

ASERS

Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism

Quarterly

Volume XII

Issue 4(52)

Summer 2021

ISSN 2068 – 7729

Journal DOI

<https://doi.org/10.14505/jemt>

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Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14505/ient>

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DOI: [https://doi.org/10.14505/jemt.v12.4\(52\).11](https://doi.org/10.14505/jemt.v12.4(52).11)

Urgency of “Halal Tourism”: Religiosity, Awareness, and Interest from Stakeholders

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Suggested Citation:

Zarkasyi, M.R., Kurniawan, D.A., Darma, D.C. (2021). Urgency of “Halal Tourism”: Religiosity, Awareness, and Interest from Stakeholders. *Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism*, (Volume XII, Summer), 4(52): 968 - 976. DOI:[10.14505/jemt.v12.4\(52\).11](https://doi.org/10.14505/jemt.v12.4(52).11)

Article’s History:

Received 24th of March 2021; Received in revised form 11th of April 2021; Accepted 7th of May 2021; Published 21st of June 2021. Copyright © 2021 by ASERS® Publishing. All rights reserved.

Abstract:

The push for the “halal tourism” attribute in Muslim countries is quite enthusiastic. There are great interest and encouragement from tourists. Explicitly, currently, several regions in Indonesia such as Ponorogo Regency are trying to realize this concept. In this paper, we have the ambition to see how much influence “halal tourism” has in Ponorogo Regency. Through variable boundaries, the relationship between religiosity, awareness, and interest can be found. This study attempt to reach all stakeholders who are already involved in the tourism sector. The survey approach was carried out by open interviews, where data was collected based on 409 informants. A multiple linear regression model is applied to answer the hypothesis design empirically. As a result, the informants who are divided into 5 groups who have experience in the field of tourism consider the concept of ‘halal tourism’ quite urgent to be revitalized. Other analyzes also found that religiosity and awareness had a significant effect on interest ($p < 0.05$). Awareness plays an important role in the relationship between religiosity and interests. The originality of this invention lies in the elements (variables and items) used, therefore it deserves to be used as a reference at a later date by decision-makers.

Keywords: halal tourism; concept actualization; interviews; Ponorogo.

JEL Classification: L83; Z32; C83.

Introduction

The world of tourism has experienced significant changes with the increasing awareness of the Muslim community to use products and services that comply with Islamic law. This phenomenon occurs throughout the world, including in the State of Indonesia where the majority of the population is Muslim (Rahmawati *et al.* 2021). In addition, as many as 13 Provinces in Indonesia have started and built “halal tourism” to meet the demands of Muslim visitors for that need in order to get comfort and assurance of the facilities provided (halal food, cleanliness of places, availability of adequate religious facilities, and other needs when traveling). This requires cooperation from various parties to realize a destination with a standard of ‘halal tourism’ to be applied in tourist objects (Khoiriati *et al.* 2018).

The role of government is equally important as a stakeholder and tourism business manager to collaborate in realizing this concept. The journey of ‘halal tourism’, of course, requires a long process. They also need to look

at potentials and consider the strengths, opportunities, threats, weaknesses, and planning in each destination (e.g. Triyawan and Carolina 2018; Ratnasari *et al.* 2020). From a different dimension, the development or change of the conventional tourism concept towards 'halal tourism' will also give positive effects on business people, but there are also negative effects because not all people easily accept the rules that are applied when visiting tourist sites. Handayani and Warsono (2017) investigating the positive impact that will certainly result from it on society is a guarantee from various aspects when traveling and this will certainly bring comfort and satisfaction of its own compared to 'conventional tourism'. So far, negative consequences have not emerged, so that business people in the tourism sector themselves have various backgrounds and choices to support or reject the development of 'halal tourism'. The sharp spotlight is on not all tourist destinations in certain areas that are under the auspices of the government, on the contrary, they have been managed by the private sector.

In supporting Indonesia to become a country with the branding of 'halal tourism', extra work is needed consistently (Suharto, Roy and Darma 2019). Ponorogo Regency as an important area of economy and business in East Java Province has implemented the concept of 'halal tourism' in several destinations and is aggressively promoting 'halal tourism' to those who do business in that field. The main business of the Ponorogo Regency government is through focus group discussions (FGD), socialization, and common perceptions with tourism managers. The success of these strategies is the creation of an interesting idea to practice 'halal tourism'.

