
Marketing Strategies of Tahfizpreneur Products Produced by PTIs in Malaysia

Journal of Entrepreneurship and Business
E-ISSN: 2289-8298

Vol. 9, Issue 2, pp. 35-45. December 2021

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Date Received: 05 December 2021

Date Accepted: 30 December 2021

DOI: 10.17687/jeb.v9i2.797



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Abstract – Optimal product marketing strategies are essential to company success. Profit generation is the main goal in covering management costs and increasing competitiveness regularly. The financial constraints of most Private Tahfiz Institutions (PTIs) in Malaysia created opportunities to venture into business and entrepreneurship. The situation generates income for survival instead of completely relying on the government, private sector, charity, and waqf assistance. Hence, the study aims to identify PTI marketing strategies to promote their products. The study performed semi-structured interviews with six chosen PTI founders involved in the marketing of tahfizpreneur products. The interview data were analysed using inductive content analysis. The findings revealed that the PTIs applied four main marketing strategies to promote the respective tahfizpreneur products: (i) direct sales to customers, (ii) printed promotions using brochures and paid newspaper advertisements, (iii) product sales agents, and (iv) electronic digital marketing, such as Facebook Ads, WhatsApp, Blaster, Instagram, YouTube, EQ2U, and Yezza. The various marketing strategies adopted increased consumer access to tahfizpreneur products, which positively impacts the sales of products and services of PTIs in Malaysia.

Keywords: Marketing strategies, Tahfizpreneur product, PTIs

1. Introduction

Tahfizpreneurship derives from tahfiz and entrepreneurship. The term refers to entrepreneurial activities performed by tahfiz institutions as an alternative to generating own income. The income compensates the operating costs and management of the respective institutions. Financial constraint is a serious issue, specifically for PTIs in Malaysia, which caused public fundraising accountability (Aziz & Ahmad, 2019; Bani et al., 2017; Ismail, 2016; Fatah, 2014). Government assistance, private sector donations, alms, and endowments remain insufficient to cover the entire operating costs of Malaysian PTIs which increases yearly (Yusopa et al., 2020; Kamal & Seman, 2017; Azha et al., 2013).

Taharin and Anas (2021) and Anas et al. (2021) mentioned that PTIs that venture into business and entrepreneurship can cover operating costs up to 60% of the revenue generated by tahfizpreneur products, including student fees and other assistance. Hence, tahfizpreneur is the primary PTI option to raise the competitiveness of Quran-based private religious institutions to fulfil the main objective of the National Tahfiz Education Policy (NTEP) of producing 125,000 huffaz by 2050. (Othman & Anas, 2020; Anas et al., 2019). Market orientation was highlighted by marketing academics from the beginning. Therefore, the study identified PTI marketing strategies for promoting their products.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Entrepreneurs, Products and Consumers

Malaysia is considered an important global halal hub, specifically in the Southeast Asian region due to its halal food industry (Buang & Mahmud, 2012). The international reputation of Malaysia related to halal food products of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) increased with ongoing efforts by the government through relevant ministries, such as the Ministry of Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism (KPDNKK), the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), and the Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives (MEDAC) in collaboration with private sectors (Shahwahid et al., 2017).

Kamaruddin and Wahid's (2020) mentioned the main challenges for SME entrepreneurs include capital constraints for halal certification, limited production technology and product promotion. The obstacles also include infrastructure, insufficient marketing experience, and the impact of false information on halal products disseminated by irresponsible parties via print and electronic media (Ramli et al., 2015). Ramli et al. (2016) added that the development of halal products is directly linked to the concept of *halalan toyyiban* in Islam and industrial safety management within the *maqasid syariah* framework, which conforms to Islamic values.

Jamaludin et al. (2011) stated that entrepreneurs and consumers play an essential role in the demand and supply chain of products through manufacturing, processing, distributing, and retail and business services. Furthermore, the diversity of consumer traits is affected by factors, such as religion, culture, gender, age, and living standards, which influence the needs, type, quantity, and quality of products according to the intended use. Therefore, the relationship between entrepreneurs, products, and consumers is the foundation of consumer *fiqh* in Islam, which is a modern *ijtihad* (refer to Figure 1). In Islamic economics, rational consumers spend their income to purchase products for physical and spiritual fulfilment known as consumer behaviour (Hanapi et al., 2019), thus ensuring halal a priority in product selection for daily use among Muslims (Ariffin et al., 2020).

