

Marketing Strategy of Umrah Banner Products in Increasing The Number of Prospective Pilgrimages During Covid 19 at Samira Travel Sidoarjo

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to evaluate the **marketing strategies** implemented by **PT. Samira Utama Wisata (Samira Travel)** to increase the sales of its **Talangan Umrah** product during the **Covid-19 pandemic**. **Background:** The global pandemic led to the temporary suspension of Umrah pilgrimages in mid-2020, resulting in a sharp decline in demand for travel services. In response, Samira Travel introduced an innovative financing product – **Talangan Umrah** – designed to assist customers in fulfilling their religious pilgrimage aspirations amid financial constraints. **Method:** The research employs a **descriptive qualitative approach**, with data obtained through **interviews and documentation** at the Samira Travel branch office in **Sidoarjo**. **Findings:** The results indicate that Samira Travel effectively utilized **digital marketing strategies**, leveraging **social media platforms** and **online promotional campaigns** to maintain visibility and attract customer interest. Additionally, the company enhanced communication with potential pilgrims through multiple channels, including **telephone, WhatsApp, and the official company website**. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that the integration of digital marketing and direct communication strategies played a crucial role in sustaining customer engagement and promoting the **Talangan Umrah** product during the pandemic, offering valuable insights for marketing resilience in times of crisis.

INTRODUCTION

The Hajj pilgrimage is a great dream for many Muslims in Indonesia. As the fifth pillar of Islam, the Hajj has high spiritual value because it is performed in the Holy Land and aims to achieve the predicate of Hajj Mabrur, namely worship that is accepted by Allah SWT without any admixture of sin or the intention of showing off. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated that the Hajj Mabrur will be rewarded with paradise. However, the waiting period for regular Hajj in Indonesia is very long, can be up to 46 years, so Umrah is an alternative pilgrimage to Mecca that is faster and more flexible [1]. Umrah is a visit to the Kaaba to perform certain worship with predetermined conditions. However, the COVID-19 pandemic that hit in mid-2020 caused the government to restrict activities, including a ban on Umrah travel. Saudi Arabia also closed access to Indonesian pilgrims to protect global public health. As a result, many prospective pilgrims were unable to depart that year.

In an increasingly competitive business environment, particularly during the current pandemic, marketing strategy has become a crucial element for companies. This strategy serves as the primary means of achieving the company's stated goals [2]. Like the case that occurred in 2017, which was quoted from kompas.com This case befell a

travel agency, First Travel. The case began in late 2017. First Travel was founded in 2009. Initially, the agency had only 50 million Rupiah in capital for permits and rental space, and was driven by recklessness and lack of experience in Umrah travel. For two years, business began to struggle, and instead of making a profit, it suffered losses. However, over time, with the help of door-to-door business, to Door-to-door visits to promote the travel agency were launched in 2014. The travel agency became famous for its low prices, luring people to perform the Umrah pilgrimage with affordable prices. For several years, prospective pilgrims pooled money and saved money through the agency to secure their Umrah. However, in mid-2017, First Travel's bosses committed fraud and embezzlement, causing a total loss of 905 billion Rupiah to 63,310 prospective Umrah pilgrims.

In response to these challenges, Samira Travel – a travel agency established in 2010 with a branch in Sidoarjo – developed a bridging financing system, or "umrah first, pay later." Under this scheme, pilgrims simply pay a down payment (DP), for example, 7 million rupiah of the total cost of 27 million rupiah, with the remainder paid in installments upon their return. The installment amount is adjusted according to the payment term. The contract used is a sale and purchase agreement (ijarah multijasa), where services such as transportation, accommodation, meals, and Umrah guidance are traded, not the pilgrimage itself. Although a travel agency can operate smoothly, its true success is determined by the ability to market its services and build customer trust. Many travel agencies have sprung up, but some still commit fraud. Therefore, it is crucial for companies to maintain pilgrims' trust and maintain loyalty. After two years of the pandemic, the government finally reopened access to the Umrah pilgrimage, requiring complete vaccination and a negative COVID-19 test result. Samira Travel itself remained active throughout the pandemic and recorded an increase in the number of pilgrims year after year. This study aims to analyze the marketing strategy of Samira Travel's Umrah advance product through a marketing mix approach [3].