This article highlights the role of religiosity and awareness of stakeholders in realizing 'halal tourism', where the main focus is all tourist destinations in Ponorogo Regency. Referring to these main objectives, we organize this paper in five points. The phenomena and reasons for highlighting the study lie in the first session. The second session presents the latest literature supported by relevant studies to determine hypotheses. In the third session, we need to demonstrate a method. The analysis and discussion are explained in the fourth session. Finally, the fifth session summarizes the findings in an outline, where there are suggestions and limitations of the study.

1. Existing Literature and Hypotheses

1.1. Interest

Winkel (1983) emphasizes that interest is a tendency that attracts attention and is oriented to stay so that someone certainly feels happy to be involved in certain fields. Witherington (1985) also adds that interest is a form of one's awareness of a particular problem, situation, object that is seen and has something to do with himself with the full consciousness without the intervention of others.

Mental devices can change things that are initially ignored into interests, where there are mixtures of education, a tendency to fear, hope, and education that lead individuals to a choice (Maria *et al.* 2019). Interest also directs them to their perception and feeling of displeasure or pleasure towards an object.

1.2. Religiosity

Souiden and Rani (2015) interpret religiosity is an individual belief in a particular religion which is proven in heart and action. A person with a high religious level will always consider the aspects of the guidelines stated in the religion they believe in and have an influence in making decisions in daily life activities. As Johnson *et al.* (2001) and Umiyati, Tamrin (2020) describe a person's religiosity as a commitment to religious teachings, reflected in his behavior and attitude. Interestingly, Ancok (2012) and Glock, Stark (1965) divided the dimensions of religiosity into ritualistic, ideological, consequential, experiential, and intellectual.

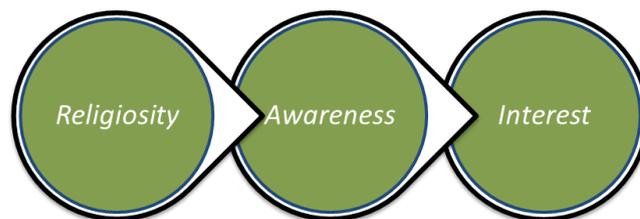
1.3. Awareness

According to Fournier and Avery (2011) the initial challenge was to be able to influence individual attitudes and behavior by instilling an awareness of a brand object, product object, and service object. For this reason, Safitri Sunarya and Danial (2019) places consumer awareness which is influenced by internal factors and individual external factors through encouraging changes to something, so that it can be formed through attitudes, actions, and insights.

1.4. Proposed of Hypothesis

The model is divided into three variables (religiosity, awareness, and interest). Each of them has a function referring to a defined flow. Figure 1 illustrates the first hypothesis and the second hypothesis, religiosity, and awareness as independent variables that affect the dependent variable, in this case, interest.

Figure 1. Concept development



Source: created by author's

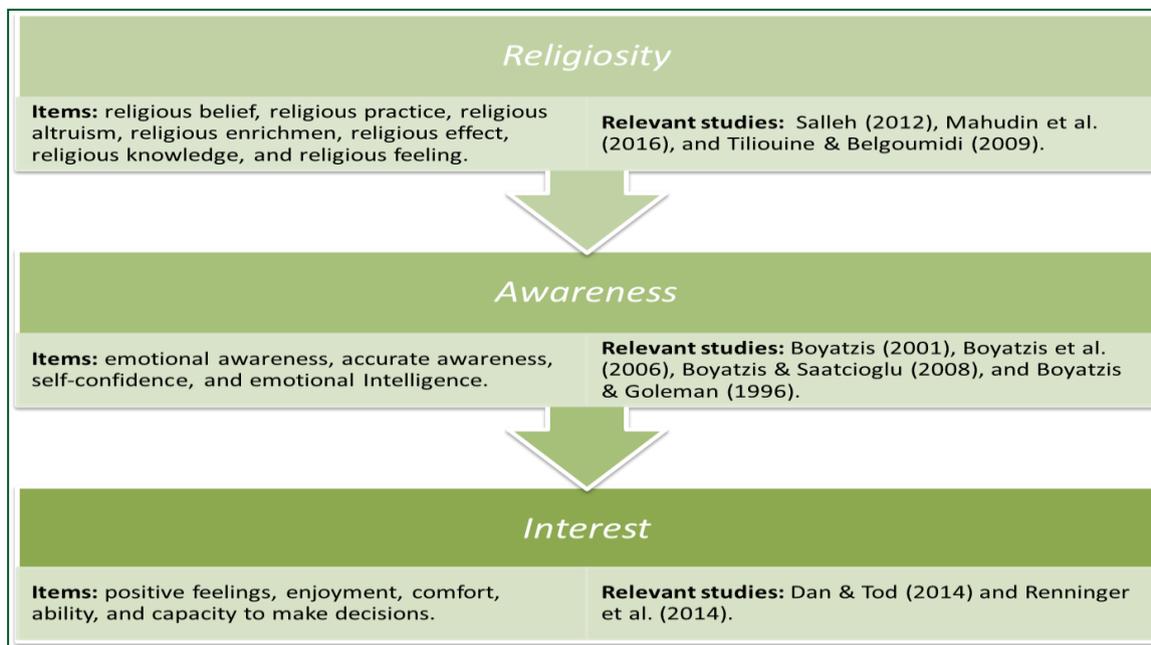
For the third hypothesis, awareness is a mediating variable that aims to moderate the relationship between religiosity and interest. That way, the mediating variable can identify whether it can strengthen or weaken these two relationships (for example Setini and Darma (2019) and Azis, Amalia and Darma (2020). The hypothesis for this paper was developed with the main focus involving the extent of the relationship between religiosity, awareness, and interest in building “halal tourism’. We try to review with previous studies and it is relevant to the two variables. Hypothesis proposals can be formed:

