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Public Relations Management in Improving Umrah Pilgrims Services: A Case Study of Travel Wizarus

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Abstract: *This study aims to investigate how public relations management can enhance Umrah pilgrim services. This research was conducted on Wizarus travel located in Tangerang, Banten Province. The method used in this study is qualitative with a descriptive approach. Data collection techniques use interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis is carried out in several steps, namely, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion and verification. The results of this study show that: First, the public relations strategy carried out by travel Wizarus is carried out through education, multi-platform communication, and collaboration with influencers. Meanwhile, public relations management carried out by travel Wizarus is carried out in three forms, namely, analyzing the needs and expectations of Umrah pilgrims, improving service quality, and monitoring and evaluation. This study has limitations, namely it does not compare public relations management in other Umrah travel. Of course, each Umrah travel has different management according to the characteristics of Umrah travel. From the limitations in this study, the author recommends both researchers and academics, especially in the field of management studies, to continue research with the same theme, both the same and different research locus in the sense of a wider scope.*

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and digitalization, communication is very important for the success of an organization, both profit-oriented and non-profit organizations. Organizations are not only required to be able to produce good products or services, but also to be able to build good relationships with various parties, such as customers, business partners, employees, and the general public. Public relations management has a strategic role, namely as a liaison between the organization and the general public. In addition, marketing is an important factor in the cycle related to the provision of consumer needs. In a company, marketing is one of the main activities that the company does to develop and earn profits. Marketing activities in the company must also

be able to provide satisfaction to consumers if they want their business to remain consistent (Kicová & Poniščiaková, 2021; Lukitaningsih, 2013; Macedo et al., 2021).

In a company or organization, strategic planning is needed that determines the goals that will be achieved or carried out by the company or organization. Strategic planning is the process carried out by an organization to determine a strategy or direction as well as make decisions to allocate resources, both capital and human resources, to achieve the goals of the organization in the future (Harjito, 2016). Technological developments are certainly influencing marketing, which includes the incorporation of technological advancements across all dimensions of marketing, aiming to drive growth while maintaining relevance in the ever-changing digital landscape. Digital transformation has had a significant impact on the marketing landscape. Digital transformation has driven changes in practices and marketing, which requires a deep understanding of the consumer value chain and adaptation to evolving business practices (Mapila & Moloi, 2024).

One of the things that companies or organizations can do in the technological era is through public relations management that focuses on creating and maintaining relationships with customers or consumers through the communication process. This communication is positive, constructive, and persuasive that appeals to the audience. In public relations management, creative and emotionally intelligent people are needed in various ways to promote a company or organization. The goal is not only to communicate and convey the message to the audience but also to get good feedback from them (Al Hadeed et al., 2024).

However, many organizations still face challenges in managing public relations activities strategically. Lack of understanding of the importance of public relations management often causes the reputation of the organization to be disturbed, especially when facing corporate challenges such as a lack of consumers and others. In the era of globalization where you have to adapt to technology, social media is considered an additional medium that determines how well communication goes. Public relations practitioners must be able to integrate social media when they create campaign communication strategies to maximize the effect and success of the planned campaign. The integration of social media in public relations campaigns focuses not only on the use of such media but also on innovative ways to package communication content strategies (Allagui & Breslow, 2016; Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012; Suryanto, 2023). Public relations through social media is the main strategy widely used by companies or organizations to improve product communication. It involves social media users as a network of information and also as public relations that will increase brand visibility on the internet (Suryanto, 2023). The development of social media has resulted in an increasingly large impact on the practice of public relations. Social media platforms allow public relations practitioners and their stakeholders to communicate interactively with each other in a variety of contexts, such as education, health, business, and crisis communication (Wang et al., 2021).

The use of social media is also carried out by several companies and organizations, including Wizarus Umrah Travel. In increasing the positive image of Umrah travel, Wizarus travel uses social media such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube. In addition, Travel Umtoh Wizarus also collaborated with several parties in building a positive image of the company (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2024; Haenlein et al., 2020; Wahid et al., 2023). Building a positive image of Umrah travel is not an easy matter, especially when it comes to the service and satisfaction of Umrah pilgrims in using Wizarus travel services. This encourages travel parties to promote through social media and conduct public relations management to build a positive image and increase public trust in the travel.

