

Balancing Tradition And Modernity: Monetizing Zakātul Fiṭr And Its Contribution To Halal Industry Sustainability

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Abstract:

Islam exceeds the conventional conception of a program merely focused on spiritual growth and religiosity, rather it espouses an all-inclusive approach that incorporates both spiritual and material realms. Through the provision of ḥalāl wealth, Islam empowers its adherents with tools to harness the glamour of the universe. However, balancing between its traditional and modern approach remains an intricate question among some Muslim scholars, which Monetizing Zakātul Fiṭr (MZF) serves as its classic example. This paper, therefore, aims to study balancing the tradition and modernity of Islamic law through the phenomenon of monetizing Zakātul Fiṭr and its contribution to sustainability of Halal Industry which serves to ameliorate the lives of Muslims globally. The research methods adopted for this work are historical and analytical, for the purposes of studying the historical advent of Halal industry as well as analyzing the opinions of the scholars concerning the phenomenon. The paper reveals that monetizing Zakātul Fiṭr can contribute to sustainability of Halal industry by increasing financial inclusion for socioeconomically challenged individuals and families. The paper concludes that Islam offers a balanced and adaptable framework, integrating the principles of tradition and modernity as it provides Muslims with the flexibility to respond efficiently to changing circumstances. Via recommendation, this paper implores Halal market to expand its focus to incorporate other critical areas where Muslims face major deficits, notably Halal agriculture and livestock, Halal e-commerce, Halal blockchain certification among others across the expanse of Muslim world, including African countries.

Keywords: Halal market, Zakātul Fiṭr, modernity, flexibility, glamour

Introduction:

Considering all pertinent factors, Islam remains the most exemplary programme in the history of mankind as it has solved impenetrable human problems which include finance, spirituality, and morality (Azzam, & Ahmad 1976). However, to consolidate and validate this preeminent status in the current times, some crucial elements must be incorporated, comprising poverty alleviation,

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eradication of corruption as well as unification of Islamic legal system on a global scale (Bahari & Yusuf, 2015). Unquestionably, the first generation of Muslim community embodied this exemplary model, which set their era to be branded as a singular excellence that eclipsed the feats of both their predecessors and successors (Hasan, 2009).

In response to the divine message of Quran 5 Verse 2, which reads, “Cooperate in justice and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and hostility. And fear Allah; verily, Allah is severe in punishment”, numerous entities and societies have munificently contributed to the amelioration of the lives of Muslims, through various modes of support. Halal market constitutes an example of this humanitarian initiative, specifically tailored to address this imperative (Mafaz & Ahmad, 2023).

Halal is an Arabic word which connotes the notion of ‘lawful’ in the English vernacular (Ahmed & Akbaba, 2020). In order to appreciate the significance and prospects afforded by Halal market, one must first cultivate a deep understanding of the concept of Halal. Therefore, while contemplating on the concept of Halal, the predominant meaning that arises in the minds of most people is that Halal only concerns with meat, food and drink products (Ergene & Armanios, 2018).

Conversely, Saheeda Ahmad has given a precise definition, elucidating the exact nature and essence of Halal (Prayag et al., 2019), “Halal encompasses an all-inclusive ecosystem of ethical principles that are universally applicable to businesses and societies. At its core, it prioritizes the welfare of individuals such as eating healthy, clean and non-toxic products, as well as shunning a lifestyle that may be detrimental to their health. Moreover, the Halal economy is reinforced by a value-based ethos on the notion that everyone cultivates a respect for the natural world, which includes the environment, sustainability, workers, suppliers’ rights, as well as animal welfare, among others. Furthermore, Halal market presents diverse opportunities and possibilities.”

As the definition underlines the wide-ranging nature of Halal market, it encompasses various sectors that one can feasibly contemplate, ranging from the most apparent, such as foods and beverages, to more contextual domains like cosmetics, fashion, fertilizer and even tourism. Furthermore, it incorporates all aspects of respectful and healthy lifestyle as exemplified by the notion of Halal holidays that converges all facets of lawful means into a singular experience. This Halal holiday establishes a curated experience, wherein every detail is tailored to respect Islamic laws, as evidenced in providing restaurants, hotels with only halal (lawful) food, with exclusion of serving alcohol anywhere, and hospitality venues with prayer rooms, pool and beaches reserved exclusively for women (Ismail, 2016).

