dominant use of technology in this process may reduce the depth of spirituality that should be at the core of Umrah. The phenomenon of "Independent Umrah", where pilgrims plan their trips independently, is increasingly prevalent as digital technology advances. Data from the Association of Umrah and Hajj Organizers (HIMPUH) notes that in 2024, approximately 400,000 Indonesian pilgrims performed Umrah without going through an official Umrah Pilgrimage Organizer (PPIU), out of a total of 1.8 million pilgrims who departed for Saudi Arabia HIMPUH.[7] This shows an increasing trend of performing Umrah independently, which raises questions about its impact on the spiritual experience of pilgrims and the role of official organizers in guiding the implementation of worship in accordance with Sharia.[8][9][10]

The adoption of digital technology in the journey towards performing Umrah has had a significant impact, especially through the emergence of various applications that facilitate booking airline tickets, accommodation, and worship guides. he existence of these applications allows prospective pilgrims to plan trips more flexibly and efficiently, and customize departure schedules according to personal preferences. In this context, the concept of independent umrah has attracted attention because it provides flexibility in choosing departure times, airlines, and accommodation, which are often adjusted to the cheapest promos or ticket prices.[11] While this provides benefits in terms of flexibility and cost savings, it also poses its own challenges, especially in terms of spiritual readiness and religious understanding, given the lack of religious guidance usually provided by official organizers.[12]

In this context, it is important to examine how the emergence of independent Umrah affects the existence of official Umrah travel service bureaus in Indonesia. As is known, the implementation of Umrah in general is still dominated by pilgrims who use the services of official bureaus or Umrah Travel Organizers (PPIU) registered with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Umrah bureaus not only provide administrative and logistical services, but also in-depth manasik guidance and protection during the trip. However, the increasing trend of independent umrah by utilizing digital technology poses its own challenges for official bureaus, both in terms of business and the role of religious guidance. This study aims to analyze the increasingly popular phenomenon of independent umrah in the digital era, and identify its impact on official umrah travel agencies. The main focus of this research is to

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[7] Https://Himpuh.Or.Id/Blog/Detail/2307/Himpuh-400-Ribu-Jemaah-Indonesia-Berangkat-Umrah-Tidak-Lewat-Ppiu-Di-Tahun-2024?Utm_Source Diakses Pada Tanggal 15 April 2025

[8] Oktoyadi Oktoyadi and Sri Wahyuni, "Kelayakan Pengembangan Bisnis E-Marketplace Perjalanan Ibadah Umrah Pada PT. Sarana Transwisata Teknologi," *Jurnal Riset Perbankan, Manajemen, Dan Akuntansi* 3, no. 2 (2019): 132, https://doi.org/10.56174/jrpma.v3i2.44.

[9] Pitaya Pitaya et al., "Paradigma Historis Backpacking Travel Sebagai Perjalanan Wisata," *Jurnal Pariwisata Terapan* 3, no. 1 (2019): 34, https://doi.org/10.22146/jpt.49274.

[10] Rusli Siti Atikah et al., "THE EMERGENCE of A NEW RELIGIOUS TRAVEL SEGMENT: UMRAH DO IT YOURSELF TRAVELLERS (DIY)," *Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites* 40, no. 1 (2022): 37–48, https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.40104-800.

[11] Issahaku Adam, "Backpackers' Risk Perceptions And Risk Reduction Strategies In Ghana," *Tourism Management Perspectives* 4, No. 9 (2015): 99–108.

[12] Mohammed Abdul Aziz Hamed Muhammad Almuhrzi, "Muslim Perspectives On Spiritual And Religious Travel Beyond Hajj: Toward Understanding Motivations For Umrah Travel In Oman.," *Tourism Management Perspectives* 2, No. 4 (2017): 235-242.

examine the shifting trend from Umrah trips that are fully managed by bureaus towards an independent travel model that is arranged by the pilgrims themselves by utilizing digital technology.

Theoretical Approach

The phenomenon of backpacker umrah is inseparable from the development of digital technology, the shift in patterns of spiritual consumption, and the changing preferences of younger generations toward more flexible models of religious travel. Several theories and conceptual approaches can be used as a foundation to analyze this phenomenon.

1. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

This model, developed by Davis (1989), posits that technology acceptance is determined by two primary factors: *perceived usefulness* and *perceived ease of use*. In the context of backpacker umrah, the use of digital applications for booking flights, accommodations, and accessing religious guidance serves as an indicator of how pilgrims adopt and utilize technology (Davis, 1989; Alim, 2021).Technology enables pilgrims to plan their journeys independently and tailor them to their personal preferences, enhancing both efficiency and autonomy (Jamil & Anwar, 2021).