METHOD

The research used is qualitative using a descriptive approach (Hasan, 2022; Sugiyono, 2016; Syarif et al., 2023). This approach was chosen with the aim of exploring in depth the management of public relations in improving Umrah services carried out by travel Wizarus. This research was conducted from June to December 2024 at Travel Wizarus, which is located on Kelapa Gading Selatan Street, No. 21, West Pakulonan, Kelapa Dua District, Tangerang Regency, Banten Province. The respondents or informants in this study are Wizarus travel leaders, stakeholders, and Umrah pilgrims who use Wizarus travel services. The data collection techniques in this study consist of interviews, observations, and documentation. The number of informants interviewed in this study consisted of 4 Wizarus travel leaders. In addition, the researcher also conducted interviews with a number of pilgrims who had used Wizarus travel services in carrying out the Umrah pilgrimage. Meanwhile, data analysis in this study is carried out in several steps, namely: (1) data reduction, namely making abstractions or summaries; (2) data presentation, namely presentation by taking the main points but can be guaranteed to be valid; and (3) conclusion and verification (Hasan, 2022; Herlambang et al., 2023; Saleh, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Travel Wizarus (Wisata Ziarah Muslim/Muslim Pilgrimage Tour)

Travel Wizarus is an abbreviation for Muslim Pilgrimage Tourism, which is an experienced travel agency service company that has dispatched thousands of Umrah pilgrims from Indonesia to Saudi Arabia. The company is named PT. Wisata Ziarah Muslim (pilgrimage tour) has been registered and received an official permit from the Ministry of Religion with a 24012400245910001 decree. PT. Wisata Ziarah Muslim (Muslim Pilgrimage Tourism), abbreviated as Wizarus, was founded by Humam Rafif Barata, who is a young businessman. The location of Wizarus Travel is located at Ruko Gading Serpong Sector 1G, Kelapa Gading Selatan Street Block AK 1 No. 20, West Pakulonan Village, Kelapa Dua District, Tangerang Regency, Banten Province. In addition to organizing Umrah, Wizarus also provides services in the form of halal tourism, both domestic and foreign, plane tickets, visas, Hajj Furoda, and others. Travel Wizarus, which has experienced development, of course, always innovates in improving services to pilgrims, especially the many competitors in the same field, namely Umrah.

Travel Wizarus also provides tour packages from outside the region and opens a number of marketing agencies to increase quantity and quality. The collaboration carried out not only affects the increase in the number of pilgrims but also the satisfaction felt by the pilgrims after using Wizarus travel services. PT. Wisata Ziarah Muslim (Muslim Pilgrimage Tours) also provide a variety of Umrah travel packages such as Father's Day packages, smart Umrah packages, Umrah special private VVIP, Umrah 2 Friday, Umrah-Turkey, and tours in several countries such as Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, and several European countries. With many packages to choose from, prospective pilgrims can choose a variety of packages that suit the wishes and financial abilities of prospective pilgrims. The increase in the number of Umrah pilgrims who use Wizarus' services proves the quality management and service provided by Wizarus to Umrah pilgrims.

Public Relations Strategy in Improving Umrah Pilgrim Services

The role of public relations in building relationships between Wizarus and Umrah pilgrims. By building communication, it aims to create a positive image that can build trust in the services provided (Firdos & Dermawan, 2023; Herlambang, 2022; Younis Masoud Mohammed & Yaqub, 2024). There are at least three strategies used in improving services for Umrah pilgrims carried out by Wizarus. First, education. An important step taken by travel Wizarus is to educate pilgrims

about worship procedures, travel regulations, and other practical matters. As one of the spiritual journeys, Umrah requires comprehensive planning in terms of physical, mental, and intellectual. Based on the observations made by the researcher, it shows that the purpose of education carried out by the Wizarus to Umrah pilgrims is more to understand the pillars and procedures of worship. Regarding the rules of this Umrah worship, the travel party provides an understanding to pilgrims about the procedures for carrying out Umrah. Through this education, Umrah pilgrims can carry out Umrah in the holy land in accordance with Islamic law (Yahya, 2022).

Second, multi-platform communication. In the increasingly rapid digital era, multi-platform communication has become an important strategy for Wizarus Travel to deliver promotions to the wider community. The strategy carried out by Wizarus is carried out through various media such as social media, websites, e-mails, and offline platforms to reach a wider community about the promotions carried out by Wizarus. Travel Wizarus uses social media as a means of communication with the wider community. In this case, it attracts the interest of prospective pilgrims to join using Wizarus travel services.

Figure 1. Content about Umrah documentation



Source: Wizarus' Instagram

Several of Wizarus' social media content, both on Instagram and Facebook, features interesting content and adapts to the development of social media. In addition, Wizarus not only shared photos but also interesting short videos related to the Umrah pilgrimage process. Based on the results of the interview, it shows that the use of video is also a means of communication for Umrah pilgrims, especially the transparency of services provided by Wizarus Travel. the use of social media carried out by Wizarus as a means of communication both with the congregation and the wider community. Through the use of social media, it will give a good and positive response because through social media it will be easy to give comments or give direct messages to Wizarus social media admins. The use of social media plays a role in building communication between Wizarus Travel and the wider community. Through social media content, at least provide inspiration and education for worshippers. In addition, it also provides easy access to information because pilgrims do not need to come directly to travel wizarus to find out Umrah, facilities, departure schedules, and special promos.

