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## The Development of Halal Ecotourism Destination. Context of Business Collaboration and Mutual Trust

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### Abstract

Halal ecotourism destination is become a strategic issue that is worth to be studied. Halal ecotourism appear as a concept synergized between ecotourism and halal tourism. This research aims to analyze the importance of business collaboration in managing halal ecotourism destination by maintaining the mutual trust. This research is conducted using qualitative method through interview with some of the manager of ecotourism in DIY and Central Java Province. The research result also supported with photos, documentation, and cross check of secondary data with field data. The validity and reliability test is done using reference study, data comparison, and consultation with experts. The result concluded that the development of halal ecotourism destination will be successful if the manager can have business collaboration between institutions and maintain the mutual trust, so that the visits of domestic or foreign tourists will increase.

**Keywords:** halal ecotourism; business collaboration; mutual trust; tourist visits.

**Jel Classification:** Q13; L84; Z32.

### Introduction

Halal concept is now become a trend in global economy, started from food and beverages product, finance, and lifestyle. As a new trend in life style, many countries are introducing their tourism product with Halal and Islamic concept. According to the Global Islamic Economy Report of 2014-2015, some countries such as Japan, Australia, Thailand, New Zealand, and others that are not country with a majority Muslim population are also create halal tourism product. The potential of Muslim world market is very tempting for tourism business

(<http://www.dinarstandard.com/state-of-the-global-islamic-economy-report-2015/>, accessed on January 27, 2018). In the travel sector, in 2013, Muslims in the world spent about US\$140 billion in tourism or 7.7% from global expenses. In 2019, it is expected that it will increase to US\$238 billion or 11.6% (outside of Hajj and Umrah). In the media and leisure sector, in 2013, Muslims in the world spent about US\$185 billion or 7.3% from global expenses. In 2019, it is expected to increase to US\$301 billion or 5.2% from global expenses (<http://www.dinarstandard.com/state-of-the-global-islamic-economy-report-2015/>, accessed on January 27, 2018). According to the research result by Pew Research Center, Islam will be the biggest religion in the world in 2075 along with the growing number of babies born in Muslim families. Combined factors of young families and high fertility rates make there will be around 225 million babies that born in Muslim families in the year 2030-2035. It is predicted that there will be an increase of Halal Tourism destination sector in the future (<http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/majalah-39510081>, accessed on January 27, 2018).

Indonesia as a country with the biggest Muslim population in the world is always tried to develop halal tourism in its homeland. There are thirteen provinces that are prepared to be the halal tourism destination, such as West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), Nangroe Aceh Darussalam, West Sumatera, Riau, Lampung, Banten, DKI Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, Yogyakarta, East Java, South Sulawesi, and Bali (Andriani 2015). Those destination of halal tourism are determined by the readiness of human resource, people culture, regional tourism product, and tourism accommodation.

This research is focused on Halal Ecotourism because the researcher wants to research about natural tourism with halal tourism basis. This is based on the consideration that natural tourism has tremendous charm for tourists who love the beauty of nature, also enjoy and understand the nature and manage it using sustainable principle. The research result of Berman *et al.* (2008) stated that in the Attention Restoration Theory (ART), if someone like direct interaction with nature, then he will have focus attention that is increased. This is different if someone catches the attention in the urban area which filled with stimulation that catches the attention dramatically, need focus direct attention, and make them less restorative. By having natural tourism, they can reduce their stress, admire the beauty of God's creation, and can breathe fresh and healthy air.

Indonesia has a potential in developing Halal Ecotourism because of its rich nature that can be synergized with religion spirituality. Tourism based nature and environment-friendly which also implemented the Halal principles will be a trigger for more optimal nature conservation. Halal Ecotourism concept has been developed at some region in Indonesia. In Banyuwangi Regency, nature tourism concept based on Halal Tourism has been developed at Santen Island. "Pantai Halal Pulau Santen" or "Santen Island Halal Beach" which is an island with black sand has been conjured up become new destination as a beach with halal tourism (<https://travel.detik.com/travel-news/d-3436182/destinasi-wisata-halal-baru-di-banyuwangi-pantai-halal-pulau-santen>, accessed on January 27, 2018). Halal Ecotourism is a big concept of destination development, which is signed by the guarantee of halal facilities, such as halal food, not sell alcoholic drink, notification of time before pray (adzan), place for wudhu' along with facilities for pray, and facilities of divided place between men and women. Unfortunately, not all tourism destinations have been thinking about halal tourism.

