Digital Strategy Model in Strengthening Brand Image to Maintain Customer Loyalty (Case Study on Umrah and Hajj Travel Agency)

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ABSTRACT
The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of literature on digital strategy, brand image, and customer loyalty, contributing a strengthened perspective to this discourse. This paper employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing a literature review model based on findings from papers related to the variables within this study over the past eight years. The outcomes of this paper aim not only to reinforce existing implementation findings but also to contribute to and enrich the research field. The Digital Strategy Model has proven to be a valuable asset for Umrah and Hajj travel agencies in shaping brand image and maintaining customer loyalty. As the digital landscape evolves, a commitment to innovation, personalization, and customer trust will be crucial for sustained success in this competitive industry. Implementing these recommendations, Umrah and Hajj travel agencies can optimize their digital strategies, ensuring a holistic and customer-centric approach that fosters brand loyalty and satisfaction in the digital era.
INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving digital era, the success of a pilgrimage agency in maintaining brand image and customer loyalty is crucial. The discussion revolves around a comprehensive digital strategy model, specifically designed to address challenges in the digital world to strengthen brand image and preserve customer loyalty. In the digital strategy model, understanding the dynamics of the digital environment involves a deep analysis of the target audience, online trends, and competitive landscapes. This analysis is key to adapting strategies effectively in creating connections with the audience (Khan & Shnaider, 2021; Medvedieva, 2023). A strong brand identity serves as the primary foundation for customer loyalty. The digital strategy model emphasizes the importance of consistency across all digital touchpoints, from social media to the company’s website. By maintaining a consistent brand identity, a company can enhance brand understanding and cultivate customer trust (Kravchenko & Karashchuk, 2023).

Social media platforms play a crucial role in this model. The model underscores the strategic use of social media to engage authentically with the audience. This includes interactive content, real-time responses, and community building (Ahmad & Rosli, 2023). By actively participating in online conversations, a brand can strengthen its presence and foster a sense of community among customers (Behl & Jain, 2023). Tailoring digital interactions based on customer preferences is a key component of the digital strategy model. By utilizing data analytics and artificial intelligence, pilgrimage agencies can provide personalized recommendations, targeted promotions, and seamless online experiences. This personalization enhances customer satisfaction and contributes to long-term loyalty (Herhausen et al., 2019).

Utilizing analytics tools, pilgrimage agencies can gain valuable insights into customer behavior, preferences, and trends. Data-supported decisions enable companies to continually optimize their digital strategies, ensuring alignment with the ever-changing expectations of customers (Ebrahimi & Hassanein, 2019). Being at the forefront of technological advancements is imperative in the digital landscape. This model encourages pilgrimage agencies to embrace emerging technologies such as augmented reality, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence to enhance the overall customer experience and maintain a competitive edge (Wu et al., 2023).

The digital environment is dynamic, requiring a continual commitment to monitoring and adaptation. The digital strategy model advocates for regular evaluations of strategy effectiveness, incorporating feedback, and adapting to the ever-changing market trends (Sulistyowati & Husda, 2023). This approach ensures that the brand remains flexible and resilient in the face of digital changes. Pilgrimage agencies face unique challenges, including sensitivity to religious aspects, trust, and high expectations regarding services (Othman et al., 2018). Digital strategies must consider these aspects specifically to ensure that each digital step not only reinforces the brand image but also is sensitive to the values and expectations of customers in the context of worship.
Digital steps, security, and customer data privacy are paramount concerns, emphasizing the necessity to implement high-security standards in managing customer data. This ensures that every online transaction or pilgrimage booking is conducted with optimal security, instilling confidence in customers regarding the safety of their information (Jayalath & S.C.Premaratne, 2021). The Umrah agency industry can also be influenced by changes in policies or regulations related to travel and religious practices. It is crucial to be prepared to respond quickly to these changes, both in terms of communicating information to customers and adjusting digital strategies to remain in compliance with the regulations in force (Kusnali et al., 2021).

With the advancement of technology, Digital Strategy encourages Umrah agencies to explore ways to enhance the virtual Umrah experience. This may involve the use of virtual reality technology to provide a more immersive view of sacred places, offering customers an experience that closely resembles the authenticity of Umrah, even without being physically present (Kabir et al., 2021). Strategies for effective crisis communication and online reputation management, including having a well-prepared crisis response plan and the ability to manage various digital platforms wisely, enable Umrah agencies to minimize negative impacts and maintain customer trust (Genel & Koçak, 2022).