However, with regard to its historical genesis, Halal market is a modern phenomenon, having emerged in the 1960s, when influxes of immigrant Muslim populations began to settle in West, particularly in France, which created a growing demand for Halal products. The 1990s witnessed the advent of Muslim consumers who were mindful in their purchasing decisions. Thus, the specialist butchers began

to establish themselves locally, leading to a subsequent diversification and globalization of Halal products within the agro-food business (Khemakhem & Karoui, 2019).

Through the ages, Halal market has undergone a process of globalization to achieve a truly international footprint. Specifically, it reach has extended to Southeast Asia, where countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore have emerged as significant destinations. Also to Middle East, as countries like Kuwait, the UAE and Saudi Arabia have many Halal markets. As well as North Africa, where countries like Egypt, Morocco, and Algeria also patronize the products, while South Asia, with countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India are also growing Halal markets. In Europe, countries like Germany, UK and France are also, driven by the Muslim populations, figuring glaringly among others (Yahya & Marzuki, 2020).

It is against this backdrop that this paper discusses the contribution of monetizing Zakātul Fiṭr as a means of sustaining Halal market which can be considered as a modern way of ameliorating the lives of Muslims as well providing halal (lawful) foods for them at global scale.

Tradition and Modernity in Islam:

A longstanding debate has existed within Muslim scholars regarding the responsiveness of Islamic legal system to the contrast of tradition and modernity. While an extensive number of contemporary scholars subscribe to the latter perspective, positing that Islamic law is flexible and accommodating, Yusuf Al-Qarḍawī opines in his work that:

وربما توهم بعض الناس أن الفقه الإسلامي لا يتسع صدره للتجديد؛ لأن أساسه أساس ديني رباني: أساسه الوحي المعصوم وما كان هذا شأنه فلا يتقبل تجديدات البشر غير المعصومة. ومن حسن الحظ أن نجد في النصوص الدينية نفسها ما يصرح بشرعية التجديد للدين بين كل قرن وآخر، وذلك في الحديث الصحيح الذي رواه أبو هريرة عن النبي (صلى الله عليه وسلم) "إن الله يبعث لهذه الأمة – على رأس كل مائة سنة – من يجدد لها دينها" (Abu Daud, 2009). ولفظة (من) في هذا الحديث تصلح للجمع. كما تصلح للمفرد فقد يكون المجدد واحدا، وقد يكون أكثر من واحد، كما قاله الذهبي (Adhahbi, Dr. Muhammad Sayyid Husayn, 1398 وابن كثير (Ibn Kathir, Ismail bn Umar, 1999) وابن الأثير وغيرهم، وكما يشهد به التاريخ. (Al-Qarḍawī, Dr, Yusuf, 1999)

Some people may think that Islamic jurisprudence is not open to modernity, simply because its source is divine and religious, also

that its foundation is based on infallible revelation. That which is like this does not accept modernity and innovations from people who are not infallible. Fortunately, it has been found within the religious texts what declares the legitimacy of renewing and modernizing the Islamic (legal) system in every century, and that is in the authentic Ḥadīth narrated by Abū Hurayrah on the authority of Prophet Muhammad, saying, “Allah sends to this nation at the beginning of every hundred years someone who will renew its religion. And the word ‘*man*’ in the Ḥadīth is suitable for the plural as well as the singular. Thus, the reviver may be one person, or more than one as stated by Adh-Dhabībī, Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Al-‘Athīr among others, and as history attests to.”

