

## SOCIAL MEDIA IN GUIDING AND MARKETING RELIGIOUS TOURISM: THE CASE OF UMRAH AND HAJJ SERVICES

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**ABSTRACT.** The media played a central role in communication between people, including religious matters. In religious tourism, there were scouting activities between the committee, ustadz, and congregation in the context of worship that was carried out well. The most prominent in this religious tourism was the pilgrimage and *umrah*. Thus, there were many Hajj and Umrah communities in a Muslim-majority country like Indonesia. This study aims to determine the role of social media in religious tourism guidance and marketing activities. This study used a micro-sociological analysis of qualitative data from activities at one of the Hajj and Umrah guidance centers in Bandung, Indonesia. Using social network analysis, it was found that social media's role was essential to disseminate information between Hajj and Umrah guidance institutions and their congregations. The use of Facebook for the profile of the guidance institution was beneficial for pilgrims to understand the various opportunities and obstacles that exist in the Hajj/Umrah pilgrimage. WhatsApp was the most frequently used to communicate interactively with the congregation so the clerics and committees. Social media is quite helpful in marketing when the assembly connects with friends and family in telling their experiences when worshipping in Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia.

**Keywords:** marketing promotion; digital interaction; religious tourism

### MEDIA SOSIAL DALAM PEMBIMBINGAN DAN PEMASARAN PARIWISATA RELIGI : STUDI KASUS TENTANG JASA LAYANAN UMRAH DAN HAJI

**ABSTRAK.** Media memainkan peran yang sentral dalam komunikasi antar masyarakat, termasuk dalam masalah keagamaan. Kegiatan keagamaan yang mesti memakai media adalah wisata religi. Demikian karena dalam wisata religi, terdapat kegiatan pemanduan antara panitia, ustadz, dan jamaah dalam rangka suatu ibadah itu terlaksana dengan baik. Yang paling menonjol dalam wisata religi ini adalah ibadah haji dan umrah. Demikian sehingga ada banyak komunitas haji dan umrah di negeri yang mayoritas Muslim seperti Indonesia. Kajian ini hendak menemukan peran media sosial dalam kegiatan bimbingan dan marketing turisme religius seperti haji dan umrah. Kajian ini menggunakan analisis Sosiologis mikro terhadap data-data kualitatif yang muncul dari kegiatan di salah satu bimbingan haji dan umrah di Kota Bandung, Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan analisis jaringan social, ditemukan bahwa peran media sosial sangat diperlukan dalam rangka penyebaran informasi antara Lembaga bimbingan haji dan umrah dengan para jamaahnya. Penggunaan Facebook untuk profil Lembaga bimbingan tersebut sangat membantu para jamaah untuk memahami berbagai kesempatan dan rintangan yang ada pada ibadah haji/umrah. Penggunaan WhatsApp adalah yang paling sering digunakan agar para ustadz dan panitia dapat berkomunikasi secara interaktif dengan para jamaah. Dari segi marketing pula, media social ini cukup membantu, ketika para jamaah berhubungan dengan teman dan keluarganya dalam menceritakan pengalamannya ketika beribadah ke Mekkah dan Madinah di Saudi Arabia.

**Kata kunci:** pemasaran; interaksi digital; wisata religi

### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, every human being cannot be separated from the name of technology; this phenomenon will seem to have become commonplace in society (Beniger, 2009) (Ratnamulyani & Maksudi, 2018). People who want to be instant and quick to do something triggering the production of technology and information service providers continue to compete for a place in the community (Jovanovic, 2020)(Dewi et al., 2020). From there, innovations

that we can feel at this time living amid the rapid development of communication systems, information, and technology, the internet is developing fast and becoming an essential part of community affairs, such as economic issues, education, health, and also as an effective entertainment media (Fukuda, 2020). One of the best measurements of internet usage is that the number of host-computers has increased from 5.9 million to 43.2 million (Nwanne, 2016).

With the increasingly widespread internet in life in today's society, we recognize a new term:

new media, a convergence of digital technology that is run on a computerized basis and is a channel of communication and information connected to the internet (Allen, 2017). The development of communication and information systems is also parallel with technological gadgets such as laptops, smartphones, tablets, and other devices. By offering their respective advantages in each product, gadget manufacturers continue to innovate and compete for consumers (Mani & Chouk, 2017).

