



Digital Marketing Communication Strategy in Facing Umrah Travel Business Competition in Makassar City

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Abstract

This study discusses the digital marketing communication strategy implemented by PT. Wisata Iman in facing the competition of Umrah travel business in Makassar City. Amid the increasing use of social media and changes in the behavior of prospective Umrah pilgrims, the company utilizes digital platforms—especially Instagram—to expand the reach of promotions, build trust, and increase interaction with prospective customers. Through a descriptive qualitative approach, data was obtained from in-depth interviews with internal parties and customers of PT. Wisata Iman. The results of the study indicate that a communication strategy based on educational, inspirational, and testimonial content through Instagram can increase the trust and interest of prospective pilgrims. However, the company also faces challenges such as limited advertising budget, tight competition, and limited resources in digital content management. Therefore, an integrated strategy with the use of SEO, email marketing, and collaboration with influencers is the key to increasing the effectiveness of digital promotions and expanding the market. This study contributes to understanding the strategic role of digital marketing communication in the religious travel industry.

Introduction

In the current era of globalization, the internet is one of the most effective mass media to support excellent product marketing. With many social media that are effective in changing the attitudes and perceptions of targeted consumers. So that marketing using the internet has good distribution for product promotion that you want to offer to consumers (Khanom, 2023).

Digital marketing communication strategies have become one of the key elements in winning business competition, especially in the service sector such as Umrah travel (Othman & Harun, 2021; Munikrishnan & Mamun, 2021; Sieradianto et al., 2024). Digitalization brings major changes in the way companies reach customers, build trust, and strengthen brands. In the context of Umrah travel, prospective pilgrims now increasingly rely on digital media to search for information, compare services, and determine the choice of service providers (Fauziah, 2023; Atikah et al., 2022; Hanafiah et al., 2022). PT. Wisata Iman as one of the organizers of Umrah travel in Makassar City faces the challenge of optimally utilizing digital strategies in order to maintain market share and increase its competitiveness.

Digital marketing communication involves various platforms such as social media, email marketing, websites, and search engines. The use of this platform is not only aimed at promoting services but also building close relationships with customers. With increasingly fierce competition, companies need to develop measurable and relevant strategies in order to provide more value than competitors (Purnomo, 2023; Okorie et al., 2023). This research topic

is important because the effectiveness of a digital communication strategy can affect business sustainability in the modern era.

A successful digital marketing strategy is not only determined by the technology used, but also by a deep understanding of customer needs and preferences (Azis, 2023; Olson et al., 2021; Hendrawan et al., 2024). Therefore, PT. Wisata Iman must be able to integrate a data-based approach with creative elements in developing its communication strategy.

The phenomenon behind this research is the increasing number of Umrah travel organizers in Makassar City, the public's desire to perform the Umrah pilgrimage continues to increase, driven by economic stability, ease of payment, and the existence of increasingly varied Umrah packages. Data from the Association of Muslim Hajj and Umrah Organizers of the Republic of Indonesia (AMPHURI) recorded a growth in the number of Umrah travel service providers by 15% in 2023 compared to the previous year. In addition, changes in customer behavior are a new challenge for companies. Prospective pilgrims are now more likely to use the internet to compare prices, evaluate company reputations through online reviews, and communicate directly with organizers through digital platforms.

The growth of public interest in performing the Umrah pilgrimage in recent years has not only been influenced by religious factors, but also by the role of social media, especially Instagram, in presenting interesting information and promotions. Through this platform, various Umrah travel agents are able to present visual content in the form of inspiring images and videos, such as the atmosphere of worship in the Holy Land, testimonials from pilgrims, to exclusive facilities offered in travel packages. These posts are often equipped with inspirational narratives and religious invitations, which are able to touch the emotions of the audience while increasing their aspirations to perform the Umrah. In addition, interactive features such as the comments column and direct messages make it easy for prospective pilgrims to ask questions and get information instantly, thus creating a more personal relationship between the company and consumers. As a result, Instagram has become not only a promotional medium, but also an effective tool for building the desire to perform the Umrah pilgrimage, especially among the younger generation who actively use social media. Although many companies have switched to digital marketing, not all of them can optimize its use. Most businesses still rely on conventional promotions, thus missing the opportunity to reach a wider customer segment. This phenomenon shows an urgent need for Umrah travel organizers, including PT. Wisata Iman, to design innovative digital marketing strategies that are in accordance with market characteristics.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has also accelerated the adoption of digital technology in various sectors, including Umrah travel services (Azam et al., 2024; Showail, 2022; Rehman, 2022). However, this change has not been fully utilized by many companies, thus providing an opportunity for PT. Wisata Iman to become a pioneer in effective digital communication strategies in Makassar City. Ease of access to information and increasing penetration of social media, especially Instagram, have opened up new opportunities in marketing communication strategies (Rehman et al., 2022; Altamira et al., 2023; Rehman et al., 2022). Instagram, with its wide user base and strong visual features, has become one of the main platforms used to attract potential Umrah pilgrims through inspiring content such as testimonials, travel videos, and promotional offers.

One of the main problems faced by PT. Wisata Iman is how to differentiate itself from competitors in utilizing digital platforms. Although the company already has a loyal customer base, fierce competition requires the company to innovate in its digital marketing strategy. In addition, limited resources and knowledge of digital marketing are also significant challenges.