Marketing strategy

According to Kotler (2004: 81), a marketing strategy is a mindset used as a reference in achieving marketing goals. This strategy includes a specific approach to the target market, determining product positioning in the market, using marketing mix elements, and arranging the allocation of funds for marketing activities [4]. On the other hand, Tjiptono (2002: 6) states that a marketing strategy is the main tool designed to help a company achieve its goals, namely by creating sustainable competitive advantages through selecting the right market and developing appropriate marketing programs to reach that market [5]. Marketing strategy plays an important role for a company because it is a means to achieve pre-designed targets. For this strategy to run optimally, a strong understanding of business characteristics is required, accompanied by knowledge of consumer needs and expectations, competitors' positions in the market, the company's internal potential, and other key elements such as cooperation with suppliers and distributors. In the marketing concept, producers do not only focus on production and promotion alone, but also more on understanding to preference consumer. It means,

manufacturer must notice Consumer needs and wants. Consumers not only buy physical products, but also expect additional benefits. This is what is called wants, namely the hope of more than just the goods purchased. If these expectations are met, then marketing activities will run successfully [6].

customer satisfaction. Success in facing market competition depends heavily on a company's ability to create total customer value. value), which is reflected in the provision of quality products at competitive prices. This customer satisfaction can encourage repeat purchases and the spread of positive recommendations through word of mouth. The Umrah pilgrimage itself is a form of worship that, according to faith, is obligatory for anyone who has the ability – both men and women, young and old – to carry it out in accordance with the rules and regulations of Islamic law. In general, the Indonesian people, who are the majority Muslim, perform the Umrah pilgrimage to the Grand Mosque in Mecca using the services of an Umrah travel agency or a travel agency company that specializes in performing Umrah in Indonesia [7]. There are many offers regarding travel agencies Umrah in Indonesia itself, which will lead to intense competition in providing integrated services, such as comparing with other travel agents. Companies need to be able to accurately identify and classify opportunities in various market segments to determine appropriate products to offer consumers and determine the primary target market segments [8] . To compete effectively, companies are required to accurately identify and determine target market segments, as well as to present products that meet consumer needs and preferences [9]. In today's era of free competition, companies are required to develop accurate strategies to compete and survive in the market. People are now more selective in choosing a safe and comfortable travel agency. Therefore, travel agencies must continue to improve the quality of their services, from departure preparation, carrying out worship in the holy land, to the return of pilgrims to their homeland.

Sharia Marketing

Sharia marketing is a business approach in which every stage – from creation to delivery of value to consumers – must be based on the principles of Islamic transactions and use contracts recognized as valid according to sharia [10]. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad, business and marketing practices were carried out with a high level of honesty. The Prophet Muhammad always provided open explanations to buyers regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the products offered. This honest attitude is the main foundation in trading, because it can build consumer trust in the seller. According to American Marketing Association quoted by Lamb , Hair , and McDaniel (2001:6), marketing is a series of processes that include planning and implementing concept development, pricing, promotion, and distribution of various ideas, products, and services, which aim to create valuable exchanges in order to meet the needs of both individuals and organizations [8].

Marketing is not only an activity in the business world, but also a strategic discipline that aims to achieve long-term satisfaction for all parties involved, such as

customers, employees, and shareholders [11]. As an objective science, marketing is supported by various measuring tools used to assess business performance, especially in terms of building, developing, and directing exchange processes that provide mutual benefits between producers and consumers in a sustainable manner [12]. In the context of business strategy, marketing functions as an adaptive step for market-oriented organizations to respond to the dynamics of the business environment, both at the micro and macro levels, which are constantly changing [5].

Marketing Mix

One strategy that is considered effective in supporting product marketing activities to achieve consumer satisfaction is by implementing a marketing mix [3]. Kotler and Armstrong (2016:51) state that the marketing mix is a collection of tactical marketing tools combined by a company to obtain the desired response from the target market. This concept consists of four main components known as the 4Ps, namely product, price, place or distribution channel (place), and promotion [4].

1. Product (Product)

A product is anything that is offered to the market to be purchased, noticed, or used with the aim of fulfilling consumer needs or desires.

2. Price (Price)

Price reflects the monetary value that consumers must pay to obtain, own, or utilize a combination of products and services offered by a company.

3. Location (Place)

Choosing a location or marketing venue is a crucial and valuable investment aspect, as a strategic location significantly determines the level of consumer visits. Therefore, location is a determining factor in the success of a business.