2. Backpacker Mobility Theory

According to Pearce (2015), backpackers are characterized by independence, flexibility, and a preference for authentic experiences over standard comforts. This model helps explain why many pilgrims opt for the backpacker umrah style: they seek a more personalized and self-managed spiritual journey (Pitaya et al., 2021). The backpacker lifestyle has emerged as a new narrative in spiritual travel, offering freedom and affordability (Atikah et al., 2022).

3. Spirituality and Modernity

This theory views spirituality in the digital era as shifting from formal ritual practices to more individualized and flexible expressions. Hamed and Aziz (2017) argue that umrah has evolved beyond collective rituals into reflective personal experiences. While technology acts as a facilitator, excessive reliance on it may diminish spiritual focus and solemnity (Nurhayati et al., 2023). Spirituality remains the core of worship and must be aligned with critical awareness of technological use (Al-Qarni, 2022).

4. Disruption and Industry Adaptation Theory

Clayton Christensen (1997) introduced the concept of industry disruption, suggesting that enterprises must innovate or risk being displaced. In the context of umrah travel, the rise of backpacker umrah compels travel agencies to develop adaptive strategies such as flexible service packages and digital-based offerings (Oktoyadi & Wahyuni, 2019). The ability of umrah travel agencies to adapt to digitalization is key to maintaining business relevance amid changing consumer preferences (Fakhruddin & Ubaidillah, 2021).

5. Digital Religion and Social Media

Heidi Campbell (2010) introduced the concept of *digital religion*, which describes how religious practices are transformed through digital platforms. In the case of backpacker umrah, platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok serve not only as communication tools but also as mediums for *dakwah*, religious education, and spiritual community-building (Mayasari, 2019). Social media expands networks of religious solidarity and enables the sharing of spiritual experiences across geographical boundaries (Nurhayati et al., 2023).

Research Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to explore in depth the phenomenon of *umrah backpackers* that has emerged and developed in the digital era. The research focuses on digital communities that actively promote, discuss, and share experiences related to independent *umrah* travel, such as the "Umrah Backpacker Indonesia" group on Facebook, the "Umrah Mandiri Hemat" Telegram group, as well as TikTok and Instagram accounts that consistently document experiences of *umrah* without using official travel agencies. These communities were chosen because they represent a concrete manifestation of the advancement of communication and information technology, particularly in the context of digitalized spirituality. The communities have grown organically since around 2018, in line with the rising interest among the public to conduct spiritual journeys independently by utilizing digital platforms. These communities operate in a highly active and participatory manner; members regularly share information about airline ticket promotions, visa arrangements, hotel bookings, and detailed itineraries through social media and chat groups. This peer-to-peer communication model makes them a primary source of reference for prospective *umrah backpackers*.

The data analysis technique employed in this research is SWOT analysis, but limited to two main aspects: opportunities and challenges. The opportunity analysis is used to identify potential areas for collaboration and innovation that can be leveraged by official *umrah* travel agencies as well as by the backpacker communities themselves. These include the development of digital service platforms, flexible *umrah* packages, and the use of digital communities as media for promotion and religious education.

The research was conducted from January to April 2025, using both online (through social media and digital communities) and offline methods (through direct interviews with participants). Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, digital participatory observation (netnography), and documentation. Interviews were conducted with three main groups: individuals who have completed an *umrah backpacker* journey at least once, managers of official *umrah* travel agencies (PPIU), and digital community leaders or administrators who actively share information about independent *umrah*.

Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The criteria for selection included: (1) having completed at least one independent *umrah* trip, (2) being currently or previously active in digital backpacker *umrah* communities, (3) aged between 20 and 40 years old, (4) having experience in organizing their own *umrah* trip, and (5) preferably having experience with both independent and agency-based *umrah* for comparison. Informants from travel agencies were chosen based on their involvement in responding to the *umrah* backpacker trend, whether through service innovation or collaboration with digital communities.

Research Result and Discussion

The Backpacker Umrah Phenomenon in the Digital Age

This phenomenon shows a shift to a more personalized, flexible and experiential style of worship. Umrah backpackers often view their journey not only as a worship obligation, but also as a meaningful spiritual adventure, where they learn firsthand about the rituals, organize logistics, and face challenges in the holy land..[13] However, this practice is not free from risks and challenges, such as lack of manasik guidance, potential errors in travel administration, and limited legal protection and services in case of problems in the field. From a fiqh point of view, backpacker Umrah is still valid as long as it fulfills the conditions and pillars of Umrah, but regulatively in Indonesia, the implementation of Umrah should ideally be carried out through an official Umrah Travel Organizer (PPIU) registered with the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