Prospective Umrah pilgrims often consider reputation and trust as the main factors in choosing a travel organizer (Harun et al., 2024; Rossitika & Mudjahidin, 2024). In this case, PT. Wisata Iman needs to utilize digital communication to strengthen its image and increase customer trust. Another problem that arises is how to design marketing content that is not only informative but also interesting and relevant to customer needs. Thus, this study aims to explore digital communication strategies that can be implemented by PT. Wisata Iman to win the competition and meet customer needs in the digital era. Every competition carried out by the Company must always be accompanied by an increase in the quality and quantity of product sales and improving service management with the aim of maximizing the programs carried out. Based on data in 2022, the number of Umrah pilgrims was 101 pilgrims and the number of Umrah pilgrims in 2023 was 624 pilgrims.

According to a report by Google Indonesia, 80% of internet users in Indonesia use digital platforms to search for information before making transactions, including Umrah travel. This data shows that digital presence is very important for Umrah travel service providers. In addition, research from Kotler & Lane Keller (2016) emphasized that an effective marketing strategy must involve elements of customer engagement, message personalization, and platform integration. Currently, the growth of travel in Indonesia is very rapid, the number of Umrah travel companies is recorded at 2,579 based on a quote from the Director General of Hajj and Umrah Organization (PHU) of the Ministry of Religion Hilman Latief on the official website of the Ministry of Religion haji.kemenag.go.id and according to data from the regional office of religion of South Sulawesi Province, there are currently 207 Umrah travel companies that have obtained official permits and 145 of them are domiciled in the city of Makassar. From the data, it can be seen that the competition in the Umrah travel business is very competitive and will continue to grow as a challenge for Wisata iman as an Umrah travel domiciled in the city of Makassar to continue to innovate in marketing Umrah packages to prospective pilgrims and choosing several specific platforms such as Facebook ads, SEO and Instagram.

Makassar was chosen as the research location because this city is one of the centers of economic and religious growth in eastern Indonesia, with the number of prospective Umrah pilgrims continuing to increase every year. Based on data from the Association of Muslim Hajj and Umrah Organizers of the Republic of Indonesia (AMPHURI), the number of Umrah travel service providers in Makassar has increased significantly, indicating great business potential but also increasingly tight competition. In addition, the behavior of prospective pilgrims in Makassar who are increasingly active in using social media and digital platforms to search for information, compare services, and interact with travel service providers, makes digital marketing communication strategies a key factor in the company's success.

Another supporting phenomenon is the success of several Umrah travel companies in Makassar who actively use social media for promotion. These companies were able to increase the number of registrations through interactive social media campaigns and the use of influencers to reach a wider market segment. This shows that the use of digital marketing is not just a trend but a strategic need for business success.

However, the main challenge faced by PT. Wisata Iman is how to measure the effectiveness of its digital strategy and ensure that the messages delivered are in accordance with the needs of the target audience. The company also needs to utilize customer data to design more focused and relevant campaigns. To face competition, PT. Wisata Iman is advised to apply an integrative approach in digital marketing communications. The first step is to conduct a SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in a digital context. Furthermore, the company can develop data-driven marketing campaigns designed to meet the

specific needs of customers. The use of social media as the main platform can be strengthened by holding interactive campaigns, such as live streaming with ustaz or customers who have traveled for Umrah. In addition, PT. Wisata Iman can also utilize paid advertising on social media to reach a wider audience.

Another suggestion is to develop an informative and responsive website, equipped with features such as an Umrah cost calculator, customer reviews, and video testimonials. Companies can also partner with influencers or local communities to expand their marketing reach. Finally, periodic evaluation of the implemented digital strategy must be carried out to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in facing future competition. In fact, it is realized that the success or failure of a company is largely determined by the success or failure of implementing communication in facing the Umrah trip in Makassar City, so that the company can survive and thrive amidst the increasingly competitive travel business competition today.

It is hoped that information about the Umrah trip can be conveyed more widely to prospective pilgrims. So that the background of these conditions is what underlies the author in conducting this research, with what has been done effectively to attract interest in prospective pilgrims in performing the Umrah pilgrimage in Makassar City. So the author raised the title regarding. The researcher acts as an analyst of digital marketing communication strategies used in the process of disseminating information from PT. Wisata Iman by conducting interviews with pilgrims who had previously departed via PT. Wisata Iman travel, the presence of researchers in this study is as full participants. Therefore, researchers are key to conducting research. Researchers not only act as data collectors, data processors, and inventors of research data. However, researchers will also be friends with the subjects. So that the results will be more accurate and valid because the more the subjects trust the researcher, the easier it will be for them to tell the truth and minimize faking (pretending). The research location chosen was Makassar City for the reason that some of the PT. Wisata Iman pilgrims had already departed via this travel agency and it was also more affordable for the interview process.

Methods

This research was carried out in terms of the qualitative descriptive design in order to examine the way PT. Wisata Iman also undertakes online methods of marketing communication to advertise its Umra tourism products in the Makassar City that is very competitive. The qualitative method was deemed as suitable given that it will be possible to deeply venture into the realm of meanings, experiences, and social processes through which marketing communications tend to breakup. Moleong (2018) points out the qualitative research provides qualitative data about the spoken words, behaviors, and interaction of people, whose primary focus is not the numerical analysis of data nor quantification of variables but instead the meaning and context.