Of the many gadgets, smartphones are the favorite among people today. The reason people prefer smartphones is the offer of their high flexibility and many features. One of the features that are widely used by the public is social media. Social media is a portal or online social networking tool connected through an internet connection. The presence of social media certainly makes it easier for users to communicate with each other, interact, send messages, share, and can build networks for individuals or groups (Benckendorff et al., 2019).

As an activity that prioritizes networks, a group trip must require the use of the latest information technology already popular in the community. An example is the pilgrimage and Umrah for Muslims who like to be done in groups. That is so because millions of Muslims come to Mecca in Saudi Arabia every year to perform Hajj and Umrah. Muslims have to make Hajj once in their lifetime as long as they can. Hajj is a ritual journey to Mecca and is considered the fifth important pillar in Islam. This ritual is performed in the 12th month of the Islamic lunar calendar, namely, „Dhul Hijjah.” Hajj includes many practices, which must be performed according to the order of the event (Khan & Shambour, 2018). Umrah can be done at any time of the year. In Arabic, Umrah means ‘visiting inhabited places.’ Sometimes the *umrah* is called ‘mild pilgrimage’ or ‘lower pilgrimage.’ The pilgrimage becomes the ‘main’ pilgrimage and compulsory for any Muslim who can afford it. Umrah is not mandatory but is highly recommended (Bashir et al., 2017).

Social media consists of two words: social meaning interaction and media is a container or social place itself. Social media is a term used for all forms of cutting-edge mass communication media based on communication and information technology. It applies to electronic or digital communication media, specifically the internet or the World Wide Web (www) (Felix et al., 2017).

The presence of new media is indeed changing the medium of human communication. The face of communication in Indonesia experienced some changes due to the application of communication

and information technology, thus turning many things in the communication systems living in Indonesia. Currently, the community has entered into the so-called hyper-communication (Baeva, 2016), making it possible for communication between one communicator with one communicant and mass communicators with mass communication.

The growing interest of media companies in the form of internet-based communication reflects the rise of new forms of socialized communication. It is mass communication because it can reach a broad and global audience through p2p (person to person) networks and internet connections (Nechita, 2012). Former Minister of Religion Lukman Hakim Saifuddin stated (Arief, 2015) that the existence of social media that is currently developing is one source of information that must be used, especially information and issues related to religion. Humans are in a new area of communication, and indeed, in the new media are necessarily computer networks whose language is digital. The senders are distributed globally and interact globally (Castells, 2011).

## METHODS

The method used in this study is qualitative because the object in this study is a natural object as in a typical situation that does not manipulate conditions, so this method is also called the naturalistic research method (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). This research was qualitative because it depends on human observations in their area, language, lives, and interactions with the world around them (Barrett et al., 2019). It is also called the case study research method (Hancock Bob, 2006). The subject in this study was KBIH (Kelompok Bimbingan Ibadah Haji – the Pilgrimage Guidance Group) of Mi’raj –later on, KBIH Mi’raj; which contained management, travel managers, and service users who could be used as sources of information.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Religious Tourism

Religious tourism is one of the types of tourism products closely related to the spiritual or religious side embraced by humanity (Griffin & Raj, 2007). Religious tourism is a tourist activity to a place with special meaning for religious people (Sharpley & Jepson, 2011). Usually, some areas of worship have advantages. The advantages are from history, myths, and legends about the place, uniqueness, and superiority of the building architecture. Mecca in Saudi Arabia is the best religious tourism that Muslims must visit. Going to Mecca is an obligation for capable Muslims.

Pilgrimage tourism is a type of tour associated with religion, beliefs, or customs in society. Both individuals and groups carry out religious tourism to visit the holy places, the Kaaba, the tombs of the saints or famous people, and glorified leaders. The goal is to get blessings, happiness, and peace. Religious tourism is much associated with the intention or desire of the tourist to get the benefit, inner strength, firmness of faith, and not infrequently also to obtain blessings and abundant wealth (McClendon & Riedl, 2019).