This backpacker-style Umrah gives its own impression to the perpetrator, because almost all of its implementation is carried out independently, and it is safe to avoid rampant bulging travel.[14] Regulations for Umrah pilgrims in Indonesia must have an Umrah visa that can be obtained from a visa provider.[15] The phenomenon of backpacker umrah in the digital era shows the spirit of independence of the young generation of Indonesian Muslims in performing worship to the Holy Land. However, it is important to understand that in practice, backpacker umrah performed by Indonesian pilgrims is not entirely independent. One crucial aspect is the umrah visa arrangement that cannot be done by individuals directly. To obtain an Umrah visa, pilgrims still need the help of a third party, namely a visa provider that has received authorization from an official Umrah Travel Organizer (PPIU). Not all providers can issue Umrah visas, only providers who have been affiliated and officially licensed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia through a partnership scheme with PPIU can do so.[16] Umrah Backpacker is increasingly widespread among the public supported by social media. Some Umrah Backpackers create groups on Facebook, they share information related to cheap ticket promos or look for friends to be friends on the Umrah Backpacker trip to be carried out. Some others share stories and tips on TikTok or Instagram etc.[17]

Analysis of Umrah Backpacker Opportunities in the Digital Age

In the digital era, backpacker Umrah is becoming an increasingly popular alternative for pilgrims looking for flexibility and cost-efficiency in their worship journey.[18] According to research by Fakhruddin and Ubaidillah (2021), although the practice of backpacker umrah was considered not in accordance with applicable regulations, in the course of this practice it began to be more widely accepted in society. This is inseparable from the

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[13] Muhammad Irham, "Komodifikasi Produk Keagamaan: Studi Di Komunitas Teras Dakwah," *Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* 7, No. 1 (2021): 167–95.

[14] M. Nurulain And Khairul Faezi, "Penipuan Pakej Umrah: Penyelesaian Daripada Perspektif Perniagaan Islam," *Global Journal Al-Thaqafah*, No. November (2019): 145–57, Https://Doi.Org/10.7187/Gjatsi112019-13.

[15] Desy Kristiane, "Mandiri Dalam Kerangka Regulasi Indonesia," *Comparativa* 5, No. 2 (2024): 151–82.

[16] Sri Istiawati, "Tinjauan Yuridis Terhadap Perjanjian Wanprestasi Perjalanan Umroh," *Jurnal Insitusi Politeknik Ganesha Medan* 6, No. 1 (2023): 47–57.

[17] Nabila (Uin Imam Bonjol) Amirah, Salma (Uin Imam Bonjol), And Hidayat Rahmat (Uin Imam Bonjol), "Fenomena Umrah Backpacker Perempuan Tanpa" 09, No. 2 (2023): 348–62.

[18] M. F. Ahmad Et Al., "The Effect Of Demographics On Customer Satisfaction Amongst Malaysia Hajj Pilgrims: Survey Result," *Applied Mechanics And Materials* 660 (2014): 1000–1004, Https://Doi.Org/10.4028/Www.Scientific.Net/Amm.660.1000.

increasingly professional management of independent Umrah facilitated by digital platforms and partnerships with officially licensed parties. In the context of Indonesian regulations, the implementation of Umrah is strictly regulated through Law Number 8 of 2019 concerning the Implementation of Hajj and Umrah (PIHU Law), specifically in Articles 86 to 104, which emphasize that the implementation of Umrah can only be carried out by Umrah Travel Organizers (PPIU) who have a license from the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia.[19] In addition, supervision of the departure of Umrah pilgrims is carried out through the SISKOPATUH system (Computerized System for Integrated Management of Umrah and Special Hajj), which requires each pilgrim to be officially registered through PPIU.[20]

Initially, backpacker umrah was considered to be deviating from regulations as many were done without going through PPIUs and even using non-umrah visas, which posed administrative and security risks. However, in its development, the community of independent umrah performers began to partner with visa providers that officially cooperate with PPIU.[21] Digital platforms play a major role in facilitating this process, from manasik education, information searches, to online service reservations. Thus, the practice of backpacker umrah is now starting to be accommodated in the regulatory framework through a collaborative approach between the community, service providers, and the government.

One informant stated that technology helped her plan the trip more efficiently and economically."

Fitriani also added that the online community provides useful tips that make traveling more efficient. This experience shows that technology not only supports accessibility, but also creates a sense of community among backpacker pilgrims. In addition to providing benefits for pilgrims, the backpacker umrah concept opens up economic opportunities for small businesses, such as accommodation, transportation, and food service providers in the Holy Land. A study by Oktoyadi and Wahyuni (2019) shows that e-marketplaces such as iGoUmroh are able to expand the market for small and medium travel agents, increasing their competitiveness with large agents. Technologies such as online booking systems and digital payments also speed up the transaction process and improve operational efficiency.[22]

According to official data from the Saudi Arabian Tourism Authority, by 2023, the number of Umrah pilgrims from Indonesia will reach around 1.5 million people, making Indonesia one of the largest sending countries for Umrah pilgrims in the world.[23] Of this number, more than 70% of umrah backpackers come from the younger generation aged 20-35 years, who are known to be adaptive to technology and have more confidence in digital-based services. Thus, it is estimated that there are around 1,050,000 pilgrims from the younger generation who choose the backpacker model.[24] A study by Hermansyah et al. (2020) revealed that 65% of backpacker pilgrims utilize digital platforms to book their services, such as tickets, accommodation, and visa arrangements. This trend underscores

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[19] Muhammad Hosnan Jaini Sanusi, "Studi Kritis Penyelenggaraan Ibadah Haji Bagi Masyarakat Muslim Indonesia Dalam Perspektif Maqāṣid Asy-Syarī'ah.," *Diss. Universitas Islam Indonesia*, 2021.

