



Umrah Backpacker: Studies and Research Path

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Backpacker Umrah exemplifies the flexibility, where pilgrims choose economical self-travel—adjusting schedules, transiting between countries for cheap flights, and sharing costs with others. This study aims to see the development of research on the topic "Umrah Backpacker" and research plans that can be carried out based on journals published with this theme. This study uses a qualitative method with a bibliometric analysis approach. The data used is secondary data with the theme "Umrah Backpacker" which comes from the Dimension database with a total of 55 journal articles. Then, the data was processed and analyzed using the VosViewer application with the aim of finding out the bibliometric map of the development of "Umrah Backpacker" research in the world. The results of the study found that there are 3 clusters with the most used words are umrah, home, pilgrim, hajj, knowledge, and Islam. Then, the topics of research paths related to Umrah Backpacker are behavioral, health, and risk factors, diaspora mobility and identity, and experiential religious tourism.

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INTRODUCTION

Umrah, which comes from the Arabic word meaning "to visit," technically means visiting the Kaaba to perform predetermined worship, including ihram (entering a state of ritual holiness), tawaf (circling the Kaaba seven times), sa'i (walking seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwah), and tahallul (shaving or trimming one's hair to get out of ihram). These rituals must follow a certain order and conditions, performed at any time except on the days of Hajj. [Rahmawati \(2023\)](#) confirms its stance in Islamic jurisprudence, with a consensus on its validity as a worship similar to the "minor Hajj" (al-Hajj al-Asghar), supported by Al-Quran 2:196 which advocates the completion of Hajj and Umrah for Allah.

In its development, Umrah involves group tour packages managed by agents, including flights, accommodation, and fixed itineraries to ensure adherence to rituals such as tawaf and sa'i. This model reflects a structured quota of Hajj but limits flexibility due to Saudi regulations that require booking through agents for international pilgrims. The introduction of the Saudi e-Visa in September 2019 marked an important change, allowing citizens of 50 countries, to enter independently for up to 90 days and perform Umrah outside the Hajj season ([Kahfi et al., 2025](#); [Hikmah et al., 2025](#)).

Independent Umrah (DIY) pilgrims emerged as a distinct segment, organizing their own trips through online platforms, social media forums such as the DIY Umrah Indonesia Facebook group, and apps for booking. Backpacker Umrah further exemplifies this flexibility, where pilgrims choose economical self-travel—adjusting schedules, transiting between countries for cheap flights, and sharing costs with others—reflecting a response to economic pressures and digital tools ([Atikah et al., 2022](#); [Kahfi et al., 2025](#); [Hikmah et al., 2025](#)).

Flexibility in timing and personalization motivate DIY pilgrims, who avoid rigid group shopping or non-religious activities to focus on worship. Budget constraints play a central role, as independent arrangements reduce costs through shared accommodation and promotional offers, which appeal to those with middle and lower incomes. The integration of technology, including virtual simulations and forums, equips pilgrims with knowledge of rituals, without the need for professional guides (mutawwif). Spirituality deepens through independent experience, which

encourages personal transformation and repeated visits ([Atikah et al., 2022](#); [Hikmah et al., 2025](#)).

Although flexible, this trend poses risks such as inadequate legal and security protections, as they operate outside of official mechanisms. Therefore, there is a need for proportional regulation, such as special provisions for backpackers and simplified quotas, to balance cultural legitimacy with security under maqasid al-shariah. Post-COVID adaptations, including new travel norms, are further influencing behavior, with an emphasis on health protocols in independent mobility ([Ibrahim et al., 2022](#); [Kahfi et al., 2025](#)). In addition, the research of [Yusoff et al \(2024\)](#) and [Saad et al \(2024\)](#) explains that independent pilgrims often ignore the protections provided by licensed mutawwif, such as emergency assistance and verified accommodation, which leads to an increased risk of fraud, accidents due to overcrowding, or health crises in Mecca and Medina. It is also compounded by the lack of adequate legal avenues, as self-regulation bypasses Saudi quotas and insurance mandates, which makes it difficult to resolve disputes within a Sharia-compliant framework.

In addition, health challenges are also increasing due to limited access to medical briefings. On the other hand, backpackers, who prioritize cost over preparation, often ignore simulations or forums for ritual knowledge, thus undermining spiritual effectiveness ([Tabatabaei et al., 2015](#); [Yezli et al., 2017](#); [Tobaiqy et al., 2020](#); [Alshammari et al., 2021](#)). In addition, economic pressures lead to inadequate lodging or flight transit, thus straining the budgets of low-income groups. Regulatory tensions arise from the flexibility of the Saudi e-Visa as opposed to capacity controls, leading to denials of entry or long delays.

Based on this background, it is important to see the extent of the current development of *Umrah Backpacker* through research, and one of the methods that can be used to see the progress of research is bibliometrics using VosViewer. The method is able to create and display a map of the author's journal and research paths based on co-citation data or a keyword map based on shared incident data. This research was conducted to complement existing research and fill the gaps in previous research and expand the literature related to *Umrah Backpacker* through the reserach path. In particular, the purpose of this study is to see the development of "*Umrah Backpacker*" research published by journals with this theme and to see future research opportunities by formulating a research agenda.