Weber's (2002) thesis on Protestant Ethics and its relationship to the spirit of thesis capitalism pays attention to the possible link between religion and entrepreneurial behavior. Weber's observation stems from the sociological facts found in Germany that most of the leaders of capital owner companies and top technical and commercial personnel are Protestants rather than Catholics. Weber departs from an underlying assumption that rationality is a central element that causes Western civilization universal meaning and influence. In economic activity, it can be seen that many cultures in history know what it means to make a profit. But it is only in the West that profit-seeking is carried out within a rationally regulated organizational framework. It is the main root of the capitalist system, which manifests itself in specific economic behavior systems.

The idea of linking the management, guidance, and marketing of *hajj* and *umrah* to social media is a step forward for a hajj and umrah guidance agency like Mi'raj in Bandung. In terms of religious business activities such as hajj and umrah trips, a solid and intimate relationship is needed between related parties such as management as the one responsible for the smooth journey, the ustadz as the party responsible for the success of worship, and the consumer as a party that must be maintained and served.

### The Purpose of the Pilgrimage

The motivation for performing Hajj and Umrah today is varied. With the existence of social media, the announcement that someone will be leaving for Hajj has become news for the social media content of every prospective hajj/umrah pilgrim. Especially if it is already at the destination, namely Mecca and its surroundings; Social media is a place for posting selfies or grooves.

Photos often uploaded on social media are photos of yourself with the Kaaba. The Kaaba, for the Islamic community, especially the people of Indonesia in general, is still considered a sacred place, so the Kabah is often visited by pilgrims to ask for the blessing there. Pilgrims who come to the Kaaba are alone, together with families groups, and

when counted, more mothers, young children, or teenagers are also not small. But some come at any time or time. Pilgrims usually come from different backgrounds, and their goals vary. As said by one of the students who also made the pilgrimage at the Kaaba the purpose of his visit to the Kaaba (in this case the Umrah worship) is to want to draw closer to Allah and remember that we are God's creation and will someday return to Him, and want to make a recitation of the Qur'an and become a pious wife (An interview with a pilgrim, BQ, 21 years old, a female student, 04/28/2019).

Pilgrimage to the Kaaba in certain months by saying the purpose and purpose of the pilgrimage is *tawassul*, i.e., praying to Allah SWT because the Kaaba is the house of God. He hopes his prayer is answered by Allah SWT (An interview with AA pilgrims, 38 years, and AR, 40 years old, both are civil servants, 04/28/2019). Some come to the Kaaba to increase faith, security, and charity, want to have a leader and get the blessing from the holy land (An interview with MA pilgrims, a homemaker, 64 years, 07/09/2019). There is also the purpose of worshipping the *Umrah*. Coming to the Kaaba is to follow in the footsteps of the apostles because the Kaaba is where the prophets fought (An interview with FM pilgrims, students, 27 years, 07/9/2019).

Gaining helpful knowledge to prepare for the Hereafter, the blessings of the Messenger, and the taste of *Mahabbah* (love) are among the many purposes expressed by Umrah participants. Some say that „coming here already has inner satisfaction, the benefits of *tawassul* (prayer), the place to scream the heart of the bridge with *tawassul*. The point is to be close to Allah and visit the Kaaba to get closer to Allah SWT (An interview with SH, a pilgrim, a private worker, 23 years, 07/09/2019).

Umrah pilgrims at KBIH Mi'raj generally come from various regions in West Java, such as Cirebon, Cianjur, Tasik, Garut, Majenang, Solo, Purwakarta, and especially Bandung. If seen from the social aspect, the characteristics of pilgrims can be seen from the variation of their social position in society. It means pilgrims who come from various social groups. A person's social status will also affect the state of his economy so that at least in a pilgrimage society can be categorized into upper and middle classes. The lower levels are usually diligent in saving or getting gifts at work. And in the high middle class, the reason for pilgrims is that they pray so that what they already have, whether it is work, property, and throne, remain, and they still have (An interview with AI, a pilgrim, a private employee, 41 years, 07/9/2019).