[20] Nurul Farhanah, "Efektivitas Penggunaan Siskopatuh Dalam Penyelenggara Perjalanan Ibadah Umrah Pada Pusat Informasi Haji Provinsi Sumatera Selatan," *Ulil Albab* 2, No. 5 (2023): 1841–52.

[21] Anik Farida, *Dinamika Pelayanan Ibadah Haji Di Indonesia*, 2022.

[22] M. Zaky Mubarak Lubis, "Prospek Destinasi Wisata Halal Berbasis Ovop (One Village One Product) M. Zaky Mubarak Lubis," *Maqdis : Jurnal Kajian Ekonomi Islam* 3, No. 1 (2015).

[23] Menur Kusumaningtyas, "Haji Backpacker : Peluang Dan Tantangan," *Malia (Terakreditasi)* 11, No. 1 (2019): 39–50, Https://Doi.Org/10.35891/Ml.V11i1.1726.

[24] Hanana. Zakiyah, "Diplomasi Indonesia Terhadap Arab Saudi Dalam Penambahan Kuota Haji 2017-2024.," *Diss. Universitas Islam Indonesia*, 2024.

the importance of digital innovation in attracting the youth market and making umrah more inclusive and in line with the needs of the digital generation.

In addition, the use of transit planes that are more economical than direct flights is also a common choice. Tickets are usually booked independently through online platforms that offer certain price promos. Other components that are cut are luggage handling services and the presence of a tour leader.[25] Pilgrims organize their own luggage and undergo worship without special assistance, including ritual activities that can be carried out flexibly without renting a special place. This finding shows that the low cost of backpacker Umrah is strongly influenced by the pilgrims' ability to manage their trip independently, as well as their willingness to adjust their comfort to their budget. This approach emphasizes efficiency, not a reduction in the value of worship. Pilgrims who are able to utilize digital technology and plan their trip carefully will get a worship experience that remains solemn even at a more affordable cost.

The phenomenon of increasing interest in backpacker Umrah in Indonesia cannot be separated from a number of interrelated factors, ranging from cost efficiency, flexibility of implementation, to legality which is now increasingly recognized. The lower cost compared to regular Umrah is the main attraction. This cost efficiency is achieved by cutting various non-essential components such as luggage, uniforms, and the use of star hotels. Pilgrims have the freedom to choose accommodation according to their own budget and preferences, even utilizing promos from online platforms to get the best price. The same also applies to airline selection, where pilgrims tend to choose more economical transit options. This finding is reinforced by the statements of resource persons, such as Ustadz Ismail, who explained that the size of the cost of backpacker Umrah is largely determined by the lifestyle and personal management of each pilgrim. This indicates that the main strengths of backpacker umrah are cost flexibility and full control over the trip. In addition, the absence of handling services and tour leaders does not reduce the quality of worship, but instead demands the independence and readiness of pilgrims, which for some people is an added value.

One of the prominent aspects of backpacker umrah is the flexibility of time and space.[26] Pilgrims are not bound to a strict schedule as in regular Umrah.[27] They can set their own agenda for worship, rest, or even exploration of other cities. This freedom creates a more personalized experience, in line with the character of the modern generation who tend to like freedom in traveling. As Mbak Nia and Mbak Mike said, the backpacker umrah gives room for additional exploration and is not dependent on large groups or structured schedules.From an opportunities perspective, this trend opens up the potential for extensive collaboration between travel agencies and the backpacker community. Umrah bureaus can take on new roles as information facilitators, special service providers such as visas, tickets, or flexible accommodation, and even develop digital applications that facilitate independent pilgrims in designing their trips. With this approach, travel agencies do not lose the market, but can instead expand the scope of services to the younger and digitally savvy pilgrim segment. The potential for technology integration, such as umrah trip planner apps, community platforms, or modular booking systems, is huge to develop in this context.

The overall findings show that backpacker umrah is a dynamically evolving phenomenon, supported by spiritual needs, the desire for efficiency, and advances in

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[25] Oktaviani, Zahrotul. 2018. "Jamaah umrah Terus Meningkat, Apa Penyebabnya?" Republika. December 2018. https://www.republika.co.id/berita/jurnal-haji/berita-jurnalhaji/18/12/15/

[26] Wallstam, Martin. 2011. "backpacker Institutionalization: Towards an Experience-Based Typology."

