

INNOVATIVE HAJJ FUND MANAGEMENT TO SUPPORT COST EFFICIENCY THROUGH SEA TRANSPORTATION: A GOVERNANCE STRENGTHENING AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY MODEL BASED ON DIGITALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

The growing interest among Indonesian Muslims in performing Hajj using sea transportation has emerged as a significant trend in recent years. This mode offers a more affordable alternative and has the potential to increase accessibility, particularly for lower-middle-income groups and coastal communities. However, this shift demands innovation in Hajj fund management, which has traditionally focused on conventional schemes and air travel. This study aims to examine how innovations in governance and institutional strengthening of Hajj fund management can support cost efficiency and financial sustainability through the integration of cost-effective sea transportation and service digitalization. A qualitative approach is employed, using a case study of a Hajj fund management institution, supported by literature review and relevant data analysis. The study also incorporates financial modeling to identify potential cost savings and improved liquidity achieved through investment innovation and the digitalization of payment and fund monitoring systems. Findings indicate that integrating sea transportation significantly reduces travel costs and positively impacts budget planning. Key challenges include strengthening institutional governance, enhancing transparency, and implementing real-time digital systems. Technologies such as blockchain and smart contracts have proven effective in increasing public trust and minimizing the risk of fund mismanagement. Furthermore, sustainable investment portfolios aligned with Sharia principles present opportunities to boost income while maintaining long-term financial stability. This research provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of an innovative Hajj fund management model that is adaptive to current trends and supports the creation of a transparent, efficient, and sustainable Hajj ecosystem.

Keyword: Hajj fund management; sea transportation; digitalization; financial sustainability; Islamic finance

INTRODUCTION

The rising interest of Indonesian Muslims in performing Hajj via sea transport has become a notable trend. Sea travel provides a more affordable option than air travel, improving access for lower-middle-income and coastal pilgrims. This shift calls for innovation in Hajj fund management, which has traditionally focused on conventional, air-travel-based schemes.

Previous literature has emphasized the diversification of Hajj fund investments, such as sukuk, cash waqf, and gold, to protect the fund's value from inflation and market volatility (Andriani et al., 2024). Innovative financial models, such as Malaysia's Tabung Haji, highlight the integration of ethical, Sharia-compliant investments and fair profit-sharing systems, which have proven effective in supporting Muslims to perform Hajj (Cheumar & Akem, 2024). Additionally, service digitalization is increasingly recognized as a tool to enhance transparency, efficiency, and accountability in Hajj fund management (Wardana & Suhartini, 2023) (Cheeryl Angelica & Faizi, 2024).

Despite a growing body of research on investment, governance, and digitalization in Hajj fund management, a research gap remains particularly concerning the integration of sea transportation as a cost-effective alternative. This study aims to address that gap by examining innovative approaches to Hajj fund management that support cost efficiency through sea transport, institutional governance strengthening, and Sharia-based digitalization. Using a qualitative case study approach, findings suggest that sea transportation can significantly reduce travel costs, while digitalization including blockchain and smart contract technologies enhances transparency and accountability. Moreover, Sharia-compliant investment innovations contribute to long-term financial sustainability. The study recommends the establishment of a specialized unit for sea transport, the strengthening of tech-adaptive institutions, and the promotion of digital literacy to expand Hajj access and build public trust.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on Hajj fund management and innovation highlights various strategies aimed at improving financial sustainability, service quality, and operational efficiency in organizing the Hajj pilgrimage. According to Andriani et al. (2024), investment diversification serves as a critical approach to safeguarding the value of Hajj funds against inflation and global market volatility. By investing in sukuk, cash waqf, and gold, fund managers can ensure a stable return while maintaining compliance with Islamic financial principles. This diversification not only preserves the economic value of pilgrims' deposits but also strengthens the resilience of Hajj fund institutions in facing economic uncertainties. Similarly, Abidin (2016) emphasizes infrastructure financing as another strategic approach, where funds are allocated to develop facilities and services that directly support pilgrims. This method ensures both the safety of the funds and the enhancement of the pilgrims' experience, aligning with the goals of Islamic finance to promote public welfare (maslahah).