- H1 - Religiosity has a positive impact to increase interest.*
- H2 - Awareness has a positive impact to increase interest.*
- H3 - Religiosity has a positive impact on increasing interest through support from awareness.*

2. Methodology

The study base is supported by a quantitative approach. The data were collected through a survey of tourism managers in the Ponorogo Regency (Indonesia). The sample targets are those who are involved in the development of “halal tourism’, so we only involve five groups including the government, business people in the tourism sector, companies, local communities, and academics. With the known characteristics and characteristics of the informants, the main target has extensive knowledge and experience related to the concept. The consideration for producing accurate data is based on the purposive sampling technique (Darma *et al.* 2020).

Figure 2. Items and conceptual outline



Source: Salleh 2012; Mahudin *et al.* 2016; Tiliouine and Belgoumidi 2009; Boyatzis 2001; Boyatzis, Smith and Blaize 2006; Boyatzis and Saatcioglu 2008; Boyatzis and Goleman 1996; Dan and Tod 2014; Renninger, Hidi and Krapp 2014

As reported from BPS-Statistics of Ponorogo Regency (2021), the number of stakeholders who took part in the progress of “halal tourism’ was 409 people, therefore this sample size has met statistical requirements, where the error margin of 5% or a population of 500 is correct. By Bujang, Sa’at and Sidik (2017) these tolerance limits are intended for special classification in quantitative approaches. The study limitation only covers three

variables with the explanation shown in Figure 2. Total indicators of all variables are 16 items with details for religiosity (7 items), awareness (4 items), and interest (5 items). Later, the informant will decide on questions that have been compiled based on five Likert scales which are divided into 1 (very not urgent), 2 (not urgent), 3 (quite urgent), 4 (urgent), and 5 (very urgent).

Data processing techniques are channeled by multiple regression analysis into three stages (data tabulation, questionnaire feasibility monitoring, and hypothesis testing). Distributed questionnaire data were first compiled with Microsoft Excel software, then cross-checked whether nothing was left behind based on the order of the informants (Yudaruddin 2017). Then, the software SPSS and Sobel test (Preacher and Hayes 2004; Preacher and Hayes 2008) to support descriptive statistics, validity, reliability, and empirical review. The process of validity uses a standard alpha (α) of 0.60 (Ikbal *et al.* 2020), reliability with Pearson correlation (Wijaya *et al.* 2021), and the level of probability focuses on a one-way test (direct effect) and a two-way test (indirect effect).

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows our search results for 409 informants. Most of them are female, which is dominated by those aged 41-50 years. Questionnaires were distributed throughout Ponorogo Regency, consisting of 21 districts, 26 sub-districts, and 281 villages that have local potential, including tourist destinations (see Figure 3). The stakeholders referred to are those who have a big share in tourism development, as much as 30.8% of the government at the level of village officials, sub-district officials, and sub-district officials. Their education background is university graduates (bachelor) and is considered to have extensive knowledge about 'halal tourism'.