[27] Prodjo, Wahyu Adityo. 2017. "Sejak Kapan umrah'backpacker' Mulai Populer? Artikel Ini Telah Tayang Di Kompas.Com Dengan Judul "Sejak Kapan umrah 'backpacker' Mulai Populer?" Kompas. June 2017. https://travel.kompas.com/read/2017/06/02/210500727/sejak.kapa n.umrah.backpacker.mulai.populer.

information technology. This change in pilgrims' behavior can be used as material for evaluation and innovation for umrah travel industry players to not only maintain the old model, but also welcome transformations that are more inclusive and based on the needs of today's pilgrims.

Analyzing the Challenges of Backpacker Umrah in the Digital Age

While backpacker umrah is growing in popularity in the digital age, this travel model faces various challenges that can affect the comfort and safety of pilgrims. These challenges include a lack of experience in independent travel planning, limited government regulations, and security risks and non-standardized services. Research by Muammar bakry shows that the lack of official guidance on backpacker umrah practices often leads to confusion among pilgrims, especially for those who are first-time travelers.[28]

One of the main challenges is the lack of regulations governing the practice of backpacker umrah. The government usually focuses on organizing Umrah through authorized agencies, while independent travel often lacks adequate oversight. Backpacker umrah pilgrims must understand visa regulations, restrictions on the use of travel services, and local policies that apply in Saudi Arabia. Without sufficient knowledge, pilgrims risk running into legal or administrative issues during the trip.[29] In an interview with Abdul Rahman, a pilgrim from Bandung who has undergone backpacker Umrah, he revealed, *"I had difficulty understanding the visa procedures because there were no clear guidelines. In addition, I was worried about the safety of the accommodation that I booked myself through an app."*

Abdul also mentioned that his ignorance of the location of local transportation in Saudi Arabia made the journey more tiring. This experience shows that limited information and support is a major challenge for backpacker pilgrims. While other interviews with pilgrims said that the lack of understanding in the language is also an obstacle in doing a backpacker trip, nanmu is a little helped by the current technology that can all be accessed via the internet.[30]

Based on the results of interviews conducted with several interviewees, the analysis of challenges in backpacker umrah can be clarified with several key findings expressed by them.[31] From these interviews, there are several things that are important factors in backpacker Umrah travel. First, related to arranging everything independently, Ustadz Farih, a mutowwif from Semarang who has settled in Makkah, explained that backpacker Umrah pilgrims must indeed look for tickets independently through various platforms such as Traveloka or Tiket.com. He emphasized the importance of being careful in choosing flights that suit the pilgrims' schedule and budget. Pilgrims independently manage ticketing and hotel bookings through platforms like Traveloka and Tiket.com he said. This shows that pilgrims must be more careful and prepare carefully so that the trip is not hampered.

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[28] Muhammad Muhammad, Muammar Bakry, And Andi Muhammad Akmal, "Problematika Haji Dan Umrah Berulang Kali Menurut Ali Mustafa Yaqub Dalam Perspektif Fikih Islam," *Nukhbatul 'Ulum: Jurnal Bidang Kajian Islam* 9, No. 2 (2023): 308–27, Https://Doi.Org/10.36701/Nukhbah.V9i2.1056.

[29] Akhmad Anwar Dani, "Problematika Pengelolaan Penyelenggaraan Umrah Di Kota Surakarta," *Ilmu Dakwah: Academic Journal For Homiletic Studies* 12, No. 1 (2018): 23–45, Https://Doi.Org/10.15575/Idajhs.V12i1.1903.

[30] Arsono Laksmana And Muslichah Muslichah, "Pengaruh Teknologi Informasi, Saling Ketergantungan, Karakteristik Sistem Akuntansi Manajemen Terhadap Kinerja Manajerial," *Jurnal Akuntansi Dan Keuangan* 4, No. 2 (2002): 106–25.

[31] Alves, Sandra, José Luís Abrantes, Maria José Antunes, Cláudia Seabra, and Ram Herstein. 2016. "WOM Antecedents in backpacker Travelers." Journal of Business Research 69 (5): 1851–56. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.10.068.

However, although backpacker umrah demands independence in terms of ticket and hotel bookings, visa processing must still go through an official service bureau.[32] As stated by Ustadz Ismail, *"Umrah visa processing must still go through an official service bureau licensed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs."* This shows that there are limitations in the visa application process, which even if the Umrah is done independently, must still go through official channels to ensure a legitimate departure. The next challenge is the absence of a companion. Ustadz Ismail also revealed that while performing backpacker umrah, pilgrims do not have companions such as tour leaders or mutowwifs. *"When carrying out backpacker Umrah, there is no tour leader or mutowwif. If you want to find out the place to visit, you search, want to go here, want to go here, let's find out the history yourself,"* he explained. This shows that backpacker Umrah pilgrims must be independent in finding information related to the places to be visited and also in carrying out worship. The absence of a companion adds to the challenge because pilgrims must be prepared to face various situations that may occur during the trip.