According to the researcher observation in field, the managers are tend to not give serious attention on fulfill the needs of domestic or foreign tourists who are Muslims and non-muslims. Most of the locations of natural tourisms are far from the urban, so that the tourists have to go through a long and exhausting journey. This condition needs the support of facilities such as; place for pray, hotel, transportation, halal restaurant, and others. Those are why business collaboration and mutual trust become consideration to be researched, because the manager of natural tourism should have good business collaboration between institutions and maintain mutual trust by using halal ecotourism principle. The cross-border collaboration between institution, sectoral, and national nowadays is become strategic choice to be implemented in the competitive business competition (Nielsen 2004) by maintaining the mutual trust (Laaksonen *et al.* 2009) so that the visits of domestic and foreign tourists are increased.

## 1. Literature Review

### Halal Ecotourism

*"Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well being of local people."* (The International Ecotourism Society, in Stevens and Jansen 2002).

*"Halal tourism is an activity supported by many facilities and service provided by society, businessman, government, and local government that meet the halal provisions."* (Kemenpar 2012).

This research is a synergy between Ecotourism and Halal Tourism, so that researcher calls it as Halal Ecotourism. The product and service, object, and the goal of the halal tourism is as same as the general tourism

as long as it does not on the contrary with the value and ethic of Islam sharia. Halal Ecotourism is the implementation of Halal Tourism in ecotourism location so that Muslim and non-Muslim tourists can feel the safety, comfort, and also get the spiritual atmosphere in the tourism location. Muslim tourists can find a place to pray, halal food and beverages, decent clothes, safe from any crime, get the spiritual atmosphere, and also help the environment conservation. Muslim and non-Muslim tourists can make the nature to get closer to God.

### Mutual Trust and Business Collaboration

Most researchers still have an ambiguity about the definition of trust that is universally agreed and accepted. There are many different researches about the core element and its character (Yang 2016). Regardless of this confusion, trust has been described as the core of social order that enable economic productivity and democratic stability, as well as integration, cohesion, and civil society involvement (Offe 1999). Mutual trust relationship depends on two factors. *First*, is that the other parties has good intention (Freitag and Traunmüller 2009), trust is based on the conclusion of the interaction of the partner's nature and personal intentions, while assurance is based on the knowledge of the incentive structure around the relationship (Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994).

Trust is a form of implicit contract as one's general expectations that another individual promise is reliable. Generally, trust is defined in three main characteristics; reliability, predictability, and reasonableness. Cooperation partners are expected to be trusted and will behave in an equal way to protect the welfare of both parties (Ba 2001). *Second*, it is that the other parties have technical competence to implement their intention (Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994). Ba (2001) extended it through a combination of goodwill and competence for reliability. Trust also contains an indispensable element of risk. McAllister (1995) also mentioned about expectation and risk in his statement, which is: *"trust is a type of expectation that alleviates the fear that one's exchange partner will act opportunistically. Of course, the risk of opportunism must be present for trust to operate."*

The role of trust in a collaborative relation is very necessary. Interaction between commitment of each parties, trust, and collaboration is very important in partnership relation of business cooperation (Laaksonen 2009). Research of Le Meunier-Fitz Hugh (2007) found that high inter-institution collaboration will increase organizational benefit. Carleti *et al.* (2007) added that the collaboration of financial institution improve customer service outreach so that it also improve the service quality and competitiveness in getting customers. Profits derived from cooperative relationship between financial institutions will improve the organizational performance. Financial institution will be able to serve customers who are in the region that cannot be reached by the network joint.

According to Gray (1989), in Jamal & Getz (1995), collaboration can be used effectively to resolve conflict or promote shared vision, where stakeholders are aware of the potential benefits of working together. In this case, collaboration is a "joint decision making process among the key stakeholders of the domain of concerns about its future" (Gray 1989, 227).

High feedback collaboration will occur through trust and collaboration relationships that bring long-term benefits, increased competitive advantage, and reduced transaction costs. Trust can be seen from the affective dimension (Bews and Rossouw 2002) and cognitive dimension of human interaction (McAllister and Daniels 1995). The affective dimension depends on the emotional bounds between individuals that represent the cooperating institutions. Whereas, cognitive dimension occurs when each party who work together choose someone they trust to establish the collaboration. In the existing literature, trust is often treated as the determinant or antecedent of relationship quality, moderators (Anderson and Narus 1990), and the effects of collaboration (Zucker 1995).

