

Communication Service Strategy in Building Alumni Loyalty of Umrah Congregations at PT Madani Alam Semesta Tour and Travel, Garut Branch

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ABSTRACT

The tight competition in the Umrah travel industry requires companies to implement effective service communication strategies rooted in Islamic values to retain customers. This study aims to analyze service communication strategies in building loyalty among Umrah pilgrim alumni; its novelty lies in integrating Islamic brotherhood values throughout the service process. A descriptive qualitative approach was used, with data collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation at PT Madani Alam Semesta Tour and Travel, Garut Branch. The results show that consistent two-way communication is applied before, during, and after worship, using digital platforms, guidance sessions, and post-service programs. This strategy effectively enhances satisfaction and trust, leading to long-term loyalty reflected in repeat participation and positive recommendations.

ABSTRAK

Persaingan yang ketat dalam industri perjalanan umrah menuntut perusahaan untuk menerapkan strategi komunikasi pelayanan yang efektif dan berlandaskan nilai-nilai Islam guna mempertahankan loyalitas pelanggan. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis strategi komunikasi pelayanan dalam membangun loyalitas alumni jemaah umrah. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada integrasi nilai-nilai ukhuwah Islamiyah di seluruh tahapan proses pelayanan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi di PT Madani Alam Semesta Tour and Travel Cabang Garut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi dua arah yang dilakukan secara konsisten sebelum, selama, dan setelah pelaksanaan ibadah melalui platform digital, sesi pembinaan, serta program layanan pascaibadah mampu meningkatkan kepuasan dan kepercayaan jemaah. Strategi tersebut secara efektif membangun loyalitas jangka panjang yang tercermin dari keikutsertaan kembali dalam program umrah serta rekomendasi positif kepada calon jemaah lainnya.

Kata Kunci

: Strategi Komunikasi Pelayanan, Loyalitas Jemaah, Umrah, Nilai-Nilai Islam.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past five years, public interest in Umrah pilgrimage in Indonesia has shown a consistent upward trend. This growth is driven by the recovery of mobility following the pandemic, easier access to digital information, and increasingly diverse service packages. Data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia shows that the number of Indonesian Umrah pilgrims reached more than 1.3 million in 2023, with projections of steady growth through 2024–2025 due to simplified visa policies and travel regulations from Saudi Arabia. This development positions the religious travel industry as a strategic segment in national tourism. However, this expansion also creates intense competition among Umrah travel organizers. Competition is no longer limited to pricing or physical facilities, but has shifted toward superior service quality and sustainable communication strategies built with pilgrims (Hasan & Rahman, 2022).

In the service industry, where offerings are intangible, service communication serves as a vital link to build strong relationships between companies and their clients. Transparent, consistent, and responsive communication has been empirically proven to correlate positively with trust, satisfaction, and loyal behaviors such as word-of-mouth recommendations and repeat participation. For Umrah services, communication carries unique dimensions as it involves high spiritual and emotional aspects. Therefore, managing expectations through accurate messaging is essential to ensure that service promises align with the actual experience felt by pilgrims (Nadratuzzaman et al., 2023; Wilson et al., 2021).

Numerous studies have examined factors influencing satisfaction and loyalty in the tourism service industry. Safitri and Kurniawan (2024) confirmed that service quality is the primary determinant of success for travel agencies in retaining their customers. Furthermore, Pramezwarly et al. (2021) found that in a competitive market, two-way communication strategies and personalized approaches are key differentiators that effectively reduce the likelihood of customers switching to other providers. Meanwhile, research by Nadratuzzaman et al. (2023) emphasized that services with religious values require communication methods that are not merely commercial, but also include guidance and spiritual elements to meet pilgrims' expectations.

Nevertheless, most existing research focuses on general service quality, accommodation facilities, or pricing. Few studies have examined in detail how communication strategies are structured and implemented across all stages of the journey before departure, during the pilgrimage, and after returning home to foster long term bonds.

Based on the review of existing literature, a clear research gap is identified. First, studies specifically addressing service communication strategy as a core factor in building loyalty among returning pilgrims remain limited. Second, most research focuses on large-scale national travel agencies, while studies at the regional branch level where market characteristics and social relationships differ significantly are still scarce. This study aims to fill that gap by examining in depth the implementation of service communication strategies at PT Madani Alam Semesta Tour and Travel, Garut Branch, which emphasizes Islamic values and community based relationships.

This study offers both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it aims to enrich communication science, particularly theories of service communication and customer relations within the context of religious-based services. Practically, it provides guidance for travel managers in designing effective communication strategies to maintain positive relationships and enhance pilgrim loyalty.