The major tool used by the researcher in the study was himself who took each step of the data collection, analysis, and interpretation himself. The researcher took an immersive position common in the participatory tradition of the qualitative inquiry and directly interacted with both the internal stake holders and with the customers of PT. Wisata Iman. Such position of a full participant helped the researcher to develop the rapport with informants in terms of trust and openness, hence the increase in accuracy and richness of acquired information. The selection of Makassar City as a research site was not accidental since the city allows one of the most vibrant centres of Umrah travel services in the eastern Indonesia where the digital habits of potential pilgrims and the competition factors affecting travel agencies are exceptionally strong.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were mostly used to collect data on the following two groups: actors of PT internally. Wisata Iman, and customers who used the services of the company earlier. Director and some of the personnel actively participating in digital marketing operations and work with the customers were the inner sources. The external informants were selected among the customers who had attended the previous Umrah traveling programs of PT. Wisata Iman. The informants used in the selection were selected using purposive sampling where interested respondents were approached on how they were related to the research topic and their personal experience with the marketing activities and the experiences of the customers of the company. All the interviews were done in-person or online in a video chat according to the available logistics and averaged 45-60 minutes in length. Participants made available audio recordings during interviews that were eventually verbatim transcribed in order to give an accurate account of the data.

Several issues were examined during the interviews, among which are the strategic use of digital marketing platforms by the company, specifically Instagram and Facebook; the kind of content that was given special attention to include educational, testimonial and promotion materials; audience reception and engagement behaviours; as well as the internal and external factors that have impacted the success of the digital marketing strategies. The question instructed as well to obtain problems experienced by the marketing team, and prospects of further opportunities to enhance the strategy and practice.

After the data had been gathered it went through a procedure of inductive thematic analysis. Systematic review of the transcripts of interviews was done to code the data by identifying major statements and themes that were emerging. By conducting a repeated process of comparing coded data, dominant patterns and categories were formed, enabling a subtle conceptualization of the manner, in which PT. Wisata Iman theorizes and implements the digital marketing approaches. There was also focus on triangulation of the information across diversities of informant sources- comparison of the staff opinions with that of the customers to high the validity and reliability of the research findings.

In order to guarantee credibility, there were a number of strategies that the researcher integrated in the process of conducting the research. The issue of reflexivity was addressed with the help of a reflective journal where the researcher provided information on observations, analytical experiences, and possible biases. In addition, member checking was conducted by sharing summaries of key findings with selected participants, allowing them to verify and validate the interpretations. These measures contributed to ensuring that the analysis accurately represented participants' views and experiences, while also enhancing the credibility of the study.

Result and Discussion

Digital Marketing Communication Strategy in Promoting Umrah Travel Programs or Packages at PT. Wisata Iman

In this research, the researcher interviewed 6 informants to find out the digital marketing communication strategy in promoting Umrah travel programs or packages at PT Wisata Iman. The following was conveyed by 6 informants in this study:

“PT. Wisata Iman uses a digital marketing communication strategy through Instagram to expand its reach and facilitate access to information for prospective Umrah pilgrims, but we are currently focusing more on Instagram media. This strategy focuses on educational content about Umrah worship, pilgrim testimonials, and price and service transparency to build customer trust. Its success is measured through website traffic, social media responses, and customer feedback, which shows that many prospective

pilgrims find PT. Wisata Iman through digital platforms and feel helped by the information provided, thus increasing Umrah travel registrations” (RAR) (Director)

Based on the statement of “RAR” as the Director of PT Wisata Iman, for questions about the digital marketing communication strategy in promoting Umrah travel programs or packages at PT Wisata Iman, it can be concluded that PT. Wisata Iman implements a digital marketing communication strategy with a primary focus on Instagram. This strategy aims to expand the reach of information, provide education about Umrah worship, and build customer trust through testimonials and price transparency. Its success is measured by website traffic, social media interactions, and customer feedback, which shows that many prospective pilgrims find PT. Wisata Iman through digital platforms and feel helped by the information provided, thus having a positive impact on increasing Umrah travel registrations.

"In my opinion, PT. Wisata Iman's most effective digital marketing strategy is through Instagram, but now the most powerful is Instagram. There, we can share photos, videos, and testimonials from pilgrims so that prospective pilgrims are more confident. We also often provide worship tips and travel information so that they understand better. The challenge is the tight competition with other agents and how to keep advertising costs efficient. In the future, we want to focus more on making interesting video content, such as Umrah travel vlogs or live streaming, so that prospective pilgrims can see firsthand the experiences of pilgrims who have departed". (NA) (Staff 1)

Based on the statement of "NA" as Staff of PT Wisata Iman, for questions about the digital marketing communication strategy in promoting Umrah travel programs or packages at PT Wisata Iman, it can be concluded that PT.'s digital marketing strategy. Wisata Iman focuses on Instagram, with Instagram as the main platform for sharing visual content, such as photos, videos, and testimonials from pilgrims. The content created is tailored to the interests of prospective pilgrims, including worship tips and travel information, to build trust. The main challenges faced are tight competition and managing advertising costs to remain efficient. In the future, PT. Wisata Iman plans to focus more on creating interesting video content, such as umrah travel vlogs and live streaming, to increase audience engagement.

Based on the statement of "DK" as a Staff of PT Wisata Iman, for questions about digital marketing communication strategies in promoting Umrah travel programs or packages at PT Wisata Iman, it can be concluded that PT. Wisata Iman's digital marketing communication strategy focuses on Instagram as the main media to reach prospective Umrah pilgrims. They prioritize educational content such as worship guides, pilgrim testimonials, and travel information, which are adjusted to certain moments to make them more attractive. The challenges faced are maintaining content consistency, managing marketing budgets, and dealing with fluctuations in demand. In the future, they want to be more personal in marketing, such as using email marketing and improving SEO so that website visibility is more optimal.

