

Implementing Effective Communication Among Hajj Pilgrims

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ABSTRACT

During the Hajj season, the pilgrims will perform their Hajj in the Holy Land of Mecca, Saudi Arabia houses. Performing hajj is the fifth principle of Islam and it is compulsory for all Muslims who have the physical and financial capability to perform Hajj at least once in their lifetime. For that, health quality is important to be preserved because it not only helps clear the flow of Hajj but also ensures the safety of the pilgrims' journey. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the communicative strategy by Utas Travel agency in creating the awareness of healthcare services for the pilgrims. Data analysis will be employing the qualitative approach. Interviewing will be adopted onto the pilgrims who have performed Hajj for a few years ago and for the first time. Interview will be done onto about 50 pilgrims using open-ended questions and data will be analysed using thematic analysis. The research outcome will benefit Utas Travel agency in identifying an effective communicative strategy in creating a healthcare service model awareness for pilgrims. This study can add to the pool of knowledge. The purpose of the study is therefore to develop an effective communication model for promoting the Hajj sector.

Keywords: *Strategy, Communication, Health, Awareness, Pilgrims*

INTRODUCTION

The importance of healthcare before and after performing Hajj is really prioritised by the management of Lembaga Tabung Haji among pilgrims. The aim is to make sure that the act of worship goes smoothly as the extreme heat in the Holy Land and other fact that they need to do a lot of physical activities including walking a great distance can be challenging. This is important because it can also reduce the cost and burden of the treatments of the pilgrims in the Holy Land and it enables the medical team to focus on other major causes. Every pilgrim who wish to perform Hajj every year is always advised by the administration of the Lembaga Tabung Haji to carry out a health examination. According to the senior manager of Hajj department, Lembaga Tabung Haji, Datuk Seri Syed Salleh Syed Abdul Rahman (2020) future pilgrims

need to undergo any health screening while at least six months before they are due to leave for the Holy Land. There are some of the elder pilgrims who have never undergo health screening before while some of them have only go for health check a month before they are leaving. Upon screening, they only realise then that they have multiple diseases and complications including the Trio- high blood pressure, heart problem and diabetes. Based on the Hajj fund profile, most of the pilgrims are very old- 70 years and above at 30%, followed by those above 50 years old, 50 percent. The average pilgrims will be in the Holy Land around 45 days and within that period, they must lead their lives in way that is different from their routines in Malaysia. Without a strong defence system, it will create many health problems. Thus, Lembaga Tabung Haji conducts early health screening program in order to detect those with complication so that can have the time to undergo health treatment before they perform Hajj. In reference to this issue, the aim of this study is to look into the use of the media and communication on the healthcare awareness among pilgrims. This study focuses on Utas Travel agency a registered private agency with Lembaga Tabung Haji that manages future pilgrims in Malaysia. Every Hajj program done by Utas travel is under the supervision of Lembaga Tabung Haji. This includes the healthcare program module prepared by Lembaga Tabung Haji.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Utas travel is one of the long-standing travel agencies that have managed Hajj and Umrah packages in Malaysia. The outcome of the survey done on the effectiveness of communication by Utas Travel Agency towards the healthcare awareness of the pilgrims finds that there is the absence of information in the form of media and communication like poster, pamphlet, web, QR code even in the social media (Tariq dan Matto, 2013). The importance of healthcare is only explained through seminar using the module prepared by officials at Lembaga Tabung Haji. According to Hashilm et al. (2016) there are pilgrims who have disobeyed health instructions from the Minister of Health and Lembaga Tabung Haji causing 61% pilgrims to suffer from influenza when they did not undergo any influenza examination whereas 38.9% received influenza vaccine when they were doing their Hajj. These percentages show that healthcare level is high among the pilgrims. It is important for this awareness to use the media and a more effective communication media so that healthcare awareness among the pilgrims can be enhanced, other than reducing the costs and burden of treatment in the Holy Land. The issue arising surrounds the study on the context and the use of the media, and communication as a form of intervention of prevention on pilgrims' healthcare awareness in Malaysia is still scarce and requires more studies and research.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To develop an effective communication model on the importance of healthcare awareness among Hajj pilgrims.
2. To test the effectiveness of healthcare communication strategy in Hajj packages prepared by Utas Travel agency.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the factors that increase the awareness about the importance of healthcare among pilgrims?
2. Are instilling healthcare values in adopting healthcare effective communication strategy able to promote Hajj packages prepared by Utas Travel Agency?