The main objective of this research is to analyze the service communication strategies implemented by PT Madani Alam Semesta Tour and Travel, Garut Branch, in building loyalty among Umrah pilgrim alumni.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to explore in depth the service communication strategies used to build loyalty among Umrah pilgrim alumni at PT Madani Alam Semesta Tour and Travel, Garut Branch. This approach was selected to understand the phenomenon holistically within its natural setting, including the meanings, values, and interactions formed between the service provider and the pilgrims. As outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research allows the researcher to act as the primary instrument to capture complex social realities, where communication processes are viewed as dynamic social constructions.

The research was conducted at the operational office of PT Madani Alam Semesta Tour and Travel, Garut Branch, which serves as the main center for service delivery and relationship management with pilgrims. Research subjects were selected using purposive sampling, where participants are chosen based on specific criteria. Informants include the branch manager, service staff, and representatives of pilgrim alumni who have participated in at least one Umrah trip and are actively involved in the company's post-service programs. This selection ensures the data obtained is rich, relevant, and suitable for analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Data collection was carried out using three complementary techniques. First, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to gather detailed information regarding the implementation of strategies, core values, and challenges in service communication. Second, passive observation was performed on service interactions, both face-to-face at the office and through digital platforms such as online communication groups. Third, document analysis was conducted on official records including standard operating procedures, religious guidance materials, social media content, and communication archives. This combination of sources aims to verify information and improve the accuracy of findings (Saldana & Omasta, 2021).

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2020), consisting of three concurrent stages: data condensation, data presentation in narrative and schematic forms, and conclusion drawing and verification. Analysis began simultaneously with data collection to maintain focus on the research objectives. To ensure trustworthiness, credibility was established through methodological triangulation, extended field observation, and member checking to confirm interpretations with informants. These steps ensure the study meets the standards of dependability and confirmability in qualitative research (Sugiyono, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that service communication strategy at PT Madani Alam Semesta Tour and Travel, Garut Branch, serves as a vital mechanism to transform transactional relationships into sustainable emotional and spiritual bonds. Communication is not merely informative; it integrates local cultural values and Islamic principles, creating a service ecosystem where pilgrims feel valued and part of a larger community.

A. Implementation of Communication Strategy Based on Local and Islamic Values

The company applies a two way communication approach that emphasizes Sundanese hospitality (*someah*) and the Islamic values of trust (*amanah*) and brotherhood (*ukhuwah*). This is reflected in the following statement from service staff:

"We strive to be as hospitable as possible to pilgrims. Communication is not just about sending schedules via WhatsApp; we aim to understand their actual needs. Every inquiry is answered with care, so that pilgrims feel they belong to the Madani family." (Syifa, personal interview, February 12, 2026)

This practice aligns with Communication Accommodation Theory proposed by Giles (2022), which explains that adjusting language style, tone, and attitude according to cultural context reduces psychological distance and increases mutual acceptance. Furthermore, Saepul Ulum et al. (2023) emphasize that the essence of communication is not merely the transmission of information, but a reciprocal interaction aimed at building mutual understanding, trust, and harmonious relationships. In this context, the communication carried out by the company is not only informative but also includes guidance and emotional approaches tailored to the characteristics of the pilgrims.

In the Garut region, the use of polite hierarchical language (*undak-usuk basa*) and the *someah* attitude also supports the principles of Social Presence Theory (Short et al., 1976), making interactions even those conducted through digital media feel warm and personal, especially for elderly pilgrims who highly value respect and familiarity. According to M. Saepul Ulum et al. (2023), the effectiveness of communication is strongly determined by the suitability of communication style with the situation, culture, and background of the parties involved, so that messages are received well and generate positive responses.

Furthermore, WhatsApp groups are used beyond administrative purposes. Drawing on Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Lombard & Snyder-Duch, 2021), these platforms are classified as high-richness channels capable of conveying information, emotion, and spiritual guidance simultaneously. Responsive and empathetic communication in these spaces creates relational transparency, which is central to building trust in service relationships.

This approach is also grounded in Islamic Relational Marketing Theory (Alserhan, 2011; Hassan et al., 2008), which requires communication to be truthful (*sidq*), trustworthy (*amanah*), and fair, avoiding deception or hidden costs. As the Qur'an states in Surah An-Nisa verse 58: "*Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due*". Unlike previous studies focusing mostly on technical service quality or pricing (Safitri & Kurniawan, 2024), this study demonstrates that combining cultural wisdom with Islamic ethics creates cognitive trust first, which evolves into affective trust a deeper bond rooted in shared values rather than just satisfaction (Tjiptono, 2022).