"In my opinion, Instagram is the most effective for promoting Umrah. Because, this platform is very visual, so we can display photos of the journey and videos of the pilgrims' experiences that make people more interested. We also often use Instagram Stories to update real-time information, so prospective pilgrims can immediately know the latest developments. The content we create is not only promotional, but also educational and inspiring, for example stories of pilgrims' experiences, motivational quotes, and worship tips. The challenge is more about maintaining audience engagement, because those who see our content are diverse, from various ages and backgrounds. So, we have to be smart in creating content that can attract everyone's attention, but still focus on our main message. In my opinion, we also need to be more

active in interacting directly with the audience, for example via DM or chat on Instagram, so that they feel closer. In addition, we also have to maximize paid advertising, so that the target is more specific and effective" (AQ) (Staff 3).

Based on the statement of "AQ" as Staff of PT Wisata Iman, for questions about digital marketing communication strategies in promoting Umrah travel programs or packages at PT Wisata Iman, it can be concluded that PT. Wisata Iman's digital marketing communication strategy focuses more on using Instagram because this platform is effective in displaying visuals of the Umrah journey and interacting with prospective pilgrims. The content created is not only promotional, but also educational and inspiring, such as pilgrim testimonials, motivational quotes, and worship tips. The main challenge in this strategy is maintaining diverse audience engagement and ensuring that the content remains interesting. To increase effectiveness, the company seeks to strengthen direct interaction through DM and maximize paid advertising campaigns with more specific targeting.

"I first knew PT. Wisata Iman from Instagram. They often upload photos and videos of their Umrah journey, and there are also many testimonials from pilgrims who have already gone, so I am even more confident in choosing them. Their promotions are also interesting, not only about the price, but also education about Umrah worship and its preparation. I often see updates on Umrah packages on Instagram Stories, plus there are special offers that are quite profitable. In my opinion, it would be more exciting if they made more videos of pilgrims' experiences or live streaming during the Umrah journey. Also, if there is interactive content like quizzes or Q&A on social media, more people will definitely get involved." (IK) (Customer 1)

Based on the statement of "IK" as a Customer of PT Wisata Iman, for questions about digital marketing communication strategies in promoting Umrah travel programs or packages at PT Wisata Iman, it can be concluded that PT. Wisata Iman's digital promotion through Instagram is very effective in attracting the attention of prospective Umrah pilgrims. The content they present not only focuses on prices, but also provides education about worship and Umrah preparation, as well as testimonials from pilgrims that increase customer trust. Information delivered through Instagram Stories and special offers are also a separate attraction. To further increase audience engagement, it is recommended that they add more videos of pilgrim experiences, live streaming of the journey, and interactive content such as quizzes or Q&A sessions.

Through the Instagram platform, PT Wisata Iman is increasingly focusing its efforts on promoting Umrah packages, considering the increasing popularity of this social media. With attractive visuals and informative content, Instagram allows companies to reach a wider and more diverse audience. The existence of features such as stories, posts, and paid ads provide an opportunity to showcase the beauty of holy places as well as testimonials from previous pilgrims. This not only attracts attention, but also increases public interest in registering for Umrah packages. With the right marketing strategy, PT Wisata Iman has succeeded in creating better interactions with prospective pilgrims, so that more and more people are interested in performing Umrah through their services.

The process of creating advertisements on PT Wisata Iman's Instagram media begins with the digital marketing strategy planning stage. The marketing team first conducts market research to understand the preferences of prospective pilgrims and the content trends that are currently popular on Instagram. They also analyze the performance of previous advertisements to find out the type of content that is most effective in attracting the audience's attention. After that,

the team determines the purpose of the advertisement, whether to increase brand awareness, encourage interaction, or increase sales conversions for Umrah travel packages.

After the strategy is set, the next stage is content creation. The creative team develops attractive advertising materials, either in the form of images, carousels, or short videos. The content created is not only promotional but also educational, such as information about Umrah trips, testimonials from previous pilgrims, and tips and guides for worship. In this process, the team also pays attention to visual elements and copywriting that are in accordance with PT Wisata Iman's values so that the message conveyed remains relevant and interesting to the audience.

After the content is ready, the team then arranges paid advertisements through the Instagram Ads feature. They target advertisements based on demographics, interests, and behavior of the appropriate audience, such as prospective Umrah pilgrims who are looking for religious travel information. In addition, the selection of ad formats is also adjusted to the campaign objectives, for example using Instagram Stories to increase interaction or feed posts to increase awareness. The team also optimizes the use of hashtags and call-to-action (CTAs) so that ads are more effective in attracting potential customers.

After the ad runs, PT Wisata Iman monitors and evaluates regularly. They use Instagram Insights and other analytical tools to measure ad performance, such as the number of impressions, clicks, interactions, and conversions generated. If necessary, the advertising strategy can be adjusted by making changes to the target audience, budget, or content format so that the results obtained are more optimal. With this approach, PT Wisata Iman can ensure that the ads created are effective in increasing brand visibility and attracting the interest of potential Umrah pilgrims.