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

1. The effectiveness of communication can help pilgrims in understanding and realising the importance of healthcare before and after performing Hajj.
2. The effectiveness of the communication can help officials at Utas Travel in particularly and Lembaga Tabung Haji in general in ensuring the smooth healthcare management among pilgrims before and after the Hajj.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study done by Wakefield, Loken, and Hornik (2010) establishes that the media and communication are used since the past decades in the effort to influence the health behaviour of the society. In this issue, the media has been used in every aspect campaigns done in this country including in health communication campaigns. Technology channels are used to disseminate messages with the purpose of grabbing the attention of viewers. The exposure of the messages can at least gain some support (Potter, 2011). There are various kinds of media that exist today encompassing the printed media like the newspapers and magazines; the electronic media like the internet; social media like Facebook and Twitter; and online applications like WhatsApp, WeChat and Telegram and an abundance of mushroomed media platforms (Samad, 2014).

Media plays an important role in giving information to the public about what happens in the world, especially in the aspects in which the public does not have the knowledge about, or experience about something (Happer & Philo, 2013). The role of the media does not stop there, but it can even be used as a useful medium in rendering success to a campaign (Junus, 2013).

Health communication campaigns are done in the effort to give a healthy behavioural effect among the current population in a country (Randolph, Whitaker, & Arellano, 2012). This is due to the fact that sometimes, there are still members of the society who have high level of awareness other than having the knowledge or information about healthy lifestyle, but they do not make it a daily practice (Krishnan & Rahim, 2014). Thus, the media campaigns have the role to spread the information about public health and threats in this issue, at the same time convincing the members of the society to accept the behavioural change proposed (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2013).

The study done by Hassali et al. (2012) finds that the mass media has been evaluated as the best information source on health activity promotion. The majority of the respondents state that the mass media is generally the best source followed by a selection of newspapers and advertisements being the second and the third best source, respectively. The study carried out by Mohamad, Haniff, Salleh, Ahmad, and Hashim (2015) finds many of the respondents have chosen the Internet as their source in getting the information on health. The Internet makes the accessibility of information on children's health and nutrition faster and easier. The study outcome also shows that the information source from the social media is also included as convenient for reference.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The approach used by the researcher in this study is the qualitative approach involving a field study in the form of interview with the pilgrims registered with Utas Travel. Purposive sampling of 50 respondents or pilgrims aged about 30 years and above comprising of pilgrims who have gone to Mecca for the first time and have been to the Holy Land several times. Literature studies will be used to form the interview questions. A non-structured question will be used in this study.

Data analysis that will be employed is the thematic analysis on the transcribed texts of the interviews. The thematic analysis is a way of identifying patterned themes in a phenomenon. These themes can be identified, coded inductively (data driven) from raw qualitative materials like transcriptions, interviews, biographies, video recording and so on, even deductively which is theory driven based on previous studies (Boyatzis, 1998). The thematic analysis is the process of coding the information that can produce themes, or complex indicators. The themes might enable the interpretation of the phenomenon to be done.

RESEARCH OUTCOME

The outcome is anticipated to be able to develop a communicative strategy in an interactive form based on the new technological medium in helping to increase the quality of services of Utas Travel so that it will be better, more efficient and more credible in line with the 4th Industrial Revolution, IR.4.0. Other than that, the hope lies in seeing remarkable improvement in channelling the information in terms of the SOP in the aspects of preparation and requirements of performing Hajj, especially regarding health examination and medical supplies.

FINDINGS

The discovery of this study will lead to the factors of health awareness to the Hajj pilgrims. The factor of media communication can be the most important channel in raising the awareness of the pilgrims other than attending the seminars or workshops provided. The social media can be one platform or medium that can easily be used and which is user-friendly for anyone to communicate and deliver information to various users who have access to the Internet. Other than that, awareness can be raised if the information delivered has quality and affects the pilgrims. This is consistent with the statement by Batini et al. (2009) that the quality of the information serves as the data that has values to the users. Ritchi et al. (2015) also state that the information quality is one of the important and significant elements to evaluate the satisfaction or awareness of the users.

The convenience of healthcare information provided by Utas travel can inculcate a sense of responsibility towards the healthcare of the pilgrims before they leave for the Holy Land. Information about healthcare is often updated with accurate, easier to understand and beneficial delivery, also it comes with an interesting presentation that can engage the attention and raise the awareness of the pilgrims. Facebook is among the social media that is the most popular among the society that can help Utas Travel as their strategy in increasing the healthcare awareness. Hopkins (2014) explains that facebook is the social media that is often used by the public including those in the rural areas. By preparing a bar code containing texts, capturing videos and photos of healthcare, this will make the channel prepared by Utas Travel customer and user-friendly and it can further promote the Hajj package that they offer.

CONCLUSION

This study is regarded as very important to be implemented to facilitate Utas Travel agency in particular and Tabung Haji also travel agencies in general in increasing health awareness of future pilgrims. This study outcome can serve as useful reference for future studies in the scope of the health communication field. It will be a great contribution in empowering knowledge in the field. Also, this study will indirectly motivate local researchers to conduct most similar studies related to the use of the media and communication in health awareness campaigns. Even more, this study will be proof that the use of the media and communication will actually play an important part and can be a great help in becoming a medium of information on public health, other than being the key to the increased awareness of the society about issues and health threats in this country.

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