Security is also an issue that needs to be considered. Ustadz Ismail added, *"Security is borne by yourself, for example the risk at immigration will be asked. Usually what is asked when in Indonesia, at least we must have a return ticket."* This emphasizes the importance of pilgrims to maintain documents and return tickets as a preventive measure so as not to experience problems with immigration in Saudi. Security becomes heavier for pilgrims who leave without an official companion from the travel. Furthermore, challenges related to transit in several countries also arise as one of the factors that need to be considered. Ustadz Ismail explained, *"For people who like challenges, yes it will be exciting because we will pass through various countries, will set foot in various countries that we have never visited before even though it is only at the airport."* However, for pilgrims who are physically weak, as expressed by Mrs. Farida, the long and tiring transit can be a very tough experience. Mrs. Farida stated, "Transit in Abu Dhabi with my condition, which is no longer young, is quite tiring. Because of the vast airport and the rush for the next flight." This shows that a long transit can be draining for pilgrims, especially for those who are unwell.

Another important challenge is foreign language acquisition.[33] In the interview, it was revealed that mastery of Arabic and English is needed in the backpacker Umrah journey. This is in accordance with Ustadz Ismail's explanation, who mentioned the importance of language mastery for smooth communication in Saudi Arabia and at international airports. "Arabic will be widely used when communicating in the territory of Saudi Arabia, although in some places, Arabs are good at speaking Indonesian, but in other areas Arabic is used," he said. In addition, English language skills are also required at international airports.Finally, climate challenges are also an important concern in backpacker Umrah travel. Ms. Nia, one of the pilgrims, revealed her experience during winter in Saudi Arabia: "In December I performed Umrah, it was winter. Because I didn't prepare enough, I was always cold throughout the worship in Medina, and my eczema flared up because my skin became dry." This experience shows that pilgrims who do not prepare for the extreme temperatures in Saudi Arabia can experience health problems, such as dry skin or other diseases.

Overall, the interviews with these interviewees reinforce the analysis that backpacker umrah has major challenges in terms of independence, security, language acquisition, health, and time and cost management. While providing freedom and unique experiences, these challenges require pilgrims to be more prepared and thoughtful in

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[32] Anaira, Fika. 2019. "Persiapan Umroh Mandiri Dan Umroh backpacker - Food, Travel and Lifestyle Blog." November 15, 2019. https://www.diarysivika.com/2019/11/persiapan-umroh-mandiridan-umroh.html.

[33] Haadiy, Fatahillah. 2015. Umroh backpacker: Cara Yang Benar Umroh Seribu Dollar. Tangerang Selatan: Ihsan Media.

preparing for the trip so that the Umrah pilgrimage continues to run smoothly. To overcome these challenges, collaboration between the government, travel agents, and digital platforms is needed to provide clear and accessible guidance for backpacker pilgrims.[34] Dedicated apps that provide comprehensive information on visas, transportation, and worship guides can be a solution. In addition, online communities can help strengthen support networks for pilgrims, while inclusive regulations can provide additional protection.

The difference between backpacker umrah and conventional umrah

Independent Umrah, also known as backpacker Umrah, is a form of performing Umrah without fully relying on the services of a Hajj and Umrah travel agency. In this concept, prospective pilgrims actively take care of all travel needs themselves, from booking flight tickets, choosing accommodation, local transportation, to arranging departure and return schedules. However, visa processing still requires assistance from an official agent, as Umrah visas can only be applied for through parties who have obtained permission from the Saudi Arabian authorities.

The term "backpacker umrah" itself refers to a flexible and frugal travel style, similar to the concept of backpacking in the world of tourism. Pilgrims usually travel in small groups or with friends/family, with the aim of reducing costs and gaining freedom in determining the itinerary while in the Holy Land. Independent Umrah allows pilgrims to design a more personalized worship experience that suits their individual preferences, but also demands a higher level of independence and logistical preparedness compared to regular Umrah. The dIffrences IS shown in Table 1.

The Impact of Technology on the Spirituality of Backpacker Umrah Pilgrims

Religion and change are two interrelated entities. In the modern context, religion is required to provide intellectual reflection on the changing reality, including in responding to the challenges of the development of science and technology.[35] Religion does not only stop at the level of doctrine or law, but must be able to interpret concrete human experiences in the midst of world dynamics.[36] In the digital age, humans and technology have become inseparable. Technology is now a basic necessity that affects various aspects of life, including spirituality. Social media and digital platforms facilitate access to religious activities and broaden people's participation. Worship apps, online discussion forums and virtual communities enable more inclusive and flexible religious practices.

