

# THE RISE OF JAPAN'S HALAL INDUSTRY AND TOURISM POST—COVID-19

<sup>2</sup>Mochamad Januar Rizki

\*<sup>1</sup>Shobichatul Aminah

<sup>2</sup>Japanese Area Studies, Universitas Indonesia

<sup>1</sup>Departement of Master Degree Program in European Regional Studies, Universitas Indonesia

Email: [moch.januar11@ui.ac.id](mailto:moch.januar11@ui.ac.id), [shobichatul@ui.ac.id](mailto:shobichatul@ui.ac.id)

*Submitted:* June 05<sup>th</sup> 2023

*Revised:* June 15<sup>th</sup> 2023

*Accepted:* July 11<sup>th</sup> 2023

**ABSTRACT:** Almost this two last decades, especially in 2005, Japan has program to increase the number of visitors from overseas, including muslim visitor. This program includes Japan Halal Food Project and Muslim-Friendly Project. In addition to that, the number of tourists from overseas that came from muslim majority countries to enter Japan rose up significantly. However, COVID-19 pandemic directly affected tourism in Japan. Halal business enterprise such as restaurant, hotel, even prayer rooms and mosques had to be closed in those emergency period. Nowadays, Japan had announced opening the international bording since October 2022 thus makes Japan's tourism slowly getting back on track especially with the presence of muslim tourists to enter Japan. This research examines the rise of halal industry and tourism in Japan Post—COVID 19 global pandemic. Using qualitative method, this research applies direct observation, interviews, and literature studis for data collection. It shows that there is an optimism from Japan's business owners to implement the concept of halal business with the rise of muslim tourists in Japan. However, there is a rising anxiety from these owners to apply the concept due to to the dependence towards muslim tourists.

**Keywords:** COVID-19 Pandemic, Japan's Halal Tourism, Japan's Halal Restaurant, MuslimFriendly Hotel

## INTRODUCTION

Halal industry and tourism in Japan has shown its rise in this two decades, specifically in 2005. It was proved by the increase of muslim facilities such as mosques, prayer room or *reihai shitsu* (礼拝室), halal restaurant, and muslim friendly hotels. These facilities usually can be found in Japan's big cities such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, and Hokkaido.

The number of mosques had climbed from 24 in 2001 to 110 in 2020. In 2020, there was new mosque that has been inaugurated in region of Fuji Kawaguchikodi (The Economist, 2021). There was Istiqal Osaka Masjid that has been inaugurated since January 12th, 2022. Then, there were also Kobe Mosque and *Tokyo Jyamii* that have been built as an initial mosques in Japan.

Public facilities nowadays in Japan offers prayer rooms. In Tokyo, there are prayers room found in Tokyo Station, Odaiba Station, and Haneda Airport. In Osaka, this facility can be found in Namba Station, Umeda Station, Kansai International Airport, and Rinku Town Premium Outlet shopping district. In Kyoto, prayers room can be found in Kansai Tourism Information center which is located near the Kyoto Station.

In terms of food industry, many cities in Japan have offered halal options. There are many restaurants that offer many halal menu that can be consumed by muslim tourists in Japan. Halal food such as originally come from Turkey,

Bangladesh, India, and Indonesia can be found in Japan. Not only that, many Japan's restaurant that serve authentic Japanese cuisine/ *nihon ryouri* offer muslim-friendly dish with the menu of sashimi, yakiniku, tempura, udon, and ramen that is halal. In 2020, at least there was 868 Japanese authentic restaurants that already certified as halal. These restaurants use ingredients such as shoyu, mirin, and broth that come from chicken and soybean (Konety, Aditiany, & Nidatya, 2021, p. 190). Hotel with muslim-friendly concept had also increased in Japan. Many hotels in Tokyo offer exclusive special floor for women such as Shinjuku Kuyakushomae Capsule Hotel, Shibuya Nadeshiko Hotel and Akihabara Bay Hotel. These hotels are very popular among female Muslim tourists. Hot springs with a Muslim-friendly concept are also separated by gender and more Japanese-style ryokan or inns offer private hot spring baths, making them suitable for Muslim tourists to maintain their privacy.