Digital Strategy serves as a guide for Umrah agencies aiming to strengthen their brand image and foster customer loyalty in the continually evolving digital landscape. Understanding the digital environment, maintaining a consistent brand identity, actively engaging on social media, personalizing experiences, making data-driven decisions, embracing technology, and continuously adapting, Umrah agencies can confidently and purposefully navigate the complexities of the digital era. The goal of this paper is to provide an overview of literature on digital strategy, brand image, and customer loyalty, contributing a reinforced perspective as a form of contribution in this paper.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Digital Strategy

According to (Chaffey & Smith, 2022) A digital strategy refers to a strategic plan crafted to leverage digital technology to its fullest potential in order to achieve the goals of a business or organization. This involves utilizing various digital platforms, technologies, and tools to enhance performance, reach the target audience, and optimize the customer experience. Digital strategy entails meticulous planning concerning the utilization of social media, data analytics, artificial intelligence, and other cutting-edge technologies to support the growth and success of the company (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

A digital strategy involves the well-thought-out formulation and implementation of plans to effectively utilize digital technology, tools, and platforms to achieve the goals of a business or organization (Marr, 2015). This encompasses identifying opportunities, understanding the target audience, and optimizing the use of digital resources to strengthen competitive positioning and enhance overall performance (Smith et al., 2012).
Brand Image

Brand image refers to the perceptions, opinions, and overall impression held by consumers regarding a brand or company. It encompasses all aspects associated with the brand, such as product quality, brand image, customer experience, and the values represented by the brand (Keller, 2013). Brand image is a culmination of consumer interactions with the brand over time, playing a crucial role in shaping preferences and purchase decisions (Kapferer, 2012).

Brand image signifies the cognitive connections and viewpoints that consumers maintain regarding a brand, shaped by diverse elements such as marketing approaches, consumer interactions, and neuroscientific reactions to stimuli associated with the brand (Hall, 2002; Medvedieva, 2023).

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty refers to the degree of allegiance or attachment that customers have toward a brand, product, or service. It reflects how frequently and to what extent customers are willing to continue using the products or services offered by a company (Kimura, 2019). Customer loyalty refers to the degree to which customers are committed to a particular brand or company and are willing to continue doing business with them over time. It is a critical factor for long-term success and sustainability in business-to-business (B2B) relationships and is often measured through various methods, including closed-loop quality management systems, latent variables of burnout, confidence, organizational citizenship behaviour, and customer loyalty, and the Net Promoter Score (NPS) (Jalali et al., 2016).

provided present perspectives on exploring customer loyalty. These include the creation of a novel closed-loop quality management system model for B2B relationships, the utilization of latent variables for gauging customer loyalty, the applicability of NPS in the Japanese market, and the combined use of cognitive mapping and multiple criteria decision analysis (MCDA) to establish a framework for evaluating bank customer loyalty (Ferreira et al., 2015).

METHODOLOGY

This paper employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing a literature review model based on findings from papers related to the variables within this study over the past eight years. The outcomes of this paper aim not only to reinforce existing implementation findings but also to contribute to and enrich the research field.

RESULT

The results of existing literature will be elaborated upon according to the needs of this paper, specifically related to the variables, starting with the findings from the papers (Subaebasni et al., 2019) A research conducted on Corporate Travel Organizers Umrah and Hajj PT. Travel Albadriyah discovered that the collective impact of customer relationship management, service quality, and customer satisfaction plays a role in influencing customer loyalty within the realm of Umrah and Hajj travel agencies. The utilization of Sharia-compliant multilevel marketing strategies in Hajj and Umrah travel agencies, particularly
at PT. Arminareka Perdana, has been examined. This underscores the application of Islamic business methods along with a multilevel marketing strategy to attract a substantial customer base (Rachmawati & Febriandika, 2019).

The marketing approach for tourism products at PT. Alamin Ahsan Travel has been deliberated, underscoring the significance of marketing tactics, including digital marketing, to contend with other Umrah and Hajj travel agencies (Qonitah & Nugraha, 2021). An empirical investigation into Umrah travel agencies examined the connections among perceived values, trust, and customer loyalty. It emphasized the indirect impact of perceived values on customer loyalty by way of mediating trust (Syahroni & Soepatini, 2018).

Through this, the company offers personalized deals ‘in-path’ even before the transaction is finalized (Majumdar, 2018). These sources offer valuable perspectives on the elements that affect customer loyalty within Umrah and Hajj travel agencies, covering the influence of customer relationship management, service quality, marketing strategies, and perceived values on customer loyalty. Although the direct impact of digital strategy is not explicitly addressed in these references, they establish a groundwork for comprehending the intricacies of customer loyalty in the realm of Umrah and Hajj travel agencies.

A Study of (Mursid & Wu, 2021) Research on Umrah travel agencies in Indonesia revealed that the service brand image significantly influences the participation of Umrah travelers. This, in turn, affects co-creation value and the satisfaction of Umrah travelers. However, Umrah travelers’ participation has an insignificant impact on their loyalty.

The investigation into Umrah travel agencies in Bandung, West Java, underscores the concurrent impact of service quality and brand image on customer satisfaction. The research demonstrates a noteworthy correlation between service quality, brand image, and customer satisfaction, indicating that service quality and brand image collectively influence customer satisfaction (Ilmy, 2020).