After seeing interesting posts on Instagram, many potential pilgrims are interested and want to know more about the Umrah packages offered by PT Wisata Iman. This interest often encourages them to send direct messages or contact via WhatsApp. With the ease of communication access offered, potential pilgrims can quickly ask about package details, prices, and registration procedures. This interaction not only speeds up the information process, but also allows for more personal and responsive service, thus creating greater trust for prospective pilgrims in choosing PT Wisata Iman as their pilgrimage travel partner.

Based on the results of the study on the digital marketing communication strategy implemented by PT. Wisata Iman in promoting the Umrah travel program or package, it can be concluded that this company relies on the Instagram platform as the main media in reaching prospective pilgrims. Instagram was chosen because of its ability to present attractive visual content, such as travel photos, pilgrim testimonial videos, and information related to the Umrah packages offered. The strategy used focuses on creating educational, inspirational, and promotional content, with the aim of increasing the trust of prospective pilgrims. The content uploaded includes Umrah pilgrimage guides, experiences of pilgrims who have departed, as well as information on prices and departure schedules. In addition, PT. Wisata Iman also utilizes the Instagram Stories feature and paid advertising to expand its reach and increase interaction with prospective customers.

This study also found that the success of PT. Wisata Iman's digital marketing communication strategy is measured through several indicators, such as increased website traffic, social media interaction, and positive feedback from customers. Many prospective pilgrims know and choose PT. Wisata Iman after seeing promotions on Instagram. In addition, fast responses via DM and WhatsApp are important factors in gaining the trust of prospective customers.

However, in its implementation, this strategy faces several challenges, such as tight competition with other Umrah travel agents, digital marketing costs that must be managed efficiently, and maintaining consistency in content creation. Therefore, to increase the effectiveness of the digital marketing strategy, PT. Wisata Iman plans to develop more video-based content, such as Umrah travel vlogs and live streaming, as well as utilizing email marketing and SEO to increase visibility in search engines. Overall, the digital marketing communication strategy through Instagram has proven effective in increasing awareness and trust of prospective pilgrims towards PT. Wisata Iman. By continuing to innovate in content and marketing strategies, PT. Wisata Iman has the potential to further expand its reach and increase the number of Umrah travel registrations in the future.

Inhibiting Factors and Supporting Factors in the Implementation of Digital Marketing Communication Strategy at PT. Wisata Iman

In the results of this study, the researcher interviewed 6 informants to determine the inhibiting factors and supporting factors in the implementation of digital marketing communication strategy at PT. Wisata Iman. The following was conveyed by 6 informants in this study:

"So the biggest challenge we face is tough competition, yes. Many other travel agents also use digital marketing, so we have to continue to be innovative. Social media algorithms also often change, so our visibility on Instagram, for example, can go up and down. Not to mention the limited advertising budget, so we have to be smart in managing the budget. But fortunately, we have a creative marketing team that is experienced in this industry. The content we create is also not just selling, we focus more on education and testimonials so that prospective pilgrims will be more confident. To overcome this challenge, we always update with digital trends, optimize SEO, and start using email marketing for a more personal approach. We also want to create more video content such as vlogs or live streaming so that audience engagement is higher. External factors such as government policies and market trends also have a big influence, so we have to continue to adapt to stay relevant and not lose out on competition" (RAR) (Director)

Based on the statement of "RAR" as Director of PT Wisata Iman, for questions about inhibiting factors and supporting factors in implementing digital marketing communication strategies at PT. Wisata Iman, it can be concluded that the main challenges in PT. Wisata Iman's digital marketing strategy are tight competition with other travel agents, changes in social media algorithms, and limited advertising budgets. However, the supporting factors are a creative marketing team, experience in the umrah industry, and educational and inspiring content that builds customer trust. To overcome obstacles, the company continues to adapt to digital trends, optimize SEO, and utilize email marketing and video content such as vlogs and live streaming. External factors such as government policies and changing trends also have an influence, so the company must always be flexible and innovative in its marketing strategy.

Based on the statement of "AQ" as a Staff of PT Wisata Iman, for questions about inhibiting factors and supporting factors in implementing digital marketing communication strategies at PT. Wisata Iman, it can be concluded that the main obstacles in PT. Wisata Iman's digital marketing strategy are the lack of time for market research and high competition on social media. The team must continue to find ways to keep content interesting and different. The supporting factors are a solid team, quality content, and management support for exploring new formats. To increase effectiveness, more in-depth audience research and advanced training in video content creation and digital marketing strategies are needed.

“Actually, finding information about travel packages is not that difficult, but sometimes the details are a bit scattered across several platforms. So, it takes more time to find the complete one, especially about prices and facilities. Actually, the information is quite clear, but if it could be more detailed about accommodation and travel schedules, it would be better. Their digital promotions are also good, transparent about prices, and there are lots of testimonials from previous pilgrims, so it's more convincing. However, sometimes their promotions appear too often, especially on Instagram Stories, so it's a bit annoying. Maybe if they made more video content, like travel vlogs or documentation of pilgrims' experiences, it would be more interesting and make prospective pilgrims feel more connected” (IK) (Customer 1)

Based on the statement of “IK” as a Customer of PT Wisata Iman, for questions about inhibiting and supporting factors in implementing digital marketing communication strategies at PT. Wisata Iman, it can be concluded that in general, information about PT. Wisata Iman's travel packages is quite clear, but it is still scattered across several platforms, so it takes more time to find complete details. Their digital promotions are considered transparent and supported by congregation testimonials, which provide a sense of trust. However, the frequency of promotions that are too frequent, especially on Instagram Stories, sometimes feels annoying. To increase marketing effectiveness, they are advised to focus more on visual content such as travel vlogs or documentation of congregation experiences to be more attractive and build stronger connections with prospective congregations.