The increasing number of these prayer room facilities is closely related to the increasing number of Muslim tourists that have visited Japan. The data below shows the rise in the number of foreign tourist arrivals from Muslim-majority countries such as the Middle East, Indonesia and Malaysia from 2005-2019. These isits by foreign tourists from Indonesia increased from 58,974 visits in 2005 to 412,779 visits in 2019.

**Number of Visits of Tourists from Muslim-Majority Countries 2005-2019**

Nomor	Country/Region	2005	2010	2015	2018	2019
1	Timur Tengah	18.301 (0,3%)	32.367 (0,4%)	56.328 (0,3%)	80.931 (0,3%)	95.160 (0,3%)
2	Indonesia	58.974 (0,9%)	80.632 (0,9%)	205.083 (1,0%)	396.852 (1,3%)	412.779 (1,3%)
3	Malaysia	78.173 (1,2%)	114.519 (1,3%)	305.447 (1,5%)	468.360 (1,5%)	501.592 (1,6%)

Source: Japan National Tourism Organization, 2018,  
<https://statistics.jnto.go.jp/en/graph/#graph--inbound--travelers--transition>

**Government Policy to Develop Halal Tourism**

The development of Halal industry and tourism in Japan was not a no-scenario incident. The government has implemented many policies to increase the demand of overseas tourists, including those that comes from muslim majority countries. Initially, Japan started Visit Japan Project in 2003 that had a purpose to welcome more tourists from many countries. Not only that, Japan had carried out Tourism Nation Promotion Basic Law in 2005 to welcome specifically more tourists from muslim majority countries (Yasuhiro, 2018).

Then, there was government's program which was called Japan Halal Food Project that was implemented in 2013. This program aimed to increase cooperation and investment in Indonesia again, especially after the bubble economy period which caused

prolonged economic stagnation in Japan. However, indirectly, this program promoted Japan's tourism to other countries. This project involved various middle restaurant business enterprises to exporters.

*"Around 20 companies such as food product importers, large-scale retailers, and restaurant chain entrepreneurs will meet with Japanese companies to discuss food product exports and promotion of the Indonesian market."* (detikFood, 2013)

Japan Tourism Agency (JTA) and Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) had composed regulation to attract muslim tourists. Local administration agencies and corporation had tried to adapt in creating an environment that is beneficial for tourists in this category. The appropriate location for muslim tourists had been prepared, halal food and beverages had

been arranged, and prayer rooms in public spaces had been built in hotels, restaurants, shopping centers, and airports.

*"Japan continues to open up the potential for Halal Tourism. Japan continues to improve hospitality for Muslim tourists heading to their country. The number of tourism to Japan has been increasing from year to year. One segment that is experiencing phenomenal growth is halal travel and halal tourism; tourism that targets Muslim tourists who adhere to Islamic rules"* (Japan National Tourism Organization, <https://www.japan.travel/id/plan/muslimtravelers/>).

The visa abolition policy for electronic passport holders according to ICAO standards in Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore is one of the supporting factors for the increase in the number of Muslim tourist visits to Japan. The development of Muslim-friendly facilities such as mosques and restaurants encourages interests from Muslim tourists since they find it easy to fulfill their religious obligations while staying in Japan.

Japanese government in city level also have program such as Muslim-Friendly Project to provide muslim-friendly facilities in tourist places. One of this program is Hida Takayama Muslim Friendly Project which initially has been implemented since 2014. This program seeks to provide Muslim tourists with prayer facilities and Halal restaurants therefore they do not have to worry

about the availability of food and prayer rooms. This program is located in the area of Takayama City, Gifu Prefecture, which is famous for its old Japanese town atmosphere. Takayama itself, which has a population of around 80,000 people, is visited by around 610,000 tourists every year. All of these numbers reported, more than 35,000 consisted of tourists from Malaysia and Indonesia (Japan National Tourism Organization).

In connection with preparations for the 2020 Olympics, Japan as the host had intensively provided various Muslim prayer facilities such as prayer rooms, restaurants and lodging. The preparations aimed to entertain Olympic athletes and Muslim spectators.