Table 1. Profile of participants

| Demographics | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| <i>Gender</i> | 409 | 100% |
| Male | 198 | 48.4% |
| Female | 211 | 51.6% |
| <i>Age</i> | 409 | 100% |
| Below 20 | 31 | 7.6% |
| 20 – 30 | 105 | 25.7% |
| 31 – 40 | 68 | 16.6% |
| 41 – 50 | 128 | 31.3% |
| Above 50 | 77 | 18.8% |
| <i>Qualification</i> | 409 | 100% |
| Senior High School (SMA) | 57 | 13.9% |
| Graduate | 223 | 54.4% |
| Masters | 89 | 21.8% |
| Doctorate | 40 | 9.8% |
| <i>Organization group</i> | 409 | 100% |
| Government | 126 | 30.8% |
| Businessmen | 93 | 22.7% |
| Companies | 52 | 12.7% |
| Local communities | 75 | 18.3% |
| Academics | 62 | 15.2% |
| <i>Work experience</i> | 409 | 100% |
| Less than 3 years | 88 | 21.5% |
| 3 – 6 years | 235 | 57.5% |
| 7 – 10 years | 46 | 11.2% |
| 11 – 14 years | 16 | 3.9% |
| More than 14 years | 24 | 5.9% |

Source: field observations, 2021

In fact, as many as 18.3% of the local community represented by traditional leaders, ancestors, religious leaders, Islamic boarding schools, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been working to develop this concept. After that, 35.4% of informants, from business people and companies, contributed through innovation, creativity, and support for corporate social responsibility. Academics from the lecturers and teachers also play an important role in realizing 'halal tourism'. With an average work experience of 3-6 years, it is also a special note considering the revitalization process in changing the overall image takes a long time.

Table 2 displays the various Pearson correlation values, mean, and standard deviation. Religiosity is a variable that has the dominant result among the other two variables because the number of items is also more.

For each variable, the CA calculated score in the awareness variable, emotional awareness is the largest item, while accurate awareness is the smallest. For religiosity, the most dominant item is religious feeling and the lowest is on religious belief. Then, in the interest variable, capacity to make decisions (highest) and positive feelings (lowest). The CA performance of all variables and items is said to be feasible for reliability testing. It is calculated that the validity of the correlation criteria must be smaller than the provisions ($p < 0.05$), which appears to be in accordance with expectations so that this result is valid. By obtaining calculations for the mean and SD in all three, the average informant suggests that the development process of “halal tourism: is considered” quite urgent ‘because the results at the highest to low intervals are in the range of 3.33 - 3.91. Another important note is also focused on these two components, where the religious effect is an item that needs attention, while the ability is the one that gets the most positive response among the other 15 items.

Figure 3. Map project



Source: https://www.id.emb-japan.go.jp/oda/id/provinces/odaprojects_map_jatim.htm. Japan Official Development Assistance

Table 2. Summary of CA, correlation, mean, and SD

| Variables/items | CA | Correlation* | Mean | SD |
|---------------------------------------|-------|---------------|-------|-------|
| <i>Religiosity</i> | 0.756 | 0.806 (0.000) | 24.77 | 5.680 |
| Religious belief | 0.721 | 0.726 (0.000) | 3.53 | 0.711 |
| Religious practice Religious altruism | 0.683 | 0.698 (0.000) | 3.51 | 0.904 |
| Religious enrichment | 0.725 | 0.750 (0.000) | 3.55 | 0.880 |
| Religious effect | 0.699 | 0.511 (0.000) | 3.48 | 0.926 |
| Religious knowledge Religious feeling | 0.695 | 0.545 (0.000) | 3.33 | 0.853 |
| | 0.749 | 0.686 (0.000) | 3.55 | 0.729 |
| | 0.830 | 0.744 (0.000) | 3.82 | 0.857 |
| <i>Awareness</i> | 0.807 | 0.751 (0.000) | 14.68 | 3.426 |
| Emotional awareness | 0.911 | 0.563 (0.000) | 3.50 | 0.834 |
| Accurate awareness | 0.752 | 0.598 (0.000) | 3.79 | 0.868 |
| Self-confidence | 0.766 | 0.726 (0.000) | 3.71 | 0.935 |
| Emotional intelligence | 0.694 | 0.777 (0.000) | 3.68 | 0.789 |
| <i>Interest</i> | 0.742 | 0.805 (0.000) | 18.41 | 4.153 |
| Positive feelings | 0.729 | 0.669 (0.000) | 3.61 | 0.874 |
| Enjoyment | 0.800 | 0.663 (0.000) | 3.68 | 0.763 |
| Comfort | 0.855 | 0.750 (0.000) | 3.75 | 0.847 |
| Ability | 0.738 | 0.835 (0.000) | 3.91 | 0.877 |
| Capacity to make decisions | 0.907 | 0.685 (0.000) | 3.46 | 0.792 |

Source: author's calculated, 2021; * $p < 0.05$

The formation of an understanding of business actors, local communities, and stakeholders to be able to meet the criteria of “halal tourism” in their operations requires extraordinary work to manage and create these ideas (Widyastuti, Parenrengi and Alkaf 2018). Basically, by maximizing all the potential that is owned, of course it is not easy to implement it considering that tourism managers have their own assessment related to “halal tourism” and different religious beliefs.