Mutual trust refers to trust that each party can fulfill its obligations and behave as expected (Ring and Van De Ven 1992). Mutual trust is interdependence of each other to achieve common goals. Kazlauskienė (2013) also added that mutual trust in business relationship can be seen from different perspective with different context, which involves voluntary engagement between partners who work together, help each other, provide informations, and support the ways of working in other areas. Mutual trust in the positive society relationship develops through inclusive communication, interactive, and learning process which is not top-down, but one-way persuasion strategy. The research result of Kac. *et al.* (2016) shows that trust is very important in improving business collaboration between partners. In addition, relationship exchange is done because of the past experiences and expectations of each partner to provide mutual benefits. Research result from Diharto *et al.* (2017), Muafi (2016) stated that trust affects the social capital that is needed in improving business performance.

Collaborative models or strategic alliances allow small scale industries to combine the resource strategically in order to achieve a long-term goal while remaining autonomous in each of the small industries (Deputi Bidang Pengkajian Sumberdaya UKMK/SMEs 2006; Miller 2007). Business collaboration is an activity unification that are mutually supportive, interdependent either vertically or horizontally between two or more business ventures.

Collaboration is one of the concepts of thinking in solving emerging problems and able to connect the gap between strong and weak business institutions (Deputi Bidang Pengkajian Sumberdaya UKMK/SMEs 2006).

In the perspective of business collaboration, small business owners are invest in collaboration where there will be a potentially shared resource to be success in a competitive market (Miller *et al.* 2007). Collaborative contains some operational content in business that includes; distributive aspects, efficiency, risk and uncertainty, optimization of strengths and emlimination of weaknesses, the same interpretations and perception, rules of the game, business core, balance of right and liabilities, and transparency within the bounds of cooperation (Deputi Bidang Pengkajian Sumberdaya UKMK/SMEs 2006). Reseach from Zineldin and Jonsson (2000) also added that although the collaboration relationship can not develop as expected, it is still expected in the long-term. Belief and high commitment should be able to create a high level of relationship satisfaction so that it can reduce opportunistic behavior and can be used to develop shared value.

## 2. Business collaboration and tourists visit

Business collaboration cannot be separated from the theory of partnership relationship management. Dent (2006) introduced the theory of partnership relationship management through explaining that in 21<sup>st</sup> century nowadays, to be able to grow, develop, and meet the consumer demands for quick service, an organization should form partnership and strategic alliance both internally and externally. This is why it is needed creativity in combining work culture that leads to the pattern of partnership or business collaboration. Dent (2006) also added that there are four advantages if the company uses a partnership pattern and an alliance or business collaboration, such as; (1) openness, (2) creativity, (3) agility, and (4) resiliency. Zimmerer dan Scarborough (2005) stated about the factors of business partnership or collaboration as follows:

1. Easy establishment. As a sole proprietorship, the establishment of partnership is also easy and cheap. Owners must obtain business license and submit forms that are not too many.

2. Complementary skills in successful partnership. The skills and capabilities of each partnership members are complement each other, so it can strengthen the company's management platform.

3. There is no limit on profit sharing. The partnership member can share the company profit using consistent charter of the partnership and do not violate the rights of any member.

4. The collection of larger capital. The form of ownership of the partnership actually expands the set of capital that is available to a business.

5. Ability to attract the partnership member. It is limited if partners are share in owning, operating, and managing a business. They are the active partner. The active partners have unlimited liability and usually have an active role in the company.

6. There are not many government regulations. The form of partnership is not much burdened by the government regulations.

7. Partnership usually can react quickly toward changing market situation (flexible), because there is no big organization that can move quickly to respond creatively to new opportunities.

Business collaboration is a special way to organize a business. Besides, it is also one of the business strategies in minimizing the risks and maintaining the business sustainability. The new form of organization in the future is also related to the term of business collaboration. In business field, collaboration is an alternative from competition strategy (Ernst 1993 in Todeva, 2005). Collaboration is based on mutual trust, openness, shared risks, and shared awards in order to create competitive advantage and better performance than if the company did not do the collaboration (Hogarth-Scott 1999).