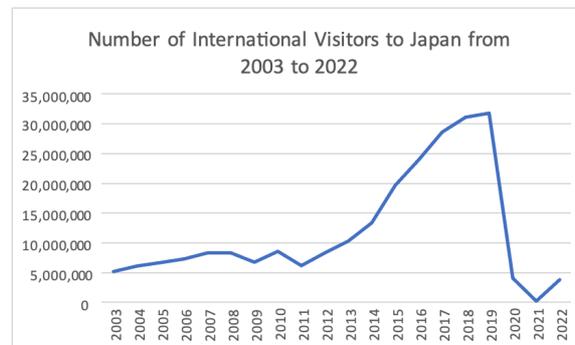
"The true hospitality of omotenashi lies in providing a wide variety of choices. The Olympics will serve as an opportunity to understand not only Muslim cuisine, but also a wider variety of cuisines. Japanese chefs will have the opportunity to show off their true skills, as they pay attention to detail and possess a high level of skill" stated Tomohiro as reported by The Japan News. As mentioned before by Tomohiro Sakuma as a director and representative from Japan Halal Business Association, the hospitality of the host truly lies on the ability to provide many options. (Ananda, 2018).

### **Challenges Post—COVID-19**

In the middle of those promotions that Japan attempted, world had come to halt to face global pandemic of COVID-19. The number of tourists from overseas had plummeted drastically due

to pandemic. It was reported that the visitors from foreign countries had decreased from 4,12 million in 2020 to

250.000 in 2021. This certainly has a broad effect on the halal tourism industry in Japan.



Sources: Japan National Tourism Organization, 2018,  
<https://statistics.jnto.go.jp/en/graph/#graph--inbound--travelers--transition>

Dependence on foreign tourists affected the business continuity of Japanese business owners. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were cases of halal-certified restaurants, Origami Asakusa which opened in 2018 as a curry business branch of CoCoIchi, had closed two halal-certified branches. Halal Ramen Ouka also had closed after five years of operation. In Osaka, halal-certified ramen restaurant Ayam-Ya had stopped operating since the pandemic. In fact, this restaurant with the main menu in serving ramen is popular among Muslim foreign tourists. Moreover, the restaurant is located in the central area of Osaka, Dotonbori. The closed restaurants already have halal certification. Apart from restaurants, worship facilities such as mosques and prayer rooms must temporarily be closed during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency.

Japanese business owners had to pay a certain amount of fee to obtain halal certification. The amount depends on each business scales. There were about 9 to 15 Halal Authority Body in Japan that could issue this certification. Moreover, in the articles that were reported by The National News stated that there was 22 Halal Authority Body in Japan.

An example of a halal certification fee in Japan at the Nippon Asia Halal Association (NAHA) is 100,000 Yen (about 885 USD) or less, and the validity period is 2 years. Then, the Japan Islamic Trust (JIT) has a certification fee of 300,000 Yen (about 2,655 USD) if five products are produced in the same facility with a validity period of one year. An additional fee of 20,000 Yen (about 117 USD) per product (Kitayama, Takanokura, Ogiya, Eksan, & Ali, 2018).

The pandemic not only affected the restaurants but also hotel and

accommodations. One of the first muslim-friendly hotel in Japan, Syariah Hotel Fujisan, had been closed due to pandemic even though they planned to reopen after foreign tourists come visit Japan again. This hotel that is located in the foot of Fuji Mountain had been operated since 2016 and to serve a segment of customers which is a muslim tourists. This two-starred accommodation is located in a strategic place near the Kawaguchi Lake and Shimobe Onsen (Hashem, 2021).

Dependence on foreign tourists and operational costs affect the business continuity in Japan. It can be said that the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on the interest of Japanese business owners in managing halal businesses. The COVID-19 pandemic had also hampered the Muslim Friendly Project program. Such as in Takayama city, the city had changed drastically in the time of pandemic. The used-to-be crowded road a year ago even on weekdays became deserted. In the emergency period, the number of foreign tourists had declined to 100% compared to the normal period. This of course affecting the income of Takayama City (Nagasaki, 2020).