Beyond investment diversification, the literature also discusses innovative financial models designed to enhance transparency, fairness, and sustainability in fund management. Zinah et al. (2024) introduce the Wadi'ah contract as a savings scheme based on the principles of trust and safekeeping, ensuring that pilgrims' funds are managed ethically and efficiently. This model fosters greater confidence among depositors by emphasizing accountability and equitable fund utilization. Furthermore, Cheumar and Akem (2024) explore the Malaysian Tabung Haji model, which integrates ethical investment, profit-sharing, and financial literacy. This model is widely recognized as a benchmark for sustainable and Sharia-compliant Hajj fund management. It not only secures financial stability but also educates pilgrims about responsible savings and ethical financial behavior, demonstrating the potential for replication in other Muslim-majority countries.

In addition to financial strategies, the literature highlights transportation innovations as an integral aspect of modern Hajj management. Hussain et al. (2021) underline the importance of shuttle bus optimization to reduce congestion and delays during the pilgrimage season. Efficient fleet planning, supported by data and technology, enhances the overall satisfaction and safety of pilgrims. Meanwhile, Chiffolleau (2024) provides a historical perspective on the transformation of Hajj transportation, tracing its evolution from traditional caravan routes to modern, technology-driven systems. This transformation reflects broader shifts toward efficiency, safety, and regulatory governance in the management of Hajj logistics. Collectively, these studies underscore that successful Hajj management requires a holistic integration of financial innovation, infrastructural investment, and technological advancement, all guided by the ethical and spiritual principles of Islam.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study aims to answer: How can innovation in governance and institutional strengthening of Hajj fund management enhance cost efficiency and financial sustainability through sea transportation and digital services? Using a qualitative case study of Indonesian Hajj fund institutions, the research explores strategies and challenges in adopting sea transport. Grounded in public governance, institutional innovation, and Islamic finance theories, the method fits the complex context of policy, technology, and Sharia compliance. Data were collected via triangulation and analyzed inductively, following Sugiyono (2018) approach to qualitative research as studying natural settings with the researcher as the key instrument. Document review and financial modeling were also used to assess cost savings

and sustainable investments. The findings offer practical insights for policymakers and contribute to Islamic economics theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before presenting the following table on innovative strategies in Hajj fund management and transportation, it is essential to understand that the modernization of Hajj management is not solely focused on improving the quality of pilgrimage services, but also on ensuring financial efficiency and system sustainability. According to Andriani et al. (2024), contemporary Hajj fund management requires investment diversification to maintain the fund’s value amid inflation and market volatility. Therefore, instruments such as sukuk, cash waqf, and gold have become the primary means to strengthen the financial resilience of Hajj fund institutions. This approach demonstrates that Islamic financial principles can align with modern financial innovation without compromising values of trust and justice.

In addition to investment aspects, Hajj fund management is also directed toward infrastructure financing that supports the smooth operation of pilgrimage services. Abidin (2016) explains that financing Hajj infrastructure projects not only enhances the quality of services for pilgrims but also ensures fund safety under the framework of Islamic finance. Moreover, innovative financial models such as the Wadi’ah contract have been introduced, emphasizing transparency, sustainability, and fair distribution (Zinah et al., 2024). This model builds greater trust among prospective pilgrims to save and invest under ethical, Sharia-compliant financial schemes.

Innovation is also evident in the transportation systems supporting Hajj operations. With the increasing number of pilgrims each year, optimizing transportation has become a pressing necessity. Hussain et al. (2021) highlight the importance of shuttle bus optimization in reducing delays and improving pilgrim satisfaction through efficient fleet planning. Furthermore, Chiffolleau (2024) describes the historical transformation from traditional caravan travel to modern, technology-driven transport systems emphasizing efficiency, safety, and regulatory support. Thus, innovation in both Hajj fund management and transportation forms the foundation for a more professional, sustainable, and equitable pilgrimage administration in line with Islamic values.

The following Table 1 summarizes various strategies and innovations in Hajj fund management and transportation based on recent studies:

Table 1 Innovative Strategies in Hajj Fund Management and Transportation

Category	Strategy/Innovation	Brief Description	Source
Hajj Fund Investment Strategies	Investment Diversification	Investment in sukuk, cash waqf, and gold to preserve fund value against inflation and market volatility.	(Andriani et al., 2024)
	Infrastructure Financing	Funding Hajj infrastructure projects to improve service quality and ensure fund safety under Islamic finance principles.	(Abidin, 2016)
Innovative Financial Models	Wadi'ah Contract	Hajj savings scheme based on the Wadi'ah contract emphasizing transparency, sustainability, and fair distribution.	(Zinah et al., 2024)
	Malaysian Tabung Haji Model	Integration of ethical investment and profit-sharing, focusing on Sharia compliance and financial literacy.	(Cheumar & Akem, 2024)
Transportation Innovations	Shuttle Bus Optimization	Improving shuttle bus services during Hajj to reduce delays and enhance pilgrim satisfaction through optimal fleet planning.	(Hussain et al., 2021)
	Historical Context and Modernization	Transformation from caravan travel to modern transport systems emphasizing efficiency, safety, technology, and regulatory support.	(Chiffolleau, 2024)