The research from Nabhan (2013) found that the higher the effectiveness of the organization in collaboration, the better the business performance of the organization. The effectiveness of alliance performance will improve business performance as well as improve the operational efficiency and organizational effectiveness (Simonim 1997). The result of some research have shown that companies with good business collaboration will improve organizational performance (Fearne and Duffy 2004, Zhang and Wang 2017). Technological collaboration can have an impact in improving company performance directly (Merono-Cerdan *et al.* 2008). Even so, business collaboration remains to be done carefully and cautiously. The research findings of Zhang and Wang (2017) provide evidence that the intensity of university-industry collaboration can have a negative effect on academic research performance. University institution should not make policies to seek cooperation with industry without considering the research performance. This is because researchers will not focus on their own research. Nevertheless, researchers with high link strength should be encouraged to participate in university-industry collaboration. In the context of developing Halal Ecotourism, institutional strategic cooperation has received attention in literature over the past two decades. This reflects an increasing frequency and importance of strategic alliances in business practice.



### 3. Research method

This research was conducted at some natural tourism location, which are:

- 2 (two) tourism villages in Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta (DIY) Province and 3 (three) tourism village locations in Central Java Province. The location is precisely in the Village Tourism Pentingsari, Umbulharjo, Cangkringan DIY, and Lor Sambu Recreation Park, Pakembinangun, DIY Province, and three natural tourism village in Rembang Regency. Central Java Province, Indonesia, which are: 1) Nature and Art Tourism Village on the slopes of hills in Kajar, Lasem District, Rembang Regency, Central Java; 2) Sumber Semen Forest Nature Tourism in Tahunan Village, Sale District, Rembang Regency, Central Java, and; 3) Karang Jahe Beach Tourism Village in Rembang-Lasem Street, Punjulharjo, Rembang District, Rembang Regency, Central Java.

- 1 (one) nature tourism village in Borobudur District, Magelang Regency, Central Java, which is Gerabah Tourism Village, in Nglipoh/Banjaran, Karanganyar Village, Borobudur District, Magelang Regency, Central Java.

Those six locations were chosen because each of them has its own uniqueness and tremendous appeal from the side of its natural beauty. Besides, most of the villagers in those locations are Muslim, so that the value of Islam is can provide a strong color in managing the tour. Tradition, local wisdom, and community habits can be used as a natural tourism icon based on Halal Tourism.

Type of this research is qualitative research relying on the participants involved in the research. There are four participants which are actively involved as nature tourism manager. All of them give a positive and pleasant response. The researcher team used an unstructured questionnaire to further explore the answer. They are eager to answer questions about the importance of inter-institutional business collaboration and the importance of maintaining trust among institutions, especially those about the orientation in halal tourism. This expectation is increasing along with the importance of increasing tourists' visit which is expected to grow in the future. The research results are also supported by photographs, documentation, and other sources that can strengthen the research result for better and easier understanding. Some of the references such as both comparative data from secondary and field data and consultations to experts are used for validity and reliability tests (Guba and Lincoln 1994, Miles *et al.* 2018, Muafi 2017a).

### 4. Research result and discussion

The research result in field shows that participant strongly recognizes the importance of business collaboration in managing nature tourism based on halal tourism. This collaboration will last long if each party keeps each other's trust in accordance with the cooperation agreement that has been fostered so far. They believe that with strong collaboration between institutions, it will be able to provide mutual benefits of weakness and can synergize well.

The interview process is started with, "Have you ever heard the term of halal tourism?" The four participants answered that they had heard. When they were asked about the views and understanding about the halal tourist village, they provide a diverse view.

"For us, villagers who are 95% Muslim, we feel no need to use the term Halal tourist village, because the social system, community relations, and home of our villagers definitely apply the rules that adhere to the traditions of the majority religious traditions in our village." (Participant 1)

"It is remain organized separation between men and women in out homestay. We consider the halal of our culinary, attractions, and supporting activities. The tourists are asked to stop during Maghrib prayer time. This tourist village is not allowed as a place for dating or drinking alcohol, although we do not call it Halal Ecotourism." (Participant 2)

"For us, Sir, we just follow the consumer demand. Our activities are dominated by outbound tours, because our location is very supportive, there are a clear river, very cool air, and beautiful nature. Even so, without calling this place as halal natural tourism, this is halal. In Lor Sambu Village, the life must be halal, because we follow the norms of society that is still strong." (Participant 1)

"Since our visitors are both Muslim and non-Muslim, we feel no need to use the term Halal tourism, halal recreation, because it will cause non-Muslim tourists feel reluctant to visit this village. We tend to follow the custom of the people here who are also religious." (Participant 2)