Meanwhile, the 2020 Olympics which was expected to be one of the momentum for the development of halal tourism must be postponed and took place without spectators. This condition was detrimental to Japanese halal businesses that have prepared themselves beforehand. "Many (halal-certified restaurants) are closed because

they have almost no customers. They were heavily impacted as they expected one million Muslim customers to come to Tokyo 2020. There are two categories of Muslim-focused restaurants in Japan. The first is a Halal-certified restaurant mainly targeting Muslims and the other is looking to a wider audience by providing Muslim-friendly options on their menu," said Shinya Yokoyama, local halal initiator as well as the founder of Food Diversity Inc, to Salaam Gateway (Alim, 2021).

## **METHODS**

This research uses qualitative method with various techniques of data collection such as literature study and direct observation. The data had been obtained from many references about Japan's halal industry and tourism for six months including handbooks, academic articles, mass media from news and social media. The data had also been obtained from twomonths observation in Osaka, Tokyo, and Kyoto.

This research acquired photos and videos documentation from the field. From the documentations, the researched analyzed the potential for halal industry and tourism in Japan post—COVID-19 pandemic based on worship facilities, halal restaurants, muslim-friendly hotels, and halal food products.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

COVID-19 directly affected halal industry and tourism in Japan. The decreasing number of muslim tourists to

Japan had hampered the business, specifically in aspect of restaurant and hotel. However, Japan's halal industry and tourism gradually gets better as COVID-19 cases had plummeted.

The Japanese government has also begun to reopen international borders in October 2022. Foreign tourists finally be able to come to Japan thus make various tourist areas are starting to be revived, including the halal and muslim-friendly tourism industry. A number of mosques, prayer rooms, halal restaurants and Muslim-friendly hotels are starting to operate normally with the implementation of the health protocol.

### **Worship Facilities**

Despite of the situation that Japan faces during the pandemic, halal industry and tourism started to get

better. Japanese government started to open its international border in October 2022. Many mosques, prayer rooms, halal restaurant, and muslim-friendly hotels started to operate normally following the health protocol, especially for Friday prayer.

The visit was arranged to some mosques and prayer rooms in Osaka, Tokyo, and Kyoto. The location that was visited includes Masjid Istiqlal Osaka (MIO). This mosque is located near Shinimamiya Station in Osaka and it is shown that the activities there have been operating normally. In March 6th, 2023, Vice President of Republic of Indonesia inaugurated this mosque that is managed by Indonesians that live in Japan.



Masjid Istiqlal Osaka  
Source: Private Documentation

Not only mosque, the observation did not stop there. It is arranged to visit prayer rooms in public spaces such as shopping centers, stations, and airports. For example, prayer rooms that are located in Osaka that could be found in Namba Station, Umeda Station, Rinku

Town Premium Outlet Shopping District. The visitors should inform the staff of information center to get an access to use the prayer rooms.



Prayer room in Rinku Town Premium Outlet, Osaka Source: Private documentation



Prayer room in Osaka Station Source: Private Documentation

### Halal Restaurant and Muslim-Friendly Facilities

Big cities have halal and Muslim-friendly restaurants. The restaurant serves a variety of halal food menus not only typical of Turkey, Bangladesh and India cuisines but also Japanese dishes such as ramen, tempura, yakiniku, gyoza, takoyaki and others. Not only that, Japanese restaurants that serve halal food are usually certified by the Halal Authority Body.

The visit to halal restaurants in Osaka and Tokyo from January to March 2023 was arranged. It is found out that

in Osaka, halal restaurants that serve halal menu with Japanese authentic dish consist of Honolu Ramen, Naritaya Halal Ramen, Osaka Yakiniku Panga, Washoku Minori Restaurant, and Matsuri Restaurant. In Tokyo, it is found that there are also many halal restaurants that serve Japanese cuisines, those restaurants are Halal Ayam-Ya Ramen, Gyumon Yakiniku, Asakusa Sushi Ken, Tendon Itsuki, and Sojibo.



Naritaya Halal Ramen in Osaka Source: Private documentation



Halal label in Gyumon Yakiniku in Tokyo Source: private documentation

From this observation, halal restaurants that serve Japanese cuisines are operating normally and getting better. In lunchtime and dinnertime, consumers have to wait in queue to eat in these restaurants.

This condition is a polar opposite compared to the COVID-19 emergency phase. One of the owner of halal restaurants in Osaka stated that they only got 5 customer a day. However,

nowadays, the customers reached 200 per day. Based on the statement of restaurant chief or *tenchou*, halal restaurant is a business that have high potential to increase the number of visitors from overseas and muslim visitors in Japan.

