



Implementation of Digital Marketing Communication in Increasing Pilgrims' Interest in Zafa Tour Hajj & Umrah Service Bureau

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to examine in depth the implementation of digital marketing communication carried out by Zafa Tour and analyze various development opportunities in increasing the interest of prospective pilgrims. This research aims to understand how digital marketing communication is applied through the stages of Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action (AIDA) in forming interest to the decision to register prospective pilgrims. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews with marketing leaders and staff. The results of the research on the implementation of digital marketing communication in increasing the interest of prospective pilgrims in the Zafa Tour Hajj and Umrah service bureau, it can be concluded that the digital marketing communication strategy implemented has been effective and in accordance with the stages of AIDA theory.

INTRODUCTION

The use of digital media in the marketing of worship travel services has experienced rapid development along with advances in information technology and changes in people's behavior. Currently, people tend to use the internet and social media as the main source of information on religious services, including worship travel services (Khadijah et al., 2022). Digital media is considered to be able to reach prospective pilgrims more widely, quickly, and efficiently, especially for productive age groups who actively use digital platforms (Ahmadi & Sudahri, 2025). Through the use of digital media, worship travel service companies can build brand awareness, expand promotional reach, and open initial communication with prospective pilgrims in the digital space.

In line with these developments, Zafa Tour is one of the Hajj and Umrah service bureaus that utilizes digital media as a means of marketing communication to prospective pilgrims. The use of social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and other digital communication platforms such as WhatsApp is the main channel in conveying information about worship travel packages and company activities. The content presented generally includes travel package promotions, documentation of pilgrim activities, customer testimonials, and educational information about the procedures for carrying out Hajj and Umrah. The presentation of the content aims to build a professional and religious image so that it can increase the trust of prospective pilgrims in the services offered (Lin & Zhou, 2023).

The impact of these digital communication activities can be seen from the high interaction of prospective pilgrims through digital media, especially through Facebook and WhatsApp. Most prospective pilgrims who carry out initial communication through digital media have a tendency to proceed to the registration stage. However, the final decision process is generally still carried out through direct meetings to ensure the suitability of services and provide further confidence to prospective pilgrims. This condition shows that digital marketing communication plays a role as an initial means of building the interest of prospective pilgrims before entering the decision-making stage (Kim et al., 2025).

The findings are strengthened by empirical data related to the registration pathway and digital information sources of pilgrims which show that digital marketing has an important contribution in shaping the awareness and interest of prospective pilgrims. The company's internal data shows that most pilgrims register through a partnership system, while direct registration to the head office is still relatively small.

This phenomenon is increasingly complex as competition between Hajj and Umrah service bureaus increases, which are both actively utilizing digital media. Many travel agencies use relatively similar marketing strategies, such as displaying pilgrim testimonials, price promotions, and departure documentation, so prospective pilgrims have many alternative service options (Aulia et al., 2024). This competitive condition requires companies to develop digital marketing communications that are more strategic, targeted, and able to create differentiation compared to other travel agencies.

This competition is even more relevant when associated with the high potential of the Hajj and Umrah service market in South Sumatra Province, especially Palembang City. Data on the implementation of the hajj shows that in the 2024 hajj season, as many as 7,205 pilgrims from South Sumatra will be departed for the Holy Land, with the city of Palembang as the largest contributor of pilgrims, namely 2,891 people (Accurate South Sumatra, 2025). In the 2025 Hajj season, the Palembang Embarkation is recorded to have dispatched 5,537 prospective pilgrims until the middle of the departure wave (Antara News, 2025). The data shows that the high number of pilgrims reflects the great need of the community for reliable and informative worship travel services, as well as a marketing opportunity for travel agencies including Zafa Tour.

In addition to the hajj, the dynamics of Umrah pilgrims in South Sumatra also show a high level of public interest. In 2025, the departure of Umrah pilgrims through the One-Plane Umrah program in Palembang will reach 433 pilgrims in one full flight (Ardyansyah, 2025). This phenomenon shows that the potential of the worship travel market in Palembang is not only limited to Hajj, but also includes Umrah as a segment that has great marketing opportunities for worship travel service agencies.

In addition, the characteristics of Hajj and Umrah services as intangible services cause prospective pilgrims to need more detailed and convincing information before deciding to use certain services. Digital media allows travel agencies to present information visually and narratively through travel documentation, pilgrim testimonials, and educational content that provides a real-world picture of the service experience. Comprehensive information delivery through digital media can help reduce the uncertainty of prospective pilgrims about the quality of services offered (Handayani et al., 2025).