"The development of tourism in Rembang combines the concept of integration between nature tourism and religious values, because Rembang has both of that potentials. Inter-religious tolerance has existed long ago, despite the majority religion is Muslim. So, the development of nature tourism must still pay attention to religious values." (Participant 3)

“As far as I know, Halal Tourism is usually in other countries which majority of the population is non-Muslim. So, it is hard to get halal food. So, to my knowledge, Halal Tourism is primarily in its culinary.” (Participant 4)

The second interview is about the importance of business collaboration between institutions that is done in the development of Halal Ecotourism. The participants give their statement as follows:

“We definitely do collaboration. Our village which is far from the urban requires good partners from government, NGO's, travel agencies, social media influencers, and others. The benefits are very great for us.” (Participant 1)

“Of course we do collaboration, because that is our key. Who wants to bring guests to our place, although the nature is very beautiful? If it is not assisted by our partners, this place is surely not sold, he.he.he... So we must invite anyone to collaborate.” (Participant 2)

“Our collaboration is tiered, involving village stakeholders based on community development, sub-districts, districts, and provinces. Then, private parties that are related such as travel agencies (ASIT), social media, NGO's, and also cooperation between districts and provinces in Indonesia. Our village community is facilitated to be able to follow up the collaboration and partnership.” (Participant 3)

“Our tourism village is still in the complex area of Borobudur Temple, about 3 kilometers, which become an advantage for us, because there are many foreign tourists who visit our village. The collaboration is done with tour guides both individuals and institution. Since there are many foreign tourists who visit this village, we must maintain tolerance that retains the value of our religious values as Muslims so that we can be accepted by visitors.” (Participant 4)

The third interview is about the importance of maintaining trust among institutions, especially the orientation of Halal Ecotourism. The participants give their statement as follows:

“Maintaining trust among institutions, especially the orientation of Halal Ecotourism is easy to pronounce, but not easy to do. Sometimes, we feel unfair to cooperate with tour agencies. They pay a relatively low price, but ask for a standard of a service that matches the high price of the bureau to the consumer. We have to choose sometimes to accept such reality. But not all tour agencies are like that. Some of them are pay attention to it, moreover, what we sold is a natural tourism that apply the principles of halal and haram.” (Participant 1)

“As Javanese people, Yogyakarta, we should not disappoint our partners. It is a shame if we are the manager of Islamic village tourism, but we do not maintain their trust.” “For us, successful is not only measured by money, but also the strength of fraternity.” (Participant 2)

“Of course we maintain the trust, although we manage this based on community which people have different characters, but as the tourism village leader, I always give that trust in the people here,” (Participant 4)

“We conduct good coaching through training, doing comparative studies to other tourist areas on how to serve visitors well, and maintain trust using the “*Gethok Tular*” (word of mouth) strategy, so that the trust with related visitors, travel agencies, college, and entrepreneurs is always maintained well, because trust is the key to sustainability.” (Participant 3)

It seems like collaboration between organizations has become more important and more common in tourism management business. They realize that the success in collaboration is highly dependent on the individual/institution that collaborates. This is because collaboration between organizations brings the consequences of diversity that can turn into a challenge. Therefore, awareness of the difference and the willingness and ability to match together in a collaborative relationship is necessary, and so does the mutual trust. It requires attention and conscious action from both parties. Relationship collaboration cannot only be built and then left without attention. Relationship collaboration requires a sustainable management and maintenance (Ylitalo 2006). In the context of inter-institutional collaboration, it is expected that natural tourism managers who is oriented to halal tourism will have an increasing wide spread network, obtain more accurate information as the basis for the formulation of natural tourism management strategies, the acquisition of larger tourist visits, and efficiency and effectiveness of the business. In the future, surely the nature tourism that they manage will gain long-term sustainability and can have competitiveness compared with cultural tourism and artificial tourism.

## Conclusion

This research gives theory contribution that business collaboration is very important to increase tourist visits. Collaboration has great advantage in improving sustainable competitiveness. Good collaboration should be supported by mutual trust between parties. This is important for the sustainability of the business managed by each party so that they can fill each other's weaknesses and synergize with each other (Muafi 2016, Muafi 2017b, Muafi *et al.* 2017).