Moreover, there was also a claim by other *tenchou* that consider halal restaurant is an high risk business. This was felt when the pandemic took place. From the observation, majority of halal restaurants are foreign tourists and non-Japanese citizen. This affects how high the dependence towards foreign tourists in this industry. Therefore, the risk to lose customers just like in the pandemic is higher compared to managing the restaurants with halal label.

In Takayama which is a city that was included in Muslim-Friendly Project, there are many halal restaurants that serve muslim tourists. These restaurants also provide prayer rooms for the tourists to fulfill their praying needs while touring.

### Muslim-Friendly Hotel

Apart from restaurants, there are Muslim-friendly hotel businesses in various big cities in Japan such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and Hokkaido. For example, the Sakura Hotel Hatagaya, which is located around Shinjuku, central Tokyo, offers Muslim-friendly lodging by serving a menu of halal food and a prayer room equipped with Qibla directions and prayer rugs. Apart from that, there are also hotels in Tokyo such as Richmond Hotel Premier Asakusa International which serves food menus

with halal certification for guests which can be ordered the day before.



Source: Halal Menu Box in Richmond Hotel Premier Asakusa International, Muslim Friendly Accomodation, 2017, <https://blog.halal-navi.com/en/8-muslim-friendly-hotels-you-should-book-for-your-trip-to-tokyo/>

Besides Tokyo, there is also a Muslim-friendly hotel Rusutsu Resort Hotel & Convention Rusutsu Tower in Hokkaido. To serve Muslim-friendly food, this hotel prepares special cutlery and refrigerators with care. These are clearly marked with a Halal stamp or green tape for easy identification and to prevent them from being mixed up with other standard cooking equipment. The prayer room is available for use at any time, upon request. Towels, slippers and prayer rugs are also provided for comfort and ease of use.



Source: Prayer rooms in Rusutsu Tower Hokkaido, Rusutsu Resort Hokkaido Japan, <https://rusutsu.com/en/sdgs/>

## Halal Tourism Mobile Application

Technological developments make it easier for Muslim tourists in Japan to maintain their worship while traveling. There are various applications and websites that provide information about halal restaurants, prayer facilities to halal food products in Japan.

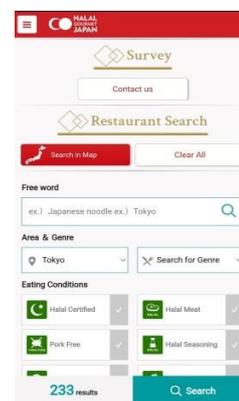
Within two months of living in Japan, researcher used the Google Map service to search for various halal restaurants, mosques and prayer rooms. The google map application is able to recommend various facilities based on the distance to the desired needs.

Not only that, there is an Halal Japan and Halal Gourmet Japan mobile application that could be accessed by muslim tourists. Using this applications, tourists could see the halal status of various food and beverages products that had been curated by the application providers. Moreover, this application provides subscription system with the amount of 20.000 IDR per month so that the user could get the benefit from scanner technology to check the halal status from Japan's products.



Surface of Halal Japan Application  
Source: private documentation

On the other matter, the Halal Gourmet Japan application is a technology service on smartphones that can help Muslim tourists find halal food and restaurants in Japan. There are pictograms or instructions to identify the condition of a halal restaurant based on certificate ownership, use of halal raw materials, not providing menus containing pork and alcohol, availability of prayer rooms and Muslim restaurant owners and cooks.



Surface of Halal Gourmet Japan Application

Source: Private Documentation

## CONCLUSION

The development of the halal industry and tourism in Japan is currently growing positively. Various prayer facilities such as mosques, prayer rooms, halal restaurants to Muslim-friendly hotels can be found in various regions of Japan. Halal industry and tourism was developed due to a policy carried out by the Japanese government to attract foreign tourists, especially from Muslim-majority countries. Based on the statistics shown at the beginning, Japan

was able to increase the number of foreign tourist visits including Muslim tourists from 2005 to 2019.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the Japanese tourism industry including halal businesses. There are many halal restaurant businesses and Muslim-friendly hotels that had to stop operating due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Halal business dependence in Japan on foreign tourists is one aspect that must be considered.