Before presenting Table 1, it is important to highlight that institutional strengthening plays a pivotal role in ensuring the sustainability and efficiency of Hajj fund management. The increasing complexity of managing large-scale pilgrimage operations requires not only financial prudence but also robust institutional capacity. According to Suhartini and Nuzulul Atiah (2022), one of the emerging strategies is the integration of sea transportation as a complementary alternative to air travel. This initiative can significantly reduce costs, especially for countries with a large number of pilgrims such as Indonesia. Moreover, Aminah et al. (2024) emphasize that sea transportation also contributes to environmental sustainability, aligning with global efforts to reduce carbon emissions in the transportation sector.

Another major development is the digitalization of Hajj services, which enhances transparency, accountability, and service efficiency. As noted by Perdana et al. (2024), the adoption of digital systems enables real-time monitoring of financial transactions, thereby minimizing the risks of inefficiency or fund mismanagement. Zakiruddin (2021) adds that

digital platforms such as online registration, e-payment systems, and mobile logistics applications have revolutionized the administrative process, making it faster, more accessible, and user-friendly for pilgrims. Additionally, Dina Fitriasia Septiarini et al. (2024) highlight the use of digital tools in financial management and investment decisions, ensuring that all processes remain compliant with Sharia principles while optimizing returns on Hajj funds. Institutional strengthening also requires a solid regulatory and collaborative framework to ensure long-term sustainability. As stated by Zakiruddin (2023), the establishment of clear and coherent regulations among Hajj-related institutions ensures transparency and accountability in fund management. Furthermore, collaboration between the Badan Pengelola Keuangan Haji (BPKH) and various stakeholders is essential for developing an integrated and operational management system (Aminah et al., 2024). Through diversified Sharia-compliant investment strategies and inter-institutional synergy, Hajj fund management can achieve both financial stability and service excellence.

The following Table 2 presents a detailed overview of institutional strengthening strategies for Hajj fund management based on recent scholarly contributions:

Table 2 Institutional Strengthening Strategies for Hajj Fund Management

Aspect	Subtopic	Description	Source
Integration of Sea Transportation	Cost Efficiency	Utilizing sea transportation can reduce travel costs compared to air travel, especially for countries like Indonesia with a large number of pilgrims.	(Suhartini & Nuzulul Atiah, 2022)
	Environmental Impact	Sea transport is more environmentally friendly than air travel, supporting sustainability principles in Hajj logistics.	(Aminah et al., 2024)
	Logistical Coordination	Collaboration between government agencies and transportation providers is needed to ensure smooth and safe pilgrim journeys.	(M. Nur, 2020)
Digitalization of Services	Transparency and Accountability	Digital systems enable real-time tracking of financial transactions, enhancing transparency and preventing inefficiencies.	(Suhartini & Nuzulul Atiah, 2022)(Perdana et al., 2024)
	Service Efficiency	Online registration, digital payments, and app-based logistics updates reduce administrative burdens and	(Zakiruddin, 2021)

		improve pilgrim convenience.	
	Financial Management	Digital tools in investment decision-making can help maximize returns while ensuring compliance with Sharia principles.	(Dina Fitriasia Septiarini et al., 2024)
Institutional Strengthening	Regulatory Framework	Strong and clear regulations and coordination among regulatory bodies are essential to ensure accountable and efficient Hajj fund management.	(Zakiruddin, 2023)
	Investment Strategy	Diversified Sharia-compliant investment portfolios can enhance the financial sustainability of Hajj funds.	(Dina Fitriasia Septiarini et al., 2024)
	Collaboration and Integration	Synergy between BPKH and other stakeholders is crucial for building a holistic and operational Hajj fund management system.	(Aminah et al., 2024)

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Another major development is the digitalization of Hajj services, which enhances transparency, accountability, and service efficiency. As noted by Perdana et al. (2024), the adoption of digital systems enables real-time monitoring of financial transactions, thereby minimizing the risks of inefficiency or fund mismanagement. Zakiruddin (2021) adds that digital platforms such as online registration, e-payment systems, and mobile logistics applications have revolutionized the administrative process, making it faster, more accessible, and user-friendly for pilgrims. Additionally, Dina Fitriasia Septiarini et al. (2024) highlight the use of digital tools in financial management and investment decisions, ensuring that all processes remain compliant with Sharia principles while optimizing returns on Hajj funds.