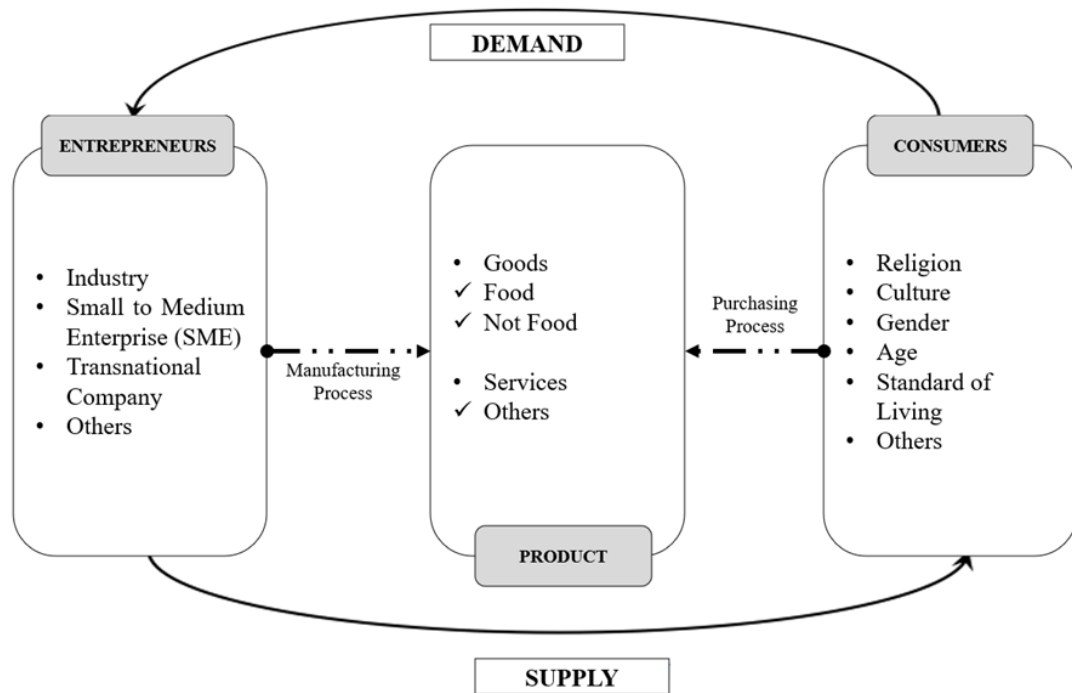


Figure 1: Relationship between entrepreneurs, products, and consumers (Jamaludin et al., 2011)

2.2. Effective Marketing Strategies

Consumer behaviours are directly connected to marketing strategies which became the constructs of marketing practices (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020; Morgan et al., 2019). Amelia et al. (2019) mentioned that the marketing strategies should highlight seven dimensions known as 7P: product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. The development of internal brands should be emphasised following competitive pressures to form a strategic and competitive market position (Zéman & Bogdan, 2019).

Global changes due to the Industrial Revolution 4.0 transformed the digital environment as a tool of country sustainability, causing technology to develop rapidly for human survival. The phenomenon aligns with the development of the digital economy (Ghobakhloo, 2020). Digital economy depicts information and communication technology that comprises: (i) digital infrastructure supporting computer networks for operation, (ii) the existence of digital transactions known as electronic commerce (e-commerce), and (iii) access to digital economic content via digital media (Barefoot et al., 2018). Additionally, technological innovations that support data use via big data dissemination, data analysis and decision-making algorithms, new automation, and robotic technologies (Bukht & Heeks, 2017).

Digital economy provides a global platform where strategies for enterprise can be developed following economic collaboration through more effective and efficient communication-information exchange (Bulturbayevich & Jurayevich, 2020) to fulfil the aim of strengthening a country reputation globally (Popkova, 2020). The situation

undeniably impacts product and service marketing, specifically in developed countries. Presently, digital marketing via social media and specific applications is dominant. The situation aligns with the ICT development that celebrates the digital economy within the framework of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. Katsikeas et al. (2019) noted that the use of modern technology expands markets overseas, saves costs, and enables more globally competent transactions.