Based on his elucidation, Al-Qarḍawī submits that the word ‘*Al-Mujaddid*’ as expounded the Ḥadīth comprises a person of incredible erudition in the field of Islamic scholarship, whose thoughtful knowledge and understanding of the sacred texts render him qualified to navigate and modernize the Islamic legal system based on changing circumstances. On this note, he reflects further on jurists who were regarded as ‘*Mujaddidūn*’ in the erstwhile eras:

ولهذا عرف التاريخ الإسلامي جماعة من الأعلام اشتهروا
بأنهم (المجددون) مثل عمر بن عبد العزيز، والإمام الشافعي،
وأبي الحسن الأشعري، وأبي بكر الباقلاني، وأبي حامد
الغزالي وابن دقيق العيد وغيرهم ممن تركوا وراءهم آثارا لا
تمحى في تكبير الأمة وشعورها وسلوكها. وإذا كان تجديد
الدين مشروعاً بصفة عامة، فإن الفقه أولى جوانب الدين
بالتجديد، لأنه الجانب العملي المرن المتحرك الذي يطلب منه
مواجهة كل طريف وجديد بالحكم والفتوى والبيان. (Al-
Qarḍawī, 1999)

That is why Islamic history has worthily recognized a group of scholars who were known as “reformers” such as ‘Umar bn ‘Abdil ‘Azīz, Al-‘Imām Ash-Shāfi‘ī, Abul Ḥasan Al-‘Ash‘arī, Abū Ḥamid Al-Ghazālī, Ibn Daqīq Al-‘Īd, Abu Bakr Al-Bāqilānī, and others who left behind indelible monuments in the nation’s thinking, feelings and behavior. Moreover, if renewing or modernizing religion is generally authorized, then (Islamic) jurisprudence is the most deserving feature of religion to be modernized because it is the practical, flexible, and dynamic aspect that is required to defy every new and unfamiliar facet with rulings, fatwas and explanations.

However, despite being among the proponent scholars who propound a vision of modernizing some aspects of Islamic legal system, Al-Qarḍawī sees no contradiction between tradition and modernity. Rather, he emphasizes that, with clear and sound understanding of both terms, contradiction never exists between them, though it may be claimed by some scholars which can be the result of their misconceptions of the two terms. Tradition, in Islamic legal system, does not imply a wholesale rejection of everything that comes from others, regardless of their specificity or origins. Instead, Muslim may take certain frameworks or forms that are conducive to them from these traditions, integrating their distinctive content and concepts, provided that the reason for that is not merely the desire to imitate, but rather the need to improve (Al-Qarḍawī, 1999).

Likewise, modernity does not necessitate belittling everything old or tradition and opening doors to everything modern, claiming that the modern always represents progress and advancement, and the traditional embodies backwardness and decadence. Similarly, modernity is not the adaptation of Islamic jurisprudence to conform to Western legal frameworks, whether Latin or German, capitalist or socialist. This cannot be regarded as modernity, but rather distortion and falsification to Islamic jurisprudential laws. However, the real modernity is the development of Islamic jurisprudence from within itself and using its own method, while preserving its distinctive traditions as well as its distinctive characters. In light of this reasoning, monetizing Zakātul Fiṭr is a typical illustration of this phenomenon, as it is at the nexus of two divergent viewpoints: traditional and modern opinions (Al-Qarḍawī, 1999).

Concept of Monetizing Zakātul Fiṭr (MZF):

First and foremost, both opponents and proponents of monetizing Zakātul Fiṭr have grounded their evidence in the prophetic traditions and other acceptably Islamic sources as the former used, among others, the Ḥadīth narrated by Ibn Umar, the latter employed another Ḥadīth reported by Ibn Umar which read:

عن ابن عمر قال: "فرض رسول الله (ﷺ) زكاة الفطر، صاعا من تمر، أو صاعا من شعير: على العبد والحر، والذکر والأُنثى، والصغير والكبير من المسلمين، وأمر بها أن تؤدى قبل خروج الناس إلى الصلاة." (Al-Jāmi' Aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ).

Ibn ʿUmar narrated, the Prophet ordered the payment of one ṣaʿ of dates or one ṣaʿ of barley as Zakātul Fiṭr on every Muslim, slave or free, male or female, young or old, and he enjoined that it be paid before Muslims went out to perform the Eid prayer.