4. Promotion

is a marketing activity aimed at introducing and attracting consumer interest in a company's products. Promotional activities can be conducted through various media such as websites, social media, radio advertisements, and other forms of communication.

This study aims to comprehensively explore the marketing strategies [13] used by PT. Samira Utama Wisata (Samira Travel) in an effort to increase sales of Umrah advance products, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, this study also focuses on understanding how the company designs, implements, and assesses the effectiveness of its marketing strategies in attracting the interest of prospective pilgrims, by utilizing digital approaches and responsive communications to the crisis situation affecting the pilgrimage travel sector.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive analytical approach with the aim of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the object of study and increasing sensitivity to the problems being faced. This approach is used to present a general picture that is in

accordance with the actual conditions in the field. This study focuses on describing in detail the marketing strategies implemented in order to increase the number of prospective Umrah pilgrims. Data collection was conducted through direct interviews and field observations at the research location to obtain relevant and accurate information. This research was conducted at the Samira Travel Sidoarjo branch, which is located at Griya Permata Gedangan Block A3 No. 2, Keboansikep, Gedangan, Sidoarjo. The main resource person in this study was Mr. Eddy Siswanto.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the marketing strategy efforts implemented by Samira Travel is to utilize the marketing mix concept, where the implementation of this strategy has been part of the company's marketing activities since it was first established and continues to be used to attract the interest of potential pilgrims.

1. Product

A product is an object or service that can be offered to prospective buyers or customers. For example, Samira Travel offers a bridging loan product that can be used if prospective pilgrims wish to perform the Umrah pilgrimage on a limited budget or with insufficient funds. Prospective pilgrims can depart for the Holy Land by making an initial payment or down payment of 20% of the Umrah package price, with the remainder paid in installments after performing the Umrah pilgrimage according to the agreed upon installment period. In practice, the contract used in Umrah financing at Samira Travel is the Murabahah Sale and Purchase Agreement, in collaboration with several Islamic banks and Islamic financing institutions such as Amitra Syariah. The presence of this Umrah financing product is very helpful for prospective pilgrims who wish to perform Umrah to the Holy Land but are constrained by insufficient funds.

2. Price

Samira Travel offers three Umrah packages: the Safawi package, the Sukari package, and the Majol package. The prices for each package are as follows.

Table 1.

No	Package Name	Price
1	Syafawi Package	Rp. 36,750,000
2	Sukari Package	Rp. 38,650,000
3	Majol Package	Rp. 46,450,000

*costs may increase every year depending on market prices and Saudi Arabian government policies

The differences between the 3 packages above are:

1. Safavid Package
More affordable prices, maximum service, suitable for pilgrims who want to perform Umrah at a lower cost without sacrificing the quality of service.
2. Sukari Package
Affordable prices, very satisfying facilities, making it the right choice for pilgrims who want a balance between price and quality.
3. Majol Package
Very luxurious facilities, suitable for pilgrims who want an Umrah experience with the best facilities without worrying about the cost.

Market segmentation is a process of dividing consumers into several groups based on similarities in characteristics, needs, or behavior, so that companies can develop more targeted marketing strategies [14]. In the context of Samira Travel, the segmentation of people who use Umrah services and Umrah advances can be classified based on the following variables:

1. **Demographic Segmentation**

Age : Generally between 30–60 years old. However, there are also younger customers (in their 20s) who use advance funds to leave early.

Gender : Both male and female, with the number of female congregants tending to be greater.

Marital Status : The majority are married couples, families, or housewives.

Occupation and Income : Civil servants, private sector employees, MSME entrepreneurs, traders, and retirees. The Umrah advance product is very attractive to the lower-middle class who have a strong desire to perform Umrah but don't yet have sufficient funds.

Education : Educational backgrounds vary, from high school graduates to college graduates.

2. **Geographic Segmentation**

Region : The majority of the congregation comes from **East Java**, especially around **Sidoarjo**, Surabaya, Gresik, and the surrounding areas, but it does not rule out the possibility of reaching outside areas through online promotions.

Urban and Suburban : Customers come from urban and suburban areas who have access to information on digital promotions and community religious studies.

3. **Psychographic Segmentation**

Lifestyle : Religious and active in religious activities such as religious study groups, religious study groups, women's social gatherings, Hajj/Umrah communities.