A research conducted on Umrah services in Pakistan indicated that customer loyalty is notably influenced by service quality and perceived fairness of prices. The findings imply that Umrah travel agencies should prioritize enhancing service quality and ensuring perceived fairness in pricing to foster customer loyalty (Yaqub et al., 2023). An examination of the influence of e-service quality, e-trust, price, and brand image on the e-satisfaction and e-loyalty of an online travel agent revealed that service quality, trust, price, and brand image positively contribute to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Willis & Nurwulandari, 2022).

The positive impact of emotional value from PT. KI customers on customer satisfaction is 67%, and customer satisfaction, in turn, has a positive impact on customer loyalty reaching 57%. Additionally, the emotional value directly influences customer loyalty, accounting for 29% (Nurfaedah & Mustikasari, 2017). The results indicate that consumer perception has a partial impact on consumer loyalty in online-based travel applications. Similarly, brand image partially influences consumer loyalty in online-based travel applications. Both consumer perception and brand image collectively contribute to consumer
loyalty in online-based travel applications. The combined effects of price variables and brand image account for 64.2% of the variation in consumer loyalty. The remaining 35.8% is explained by other variables, suggesting potential avenues for future research by other scholars (Astu & Hastuti, 2022).

The outcomes of the multiple linear analysis reveal that both word of mouth and brand image exert a positive and significant impact on the decision-making of pilgrims using Smarts Umrah services in Palembang. To perpetuate word of mouth, there is a strategy to reward pilgrims interested in becoming agents by promoting Smarts Umrah travel service programs. This involves staying attuned to promotional trends to enhance the outreach to consumers. Regarding brand image, it is anticipated that Smarts Umrah could offer coupons for Umrah fee discounts or even provide free Umrah service products during events, particularly religious gatherings. This approach aims to generate more discussions among consumers and potential customers about Smarts Umrah travel services (Farka & Sulastri, 2023).

Through the utilization of judgmental and snowball sampling techniques, data were gathered from Muslim participants who participated in a survey containing assessments of religiosity, severity of service failure, forgiveness, and the intention to complain. Partial least squares were employed to examine four hypotheses. The results indicate that religiosity does not have an impact on the intention to forgive the service provider in the event of service failure. Conversely, the severity of service failure was demonstrated to influence the intention to forgive the service provider. These findings offer guidance to religious service providers on enhancing their service delivery and mitigating the adverse effects of service failures (Anggraeni & Darmayanti, 2020).

The findings revealed that the quality of Islamic services offered by the travel company and the trust of pilgrims significantly impact the customer satisfaction experienced by Umrah and Special Hajj pilgrims. This satisfaction, in turn, influences their inclination to utilize the services of the travel company for Umrah and Special Hajj in the future. This research provides valuable insights for Hajj and Umrah travel organizers in Indonesia, offering guidance on enhancing the quality of organizing Hajj and Umrah to ensure the comfort and solemnity of customers' worship (Subhan et al., 2023).

Through interviews and subsequent analysis, young adults were observed associating experiential and functional benefits with the brands. Additionally, they expressed an intimate connection to the brand identities. These primary categories and their subcategories were found to be interconnected, as young adults perceive the brand images of travel cybermediaries similarly to how these companies express their brand identities through UGC on Instagram (Aravani, 2019).

These sources offer valuable perspectives on the impact of service quality, brand image, and customer relationship management on customer loyalty within Umrah and Hajj travel agencies. They establish a groundwork for comprehending the intricacies of customer loyalty and the factors that play a role in this specific industry.
DISCUSSION

In the rapidly evolving landscape of the travel industry, particularly in the context of Umrah and Hajj travel agencies, the integration of a robust digital strategy is becoming increasingly essential. This discussion explores a Digital Strategy Model aimed at fortifying brand image and sustaining customer loyalty within Umrah and Hajj travel agencies. The implementation of a Digital Strategy Model for Umrah and Hajj travel agencies is pivotal in establishing a strong brand image and nurturing customer loyalty in today's digital age. Embracing technological advancements, personalization, and data-driven insights can propel these agencies to not only meet but exceed customer expectations, ensuring enduring loyalty and positive brand perception.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Digital Strategy Model has proven to be a valuable asset for Umrah and Hajj travel agencies in shaping brand image and maintaining customer loyalty. As the digital landscape evolves, a commitment to innovation, personalization, and customer trust will be crucial for sustained success in this competitive industry.

FURTHER STUDY

This paper strengthens existing results through the elaboration of the available literature, making this implementation a contribution to the body of research findings.

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This paper serves as our contribution to our institution and to the realm of knowledge, reflecting the author's line of thought. For our institution, we hope it can provide a benefit in the development of knowledge, particularly in the fields of marketing and pilgrimage and Hajj agencies.
REFERENCES