عن ابن عمر قال، أمرنا رسول الله (ﷺ) أن نخرج زكاة الفطر عن كل صغير وكبير وحر ومملوك صاعا من تمر أو شعير قال؛ وكان يؤتى إليهم بالزبيب والأقط فيقبلونه منهم وكنا نؤمر أن نخرجه قبل أن نخرج إلى الصلاة فأمرهم رسول الله (ﷺ)

أن يقسموه بينهم، ويقول: أغنوهم عن طوافهم هذا اليوم- (Al-Bayhaqī)

It was narrated by Ibn Umar that the Prophet enjoined paying Zakātul Fiṭr for every young and old, free and slave, a Ṣā^c of dates or barley. He said, raisins and dried cheese were brought to them and they would accept them from them, and we were ordered to pay it before going out to pray, so the Prophet ordered us to divide it among them, saying, “save them (the poor) wondering around (asking for food) on that day”.

The first Ḥadīth, based on the interpretation of the opponents of Monetizing Zakātul Fiṭr indicates that that Prophet Muhammad, while revealing the provisions of which payment of Zakātul Fiṭr is due, did not mention its equivalent or being monetized, even though there was a need to be comprised during the time (Abū Zakariyyā’ Muḥyidīn Yaḥyā. N.D).

The second Ḥadīth was interpreted by the proponents of monetizing *Zakātul Fiṭr* that the legal reason of declaring *Zakātul Fiṭr* is to enhance the underprivileged as the Ḥadīth clearly specified, ‘save them from wondering around asking for food on that day’, and the enhancement and enrichment can be realized by paying its value, because it is even closer to satisfying their need (Badā’icu Ṣanā’ic, N.D). Also that the Prophet even limited that enrichment (*Al- ‘Ignā’*) to the day of Eid so that joy would spread to all Muslim, thus the rich and the poor would be apparently equal while celebrating the festive. In the present time, according to them, this goal cannot be achieved by giving out only grain, which is not the food of the poor and all Muslims, nor is it possible for them to benefit from it on that day even if they wanted to eat it contrary to the norm (Taḥqīqul Āmāl Fī ‘Ikhrāji Zakātul Fiṭr Bil Māl, N.D).

As evident from the prior arguments, one can discern that the essence of this legal divergence stems from the contradiction between two disparate perspectives: modernity and tradition. Proponents of the traditional viewpoint contend that monetizing *Zakātul Fiṭr* is entirely unsustainable simply because it was neither practiced nor pronounced by the Prophet, whereas other Muslim scholars, espousing a more modern stance, posit that *Zakātul Fiṭr* can be supplanted by its equivalent or values since the reason for its ruling is based on enriching the poor during Eid-Fiṭr celebration which can be attained through other modern means.

Many scholars have related to this legal rationale behind the payment of *Zakātul Fiṭr*, as a legal maxim conveys that ‘Rulings revolve around their legal reasons’, thus they base their *fatwa*, concerning this particular issue, on the modernity of Islamic jurisprudential modernity. Within the distinguished ranks of celebrated scholars and reformers who uphold the conviction that *Zakātul Fiṭr* can be monetized is the leader of Muslims, Umar bn Abdul Azīz who preceded even Abū Ḥanīfah in considering monetization of *Zakātul Fiṭr*. It was recounted that

Umar bn Abdul Azīz ordered the governor as well as his agents in Baṣrah to take half of dirham from each person as *Zakātul Fiṭr*. Certainly, it was not merely the personal opinion of Umar bn Abdul Azīz, but rather making it a general matter (Aṭ-Ṭahāwī, 1399).

Al-Ḥasan, another preeminent figure supporting the view, opines that, “there is nothing wrong with giving dirhams as *Zakātul Fiṭr*, because what is primarily considered is enriching the poor which is also achievable by monetizing it which is similar to giving it as wheat.” Abū Jaʿfar equally supports the view saying that paying the value (of *Zakātul Fiṭr*) is even better, because it is closer to avail the needy and the poor (Ibn Abī Shaybah, 1997).