Values and Motivation : Having a strong desire to perform the Umrah pilgrimage despite limited financial resources. Advance financing is considered a sharia-compliant solution that facilitates the intention to perform the pilgrimage.

4. Behavioral Segmentation

Benefits Sought : Ease of financing (bridging), sharia services, intensive spiritual guidance, and comfort during the trip.

User Status : Consists of new customers and loyal customers who have used Samira Travel services more than once.

Loyalty Level : Congregants who feel satisfied tend to recommend to relatives through word of mouth promotion (word of mouth) . of mouth).

Response to Promotion : Positive response to digital promotion through social media, WhatsApp , seminars, and religious study groups

3. Place

Choosing a location is crucial. If it's strategic, visitors will easily find it. Samira 's location The travel agency itself is located at Kemiri Indah Housing Complex B5 No. 7, Bluru Cilik, Kemiri, Sidoarjo District , Sidoarjo Regency. You can also contact them by phone at 0877-5424-4859 or through the official travel agency website . www.samiratravel.co.id

4. Promotion

Promotion is a business activity aimed at increasing consumer awareness of the company's products. To introduce its products, Samira Travel actively promotes them through various channels, both in person and digitally. Direct promotional strategies include holding Umrah -themed seminars and speaking at campuses or community events such as religious study groups, women's social gatherings, and the Family Welfare Movement (PKK). Indirect promotions are conducted through social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook, as well as television and radio advertisements. These efforts are aimed at increasing public awareness of the services offered.

Umrah Financing Agreement Through Umrah Advance Funds

In Islam, a contract is a binding agreement between transacting parties, carried out through ijab and qabul legally according to sharia [15]. This contract reflects the agreement and willingness of both parties, and has an impact on the object of the contract agreed upon. In practice, the contract used in financing Umrah at Samira Travel is the Ijarah Sale and Purchase Contract. Multijasa , by collaborating with several Islamic banks and Islamic financing such as Amitra Syariah which is supervised by the MUI Syariah Council and OJK for financing Umrah pilgrimage trips.

Advantages of Umrah with Samira Travel

One of the advantages offered in the Umrah program with Samira Travel is the relatively affordable cost and the availability of sharia advance facilities, where prospective pilgrims only need to pay a down payment of IDR 5,000,000 to be able to depart within one month. The remaining payment can be paid in installments after the Umrah has been performed with a tenor ranging from 6 to 36 months (maximum 3 years). Samira Travel is also accompanied by a competent, experienced, patient ustadz guide who provides attentive service to pilgrims. Pilgrims will have the opportunity to make additional pilgrimages to the Asmaul Husana Museum and the Nabawi Mosque

Museum in Medina. The Umrah manasik activities held not only discuss the pillars and procedures of Umrah worship, but also cover other technical aspects such as an introduction to aircraft facilities, procedures for tayammum, and performing prayers during the trip. As a token of appreciation, after returning from Umrah, pilgrims will also receive a souvenir book and be invited to a gathering event with other pilgrims.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : The research findings indicate that PT. Samira Utama Wisata (Samira Travel) successfully implemented an adaptive digital marketing strategy that proved effective in sustaining business performance during the Covid-19 pandemic. By utilizing **social media platforms, online promotions, and direct communication channels** such as WhatsApp and telephone services, the company managed to maintain customer engagement and promote its **Umrah financing products** despite industry-wide declines in travel demand. **Implication :** This demonstrates that **digital transformation and customer-centric communication** are essential components of marketing resilience during crises. Samira Travel's strategy not only enhanced **brand trust and customer loyalty** but also supported **business continuity** in a highly volatile market. Furthermore, its focus on the lower-middle to upper-middle Muslim segment seeking Sharia-compliant financing reflects the importance of market segmentation and value-based marketing in religious tourism. **Limitation :** However, the study's findings are limited to the Covid-19 context and primarily assess short-term marketing outcomes. The research does not fully explore long-term brand sustainability, consumer behavior post-pandemic, or the **economic feasibility** of financing programs under changing global travel regulations. **Future Research :** Future studies should investigate the long-term impact of digital marketing **innovations** in the religious travel industry, particularly post-pandemic consumer trust recovery and hybrid marketing models that integrate offline religious engagement with digital financing systems. Additionally, research could explore how Sharia-based financial technology (FinTech) can enhance accessibility and inclusivity for prospective Umrah travelers, supporting broader digital transformation in faith-based tourism.

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