“In my opinion, the main obstacle is the rather confusing navigation on the website. Sometimes I have to search first to find the package information I want. On social media, the information is quite clear, they often update on Instagram and Facebook, but the package price is not always displayed, so I have to DM or check the website again. Their promotions are quite informative, especially about Umrah pilgrimage education, but paid ads on Facebook often appear in the feed, so it's a bit annoying. In my opinion, they also need to be more responsive in DM or chat, because sometimes it takes a long time to get an answer. If that can be fixed, it will definitely be more convenient for prospective pilgrims who want to find information” (UN) (Customer 2)

Based on the statement of “UN” as a Customer of PT Wisata Iman, for questions about inhibiting and supporting factors in implementing digital marketing communication strategies at PT. Wisata Iman, it can be concluded that the main obstacle in PT. Wisata Iman's digital marketing strategy is the unclear website navigation, so prospective pilgrims have difficulty finding package information quickly. In addition, although their social media is active in providing information, the package prices are not always displayed transparently, so customers have to search further through DM or the website. Their promotions are quite educational, but paid ads on Facebook seem to appear too often, which can be annoying. The supporting factors are consistent information updates on social media and educational content that helps prospective pilgrims understand the Umrah pilgrimage.

However, they need to improve responsiveness in chat or DM services so that prospective customers can get information faster and easier. Based on the results of the study on inhibiting and supporting factors in the implementation of digital marketing communication strategies at PT. Wisata Iman, it can be concluded that the company faces various challenges in implementing its digital marketing strategy. The main challenges include tight competition with other travel agents, changes in social media algorithms that affect content visibility, and limited budget for paid advertising. In addition, managing social media content that must always be interesting and relevant is also an obstacle, especially with audiences spread across

various platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Lack of time for market research and less than optimal website navigation also become obstacles for prospective customers in obtaining the information they need.

PT. Wisata Iman also locates the focus of its digital marketing strategy here at Instagram to market its umrah packages because when it comes to the provision of emotionally overwhelming and inspiring visual material, this platform is optimal. Instagram as the primary platform was selected on the basis of the capabilities of presenting high-quality photos and videos that can evoke the sense of spiritual desires among the potential pilgrims (Alalwan, 2018). Both in the scope of promotions of the package and creation of the story of the life-altering worship experience, each upload is created. To reach more people the company optimizes the Instagram features imaginatively whether through Instagram Stories and Reels. Real-time content like the preparation of departure, pilgrims travels records, or how to worship in the holy land are also expressed through product stories. In the meantime, short videos that are educational and/or motivational, e.g., the words of the ustaz in his lectures or recap of historical sites in Mecca and Medina become posts on Reels. In this way, one will not only sell the content, but also make it teach something (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Tafesse & Wien, 2018).

Instagram live can be used by PT. Wisata Iman to deal first handily with potential pilgrims. The company makes it more interactive by holding question and answer sessions with the umrah guides or touring the Grand Mosque virtually. This corresponds to the results of Sheldon & Bryant (2016), who have asserted that active means of communication through the social network creates trust in users and establish an emotional bond. Live features are frequently being utilised to talk about certain themes (spiritual preparation before leaving or guide to worship to the first-time pilgrims) and archived on IGTV afterward so that they could be watched repeatedly. The presence of such interactive features, as Preece et al. (2009) report, enhances building online community and meets both informational and emotional needs of the followers.

The testament of pilgrims is the core content in PT. Wisata Iman. The authentic way to share the truth about pilgrimage with a short video format or a photo carousel of genuine experiences of people who were there before. The methodology shares with the idea of the electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and is acknowledged to have a strong impact on consumer trust and purchase intentions (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). The text of this testimonial not only exhibits customer satisfaction but also convenient information (for example, the quality of the housing state or the team service or group atmosphere during the trip) that will make the experience less risky in perception to those consumers who are still unsure about their decision to stay (Filieri, 2015). The Instagram Guides content is used to publish educational material related to Umrah, including a guide on how to worship or the list of the most effective location in Mecca. According to Lu & Stepchenkova (2015), digital content that is well structured makes users more engaged in the intellectual process and provides a more informed choice. The company also develops a series of Highlights into which they divide content, including "Congregation Testimonials", "Umrah Tips", or "Departure Schedule" so that their Instagram profiles become comprehensive sources of information, which, in turn, increases the credibility and usefulness of the brand as a digital point of reference, especially to future pilgrims.

Effective hashtag strategy supports its increased distribution. PT. Wisata Iman adopts the popular hashtags #UmrohBersamaKeluarga and specific hashtag like #WisataImanTravel that is easy to monitor. They also come up with special hashtag per group of departure and ask pilgrims to resort to sharing as much of their experiences as they can with the hashtag. The generated user-generated content is then reposted again to the main account of the company

further empowering the digital community of the company. This is consistent with the research of Stojanovic et al. (2021) who pay significant attention to content-based marketing as the component that enhances consumer trust. Besides, training and motivating information offered by the company assists in building better relationships with the customers. According to the study by Ohman (2017), engagement with the audiences and market expansion using visual social media, i.e., Instagram, is possible in the tourism sector. Thus, PT. Wisata Iman is not just used as a way of selling, but to inform and motivate the targeted potential pilgrims.

