

# MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OF HALAL TOURISM AROUND GUS DUR'S CEMETERY IN JOMBANG

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## Abstract

*This article aims to develop an appropriate strategy for halal tourism at the complex of Gus Dur's cemetery. The aim of the study is to find out an appropriate marketing communication strategy that can be applied for halal tourism particularly in religious tourism complex, around Gus Dur's cemetery. This study used descriptive qualitative method through a mapping approach in finding the data. The finding of the study is that the implementation of an appropriate marketing communication strategy of halal tourism around Gus Dur's cemetery should consider several aspects including advertisement role, sales promotion, event enhancement, maximizing social relationships, social publicity, direct marketing with digital utilization, and growing good tourist image with the role of word of mouth. The marketing communication strategy that will be developed should refer to the concept of halal tourism; the so called Muslim-friendly environment. Throughout this marketing communication strategy, this will maximize the existence of religious tourism around Gus Dur's cemetery both for local and international tourists.*

**Keywords :** *Marketing Communication, Halal Tourism, Gus Dur's Tomb*

## Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menyusun strategi yang tepat untuk wisata halal yang ada di sekitar makam Gus Dur. Tujuan dari studi ini adalah untuk menemukan strategi komunikasi pemasaran yang tepat yang bisa diterapkan untuk wisata halal di kompleks wisata religi makam Gus Dur. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif diskriptif melalui pendekatan *mapping* untuk memaksimalkan data yang didapat. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa strategi komunikasi pemasaran wisata halal yang tepat untuk diterapkan di wisata makam Gus Dur adalah dengan memaksimalkan peran iklan, promosi penjualan, peningkatan event, menjalin hubungan masyarakat yang maksimal, publisitas yang bersifat sosial, pemasaran langsung dengan pemanfaatan digital, dan menumbuhkan citra baik wisata dengan peran *word of mouth*. Strategi komunikasi pemasaran yang disusun harus mengacu pada konsep wisata halal yang keseluruhannya ramah muslim. Dengan strategi komunikasi pemasaran tersebut, maka akan memaksimalkan eksistensi wisata religi makam Gus Dur baik di wisatawan lokal maupun internasional.

**Kata Kunci :** Komunikasi Pemasaran, Wisata Halal, Makam Gus Dur

## INTRODUCTION

In the last decade of 2017 tourism sector has shown the implication in increasing the Indonesian economy. This is not only in Indonesia but many other countries had shown the importance of the tourism sector in developing nation wealth. In Indonesia, the power of tourism has become a significant sector that increases the national income despite the country has just realized this role in the last five years. This has been confirmed on the Indonesian tourism wikipedia page that tourism sector plays significant role in supporting the country's economy after petroleum commodities since 2009. The data showed that the number of foreign tourists had traveled to Indonesia reached more than 11,525,963 million or an increase of 10.79% in 2016 compared to the previous year.

Indonesia's natural wealth is very diverse ranging from beach with various activities, mountain views and historical spots that are well-known with their majestic and charming. Lately the religious tourism has attracted the attention of the government. Religious tourism can be said as tourism spot which have a religious site such as a place of worship or a pilgrimage area of community leaders who are considered to be important and useful for the community. Further, religious tourism is able to attract the tourist visitors without promotion. This shows the strength of religious tourism compared to other tourism spots. Interestingly religious tourism has their own uniqueness that attracts tourists not only to visit one time but also become sustainable tourists.

According to Maya Tita Sari (2018) religious tourism has several advantages such as: (1) Removing boredom, (2) Eliminating the burden of thought or stress, (3) Reflecting spiritual need, (4) Getting closer to God, (5) Reminding humans in the Hereafter, (6) Increasing insight, (7) Improving personal quality, (8) Developing Socialization, (9) Increasing self-confidence, (10) Detoxifying oneself from social media, (11) Giving time for oneself, (12) ) Becoming happier and more calm, (13) Increasing empathy.

Considering those advantages, the religious tourism spots has resulted other benefits to other tourism sectors. For instance in terms of non-religious tourism, the benefits can be physical and psychological sectors. Also, religious tourism has benefits from mental and spiritual aspects. Thus, religious tourism has own uniqueness that it is able to attract the visitors even without promotional assistance. Anyway, the religious tourism still need to be managed with an appropriate promotion strategy with the focus on enhancing convenience of tourisms standard as well as increasing tourists' visit.

The existence of religious tourism can be improved one through presenting halal tourism around religious tourism spots and this becomes more strategic to increase the number of tourists. The Indonesian government insists that halal tourism is created not to compete with conventional tourism, but to open up new opportunities in the tourism sector. The evidence has shown that some regions of Indonesia that has been implemented halal tourism are able to show the number of significant increases.