Japanese halal restaurant business owners in the country are generally non-Muslims. Thus, these business owners could easily stop managing their halal business. Broadly speaking, this certainly makes it difficult for foreign Muslim tourists to maintain their Shari'a while in Japan.

However, the potential for halal business in Japan is very high following the growth of tourists from Muslim-majority countries. It is important for halal businesses in Japan to promote their products so that consumers who come are not only foreign tourists but also domestic tourists and local residents for the continuity of their business.

## REFERENCES

- Alim, E. A. (2021, May 3). *No Muslim tourists, no international Olympics spectators: How Japan's halal restaurants surviving?* Retrieved April 12, 2023, from Salaam Gateway: <https://www.salaamgateway.com/story/no-muslim-tourists-no-international-olympicsspectators-how-are-japans-halal-restaurants-surviving>
- Ananda, P. (2018, November 20). *Olimpiade Tokyo 2020, Jepang Bakal Siapkan Menu Makanan Halal untuk Muslim Traveler.* Retrieved April 12, 2023, from OKElifestyle: <https://lifestyle.okezone.com/read/2018/11/20/298/1980230/olimpiade-tokyo-2020jepang-bakal-siapkan-menu-makanan-halal-untuk-muslim-traveler>
- detikFood. (2013, December 5). *Japan Halal Food Project Promosikan Produk Pangan Halal Jepang di Indonesia.* Retrieved April 12, 2023, from detikFood: <https://food.detik.com/info-halal/d-2433453/japan-halal-food-project-promosikanproduk-pangan-halal-jepang-di-indonesia>
- Hashem, H. (2021, June 22). *Japan wants more Middle East Tourists but is it ready to cater to Muslim travelers from the region?* Dipetik April 12, 2023, dari Salaam Gateway: <https://www.salaamgateway.com/story/japan-wants-more-middle-east-tourists-but-isit-ready-to-cater-to-muslim-travelers-from-the-region>
- Japan National Tourism Organization. (n.d.). *Hidden gem destinations for Muslim travelers, Hida Furukawa and Hida Takayama in Gifu Prefecture.* Retrieved April

- 12, 2023, from Muslim Travelers' Guide:  
[https://muslimguide.jnto.go.jp/english/travel\\_tips/hiddengem-destinations-for-muslim-travelers-hida-furukawa-and-hida-takayama-in-gifuprefecture/](https://muslimguide.jnto.go.jp/english/travel_tips/hiddengem-destinations-for-muslim-travelers-hida-furukawa-and-hida-takayama-in-gifuprefecture/)
- Japan National Tourism Organization. (n.d).  
<https://www.japan.travel/id/plan/muslimtravelers/>. Retrieved April 12, 2023, from Japan Travel: <https://www.japan.travel/id/plan/muslim-travelers/>
- Kitayama, D., Takanokura, M., Ogiya, M., Eksan, S. H., & Ali, M. H. (2018). A Study on the Halal Food Supply Chain in Japan from an Inbound Perspective. *Proceedings of the International MultiConference of Engineers and Computer Scientists 2018 Vol II* (pp. 959-964). Hong Kong: The International MultiConference of Engineers and Computer Scientists.
- Konety, N., Aditiany, S., & Nidatya, N. (2021). Japan's Rational Choice in Developing The Halal Industry. *MIMBAR*, Vol. 37 No.1, 187-198.
- Nagasaki, R. (2020, September 7). *International Tourist Destination Takayama: The effects of COVID-19 and the path to tourism recovery*. Retrieved April 12, 2023, from Centrip Japan: <https://centrip-japan.com/article/1365.html>
- The Economist. (2021, January 7). *The number of Muslims in Japan is growing fast*. Retrieved April 12, 2023, from The Economist: <https://www.economist.com/asia/2021/01/07/the-number-of-muslims-in-japan-isgrowing-fast>
- Yasuhiro, F. (2018). Q&A ハラールを知る 101 問: ムスリムおもてなしガイド) Q&A Halal wo Shiru 101 Mon: *Musurimu Omotenashi Gaido*. Japan: Kaihou Shubbansha.



© 2023 by the authors. Submitted for possible openaccess publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY SA) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>).