METHOD

In this study, various scientific journal publications related to the theme "Umrah Backpacker" around the world were used as data sources. Data was collected by searching for journal publications indexed by the Dimension database using the keyword "Umrah Backpacker". After that, scientific articles or journals relevant to the research theme will be selected based on the publication data that has been collected. Journals equipped with DOI are criteria in the process of filtering and processing data using software. There are 55 journal articles published under the research theme "Umrah Backpacker". The development of publication trends related to the research topic is analyzed using the VOSviewer software, which can generate bibliometric maps and allow for more detailed analysis.

In order to build a map, VOSviewer uses the abbreviation VOS which refers to Visualizing Similarity. In previous studies, VOS mapping techniques have been used to obtain bibliometric visualizations which are then analyzed. Furthermore, VOSviewer is able to create and display an author's journal map based on co-citation data or a keyword map based on shared incident data. Therefore, in this study, an analysis of journal maps related to "Umrah Backpacker" will be carried out, including

author maps, and keywords which will then be analyzed for research paths that can be carried out in the future through clusters on *keyword mapping*.

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with meta-analysis and a descriptive statistical literature study based on 55 journal publications that discuss the theme "Umrah Backpacker". Meta-analysis is a method that integrates previous research related to a specific topic to evaluate the results of existing studies. Furthermore, the qualitative method used in this study is also referred to as a constructive method, where the data collected in the research process will be constructed into a theme that is easier to understand and meaningful. The sampling technique used in this study is the purposive non-probability sampling method, which aims to meet certain information according to the desired research objectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Map

The image below describes the keyword trends that appear in the research on the theme "Umrah Backpacker" and the larger form is the most widely used word in journal publications with the theme "Umrah Backpacker".

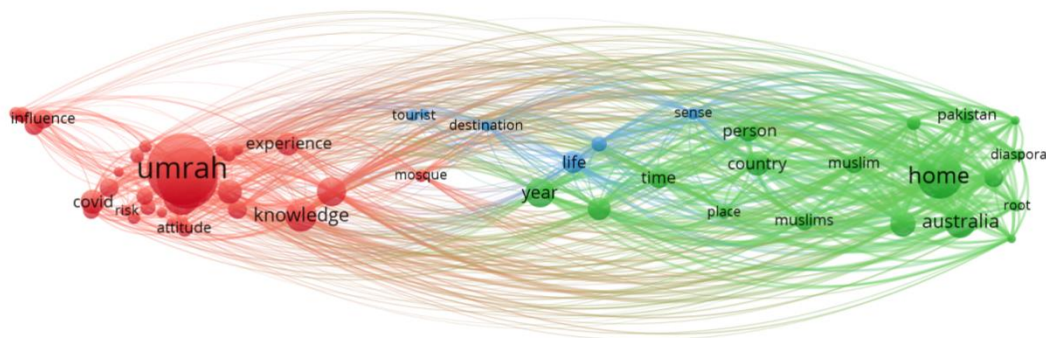


Figure 1. Research Path

As for the mapping, the most common keywords that appear in the publication "Umrah Backpacker" include Umrah, home, pilgrim, hajj,

knowledge, and Islam, which are then divided into 3 clusters, as follows:

Cluster 1: Behavioral, health, and risk factors

This cluster contains 37 keyword items, namely attitude, barrier, control, covid, employee, employee performance, experience, factor, hajj, impact, implication, influence, knowledge, law, malaysia, mosque, need, pandemic, participant, phenomenon, pilgrim, pneumococcal vaccine, practice, resilience, respiratory illness, risk, self, self efficacy, social medium, umrah, umrah pilgrim, vaccination, visitor. In this cluster, the focus of the research topic is on individual attitudes, perceived obstacles, self-efficacy, and awareness of risks that affect backpacker-style Umrah practices. In addition, it was also explained how health issues, vaccinations, COVID-19 experiences, and regulatory aspects shape the decision-making, resilience, and adaptive behavior of pilgrims during the independent Umrah journey.

Some pilgrims choose backpacker-style Umrah because of its affordability, allowing larger groups or families to participate without the exorbitant cost of a tour package. Flexibility in scheduling also allows for longer worship times, less rush, and personalized itineraries, fostering a sense of calm and a deeper quality of worship compared to agent tours that are usually fixated on travel schedules (Yusoff et al., 2024; Kahfi et al., 2025). Nevertheless, there are a number of major obstacles in undergoing backpacker Umrah such as logistical challenges such as unreliable hotel confirmations, fluctuations in transportation prices, and cancellations in peak seasons, which increase unexpected costs. Language gaps also hinder communication with locals for taxis, accommodation, or emergencies, while on-the-ground handling—such as visa fluctuations and navigating crowds—add complexity without agent support (Hikmah et al., 2025; Putri Salsabila & Soeprpto, 2025). Women face additional interpersonal constraints, such as needing group companions in place of mahrams, amid concerns about inadequate facilities or disorientation (Nasir et al., 2025).