MZF’s Contribution to Halal Industry:

Assuming the global integration of monetizing *Zakātul Fiṭr* into the existing framework, a rigorous reassessment by Muslim scholars, coupled with the incorporation of active mechanisms for resolving and alleviating poverty among Muslims, would yield many benefits. Not only would this improved system cater to the sustainability of Halal market, but it would also provide extensive advantages to Muslims at global level in numerous aspects. The following illustrations, however, exemplify the potential benefits of adopting monetizing *Zakātul Fiṭr* for Halal market AK, M. R. (n.d.):

1. Increasing Financial Inclusion:

Monetizing *Zakātul Fiṭr* can upsurge financial inclusion for some socioeconomically challenged individuals and families, as the amounts being generated during that period, if wisely managed, can cater for their financial struggles which is one of the objectives of Halal market (Kasri, 2014).

2. Augmenting Halal Industry Development:

This phenomenon can enhance Halal Industry development as the money may be used for productivity of more *ḥalāl* goods which can immensely contribute to building the Halal market by providing financial support to Halal productions leading to more innovation and affordability (Rahman, 2012)..

3. Improving Market Performance:

Through monetizing *Zakātul Fiṭr* there is possibility of improving market performance of Halal industries, as the funds collected can be utilized to care for the entrepreneurial marketing efforts, which can lead to augmented market share and income (Ahmed, 2004).

4. Growing Economic Advance:

By monetizing *Zakātul Fiṭr*, the funds being collected can be endowed in countless Halal productions which include tourism, food and finance, thus, as a result, leading to growing economic advance (Kuznets, 1973).

5. Job Creation:

By adopting monetization *Zakātul Fiṭr*, the funds in Halal businesses can lead to job creation and economic liberation for some downgraded and lowered communities and jobless individuals (Pissarides & Mortensen, 1994).

6. Refining Quality of Halal Products:

With increased funding through monetization of *Zakātul Fiṭr*, Halal industries can invest in research and development, which may considerably lead to better-quality innovation in Halal merchandises (Soon, Jamaludin & Lau, 2016).

Furthermore, notwithstanding the foregoing observations, there exist additional spheres where monetizing *Zakātul Fiṭr* can contribute meaningfully to the sustainability of Halal market as it accommodates acute support to Muslims on a global level. In a similar vein, Halal market boasts the potential of fostering connections between disparate cities, states, countries as well as Muslim individuals which enables the market to make an essential influence to the welfare of Muslims residing in faraway regions. Finally, the socio-economic dilemma challenging Muslims, throughout the world, cannot be resolved through only provision of survival commodities such as barley, rice, beans, grains, and dates among others; rather a continual and planned investment of resources is essential to combat poverty in the world.

Conclusion:

This work has traced the evolution of Halal market as well as the diverse opportunities and potentials created by the industry to cater for the healthy lives of Muslims. It also outlined the efforts of Islamic scholars vis-à-vis their variant opinions concerning the tradition and modernity in Islam which has led many scholars to the notion of rigidity of Islamic legal system. Conversely, it showed how to strike balance between the two theories. The paper also elucidates the concept of monetizing *Zakātul Fiṭr*, briefly exposing the divergent opinions of both proponents and opponents of the overview, including their legal pieces of evidence.

Also it is established, within the context of this paper, that monetizing *Zakātul Fiṭr* can energetically contribute to the sustainability of Halal market, likewise to ameliorating the lives of Muslims if properly handled and managed by an energetic and religious entity. Thus, it is imperative for Muslim scholars to wisely incorporate the idea, without invalidating the basis of *Zakātul Fiṭr* as pronounced by the prophet, into alleviating poverty and catering for the need of the poor.

Sequel to the above, it is hereby suggested that Halal market should expand its focus to incorporate other critical areas where Muslims face major deficits, notably Halal agriculture and livestock, Halal e-commerce, Halal blockchain certification among others across the expanse of Muslim world, including African countries.

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