Implications for tourism managers are that they can do business collaboration with these parties as follows;

1. Government through the support of facilities and policies and regulations that support halal tourism.
2. Youth and community organization to provide support and commitment to halal tourism services
3. Food and beverages industry that sells halal product
4. The lodging/hotel industry that is committed to halal tourism
5. Transportation industry that understand the local area especially the location of pray and halal food and beverages
6. Tourism management training, business management, and IT
7. IT companies to serve the affordability of IT services
8. State-Owned Enterprise through its CSR program in supporting the structuring of social and cultural aspects
9. Other parties that have inter-institutional advantage and synergy.

Tourism managers and stakeholders must maintain mutual trust and commitment, so that the natural tourism they manage can grow and succeed and have long-term sustainability. To be able to trust each other, it is need to be followed up by doing a mutually beneficial cooperation between both of the parties.

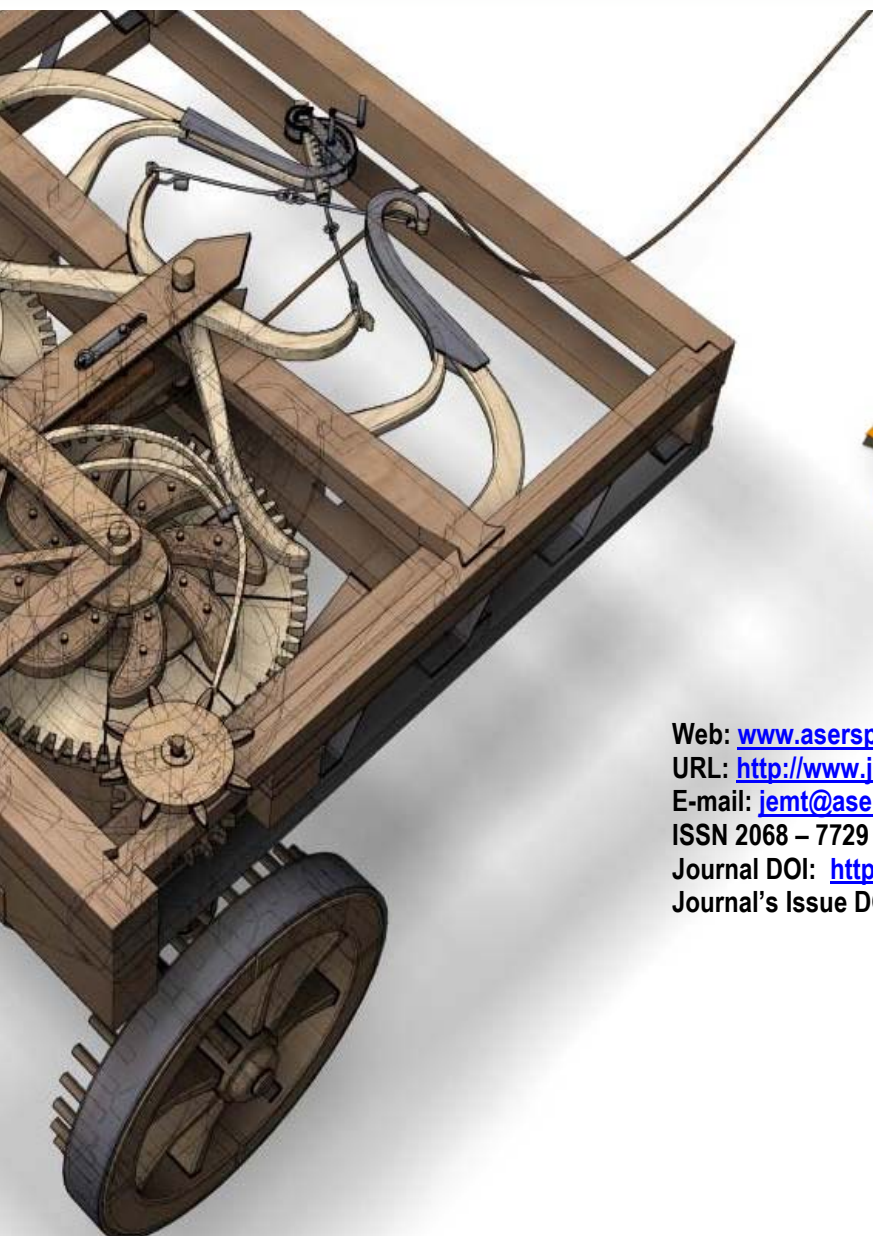
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