The social media platforms frequently used in digital marketing include Twitter, YouTube (Li et al., 2021), WhatsApp (Hendriyani et al., 2020; Mufadhol et al., 2020), websites (Agarwal & Bansal, 2020), Instagram (Yunus et al., 2019), and Facebook (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017). The strategy is highly effective towards young people, known as Generation Z (Munsch, 2021; Anjum et al., 2020). Significantly, the strategy saves money and creates a significant commercial impact on businesses (Gupta, 2020; Ritz et al., 2019; Bala & Verma, 2018). Meanwhile, traditional marketing strategies should be prioritised to complement digital marketing strategies that need to be adapted to present ICT developments (Han, 2020).

3. Study Methodology

The study performed a semi-structured interview with six selected PTI founders involved in marketing tahfizpreneur products. The study identified the marketing strategies employed on the premises by using purposive sampling with a qualitative study sample size of five to seven people (Ghazali & Sufean, 2018; Hua, 2016; Chua, 2011). The interview data were analysed by employing the inductive content analysis method (Kyngäs, 2020) to generalise findings from the case study based on the study objective. The data analysis began with organising raw data from interview findings based on PTIs with codes P1 to P6 (as in Table 2). Subsequently, an in-depth study was conducted including readings of interview data transcripts according to two main themes: (i) PTI Products and Services and (ii) PTI Marketing Strategies (see Table 1).

4. Findings and Discussion

The PTIs in Malaysia venture into business and entrepreneurship in two main categories: products and services. The products and services include livestock and agriculture, sunnah nutrition products, food and beverage-based products, household products, Islamic treatment services, vocational services, hajj and umrah services, takaful insurance services, and halal chicken processing. The PTIs involvement in multiple fields of business and entrepreneurship is a benchmark of efforts to raise competitiveness in private religious institutions, such as 'pondok' and modern schools.

The efforts include commemorating the Buy Muslim First campaign initially known as BMF. From 2018, the campaign was spearheaded by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), such as *Gerakan Pembela Ummah* (UMMAH) to promote the significance of Muslim products (Mustaffa et al., 2019). The campaign aligns with the concept of *halalan tayyiban* in Islam to ensure the product purity and to raise users' confidence and economic competitiveness of global Muslims, specifically in Malaysia (Hassan et al., 2020; Othman et al., 2020; Mohamad & Khairuldin, 2018). The effort

encourages the attitude of prioritising Muslim products, thus boosting the collection of zakat on Muslims' annual business, and increasing PTI sustainability.

Table 1: Malaysian PTI Products and Marketing Strategies

PTIs	PRODUCTS	MARKETING STRATEGIES
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livestock (goats or cattle) • Agriculture (vegetables) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct sales to customers • Printed (paid newspaper advertisements) • Sales agents • Electronics (WhatsApp & Facebook)
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunnah food products (honey, habbatus sauda' & olive oil) • Calligraphy frame • Islamic treatment services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct sales to customers • Electronics (Facebook)
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational services (vegetable fertilisation, ruminant livestock, aquaculture, food & beverage) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct sales to customers • Electronics (Yezza, WhatsApp & EQ2U)
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mineral water products • Home appliance products (water filters & air filters) • Vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct sales to customers • Manually to eateries, workshops, surau and mosques
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livestock (cattle, chickens & goats) • Food products (banana chips, coffee, cooking oil & dates) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct sales to customers • The concept of trading • Sales agents • Printed (brochure) • Electronics (Facebook Ads & WhatsApp Blaster)
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hajj & Umrah Services • Takaful insurance services • Halal chicken processing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion directly to customers • Printed (brochure) • Electronics (Facebook, Website, Instagram, YouTube & WhatsApp)

Source: Research interviews

Table 1 presents four main strategies used by PTIs to market their respective tahfizpreneur products, namely (i) direct sales to customers, (ii) print promotions using brochures and paid newspaper advertisements, (iii) using product sales agents and (iv) electronic digital marketing, such as Facebook Ads, WhatsApp Blaster, Instagram, YouTube, EQ2U, and Yezza. Most PTIs use electronic marketing mediums, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram to meet consumer needs as the main strategy of digital product marketing (Li et al., 2021; Bani & Nordin, 2020; Kingsnorth, 2019) established new markets (Vieira et al., 2019).