## Hajj and Umrah Management

In Indonesian Law, hajj pilgrims are Indonesian citizens who are Muslim and have registered to perform Hajj following established requirements (Law No.13 of 2008). In other words, a pilgrim is a person or group of Muslims who will perform the pilgrimage to the holy land and can make payments. It can be concluded that the pilgrims are pilgrims who are serving the pilgrimage or have completed the pilgrimage in the year concerned (both those who follow the Pilgrimage Guidance Group (KBIH) and the Government). This research was conducted at KBIH Mi'raj Jl. RE. Martadinata No. 113, Cihapit, Bandung Wetan, Bandung City, West Java 40114. Taking data is also not too difficult. The results of this study found about organizational management in KBIH Mi'raj and the management of KBIH Mi'raj.

Pilgrimage Guidance Group (KBIH) Mi'raj, at its inception in 2000, KBIH Mi'raj did not recruit pilgrims because many people wanted to register with KBIH. Still, in the following years, KBIH Mi'raj pilgrims conducted promotions to recruit prospective pilgrims now remember how many were standing KBIH in the city of Bandung. Promotion conducted by KBIH Mi'raj itself uses printed media. Namely, brochures are given to alumni of KBIH Mi'raj pilgrims.

KBIH Mi'raj gives Hajj ritual lessons to the congregation in groups and individually. The provision of guidance for the rituals by KBIH is scheduled for what material will be delivered, who gives direction, and implementation time. The material presented is the main material, including Aqeedah, Shari'ah, Akhlaq, Health, Geography, and culture of the Arab nation, everyday Arabic, Pilgrimage and traveling in Islam, Regarding the practice of attracting pilgrims, hajj pilgrimage, and prayers. The particular materials include the rules of Hajj and Umrah, Hajj and Umrah Problems, Things that damage the Hajj and Umrah, Preserving the pilgrimage, and everything related to the Hajj.

Pilgrims who attend KBIH Mi'raj, besides getting the ritual guidance before departure, also get guidance in the Holy Land. Every year KBIH Mi'raj always assigns a representative from the management to become a guide in the Holy Land. In addition to guidance in the Motherland and in the Holy Land, KBIH Mi'raj also provides post-Hajj guidance. This guidance aims to maintain a congregation after carrying out the pilgrimage.

Organizing is a management function that aims to determine the tasks or positions of each unit of the organizational structure. In KBIH Mi'raj, an organizational structure and division of roles are

arranged in their respective fields. This division of functions carries out all planned activities effectively and efficiently. With the implementation of the organizing function, administrators can understand and carry out the tasks of each of the designated sections. In the KBIH Mi'raj part of the organizational structure is as follows: Guidance; Chairman; Vice Chairman; Secretary; Treasurer; Field of education; Hajj Sector (KBIH); Social Affairs; Culture and society.

Actuating is the third function of the management function after the planning and organizing functions. An organization must draw up a plan that will be carried out and organize the plan. However, to show the results achieved, an organization must take action. With this mobilization function, everything that has been in planning and organizing can be accomplished. The implementation of KBIH Mi'raj's planning and organizing functions is as follows: First, the recruitment of pilgrims is one of the essential things in KBIH Mi'raj's activities. In recruiting pilgrims, all administrators take part. Besides, pilgrims who have taken part in guidance with KBIH Mi'raj also recruit pilgrims by providing information about KBIH Mi'raj. The pilgrims were satisfied with KBIH Mi'raj's guidance, so they invited the brothers around them to join the KBIH Mi'raj congregation. This first step uses social media, especially WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram.

Second, social media is carried out in the Hajj Manasik Guidance application (in the country). Guidance conducted by KBIH Mi'raj in the country is carried out ongoing. The material delivered will provide prospective pilgrims in carrying out the pilgrimage. Also, social media is also carried out in applying Hajj guidance in the Holy Land. The pilgrimage guidance group (KBIH) Mi'raj annually sends representatives from the management to become mentors in the Holy Land. After performing the Hajj pilgrimage, KBIH Mi'raj pilgrims conduct routine prayer. This study aims to maintain friendship between pilgrims and to the board. This recitation is usually filled with advice from one of the management of KBIH Mi'raj. All activities of this stage are communicated through social media.