However, technology also brings challenges. Ease of access can reduce the meaning of spirituality to routine activities or mere information consumption.[37] Online rituals are often considered less sacred than those performed physically. In addition, the dissemination of religious values through digital media has the potential to cause conflict, abuse and other ethical issues. Therefore, there is a need for awareness in maintaining a balance between

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[34] Jati, Wasisto Raharjo. 2015. "Islam Populer Sebagai Pencarian Identitas Muslim Kelas Menengah Indonesia." *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 5 (1): 139. https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2015.5.1.139-163

[35] Azwar Aripin, "Tantangan Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam Dan Strategi Pengembangannya Dalam Menghadapi Tuntutan Kompetensi Masa Depan," *Jurnal Al-Mufidz: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 1, no. 2 (2024): 121–42.

[36] "PENDEKATAN HISTORIS DALAM STUDI ISLAM Sri Haryanto," *Jurnal Ilmiah Studi Islam* 17, no. 1 (2012): 127–35.

[37] Capitalizing intimacy Tobias Raun, "New Subcultural Forms of Micro- Celebrity Strategies and Affective Labor on YouTube," *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 24, no. 1 (2018): 99-113.

the benefits of technology and the depth of spirituality.[383940] Nonetheless, if managed wisely, technology can be a tool that supports the development of human spirituality. Ethical approaches to digital technology, such as respect for privacy, fairness of access, and moral responsibility, can help create a digital ecosystem that aligns with spiritual and religious values. [41]

Technology has a significant impact on the spirituality of backpacker Umrah pilgrims. Through mobile applications, digital maps, and social media, pilgrims can more easily access information on worship, holy sites, and manasik guides independently. This allows them to be more focused and solemn because they do not depend on the guide directly. However, on the other hand, dependence on gadgets can also interfere with the solemnity of worship if not used wisely. Technology also facilitates pilgrims in documenting their spiritual journey and sharing inspiration with others. Virtual interactions with other umrah communities also strengthen religious motivation. Thus, technology can be a means of supporting spirituality, provided it is used appropriately and in a balanced manner.

Digital technology provides great convenience for backpacker Umrah pilgrims in carrying out their worship, especially in managing the trip independently. Based on interviews with several backpacker pilgrims, they admitted to utilizing travel applications such as ticketing and hotel booking platforms to plan their trips without attachment to conventional Umrah bureaus. In addition, umrah guide apps and online religious platforms are their main sources of information to understand the procedures of worship, prayers, and pilgrimage guides. This convenience allows them more flexibility in scheduling and budgeting, giving them a more personalized experience of the pilgrimage.

In addition to practical aspects, technology also creates space for backpacker pilgrims to strengthen the spiritual dimension through virtual communities. One pilgrim recounted that WhatsApp and Telegram groups became a means of sharing spiritual experiences, travel tips, and moral support during the journey. In fact, some online communities organize virtual prayers or religious studies before departure. However, some pilgrims also admitted that reliance on technology, such as tawaf guide apps or virtual worship simulations, can reduce the sense of solemnity.

Based on the interview "Other pilgrims "In general, with the backpacker Umrah we can take a glimpse in several neighboring countries, and directly we think it adds to our experience and God willing, increases our spirituality, because we see firsthand the creation of Allah SWT, related to the implementation of worship, thank God, everything is sophisticated, we can access it anywhere."

From the author's analysis that the implementation of Umrah independently, such as backpacker Umrah, offers a unique spiritual experience while adding insight and travel experience. In the implementation of this worship, pilgrims not only perform Umrah in the Holy Land but also have the opportunity to explore various places that witness the greatness of Allah's creation, such as neighboring countries visited during the trip. In addition, technological advances that allow digital access and facilities make it easy for pilgrims to plan, carry out, and perfect their Umrah worship information independently.[42] With all its

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[38] Royke Lantupa Kumowal, "Moderasi Beragama Sebagai Tanggapan Disrupsi Era Digital," *Da'at : Jurnal Teologi Kristen* 5, No. 2 (2024): 126–50.

[39] Yeyet Rohilah, ""Efektivitas Kebijakan Kementerian Agama Ri Terhadap Penyelenggara Perjalanan Ibadah Umrah (Ppiu) Dan Perlindungan Jemaah." (Jakarta, 2018).

[40] Sugiharti, Nesdya Esther. "Rencana Bisnis Pendirian Usaha "Dya Tour N Travel" Di Jakarta Utara/Nesdya Esther Sugiharti/76160255/Pembimbing: Liaw Bun Fa." (2020).

[41] Meilisa Ani Nurhayati Et Al., "Islam Dan Tantangan Dalam Era Digital: Mengembangkan Koneksi Spiritual Dalam Dunia Maya," *Al-Aufa: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kajian Keislaman* 5, No. 1 (2023): 1–27, Https://Doi.Org/10.32665/Alaufa.V5i1.1618.