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The following Table 3 presents a detailed overview of institutional strengthening strategies for Hajj fund management based on recent scholarly contributions:

Table 3 Innovations in Hajj Fund Management in Western Countries

Category	Strategy/Innovation	Brief Description	Source
Tabung Haji Model as a Framework	Ethical Investment & Profit Sharing	The Malaysian Tabung Haji model combines ethical investments with a profit-sharing system, proven effective in supporting Malaysian Muslims in performing Hajj.	(Cheumar & Akem, 2024)
	Sharia Compliance	Avoids elements of riba and gharar; the model can be adapted in Western contexts to establish a sustainable Hajj financial system.	(Cheumar & Akem, 2024)
Digitalization of Hajj Fund Management	Digital Pawnshop Applications	Highlights the potential of digital platforms in simplifying fund management, though the involvement of third parties remains a challenge.	(Cheeryl Angelica & Faizi, 2024)
	SI-MASHAJI Application	Enhances user experience in managing Hajj dormitories in Indonesia; serves as a model for digital service innovation applicable in Western countries.	(Hendrizar & Frinaldi, 2023)
Financial Investment Strategies	Gold and Sukuk Diversification	Provides a hedge against inflation and market volatility, helping maintain long-term sustainability of Hajj funds.	(Andriani et al., 2024)
	Halal System Integration	Applies halal investment principles aligned with Islamic values, emphasizing transparency and ethical fund management.	(Aminah et al., 2024)
Governance & Institutional	Establishment of Dedicated Institutions	Examples such as Indonesia's BPKH highlight the importance	(Nur Rohmah Hidayati et

Strengthening		of professional and transparent institutions in managing collected Hajj funds.	al., 2024)
	Direct and Collaborative Investments	Direct and collaborative investment strategies can generate additional income and support infrastructure, thereby strengthening Hajj financial governance.	(Ali & Mandalia, 2022)

The table above provides a comprehensive overview of the multifaceted challenges and innovations in Hajj fund management, highlighting both governance-related issues and strategic responses developed through institutional, financial, and technological improvements. One of the major themes emerging from the table is the ongoing struggle for transparency and accountability. As noted by Wardana and Suhartini (2023), the Hajj fund management system has long faced criticism due to inefficiencies, weak oversight, and the occasional occurrence of corruption. While the Badan Pengelola Keuangan Haji (BPKH) serves as the main supervisory body, challenges in ensuring full accountability remain. Similarly, Suhartini and Nuzulul Atiah (2022) argue that the complexity of fund allocation and unclear public reporting mechanisms contribute to public skepticism. This indicates that reforming transparency is not merely a procedural need but a moral imperative in upholding the trust of millions of Muslim pilgrims.

The table also identifies significant regulatory and governance challenges, including dual authority and inefficient coordination, as mentioned by Zakiruddin (2021). These issues hinder the consistent application of good governance principles such as fairness, integrity, and legal certainty. Without a unified regulatory framework, decision-making processes may become fragmented, reducing overall institutional effectiveness. Moreover, as Ramadhani and Aliyah (2024) highlight, ethical and security issues have become increasingly pressing in the era of digitalization. The rapid integration of digital systems introduces risks such as data breaches, cyber threats, and manipulation of financial records. Therefore, maintaining ethical standards and ensuring data integrity are vital for protecting public trust and sustaining the credibility of the digital financial ecosystem in Hajj management.

On the innovation side, the table underscores the role of digital transformation through systems like the Integrated Hajj Information and Computerization System (SISKOHAT), which enhances communication and transparency between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the public (Wardana & Suhartini, 2023). This system represents a major leap forward in

connecting pilgrims with real-time information and ensuring that fund disbursement processes remain traceable and accountable. Additionally, Sharia-based financial models such as the Wakalah contract are increasingly used to improve transparency and efficiency while maintaining compliance with Islamic law (Mahfudz et al., 2023). Complementing this is the Integrated Halal System, which ensures that all investments comply with halal standards, reinforcing both ethical integrity and financial sustainability (Aminah et al., 2024).