In general, halal tourism refers to objects and actions that are allowed in Islamic teachings to be used by Muslims particularly in the setting of the tourism industry. Based on these definitions, the availability of the halal products are the main reference including: halal hotels, halal resorts, halal restaurants, and halal trips. Tourist attractions can be collaborated with halal tourism are not just for locals of Indonesian who are Muslims but also welcome for non-Muslims to enjoy the spots as well as understand different cultures.

Syahidah Novia (2017) defined that there are several globally recognized halal tourism standards based on Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) as follows: (1) Family-friendly tourist destinations, (2) General security for Muslim tourists' visitor, (3) Keeping Muslim tourist as the majority of visitors, (4) Halal-guaranteed consumption, (5) Accessible

places for worship, (6) Various Muslim-friendly facilities, (7) Muslim-friendly accommodation, (8) Ease of communication, (9) Diverse Muslim-friendly accessibility, (10) Ease of various Muslim-friendly tourist facilities

Based on those standards, it is not that difficult to develop tourism managements for stakeholders or any people involved in the tourism area who want to implement halal tourism including for religious tourism objects. Halal tourism standards are easily able to be created particularly in encouraging the development of religious tourism. If religious tourism becomes the prioritized aspects of the country by considering the location or historical object as well as prioritizes the visitors, it will simultaneously increase the tourists.

One of the well-known religious tours that attracts a lot of visitors is in Jombang; also known as 'santri city' in Indonesia due to the cemetery of Gus Dur; the fourth president of the Republic of Indonesia, KH. Abdurrahman Wahid or called Gus Dur. Gus Dur's funeral complex is located along with the Islamic boarding schools in which managed by his family, it is *Pondok Pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) Tebu Ireng, Jombang in East Java. Since the burial of Gus Dur in that complex, this funeral area immediately kicked off the world of religious tourism, people from all over the country has visited this religious site. By the increase of the number of tourists, the management of this site should begin providing a variety of well-managed and supporting facilities by the community who involve in this management. Therefore, the researcher will compile and analyze the appropriate communication strategies for halal tourism management in Gus Dur's religious tourism site. The study aims to know and promote the halal tourism marketing communication strategy around Gus Dur's cemetery to increase the existence of tourism objects and the number of visitors as well as to develop the comfort and safety of tourists in a halal manner.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

The focus on the study is through this question: How is the appropriate marketing communication strategy for halal tourism around Gus Dur's cemetery can be implemented for developing the religious tourism complex?

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Tourism Promotion**

Promotion can be defined as an activity for distributing promotional materials such as films, slides, advertisements, brochures, leaflets, folders, through various channels including television, radio, magazines, cinemas, direct mail and others. Promotional activities aim to persuade the viewers, in this context the tourists in which categorized into two groups. First, a group of people who have the abilities both financial and physical ability for having tourism activities but they do not have time for travelling. Second, the targeted tourists in which the promotion aims to give information and influence prospective travelers to visit tourist the destinations (Afifatur & Novaria, 2017).

### **Religious Tourism**

According to Lathoiful Minan (2013) in the Islamic Bulletin Sidogiri demonstrated that religious tourism is such a non-official agreement created by the community itself, including tourism service providers, funeral managers of figures both in urban and rural areas. Religious tourism is created to enhance religious insight and increase one's spiritual level. After all, this kind of religious tourism activity is a journey that aims to fulfill spiritual need to enhance gaining religious wisdom.

Religious tourism is a type of tourism that aims to fulfill human spiritual needs to strengthen one's own faith by visiting places that are considered to have religious values. Religious tourism can be interesting

in terms of understanding the culture of the community. This naming was coincidentally made up and followed by an immediate agreement among several groups such as tourism service providers, managers and guardians of the graves of women, community leaders and large society (Anwar et al., 2017, p. 187).

Intan Shafina Suid (2017, p. 258) defined the religious site of Islam as a tourism that

*“Islamic tourism is a balance concept of life; not only achieving pleasure while travelling but relates tourism activities as a bridge to gain happiness in the hereafter. It is clear that the involvement of social, religious and economic factors contribute to the Islamic tourism development process. On the other hand, the formation of this tourism is a mixture of religious tourism, spiritual tourism, cultural tourism and other types of tourism as long as the activities involved not against the Islamic values or principles as a way of life”.*

Based on the above understanding, the religious tourism cannot be interpreted narrowly, but its scope is very broad, and its nature is general. It can be understood simply that a tourist object which means a destination for religious tourism not just a cemetery of the saints, but also includes various spots that can stimulate or increase a person's religious level, even fulfill spiritual need, this include the funeral of guardians and community, place of worship, and Islamic historical museum are also significant figures in this tourism sector.