In Table 3, it can be interpreted that the first hypothesis and the second hypothesis showing religiosity and awareness of interest have been ‘accepted’. Awareness can also moderate its effect on religiosity and interest so that the final hypothesis can be ‘accepted’. These three relationships have a probability of below 5% ($p < 0.05$). Awareness as a moderating variable seems to be able to strengthen the two relationships that involve religiosity towards interest by 2.5%. Meanwhile, the closeness of the direct influence of religiosity and awareness of interest is the same. If these two variables increase constantly, interest will surge to reach 13.8% and 18.2%.

The correlation between religiosity and interest has been investigated by Luthfiani and Sari (2019) who concluded that religiosity has a positive effect on consumer interest. This is also in line with empirical studies (Mansur *et al.* 2018), where there is a significant impact of religiosity on interest. The level of one's religion is a vital determinant to encourage individual interest to obey and carry out the rules or norms that apply.

Table 3. Prediction results

| Hypothesis | Effect | Path Coef. | SE | Sig* | Confirmed |
|---|--------------|------------|-------|-------|-----------|
| Religiosity – interest (H1) | Direct (+) | 0.138 | 0.037 | 0.001 | Yes |
| Awareness – interest (H2) | Direct (+) | 0.182 | 0.058 | 0.005 | Yes |
| Religiosity – awareness – interest (H3) | Indirect (+) | 0.025 | 0.010 | 0.016 | Yes |

Source: author's calculated, 2021; * $p < 0.05$

The existence of competition can create prestige value, thus providing many choices for enthusiasts. Awareness is certainly very significant in building interest (Hadi, Rini and Sembiring 2020). No less important, relevant findings were also evaluated by Pratiwi, Dida and Sjafrah (2018) who discussed “halal tourism” has become a new phenomenon in several countries and has attracted attention for tourists. The existence of intense communication in halal tourist destinations makes it easier to socialize to raise awareness and become a special attraction.

Religion can shape a person's perspective, including the relationship between humans and the environment (Dunlap *et al.* 2000). Exploration by Hope and Jones (2014), the role of religion and the values of religious beliefs and values can influence individual perspectives and points of view in the surrounding environment. Environmental evaluation has to do with human welfare to anticipate social, economic, and cultural problems. In fact, religion is able to foster individual awareness of human responsibilities, interests, and needs. Then, Agorastos, Demiralay and Huber (2014) present the relationship between spirituality, personal belief, and religiosity with mental health. There are paranormal beliefs and magical ideas about mental health extensively and this is quite significant. Based on human experience, religiosity is a worthy parameter and it is important to receive great consideration in building awareness and will Rusli, Firmansyah and Mbulu (2019).

In the last twenty years, Indonesia is known to have the largest Muslim population in the world. The flow of ‘theory of planned behavior’ for case studies of Islamic banks by adding self-efficacy and religiosity as mediating variables Nugroho, Hidayat and Kusuma (2017). The most interesting finding lies in ‘religiosity’, which plays a vital role for Islamic banks, given the increasing number of customers. Self-efficacy can also increase customers' intention to participate in the Islamic banking system.

Conclusion, Limitation, and Future Implication

This paper seeks to present a pattern that connects religiosity, awareness, and interest in the sustainability of “halal tourism” in Ponorogo Regency with the support of primary data or direct interviews with relevant stakeholders. There are three aspects that can be concluded in a direct relationship and an indirect relationship, where religiosity has a significant effect on interest, awareness also has a significant effect on interest, and awareness plays an important role in strengthening the influence between religiosity on interest significantly.

The extra identification of these three patterns indicates that all elements strongly support the sustainability of “halal tourism” in the Ponorogo Regency. This concept is not solely due to economic pressure, but there are social and cultural motives that have pioneered the flow of “halal tourism” travel.