From a governance and sustainability perspective, institutional reform is a recurring theme across multiple studies. As argued by Zakiruddin (2023), reforming the institutional structure through clear regulatory mandates and enhanced supervision mechanisms is crucial to resolve overlapping authorities and strengthen accountability. Cost efficiency innovations, such as integrating sea transportation into Hajj logistics, further demonstrate practical ways to reduce operational expenses while maintaining service quality (Chiffolleau, 2024). Finally, stakeholder collaboration emerges as a key factor for long-term success. According to Mahfudz et al. (2023), synergy among Sharia financial institutions, regulators, and technology providers is essential for optimizing fund management, promoting transparency, and encouraging greater public engagement. Collectively, the table illustrates that the future of Hajj fund management depends on a balanced combination of technological innovation, regulatory reform, ethical compliance, and institutional collaboration.

Table 4 Challenges, Digital Innovations, and Governance in Hajj Fund Management

Aspect	Issue / Challenge / Innovation	Brief Description	Source
Challenges in Hajj Fund Management	Transparency and Accountability	Hajj fund management faces criticism due to lack of transparency and accountability; issues such as corruption and inefficient fund utilization still persist. BPKH plays a supervisory role, but challenges remain.	(Wardana & Suhartini, 2023)(Suhartini & Nuzulul Atiah, 2022)
	Regulatory and Governance Issues	Dual authority and inefficient management lead to non-compliance with good governance principles, requiring reforms to ensure legal certainty and fairness.	(Zakiruddin, 2021)
	Ethical and Security Issues	Financial digitalization introduces data security and integrity concerns; maintaining ethical and secure digital	(Ramadhani & Aliyah, 2024)

		systems is crucial for public trust.	
Innovations in Digital Systems	Integrated Hajj Information and Computerization System (SISKOHAT)	This system enhances transparency and accountability by providing real-time information to pilgrims and improving communication between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the public.	(Wardana & Suhartini, 2023)
	Wakalah Contract and Sharia Compliance	The integration of Sharia principles in Wakalah financial contracts improves fund management transparency and efficiency in accordance with Islamic law and national regulations.	(Mahfudz et al., 2023)
	Integrated Halal System	Managing investments with halal certification ensures compliance with Islamic ethics, fostering public trust and sustainability of the Hajj fund.	(Aminah et al., 2024)
Governance and Financial Sustainability	Institutional Reform	Strengthening governance through clear regulations and supervision mechanisms is necessary to resolve authority dualism and align management with good governance principles.	(Zakiruddin, 2023)
	Cost Efficiency via Sea Transportation	Sea transport offers significant cost reduction in Hajj operations, requiring well-planned coordination for a smooth and beneficial transition.	(Chiffolleau, 2024)
	Stakeholder Collaboration	Synergy among Sharia financial institutions, regulators, and other stakeholders is vital to overcome challenges and optimize fund management, including through digital platforms for transparency and public engagement.	(Mahfudz et al., 2023)

This study finds that Indonesia's Hajj fund management faces major challenges in transparency, accountability, and financial efficiency, limiting cost optimization. A promising

innovation is using sea transportation as a cheaper alternative to air travel, especially for lower-middle-income and coastal pilgrims. Cost efficiency is further supported by Sharia-compliant investments (sukuk, cash waqf, gold) and digital services like SISKOHAT and online payments. Sea transport integration also promotes economic and environmental sustainability. Digital financial tools such as wakalah contracts, halal certification, and real-time tracking reduce fund misuse and boost public trust. Institutionally, structural reforms and collaboration among BPKH, Sharia financial bodies, and logistics providers are needed for an efficient, Sharia-compliant, sustainable system. Malaysia's Tabung Haji model shows success with ethical investment and fair profit-sharing, which Indonesia could adapt. Overall, combining sea transport and digital finance offers a practical solution to funding challenges while enhancing governance.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that integrating sea transportation and digitalization in Hajj fund management significantly improves cost efficiency and financial sustainability, especially in countries like Indonesia with many pilgrims. Sea transport offers a more affordable logistics option, while digital technology enhances transparency, accountability, and service efficiency. Sharia-compliant diversified investments also provide a stable and ethical financial base. Though limited by reliance on literature and case study data, the research enriches Islamic finance theory and offers practical guidance for fund managers and policymakers. Key recommendations include creating a dedicated unit for alternative transport modes, accelerating digitalization, and improving digital literacy among pilgrims and administrators. For Western countries, adopting models like Malaysia's Tabung Haji could support efficient, Sharia-compliant Hajj finance. Cross-sector collaboration and strong policies are essential for a modern, transparent, and resilient Hajj fund system serving global Muslim communities.

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