In the context of digital marketing communication, the success of message delivery is determined not only by the type of content produced, but also by the messaging strategy, the consistency of publications, and the ability of travel agencies to create communicative interactions with audiences (Ayu et al., 2023). Two-way communication through digital media allows prospective pilgrims to obtain information directly while providing an opportunity for travel agencies to understand the needs and preferences of potential consumers. These interactions have the potential to increase audience engagement which can contribute to the formation of interest in prospective pilgrims.

Based on this description, this research is important to examine in depth the implementation of digital marketing communication carried out by Zafa Tour and analyze various development opportunities in increasing the interest of prospective pilgrims. This research aims to understand how digital marketing communication is applied through the stages of Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action (AIDA) in forming interest to the decision to register prospective pilgrims. The results of the research are expected to provide an empirical picture of the digital marketing communication practices applied by Zafa Tour, as well as become material for evaluation and strategic recommendations in the development of digital marketing communication that is more effective, directed, and in accordance with the needs of prospective pilgrims.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, which aims to deeply understand the phenomenon of digital marketing communication implementation in the Zafa Tour Hajj and Umrah service bureau, as well as digital marketing communication opportunities in the Zafa Tour Hajj and Umrah service bureau in increasing the interest of prospective pilgrims. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meaning, motivation, and context of digital marketing communication practices in a holistic and in-depth manner, in accordance with the characteristics of social research that focuses on understanding phenomena in their natural settings (Nurmansyah et al., 2024).

The descriptive method is used to describe in detail the digital marketing communication practices carried out by Zafa Tour, as well as the perceptions and experiences of actors and prospective pilgrims regarding the strategy. Qualitative descriptive research is very appropriate to be used to reveal behaviors, attitudes, and processes that occur in the context of digital marketing, as well as provide a comprehensive overview of the bureau's internal practices and dynamics (Istiqomah et al., 2024). This research is included in the field research category, because data is collected directly from the research object through observation, interviews, and documentation, thus allowing researchers to obtain actual and relevant data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**Implementation of Digital Marketing Communication by Zafa Tour in Increasing the Interest of Prospective Pilgrims****Attention Level**

Thus, the results of the research at the attention stage show that the digital marketing communication applied has been able to attract the initial attention of prospective pilgrims through the use of social media, the presentation of educational and inspiring visual content, and consistency in the delivery of information. Therefore, the attention stage applied by Zafa Tour can be said to have been effective as the first step in fostering the interest of prospective pilgrims to get to know more about the Hajj and Umrah services offered.

Interest Level

Thus, the interest stage shows that the digital marketing communication implemented has been able to foster the interest of prospective pilgrims through the delivery of complete information, the prominence of service benefits, and relevant and persuasive content. This interest encourages prospective pilgrims to seek further information and communicate directly with Zafa Tour, so that the marketing communication process runs effectively in turning initial attention into a deeper interest in the services offered.

Desire Stage

Thus, the desire stage shows that the digital marketing communication applied has succeeded in building the trust and confidence of prospective pilgrims through real evidence of service, intensive communication, and emotional approaches. This trust then encourages the emergence of the desire of prospective pilgrims to use the Hajj and Umrah services offered by Zafa Tour.

Action Stage

Thus, the action stage shows that the digital marketing communication implemented has been able to direct the interest of prospective pilgrims into real actions in the form of registration. This success is supported by easy access to communication, responsive services, good interpersonal relationships, and positive experiences of pilgrims that strengthen the trust of other prospective pilgrims.

Digital marketing communication opportunities at Zafa Tour's Hajj and Umrah service bureau in increasing the interest of prospective pilgrims**Digital Content Development Opportunities**

This is in line with the AIDA theory put forward by E. St. Elmo Lewis, especially at the attention and interest stage. This theory explains that marketing communication must be able to attract attention through relevant messages, then foster interest in the services offered. In this case, the educational, informative, and soft selling content carried out by Zafa Tour plays an important role in building the attention and interest of prospective pilgrims.

In the perspective of digital marketing communication, content that is relevant, educational, and has emotional value tends to be more effective in building long-term relationships with audiences. Attractive content is not only able to create initial attention, but can also increase engagement, build trust, and strengthen the image of the institution in the eyes of prospective worshippers.