This finding also gives a signal that religiosity is the most dominant variable and must be highlighted, where stakeholders in the tourism sector are still strong in their religious beliefs. Given that emotion is a vital

dimension in awareness, it is the responsibility of future researchers to apply it to the model. From another aspect, the capacity to determine decisions in the interest variable is a distinct advantage that needs to be re-highlighted. The existence of factors that are quite dominant in these three variables, of course, is also something that must be underlined because the knowledge of the public is very different about 'halal tourism'. Case studies in other places or different countries can lead to multiple interpretations so that first it requires a harmonious understanding that is detailed and concrete. The diversity of people who have certain beliefs can also be an obstacle if this concept is not optimally socialized.

Acknowledgements

We are very excited about the successful collaboration on this work. The authors are responsible for the validity of the data collected. We appreciate all informants who have collaborated to support the data. This work also received an internal grant from the Faculty of Economics and Management – Universitas Darussalam Gontor.

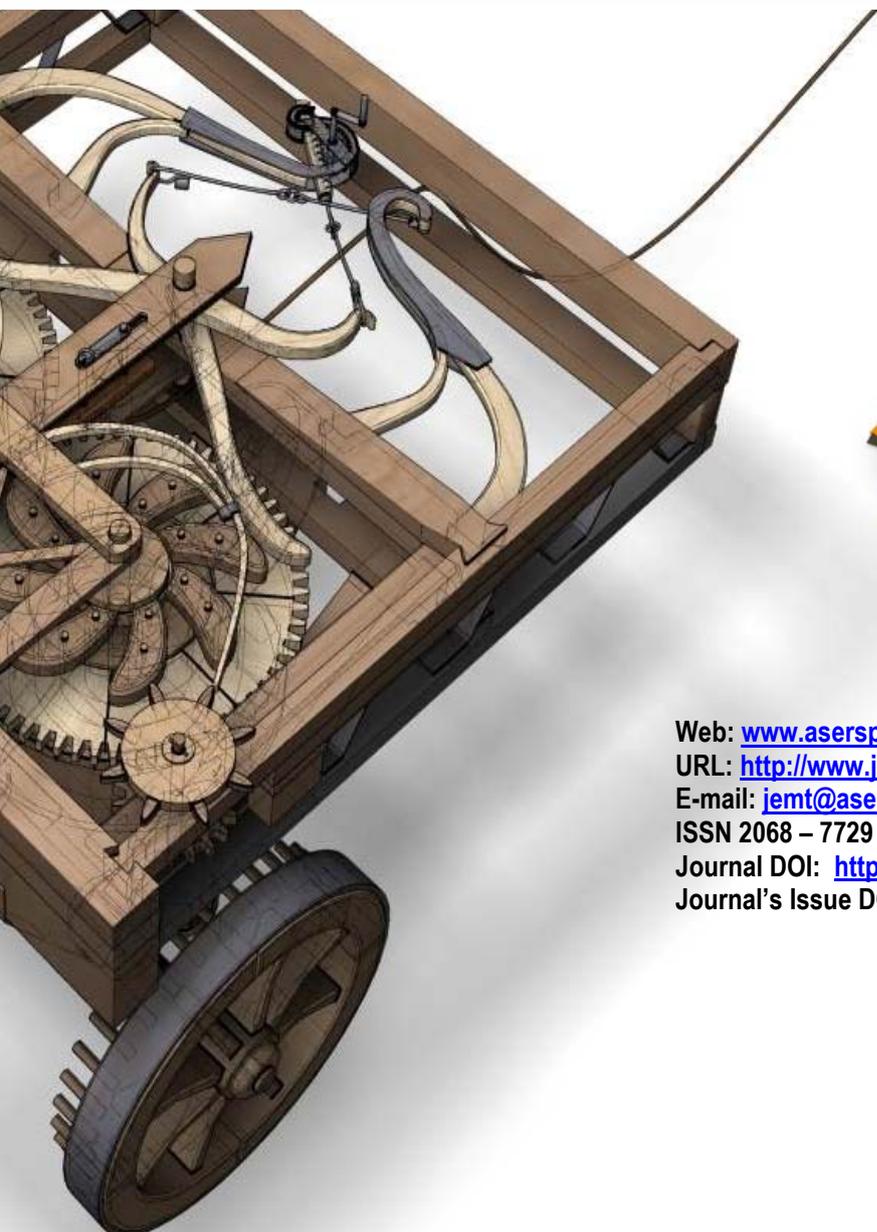
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ISSN 2068 – 7729

Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14505/jemt>

Journal's Issue DOI: [https://doi.org/10.14505/jemt.v12.4\(52\).00](https://doi.org/10.14505/jemt.v12.4(52).00)