KBIH Mi'raj, besides helping pilgrims in rituals, also helps in the case of hajj equipment, the Mi'raj cooperative provides a variety of hajj equipment and souvenirs. All KBIH pilgrims can buy hajj supplies such as ihram clothes, shoes, sandals, and others. Besides, pilgrims can also order souvenirs such as dates, Zamzam water, raisins, and other things at a standard price and deliver them directly to the house. So, the implementation of the



pilgrimage will be more solemn without thinking about many things, and no need to bother on the plane because it brings many goods.

Supervision carried out by KBIH Mi'raj is carried out in three stages; the first, after the recruitment of pilgrims, all management carries out coordination and evaluation. Second, supervision is carried out after the Hajj rituals are carried out. Third, supervision is carried out after the pilgrimage. Management is art in completing work through other people in this organization. It implies that managers achieve organizational goals by arranging other people to carry out various tasks that might be needed, or means by not doing the tasks themselves.

### **Management of Promotion of KBIH Mi'raj**

In management functions consisting of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling, it is stated that promotion is determined during the planning process. A KBIH chairman carries out managerial functions to determine the required goals and achieve them as specified in his plan.

The planning process of an institution sets various decisions, including how to promote an institution to the general public. It is essential because, without the promotion process, people will not know the institution's existence. When the promotion process has been carried out, more and more people are aware of these institutions or organizations.

Promotion conducted by KBIH Mi'raj began in 2001. From that time until 2004, there were quite a lot of consumers who registered. But in 2005, there was a decline in pilgrims who registered. Therefore, KBIH Mi'raj promoted by making brochures, websites, Facebook, and word of mouth utilizing pilgrims alumni (an interview with HBP, director of KBIH Mi'raj, 03/13/2019). Promotion conducted by KBIH Mi'raj is to use brochures, internet media, i.e., websites and social media, namely Facebook, then through word of mouth, by utilizing alumni who are satisfied with all the activities KBIH has given. Promotion is determined in the initial planning and systematically programmed.

The function of this brochure, website, and social media is that when there are prospective pilgrims whose area is far from the location, the prospective pilgrims can see and know the existence of KBIH Mi'raj to try to look for deeper details information and later will register at KBIH Mi'raj. The things displayed in brochures, websites, and social media are easy to understand enjoyable and list the advantages possessed by KBIH. The primary purpose of advertising policy is to provide regular information about company activities and available

services. It is directed to introducing the name KBIH Mi'raj to the broader community.

KBIH Mi'raj advertising activities are carried out using several media, including brochure print media and social media in WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. KBIH Mi'raj uses brochure media for its advertising activities to attract consumers (prospective pilgrims) in the surrounding environment, where the target is the entire community of Bandung. The KBIH Mi'raj brochure is distributed to neighboring guidance congregations to communities close to the KBIH location each year. The distribution of brochures was carried out by all staff at KBIH Mi'raj" (An interview with HUA, a Mi'raj staff, 03/13/2019). KBIH Mi'raj uses the brochure here to provide an explanation and understanding of the products and services offered by them.

### **Hajj and Umrah Social Media**

KBIH Mi'raj has an Instagram account @mirajhalaltour and a Facebook account called Mi'raj Halal Tour and Travel," <https://www.facebook.com/mirajhalaltour/>. These accounts always provide the latest information about KBIH Mi'raj. Advertisement using media through the Fanpage is considered to provide convenience in delivering and accepting all information relating to KBIH. In addition to information material, the uploaded post is a learning tool for prospective pilgrims in getting to know KBIH Mi'raj. By accessing Facebook social media and opening the KBIH Mi'raj Fanpage feature, users can receive information related to KBIH. The KBIH Mi'raj Facebook Fanpage was first created in 2014 by the KBIH Mi'raj admin and began to be operated for the first time until it was visited by consumers around mid-2015 until today. Thus all related information about KBIH Mi'raj can be easily accessed for cyberspace surfers using Facebook social media. It is recognized that the existence of social media from the management of Hajj and Umrah is beneficial for marketing when viewed from the management side and provides information that can attract prospective pilgrims (an interview with OP, a pilgrim, 08/15/2019).

Personal selling activities carried out by KBIH Mi'raj are by making presentations to companies or institutions. In these activities, the task of the marketing division is to offer and explain the various umrah products and packages owned by KBIH Mi'raj, the price of each umrah package, accommodation, and transportation to be provided, and the requirements that prospective pilgrims must meet. The presentations are carried out by displaying slides containing material related to the pilgrimage.