Thus, the development of digital content is a strategic opportunity for Zafa Tour in increasing the effectiveness of digital marketing communication. The more innovative, relevant, and consistent the content presented, the greater the opportunity to attract attention, build interest, and strengthen relationships with prospective pilgrims on an ongoing basis.

Opportunities for Optimal Use of Digital Media

In the perspective of AIDA theory put forward by E. St. Elmo Lewis, digital media plays an important role in attracting attention, fostering interest, building desire, and encouraging the action of prospective pilgrims. Therefore, digital media optimization not only serves as a means of disseminating information, but also as an important part of building effective marketing communication.

Thus, the opportunity to use digital media optimally shows that Zafa Tour has great potential to increase the effectiveness of marketing communication through the development of platforms that have not been maximized, integration between media, and the use of digital features more strategically. The optimization is expected to expand the reach of information, increase the involvement of prospective pilgrims, and strengthen digital marketing communication in increasing the interest of prospective pilgrims.

Opportunities to Increase Interaction and Engagement

This is in line with the AIDA theory put forward by E. St. Elmo Lewis, especially at the interest and desire stage, where intensive and continuous interaction can increase interest and build confidence in prospective pilgrims in the services offered. Through personal communication, quick response, and consistent follow-up, Zafa Tour is able to strengthen relationships with prospective pilgrims and encourage them to the action stage.

Thus, increasing interaction and engagement is a strategic opportunity for Zafa Tour to strengthen relationships with prospective pilgrims, increase trust, and encourage interest to the decision-making stage to use the services offered.

Human Resource and Technology Development Opportunities

The development of this technology shows that Zafa Tour is transforming towards a more modern, integrated, and efficient marketing communication system. This is in line with the development of digital marketing communication which is currently increasingly leading to the use of automation technology, artificial intelligence, and data-based digital systems in increasing the effectiveness of communication with consumers.

Thus, the development of human resources and technology is a very important strategic opportunity for Zafa Tour in improving the quality of digital marketing communication. Through improving team competencies and utilizing modern technology, Zafa Tour has the opportunity to create more effective communication, more responsive services, and a better experience for prospective pilgrims and pilgrims who have used the service.

Opportunities for Expansion of Reach and Marketing Networks

Thus, digital marketing communication provides a strategic opportunity for Zafa Tour to expand market reach and strengthen its marketing network through social media, partnerships, and congregation recommendations. This opportunity allows Zafa Tour to reach more prospective pilgrims effectively and sustainably.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research on the implementation of digital marketing communication in increasing the interest of prospective pilgrims in the Zafa Tour Hajj and Umrah service bureau, it can be concluded that the digital marketing communication strategy implemented has been effective and in accordance with the stages of AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) theory proposed by E. St. Elmo Lewis.

At the attention stage, Zafa Tour managed to attract the attention of prospective pilgrims through the use of digital media such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp, as well as through the presentation of educational, informative, and interesting content. At the interest stage, the interest of prospective pilgrims is built through the delivery of complete information about packages, facilities, departure schedules, and service benefits. At the desire stage, the desire and belief of prospective pilgrims are formed through pilgrim testimonials, Google Maps ratings, activity documentation, follow-up, and service approaches that emphasize comfort and emotional closeness. Furthermore, at the action stage, prospective pilgrims are encouraged to register through easy access to digital communication, responsive customer service, and a practical registration process through WhatsApp.

This research also shows that Zafa Tour has a great opportunity to develop digital marketing communication, including through increasing content creativity, optimizing digital platforms, especially YouTube, increasing interaction and engagement with prospective pilgrims, developing human resources and technology, and expanding reach and marketing networks.

Overall, Zafa Tour's digital marketing communication has been able to increase the interest of prospective pilgrims through informative, persuasive, and trust-building communication strategies. If developed sustainably, this strategy has the potential to be the main force in increasing the competitiveness and number of Zafa Tour pilgrims.

ADVICE

Zafa Tour needs to improve the quality and consistency of digital content, such as educational videos, pilgrim testimonials, and interactive content to make marketing communications more interesting and relevant.

The use of digital platforms, especially YouTube, needs to be optimized so that it can be used more optimally as an educational and promotional medium.

Zafa Tour needs to increase interaction with prospective pilgrims through more consistent follow-up and faster response to prospective pilgrims' questions.

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