Furthermore, previous Umrah or Hajj experiences have helped increase self-efficacy, provide confidence in rituals, navigation, and problem-solving, so that independent travel becomes feasible for repeat pilgrims. Networking through social media or communities also improves competence, offering tips on apps like Nusuk for bookings and mutual contacts for mutawwif. Agents who act as informal guides further improve self-efficacy by handling negotiations and compliance in Arabic, bridging the skills gap for

beginners (Hikmah et al., 2025; Denianti & Muhajarah, 2025).

Nevertheless, pilgrims remain aware of risks such as getting lost, uninsured health problems, or non-compliance with regulations, although these risks can be mitigated through preparation and digital tools. Increased awareness of security threats, fraud, or abandonment encourages group travel, although cumulative exposure can lower perceptions of self-efficacy in high-risk scenarios.

Cluster 2 : Diaspora mobility and identity

This cluster contains 18 keyword items, namely australia, bangladesh, connection, country, diapura, home, husband, islam, middle east, muslims, muslims, pakistan, person, place, root, saudi arabia, time, year. Research on this topic emphasizes the role of Muslim diaspora communities in shaping cross-border independent Umrah mobility. This cluster reflects how transnational ties, cultural roots, family relationships, and geographical origin affect the timing, choice of destination, and travel patterns of backpacker Umrah pilgrims.

The Muslim diaspora community plays an important role in enabling independent Umrah mobility by providing cross-border networks for information sharing, logistical support, and cultural mediation, especially for pilgrims traveling alone or independently. The network leverages family ties, digital platforms, and local knowledge in Saudi Arabia to facilitate visa access, accommodation, and navigation without formal agents. Atikah et al (2022) emphasize how diaspora connections transform rigid pilgrimage structures into flexible transnational pathways.

Research from Khadijah et al (2022), Kahfi et al (2025), and Hikmah et al (2025) also explains that the diaspora community, especially Indonesians and Malaysians in Saudi Arabia, acts as the main information hub for independent Umrah pilgrims, sharing tips in person on e-visas, booking the Nusuk app, and cost-effective routes through WhatsApp groups and Facebook forums. The network disseminates knowledge about rituals, local transportation, and emergency contacts, reducing barriers for first-time pilgrims traveling alone who rely on diaspora referrals rather than agents. This can certainly foster trust and independence, allowing pilgrims from their home countries to coordinate Umrah trips.

On the other hand, established members of the diaspora act as informal mutawwif, offering lodging in shared accommodation, guiding tawaf and sa'i, and

negotiating with locals in Arabic, bridging the language gap for independent pilgrims. In cities such as Mecca and Medina, diaspora-run guesthouses and ride-sharing services lower costs by up to 50% compared to agent packages, favoring longer stays for deeper spirituality (Atikah et al., 2022; Arafat, 2024; Hikmah et al., 2025).

Cluster 3 : Experiential religious tourism

This cluster has 6 keyword items, namely destination, life, mecca, play, sense, tourist. The topic of his research emphasizes on the backpacker's Umrah experience as religious tourism centered in Mecca as his destination. The cluster highlights personal understanding, life reflection, and experiential engagement, where spiritual fulfillment intersects with tourism-oriented exploration and self-paced Umrah practices. The pilgrims develop personal understanding through direct encounters with sacred sites such as the Kaaba, where ihram rituals evoke awe and cognitive insight, reframing the priorities of life through Islamic phenomenology. Self-practice improves ritual cognitive mapping, fosters competence in tawaf and unguided sa'i, which builds spiritual cognition and adherence to moral codes. This understanding can improve well-being in various physical, emotional, and intellectual dimensions, as pilgrims integrate the values of the Qur'an into their daily reflections (Moaven, 2020; Hassan et al., 2023; Alzeer & Abuzinadah, 2024).

On the other hand, the reflection of life appears during the long stay in Mecca and Medina, where the pilgrims reflect on past mistakes and future resilience, triggered by a temporary separation from the routine during the Umrah pilgrimage. Umrah encourages uncomfortable self-introspection, which leads to a narrative of psychological forgiveness and escape, in line with the transformative model in Islamic psychology. A number of studies highlight how post-Umrah integration maintains this reflection, resulting in insights into gratitude and immortality, which differ from structured tours (Al-Ajarma, 2021; Fatima, 2024; Alzeer & Abuzinadah, 2024; Hashim et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study aims to find out the extent of the development of research with the theme of "*Umrah Backpacker*" in the world. The results of the study showed that the number of research publications related to "*Umrah Backpacker*" was 55 journal articles indexed by Dimension. Furthermore, in the development of research related to "*Umrah Backpacker*" based on bibliometric keyword mapping, the most widely used

keywords are Umrah, home, pilgrim, hajj, knowledge, and Islam. Based on the keywords that are often used, they are then grouped into 3 research map clusters with topics that discuss behavioral, health, and risk factors, diaspora mobility and identity, and experiential religious tourism.

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