The use of Content Marketing Theory as an application to PT is quite actual. Digital marketing communication strategy of Wisata Iman. According to this theory, customer relationship can be established through related and valuable content to the brands. The approach centered on education and testimonials of pilgrims will generate more value to customers, and the credibility and engagement are also higher. That demonstrates that PT. Wisata Iman is not limited to doing transactional relationship, but investing in long-term relationship with people. In the meantime, another theory of customer trust by Morgan & Hunt (1994) also comes into play on the same strategy. According to this theory, customer loyalty may be enhanced through the relationships that are characterized by trust. PT. Wisata Iman uses this method as they present transparent content through testimonials of pilgrims which contributes in the development of trust among potential pilgrims. This is how they can build a conducive situation where potential pilgrims will be certain on whom to hire the services of Umrah travel agent.

In this way, PT. Wisata Iman does not just offer prospective pilgrims a price offer, but it creates a feeling of trust, and closer relations. This works well in gaining customer loyalty and retention and this is highly vital in the tourism sector (Payne & Frow, 2005; Gummerus et al., 2011). The company has an opportunity to form a community of loyal pilgrims through continuous education and value addition to customers (Collins-Kreiner, 2010). Summing up the effects of the digital marketing communication strategy, adopted by PT. Wisata Iman understands the needs and expectations of the potential pilgrims to the latter. They have also been able to use different social media and websites and reach more people as well as consolidating their relationships with the customers (Tiago & Verisimo, 2014). This is one of the ways on how digital marketing can be effectively used to create brand awareness and customer loyalty to the tourism industry.

Going ahead, it is necessary that PT. Wisata Iman to keep on changing according to market trends and customer requirement. Through analytics and customer feedback, it will be able to streamline its approaches so that it can have a more successful business (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Thus, PT. Wisata Iman will continue to be competitive and be of relevance in this fast changing industry. Another email marketing tactic is also applied to stay in touch with potential pilgrims that have checked the site or got a question (Jarvinen & Taiminen, 2016). PT. Alternatively, Wisata Iman regularly sends out emails with special offers or information, the latest news, or even education. Such marketing emails are created on a personal basis depending on the interest and stage of decision making of the recipient, thus it makes it more pertinent and operational (Hanssens et al., 2005).

The expansion strategy includes the cooperation with influencers and religious representatives. PT. One of the strategies that wisata Iman uses towards promoting umrah packages is through ustaz or popular figures who have many subscribers and followers on social media. This strategy will work as potential pilgrims are more inclined to rely on the suggestions that they get based on people they admire (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011). A typical collaborative content is a review of experiences of the umrah or a discussion of why one should

select an umrah travel company one can trust. One of the channels that PT has adopted as a source of communication is WhatsApp Business. Customer service plan of Wisata Iman. This is a platform through which the firm is utilizing to respond fast to the queries by the prospective pilgrims. Introductions like auto price lists and e-brochures and confirmation of payment through WhatsApp make the services as efficient as possible, but also give a good customer experience. Improving web sites via SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is a practice conducted in order to raise the level of organic visibility. PT. Wisata Iman makes sure that the contents in their site have keywords which potential pilgrims search a lot of times like best umrah packages or trusted umrah travel. This plan will enable the websites of the company to be seen on the first page when people search Google so that there will be quality organic traffic (Fishkin & Høgenhaven, 2013).

It contains a blog on PT. The official website of Wisata Iman is a very informative room covering all those things that pertain to umrah. Extended articles and posts on the topic of physical and spiritual preparation, guides to worship, testimonials of pilgrims strengthen the authority of the company in this segment. Highly informative blog posts will not only inform potential pilgrims but also make them spend more time on the site, that is, the final outcome of informative posts will have a beneficial impact on conversion.

Retargeting strategy is used to remind the potential pilgrims that were able to visit the website but have not been able to make a booking. With the help of Facebook Pixel and Google Ads Remarketing, PT. Wisata Iman shows the corresponding advertisements to the past visitors (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Such a method can be effective in attracting back potential clients who still probably might be weighing on it. PT. Wisata Iman similarly promotes the user generated content when they invite the pilgrims to post their travel stories in social media via a special hashtag. Directly customer generated content has even higher trust factor than company promotions (Christodoulides, Jevons, & Bonhomme, 2012). The corporation then republishes the most interesting content on pilgrim sites on their official sites. Others are the introduction of Webinars and online training classes in preparation of Umrah which are organized by PT. Wisata Iman. The quality of speakers at this virtual event is high, and they talk about many facets of preparation before the Umrah in terms of logistics and spirituality. Besides being a kind of educational service, webinars also serve as the rather primitive, although rewarding form of promotion, since participants interested in the webinar are likely to give the services that are offered by the company a thought (Rettie et al., 2008).

Data analysis turns out to be a significant foundation of PT. The marketing of Wisata Iman. With the help of a program like Google Analytics and Facebook Insights, the company will be able to track the results of any digital campaign. The information aids the marketing squad to comprehend what is going on in the strategies that are being employed and those that must be changed, and consequently, a better allocation of marketing budget can be achieved. These are referred to as content personalization, an approach that is progressively being worked by PT. Wisata Iman. The company adapts the marketing messages to various segments depending on the demographic statistics and behavior of different groups. In this case, the content to be served to young families and elderly pilgrims will be different. This humanization renders the marketing communications more applicable and effective.