### **Halal Tourism**

Sharia Tourism is one of the forms of cultural-based tourism that emphasizes the Islamic values and norms as the key role. As a new concept in the tourism industry, sharia tourism requires further development and a more comprehensive understanding of the collaboration of Islamic values that is embedded in tourism activities. Muslim tourists are the largest number of tourists in Indonesia as well as the largest Muslim population in the world. By this condition, Indonesia is the largest Sharia tourist industry market in the world and it should be realized by tourism

businesses in Indonesia because sustainable Sharia tourism development will be able to provide significant economic contributions to communities who involved in it (Widagdyo, 2015, p. 74).

The *shari'a* tourism which comprising religious values and norms aims to carry out the activities, the service and the facilities managed by tourism managers are lawful according to Islamic teachings that enable the visitors enjoy educational tourism as well as entertainment activities based on Islamic rules and laws.

The concept of halal tourism is not only intended for Muslims but it is also a big concept of developing the tourism destinations. They are the guarantee of halal food, no alcohol sold, providing *adzan* (prayer's reminding), praying rooms with the worship facilities, and facilities of separation between men and women. In essence, the concept of tourism does not contain any elements of racial intolerance. This is likely focusing on market segmentation and marketing strategies (Ari & Hadi, 2017, p. 101).

### **Communication Marketing Mix**

According to Shimp (2003, p. 4) suggested that *marketing communication* becomes important part of a marketing mission and the main determinant of the success of the marketing activity. Further, Purba (2006, p. 126-127) defined that marketing communication is an effort to convey a message to the public regarding products on the market. Marketing communication includes various activities to support products, services, ideas using the *marketing mix* that consists of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relation and publicity, and direct marketing.

The *marketing communication mix* consists of eight main communication models that aim to encourage the effectiveness and efficiency of marketing communications (Kotler & Keller, 2009). They are: (1) Advertising, all forms of print media results in the form of product presentations and promotions ideas, in the form of goods or

services through real sponsors, (2) sales promotion, are various temporary incentives given to encourage consumer purchasing power for goods and services available on the market. (3) Events and testimonies, activities and programs which are sponsored by companies to create daily interactions or to design a particular brand. (4) Public relation and publicity, various forms of programs managed for the purpose of promotion and protecting the company's image and product internally. (5) Direct marketing, the marketing process in the form of the use of letters, telephone, facsimile, electronic mail, and internet that is used to establish communication and dialogue between producers and consumers to support the relation between producers and consumers. (6) Interactive marketing, online activities and programs designed to involve customers either directly or indirectly in increasing awareness, improving brand, or creating sales of products and services. (7) Marketing by word of mouth, kind of marketing through oral, written, and electronic communication among people related to the superiority or experience of buying or using a product and service. (8) Personal Selling, face-to-face interactions with one or more prospective buyers for the purpose of making presentations, answering questions, and procuring orders.

### **Communication Strategy**

According to Onong Uchjana Effendy (1984, p. 35) strategy is defined as a plan and management to achieve certain goals by utilizing certain techniques. A communication strategy is like covering everything needed to know how to communicate with the target audience. The communication strategy defines the target audience, the various actions to be taken, says how the target audience will benefit based on its perspective, and how the larger target audience can be reached more effectively.

This can be done by developing a participatory communication strategy involving the target audience and the benefits obtained. Communication strategies in managing religious tourism are carried out

by various interested groups including the government or stakeholder, the private sector or the community around the tourist area. Ideally communication should be carried out fairly by involving community participation, getting support from the private sector/ company and working with the government to develop religious tourism. Participatory communication has the principle of carrying out dialogue as a form of respect for human rights (Hasan, 2018, p. 69).

Further, Mohr and Nevin defined a communication strategy as the use of combination of communication facets which include the frequency, formality, content, and channels of communication (Kulvisaechana, 2001, p. 17-18). Meanwhile, R. Wayne Pace, Brent D. Peterson, and M. Dallas Burnett (in Effendy, 1984, p. 35-36) communication strategies have three objectives, such as: (1) To secure understanding - ensuring a message is received by the communicant to the core, (2) To establish acceptance - carrying out the message recipient's guidance. (3) To motivate action - to encouraging activities.

Communication strategies should be carried out on a macro basis and the implemented process should be directly and vertically pyramidal

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The method of this study used qualitative descriptive. According to Muhammad Natsir (1983, p. 63) descriptive method is a research method that focuses on status of human groups, an object, a situation, a system of thought or a research class in the present. The objective of this method is to make a description or an image in a systematic way, actual and accurate based on the facts, nature and relationships to the studied phenomena.