The effort is consistent with the basic principle of the marketing strategy by Palmatier and Crecelius (2019). The strategy describes that consumers differ in nature and change in competitive action with limited resource forces. The digital marketing strategy is more cost-effective and less expensive than print and paid product advertising (Ghazie & Dolah, 2018). Although digital marketing is a popular option, traditional marketing strategies, such as direct sales to customers, printed mediums, such as brochures and paid newspaper advertisements, and using sales agents are still utilised. The strategy aligns with Prasetya et al. (2020), stating that digital marketing during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was not optimal because of restricted movement, time, and place, specifically for SME products. Additionally, marketing using brochures was suggested as an alternative to reach a broader market. Meanwhile, Zhu and Herman (2021) added that the marketing strategy is restricted to a single target group. Thus, electronic brochures, such as e-brochures and e-flyers are proposed as a business and entrepreneurship communication strategy (Soegotto & Istiqomah, 2019). Ultimately, traditional marketing strategies support digital marketing strategies and their relationship (Lawrence et al., 2018).

Table 2: PTI Coding of the Study

Private Tahfiz Institutions	Codes
Akademi Tahfiz Al-Hira', Rawang, Selangor	P1
Maahad Tahfiz An-Nabawi (MATAN), Shah Alam, Selangor	P2
Maahad Tahfiz Al-Quran Lil-Muttaqin, Hulu Langat, Selangor	P3
Institut Maahad Tahfiz Al-Azim (IMTAZ), Rawang, Selangor	P4
Maahad Tahfiz Wal Qiraat (MTQ), Shah Alam, Selangor	P5
Maahad Tahfiz Sulaimaniyyah, Kajang, Selangor	P6

Source: Study sampling

The data from interviews with the six PTI founders suggested that cost is the main factor in selecting marketing strategies for their tahfizpreneur products. The following are the participants' responses:

"Our Facebook marketing medium is mandatory. After that, there is WhatsApp blast, which is the available electronic medium that we use. We also use newspapers like Sinar Harian, Metro and Harakah. Before, if advertised in the newspapers, we must pay..." (P1)

"We have not done any paid media marketing so far. We are more of a free medium only. We do not use Facebook ads, Instagram ads because it is more for businesses that require high capital" (P2)

"... The charge for the platform is 1.06% for administration. The charge will increase if there are more users. We only consider the cost of construction ..." (P3)

“We do direct marketing. For the cost, it involves the cost of fuel and tolls, and we also want to make shelves, signboards, and drinks. That is all.” (P4)

“FB ads are around RM500, WhatsApp blaster and Facebook auto software are within RM200. But it does not involve costs in that time, it involves long time span” (P5)

“Marketing is through a printed medium, and we also use digital. We send WhatsApp and brochures to our staff and parents of students. We also have Facebook, website and Instagram...” (P6)

The findings revealed that PTIs prefer tahfizpreneur product marketing strategies consistent with current trends and save money, specifically by using free social media strategies. Participant 1 (P1) and Participant (P6) were willing to spend capital for paid advertising in print media. Participant 3 (P3) used the Yezza and EQ2U applications, which provided a service and administration charge of 1.06 per cent. Meanwhile, Participant 5 (P5) allocated capital of RM200-RM500 for paid advertising on social media via WhatsApp Blaster and Facebook Ads.

The results are supported by Yin and Feng (2021), where digital advertising impacts consumer decisions to purchase products with more attractive and informative advertising appeal. Hence, the various marketing strategies emphasise specific target groups resulting in the tahfizpreneur products produced by PTIs being accessible by all levels of society and in the hearts of local consumers.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Traditional marketing strategies supported digital marketing strategies and are closely linked. Nonetheless, electronic digital marketing is the main strategy to market tahfizpreneur products of PTIs in Malaysia. The strategy aligns with current technological developments, followed by direct marketing to consumers, promotion via printed brochures or paid newspaper advertisements, and using sales agents.

The strategies are capable of fulfilling the tahfizpreneur goal of covering the operating costs of the respective PTIs, paying student fees, and receiving other assistance from numerous parties. The capacity and image of the private educational institutions can be increased through government support via MEDAC, the National Entrepreneurship Institute (INSKEN), MOH, the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (JAKIM), the State Islamic Religious Council (MAIN), and the State Islamic Religious Department (JAIN). Ultimately, the PTIs could remain competitive in achieving the NTEP goal of producing 125,000 *huffaz* by 2050.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

The research fund is sponsored by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) Malaysia under the FRGS 2018-1 research grant.

Acknowledgement

This study was fully sponsored by MOHE Malaysia under the FRGS research grant, research code FRGS/1/2018/SSI03/UITM/03/1 entitled 'Model Tahfizpreneur Tadbir Urus Tahfiz Swasta di Malaysia'

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