B. Post-Service Communication and Relationship Strengthening

A distinguishing feature of this strategy is its continuous engagement even after the pilgrimage ends. The company regularly organizes religious gatherings and alumni reunions. One pilgrim stated:

"The service is excellent; even after returning from the Holy Land, the relationship remains strong. We are often invited to alumni gatherings, so we feel continuously cared for. If we have the opportunity again, we will definitely choose Madani once more." (H. Undang, personal interview, February 15, 2026)

This confirms the Relationship Marketing Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Kotler & Armstrong, 2021), which posits that long-term loyalty depends not only on the transaction itself but on sustained interaction after the service is delivered. M. Saepul Ulum et al. (2023) add that consistent and continuous communication is the key to maintaining relationships, as it fosters a sense of belonging and trust that grows stronger over time. This study extends the Service Profit Chain Model (Heskett et al., 2022), showing that in religious tourism, the highest value is not the service experience alone, but the *continuity of spiritual and social connection*.

These findings also support the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), where consistent communication acts as a positive stimulus, shaping pilgrims' emotional state (*organism*) and leading to behavioral responses such as repeat visits and recommendations. While most prior research only analyzes communication

during the trip, this study highlights that post-service communication is the decisive factor in building a strong sense of belonging that withstands market competition.

C. Developing Satisfaction, Trust, and Pilgrim Loyalty

Responsiveness and politeness are the main drivers of satisfaction, as expressed by another pilgrim :

“The staff are very responsive. Every question by phone or message is answered immediately, no delays. They provide great assistance from registration until departure.” (Hj. Sa’adah, personal interview, February 18, 2026)

Satisfaction grows into trust when service promises match reality:

“From registration until returning to Garut, everything was as promised. Nothing was hidden regarding costs or facilities. That is why I trust them and dare to invite friends to join Madani.” (Ajang, personal interview, February 20, 2026)

This aligns with Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980), which explains that satisfaction arises when actual performance meets or exceeds expectations. According to Trust-Commitment Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), trust is the key mediator that converts satisfaction into loyalty. Saepul Ulum et al. (2023) further explain that in long-term relationships, trust built through honest and open communication creates a strong bond that is difficult to break, encouraging customers to remain loyal. In this study, loyalty is not only transactional but also relational and spiritual, as described by Brand Attachment Theory (Park et al., 2010), where pilgrims view the agency as a “spiritual partner” rather than just a business provider.

The results confirm earlier work by Sari & Pratama (2024), but add a critical dimension: in the Umrah sector, loyalty is driven not only by rational satisfaction but by shared spiritual identity and communal belonging. This is consistent with Spiritual Marketing Theory, which argues that services involving faith require communication that addresses both practical and existential needs, creating a bond far stronger than ordinary commercial relationships.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion presented, this study has achieved its objectives of identifying and analyzing service communication strategies in building loyalty among Umrah pilgrim alumni at PT Madani Alam Semesta Tour and Travel, Garut Branch. It is concluded that the implemented communication strategy serves not only as a means of information delivery, but also as a fundamental foundation for transforming transactional relationships into sustainable emotional and spiritual bonds. The success of this strategy lies in the integration of three key elements: local cultural values (*someah* hospitality and Sundanese linguistic etiquette), Islamic principles (*trustworthiness* and *brotherhood*), and the adaptive use of communication technology. This approach has proven effective in fostering pilgrim satisfaction and trust, which ultimately translates into loyalty demonstrated through repeat participation and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. These findings contribute to the body of knowledge in communication and service marketing, particularly in the field of religious tourism, by confirming that loyalty is built not only through physical service quality, but also through the consistent delivery of values and meaning across all stages of service.

Based on these conclusions, several recommendations are proposed for practical application and future research :

First, for the management of PT Madani Alam Semesta Tour and Travel, Garut Branch. It is recommended to strengthen pilgrim relationship management through accelerated digitalization. Developing an integrated *Customer Relationship Management* (CRM) system or a dedicated service platform will enable more systematic management of alumni data,

making post-service communication more targeted, efficient, and accessible to a wider range of pilgrims.

Second, regarding human resource development. Regular training and capacity building programs should be conducted for all staff, focusing on interpersonal communication skills, service delivery based on religious and cultural values, and proficiency in modern information technology. This effort is essential to maintain consistent service standards and sustain competitive advantage amid growing market competition.

Third, for future researchers. This study is limited to a qualitative approach, which provides in-depth insights but does not measure the magnitude of influence between variables. Therefore, it is recommended to expand the scope using quantitative or mixed-methods approaches. Conducting surveys with a larger population of pilgrims will allow statistical measurement of how communication strategies influence loyalty levels, enabling broader generalization and further strengthening the theoretical framework established in this research.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

The authors contributed to the completion of this research as follows: The main author conceptualized the research topic, formulated the problem and objectives, designed the theoretical framework, and collected primary data through interviews, observation, and documentation. The co authors verified data validity, conducted data analysis and interpretation, reviewed relevant literature and references, and compiled the initial draft of the manuscript. All authors jointly discussed the findings, revised the content to meet academic standards, read and approved the final version of the paper, and are responsible for the accuracy and integrity of the entire research content.

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