## **DISCUSSION**

This discussion starts with the definition of strategy as a study that can be felt directly by the user. In general, the halal tourism presented in

Gus Dur's religious tourism is only limited to the scope of transportation and culinary particularly in terms of facilities, field support, entertainment and transportation. So the need for compilation and maximization of the existence of halal tourism needs to be developed to increase the visitors. In other words, the religious meaning will be felt by tourists throughout friendly interaction with foreign tourists. In this context, in the complex of Gus Dur's cemetery as the place where they are able to know and reflect a political figure that is known to the world as he had become the 4th president of the Republic of Indonesia.

Based on the marketing communication mix theory, the marketing guidelines for the appropriate marketing communication strategy for floating halal tourism in Gus Dur's cemetery can be examined as follows:

1) Advertising

The need of managers and supervisors in Gus Dur's religious tourism is to design and use the role of advertising as a media campaign. Ads that are arranged are not always in print but also can use the media, such as making certain interesting spots to be used for photos, facilities and infrastructure to look neat, orderly and attractive both enjoy the landscape and to take pictures. Further, throughout instagramable photos of the visitors, this will enable them to participate in promotions on their social media accounts. This way is a new, affordable, and profitable advertising medium.

2) Sales Promotion

Sales promotions can be arranged with a strategy of giving discounts on tourist entrance fees which is given to the group visitors. In addition, the visitors are also given souvenirs that can be taken from the retribution fund. This sales promotion is considered more effective because it can involve community participation.

### 3) Event and Testimony

Managers can hold various activities of particular events, such as grand *haul* which is enlivened with a series of religious celebrations and competitions and involving community leaders and people in governments. This can maximize the grand *haul* event because it is an attraction for visitors.

These various events that will be conducted need to be followed by charity or support to locals and poor people such as mass circumcision for boys from poor family, *hafidz* scholarships, and so on. These kinds of event and resulted testimony can be used as a strategy to maximize the increasing role of tourists in Gus Dur's religious cemetery complex.

### 4) Public Relation and Publicity

The tourism sector will be optimal by involving the role of the surrounding community. It is important to involve the active participation of the community as tourism managers in order to increase the impact of tourism for community. The active involvement of the community in managing the tourism can be seen through providing *ponte* facilities, bathrooms, restaurants, accessories and souvenir shops, parking areas and management as the service providers around Gus Dur's religious tour.

This strategy is expected to be able to increase the visitors and the beneficial retribution to prosper the surrounding community. As welfare increases, the community is also involved in caring for the tourist attractions, so that in the future it will prevent and overcome potential conflicts between tourism managers and the community. This will result good cooperation between managers and the community as well as create mutual relations to achieve the same goals.

### 5) Direct Marketing

Direct marketing has only been limited to ticket sales at tourist attractions. This model needs to be changed by following the

development of the digital era so that ticket sales services can be faster and easier. Managers must look at the digital world in marketing ticket entry. For instance, online ticket sales can collaborate with the travel entrepreneurs or agencies. This is not just selling but also at the same time promoting religious tourism both national and international scale will indirectly know that Gus Dur's cemetery is not just a grave but also for religious tourism.

#### 6) Marketing *Word of Mouth*

Marketing by word of mouth can be very effective and this becomes a way to maintain a good image of touristic attractions through their satisfying impression of the visitors. This marketing can be shown through the impression of the community, management hospitality and cleanliness both the tourism spots and facilities that are interrelated in maximizing the marketing of word of mouth.

Based on the new strategies that have been prepared, it should work and refer to the concept of halal tourism with aim to increase the visitors and maximize the tourism potential. The reasons are Gus Dur's cemetery not only has religious aspect but also contains the historical aspect that are recognized by the world and it is very potential for tourism. By this condition, it should be followed by an appropriate management to enhance the area of Gus Dur's cemetery that is also a religious tourism the halal tourism concept.

## CONCLUSION

Religious tourism in Indonesia recently becomes one of the tourist landmarks. Interestingly this landmark does not spend a lot of budget for promotions because it has their own power of religious teaching that attracts tourists. On the other hand, this is also resulted a challenge that religious tourism sometimes does not manage optimally with the sustainable development. This is what makes religious tourism as an

alternative tourism instead of the main destination. In this case, the complex of Gus Dur's cemetery in Jombang which has potential religious tourism and great history that should be developed using the concept of halal tourism for the main support. This is not only able to increase the number of tourism destinations but also the image of tourism itself.

The arrangement for the marketing communication through mix strategy is used for developing the religious tourism in the complex of Gus Dur's cemetery. This mix strategy includes advertisements which maximize digital media in an attractive and friendly packaged sales promotions for group visitors and provides events that support local activities and culture, community relations and publicity by involving the active role of the community in managing tourism, and also by direct marketing through internet and framing a good image for the role of word of mouth. By this strategy, it is expected to be able to increase the visitors and be able to create security, comfort area in familiarizing Gus Dur's religious tourism with the concept of halal tourism.

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