Another tactic that it has undertaken in order to exploit the power of word-of-mouth marketing programs is the referral programs. PT. Wisata Iman presents incentives in terms of discounting or prizes to pilgrims who have been able to refer services to other people (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009). Such a program will be effective due to the fact that suggestions of people known or related to a customer are mostly relied upon compared to general advertisement

(Kozinets et al., 2010). A content distribution channel strategy is the use of Islamic media as partners. PT. Wisata Iman also posts sponsored contents in major Islamic news portals or online magazine. The method is used to target a religiously inclined audience and is greatly interested in Umrah pilgrimage (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). To encourage more interaction, interactive sessions through polls on Instagram stories or quizzes with prizes on Umrah knowledge are their go to mediums. Besides the entertainment component, this practice is also effective in aiding the firm to gather information on the preferences of prospective pilgrims that can be employed in improving marketing strategies (De Vries et al., 2012).

The technology employed is virtual reality (VR) and 360 degrees video; they have used it to offer an experienced feel to potential pilgrims. PT. Wisata Iman has created a virtual tour that enables potential pilgrims to learn about the Grand Mosque and other sacred places in a software form of touring. It is an innovation that increases the company value as compared to the competitors.

When executing the digital marketing communication strategies, PT. Different issues may undermine the successfulness of the promotions of Wisata Iman in the digital environment. Competition within Umrah travel industry is becoming stiffer, which is also one of the determinant factors. As more and more travel agents adopt the digital marketing approaches, PT. Wisata Iman has to identify additional creative and appealing strategies that would make the company outstanding in the eyes of competitors (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). As long as there is no distinction, the firm can find it hard to capture the attention of potential pilgrims considering the numerous options of travel agents in the market (Porter, 2008).

Besides the fact that there is a lot of competition, limited advertisement budgets also pose a serious challenge to PT. Wisata Iman in Adopting Digital Marketing. A huge amount of paid promotion will have to be invested both in social networks and search systems, to reach more people. Nevertheless, having a low budget, PT. Wisata Iman should be more considerate when identifying the most proper marketing platform and time at which they should run their advertisements (Ryan, 2016). Otherwise when approached in an immature manner, the issue of advertisement that goes out may be not very successful in promoting the advertised entity to the target market (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014).

Inadequate conduct or lack of profound market research is also a hindrance to PT. Digital marketing strategy of Wisata Iman. Companies that have no good knowledge of what might attract potential pilgrims usually fail to come up with content that is really relevant and timely (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Customers who plan to visit Umrah resorts prefer to find out detailed descriptions of facilities, travel programs, and comments of former clients (Hudson & Thal, 2013). Unless thorough market research is undertaken, even the marketing strategy applied would be less successful in raising the interests of the audience.

It is also a problem as PT manages various digital platforms at the same time. Wisata Iman. The platforms vary in their characters and content consumption. Instagram can be used more actively to share the visual content, whereas Facebook is much more viable when it comes to creating communities and disseminating information in the long text format (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In the absence of an efficient content management framework, the performance of social media can be not perfect, and this will eventually compromise the success of their online marketing efforts (Tuten & Solomon, 2017).

Moreover, the small human resource in the digital marketing team is also a major challenge. Digital marketing is not the type of marketing that all team members are adequately skilled to handle properly. They might lack the opportunity to streamline the utilization of new tools and

technologies of analysis able to maximize the success of digital campaigns without sufficient training (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Thus, it is worthwhile that PT. Wisata Iman to undertake training the marketing staff to improve its competitive nature in the digital market. Conversely, the fact is that the creation of such digital technology like artificial intelligence (AI) and marketing automation may become the wonderful opportunity of PT. Wisata Iman. With the help of analysis tools based on AI or 24-hour customer support by chatbots, any company can enhance the effectiveness of digital marketing processes (Kumar et al., 2016). The unfortunate thing is that this technology is usually undermined by either a shortage of human resources qualified enough to take it on or the limited budget to procure high rate software (Stone, 2021).

The rate of responding to the digital trends is another factor that should be taken into consideration. The younger generation can now also use the much-better-informed method of promoting via platforms like TikTok due to the popularity it has gained by the millennial group of Umrah pilgrims themselves. PT. This can be used by Wisata Iman engaging in innovative contents e.g. religious competitions or live Umrah repair tours. The question is, though, which is to keep consistency in terms of content and in a way, make the message coming out more in line with the Islamic values, but in a way, not so commercial. Customer relationship management (CRM) also plays an important role in carrying digital marketing initiatives. An integrated CRM system will make PT. Wisata Iman can do the database management of the prospective pilgrims in a better way, starting with the prospective stage to after travelling. Nonetheless, the resistance toward change of the manual systems that are used tends to slow down the implementation. Teams should be trained rigorously and in a step-by-step manner to learn how to embrace these new digital tools.

Conclusion

PT. Wisata Iman utilizes digital channels such as Instagram, Facebook, and websites to promote the Umrah program, focusing on educational content and pilgrim testimonials to build trust. This digital promotion is effective in conveying information, despite challenges in consistency and limited advertising budget. The use of SEO and visual media is also important to increase audience engagement. Inhibiting factors include limited marketing budget, tight competition, and changes in social media algorithms that affect content visibility. In addition, unclear website navigation hinders audiences from finding information. Conversely, supporting factors consist of creative and experienced staff, leadership support, and quality content that attracts the attention of the audience. Social media plays an important role in building direct relationships with prospective pilgrims through channels such as Instagram Stories and Facebook.

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