[42] Maoz, Darya. 2007. "backpackers' Motivations the Role of Culture and Nationality." Annals of Tourism Research 34 (1): 122–40. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2006.07.008.

advantages, independent Umrah not only enhances spiritual closeness to Allah, but also broadens social and cultural experiences, ultimately enriching pilgrims' understanding and awareness of the diversity of humanity and the greatness of Allah SWT.

Tabel 1. The difference between backpacker umrah and conventional umrah

Aspect	Independent Umrah (Backpacker)	Regular Umrah (Conventional)
Itinerary Planning	Participants are free to plan their own itinerary individually or with a group.	Itinerary is determined by the *umrah* travel agency.
Umrah Duration	Participants can freely determine the length of their *umrah* journey.	Duration is adjusted according to the selected package.
Additional Destinations	Participants are free to choose additional destinations beyond the *umrah* ritual.	Additional destinations (such as Makkah/Madinah city tours) are set by the travel agency.
Flight Schedule	Participants choose their own departure time and airline.	Flight schedule is determined by the travel agency.
Accommodation	Participants choose the location, length of stay, and type of accommodation independently.	Accommodation is included in the package and based on the selected options.
Meals	Free to choose restaurants or food types during the trip.	Meals are provided as part of the travel package.
Local Transportation in Saudi Arabia	Participants must arrange their own local transportation, often with assistance from third parties.	All local transportation is arranged by the travel agency.
Cost	Generally more affordable and flexible, depending on personal choices.	Costs are usually higher as they cover all-inclusive services.
Level of Independence	Very high – participants must handle nearly all aspects of the trip themselves.	Low – all travel needs are managed by the service provider.

Impact and Travel Bureau's Response to Backpacker Umrah

In recent years, the phenomenon of the umrah backpacker community has increasingly shown its existence in society. Umrah pilgrims who adopt this backpacker concept tend to prefer independent travel that is flexible, cost-effective, and provides greater freedom in exploring destinations, both before and after performing Umrah.[43] This change in preference is a challenge for conventional Umrah travel agents who have been offering standard packages. However, behind these challenges, there is a great opportunity for the umrah travel industry to adapt to these new needs. Based on an interview with Mr. Ahmad Fauzi, the owner of one of the leading umrah travel agents in Jakarta, he stated, "The umrah backpacker phenomenon is actually not a threat, but a challenge for us to innovate. By understanding the preferences of more independent pilgrims, we can create more relevant services without losing the essence of our services." This opinion reflects the importance of business strategy transformation to remain relevant in an era of increasingly fierce competition.

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[43] Nurni, Fitriyana. *Analisis Penggunaan Media Sosial Dalam Pemasaran Digital Produk Umrah Pada Pt Athalah Safar Internasional Kota Metro*. Diss. Iain Metro, 2024.

From the interview above, researchers try to conclude several strategies that can be applied by the Umrah travel agency:

1. Business Strategy Adjustments by Umrah Travel Agencies Travel agencies can enhance online services with interactive platforms that allow prospective pilgrims to choose routes, accommodation, and activities during the trip. This flexibility appeals to pilgrims who want a personalized experience while giving them full control over their trip.
2. Partnership with Backpacker Community Establishing a partnership with the backpacker community can be a strategic move. The travel agency can support this community with travel information and logistics, while the backpacker community helps promote travel services to its members.
3. Develop Umrah Packages Specific to the Backpacker Community Designing backpacker Umrah packages that include worship as well as local and cultural exploration experiences can attract potential pilgrims who are looking for a different experience. This approach not only expands the market but also strengthens the travel agency's innovative image.

With these strategies, Umrah travel agencies can remain competitive and relevant amid the development of new trends in the world of Umrah travel. The integration of digital innovation and community collaboration is the key to success in this transformation era.

Conclusion

The backpacker umrah phenomenon, supported by the development of digital technology, presents both opportunities and challenges for pilgrims and the umrah travel industry. From the pilgrims' perspective, backpacker umrah provides convenience in organizing travel independently, improving fitness, and adding spiritual experiences through more personalized exploration. However, over-reliance on technology can reduce the solemnity of worship, so it is important to maintain a balance between the use of technology and spiritual meaning. From a business perspective, Umrah travel agencies can capitalize on this trend by implementing adaptive strategies, such as digitizing services, collaborating with the backpacker community, and developing flexible Umrah packages. This approach allows travel agencies to remain relevant and competitive amidst digital transformation. Backpacker umrah is not just an alternative to travel, but also a strategic opportunity for the development of the umrah travel industry in the modern era. This research emphasizes the importance of integration between technology and spiritual values to create a meaningful umrah experience for pilgrims and encourage interest in the sharia-based travel industry.

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