KBIH Mi'raj also conducts personal selling or individual sales which are carried out by staff at KBIH Mi'raj at the KBIH office, such as providing good service when prospective pilgrims want to register or just asking about the rituals at KBIH Mi'raj (an interview with US, a Mi'raj staff, 08/15/2019).

Word of mouth promotion strategy is a customer talking about a product or service to family and relatives. Meanwhile, companies do not need to put up expensive advertisement budgets. KBIH Mi'raj promoted attracting pilgrims to register to utilize pilgrims alumni who have followed the guidance at KBIH Mi'raj by delivering word of mouth through good service (an interview with HBP, KBIH Mi'raj director, 05/25/2019).

As for services that must be immediate and of short duration, KBIH Mi'raj creates WhatsApp accounts. It is adjusted to the needs of the pilgrims or *umrah*. For example, for guidance, there is a WhatsApp group administered by an *ustad* (preacher); for administrative matters, there is a WhatsApp group with the administration and the like. Each departure has its own WhatsApp group that helps with various immediate communication needs. So that all can be involved, no one is missing information (an interview with US, a Mi'raj staff, 08/15/2019).

KBIH Mi'raj focuses on promotion targets because the more competitors there will be, the more minor success of KBIH Mi'raj. Therefore the focus of the promotion of KBIH Mi'raj is through alumni services. It is because the alumni are customers who must be honored. Alumni usually share their experiences with KBIH, so their affairs can attract that many. KBIH Mi'raj is committed to focusing on the services of pilgrims alumni. As more and more consumers are satisfied, more and more consumers are interested in registering Hajj on KBIH Mi'raj. Therefore, before reaching the consumer experience, KBIH Mi'raj builds an excellent service first so that alumni are expected to be satisfied through the services available from KBIH. From a service will shift to the experience of consumers, so customers or alumni can tell the knowledge gained from KBIH Mi'raj to others. New consumers or prospective pilgrims are interested in KBIH Mi'raj because of the factual evidence; namely, alumni experience already exists. Besides, many efforts benefit KBIH Mi'raj by maintaining the trust of alumni rather than doing other marketing (an interview with HBP, director of KBIH Mi'raj, 05/25/2019). Promotion management is an activity to direct and guide the actions of introducing products, convincing, and reminding the benefits of these products to consumers in the hope that they are

attracted to become partners voluntarily (Jacobson, 2019). Advertising management is the analysis, implementation, and supervision of programs to attract partners to achieve organizational goals (Gope et al., 2018). Promotion is essentially marketing communication, meaning marketing activities that seek to disseminate information, influence, persuade, and remind target markets for companies and their products to be willing to accept, buy and be loyal to the products offered by the company concerned (Kumar & Gupta, 2016). Hajj and Umrah service organizations such as KBIH Mi'raj in Bandung, Indonesia, have done all of these.

Of the numerous gadgets, smartphones are the first favorite among individuals nowadays. The reason individuals favor smartphones is the offer of their high adaptability and many highlights. One of the highlights broadly utilized by the open is social media. Social media may be a portal or online social organizing device associated with an online association. The nearness of social media certainly makes it less demanding for clients to communicate with each other, connect, send messages, share, and construct systems to people or bunches (Benckendorff et al., 2019). The implementation of social media using smartphones in grouping communications of the pilgrims shows that technology serves humans' needs as their extension of capabilities (Steinert, 2016), so that humans are still technologically determinant, as theorized by Marshall McLuhan (Drew, 2016).

## CONCLUSION

The role of the media, which is so essential in disseminating information, needs attention and consideration in marketing activities because the selection of the right media can have a significant impact on a promotional activity, including in promoting religious tourism. The use of media such as conventional media, social media media, or other media is certainly very necessary, but with online media the choice of social media is very appropriate, where social media has various features/diverse applications and fast access in its presentation, as well as assisting agencies or parties who interested in tourism development to streamline the promotion budget. Moreover, with the ease of usage and ownership of social media devices, social media was a means of promoting or supporting agencies or religious tourism organizers. It showed in communication activities between the committee, *ustadz*, and their congregations, including uploading photos or tourist locations they visit.

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