Third, cooperation with influencers. The public relations strategy carried out by Wizarus Travel is through collaboration with influencers or public figures who are popular on social media. Collaboration with influencers in the digital era, of course, is an effective strategy to deliver Umrah services to the wider community (Joshi et al., 2023; Ouvrein et al., 2021; Vrontis et al., 2021). The collaboration is carried out with influencers who have a large following both on Instagram and Facebook. This collaboration is considered successful because Wizarus Umrah pilgrims come from all social classes, both lower, middle, and upper classes. There are even public figures or artists who have used Wizarus' services in performing the Umrah pilgrimage.

The presence of influencers in promoting Wizarus travel has a positive impact both from the number of registrants and public awareness about the importance of Umrah. Moreover, collaboration with influencers in the form of documentation of Umrah worship, halal tourism, and conducting live activities on social media discussing services at Wizarus. Through cooperation with influencers, at least help Wizarus to get prospective Umrah pilgrims. Moreover, the reputation and popularity of influencers tend to be in demand by the public because of the testimonials given by influencers to Wizarus Travel. The collaboration with influencers certainly also has an impact on content or posts on Wizarus' social media that are more creative and innovative.

Public Relations Management in Improving Umrah Pilgrims Services

Public relations management carried out by travel Wizarus consists of several forms consisting of. First, analyze the needs and expectations of Umrah pilgrims. The analysis of the needs and expectations of Umrah pilgrims is very important for Wizarus to carry out in ensuring that the Umrah pilgrimage is carried out in accordance with Islamic law. In ensuring the needs of Umrah pilgrims, the wizarus conducted an analysis of the physical and logistical needs of the pilgrims. Wizarus also provides accommodation in the form of star hotel lodging while in Mecca and Medina with adequate facilities for pilgrims. In addition, for consumption, food that suits the tastes of the Indonesian people is also given with clean packaging and has balanced nutrition for pilgrims both in Mecca and Medina. In addition to the needs of accommodation, transportation, and consumption, Wizarus also pays attention to the needs of worship for Umrah pilgrims. This is done by Wizarus by providing guidance on the procedures for Umrah worship, both before departure (*manasik* and training materials) and in the holy land through worship guidance.

Based on the results of the observations made by the researcher at the Wizarus office, there is also a guidebook related to providing services or needs to pilgrims, such as the importance of maintaining health, which is always campaigned by Wizarus travel. Even the travel party also provides emotional and psychological needs for pilgrims so that they can get peace of mind during the Umrah process. Second, improving service quality. Improving services for pilgrims is something important because it will have an impact on the worship of pilgrims. In addition, the travel service team must also be professional in serving pilgrims, both in preparation, implementation, and return to the Umrah pilgrimage. The travel team must also have an understanding of the procedures of Umrah and other general knowledge related to the Mecca and Medina regions. Understanding the immigration process, handling emergency situations, and about *manasik* must also be understood in providing services to Umrah pilgrims. The Wizarus travel team also built communication between the team, both Wizarus' guides and travel leaders. The coordination carried out is a good and positive image of cooperation. So the services provided to pilgrims can be carried out in accordance with the Wizarus standard operating procedures (SOP). The implementation of services must also be based on empathy, patience, friendliness, care, and others. The services provided are part of worship by providing quality service facilities for Umrah pilgrims.

Third, monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring is the process of collecting data periodically to monitor the progress of a program or activity. The purpose of monitoring is to ensure that activities are running as planned and to find problems or obstacles that can interfere with implementation. While evaluation is a more in-depth assessment of how effective and influential a program or project is, The purpose of the evaluation is to find out the extent to which the desired results are achieved and to provide recommendations for improvement in future programs (Ma'mun, 2019; Mustofa, 2012; Rodiyah & Yovani, 2024).

Monitoring and evaluation of Umrah services carried out by Wizarus Travel is an important part of the implementation of the services provided to meet Wizarus standards. Of course, the monitoring stage must be carried out continuously and check the quality of service in every Umrah trip carried out by Wizarus. An important process carried out by travel Wizarus is supervision to ensure that all stages of the trip, from preparation to the return of pilgrims, run smoothly as planned. In addition, the Wizarus team also monitors the Umrah manasik, which provides worship guidance and technical instructions to pilgrims so that they are ready to carry out the Umrah pilgrimage. During the supervision process, more focus is on the implementation of services such as transportation, accommodation, and consumption that are in accordance with the needs of Wizarus pilgrims. The Wizarus team handles any complaints directly or through WhatsApp groups so that issues can be resolved responsively.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research conducted by the author, there are at least two key findings. First, the public relations strategy carried out by travel Wizarus is carried out through education, multi-platform communication, and collaboration with influencers. Meanwhile, public relations management carried out by travel Wizarus is carried out in three forms, namely, analyzing the needs and expectations of Umrah pilgrims, improving service quality, and monitoring and evaluation. The strategy and management carried out by Wizarus Travel aim to improve services to Umrah pilgrims. This study has limitations, namely it does not compare public relations management in other Umrah travel. Of course, each Umrah travel has different management according to the characteristics of Umrah travel. From the limitations in this study, the author recommends both researchers and academics, especially in the field of management studies, to continue research with the same theme, both the same and different research locus in the sense of a wider scope.

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