

# **Challenges And Opportunities In Developing Malaysian Umrah Tourism: Implication Of Social Media Application Among Umrah Consumers And Umrah Travel Agents**

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## **Abstract**

Umrah is well known as spiritual Islamic tourism yet it has a lack of literature even the statistics indicated 6 million people visited Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah each year. Media currently plays an important role in maintaining the image of tourism destinations particularly in the context of Umrah. Thus, this paper aims to discuss the challenges met by Umrah industry in Malaysia. The study also proposes to focus on media platform such as social media application compared to traditional Word of Mouth as marketing medium to be hugely adopted in the Umrah industry. Currently media marketing applied by Umrah travel agents in Malaysia is only in the form of websites which is not well accepted by Umrah consumers. Notably, there are also several travel agents which still do not have official websites. Therefore, it is recommended for Umrah industry player to adopt social media such as Facebook as a marketing medium which have been highly recommended by researchers. This paper ended by providing several conclusions and suggestions for clear research ideas to be focused in the future.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Challenges, Opportunities, Umrah Consumers, Umrah Travel Agents, Umrah Tourism

**Paper type:** Research paper

## **Introduction**

There are positive and constant development happened in the growth of tourism industry all over the world. Nevertheless, according to Hassan et. al. (2015), pilgrimage tourism such as Umrah has not yet well developed when the attention is not much received from the audience even though 6 million people attended Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah every year. According to Pew Research Center (2011), concentration on Islamic tourists is an important decision after referred to the Islamic tourists' population which is growing consistently. The Muslim population has a population growth of 1.5 percent annually in Malaysia while non-Muslims only have a growth of 0.7 percent. Social media is generally a very important medium in nowadays marketing mix and in promotion mix specifically (Bashar et. al., (2012). In the area where the technology changes continuously over time, the pace needs to be followed where advance marketing needed or else the chance of being left behind in the industry and becoming outdated over the time will be high. According to Srinivisan et. al. (2016), the research mentioned clearly about the role of social media as the compliments towards other online marketing strategies. Though, based on the study

conducted by Othman et. al., (2018), the research is still uncertain on how effective the social medium among Muslim tourists in order for them to deal with significant travel judgments. Other than that, most of Umrah travel agents in Malaysia marketed their Umrah package products only in the form of websites. Based on the study conducted by Long et al., (2018), the findings of the study have shown that travel agencies in Malaysia have websites that can help to provide basic information such as phone numbers, e-mail addresses, fax and background of travel agencies and Malaysia is still in the second stage of being at a low e-commerce practices among their citizens. It is suggested for the Umrah industry player to implement the social media for marketing the Umrah industry in Malaysia after considering how powerful social networking today such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr.

## **2.0 Facts of Umrah**

According to Majid et. al. (2016), there are two types of pilgrimage in Islam. The first one is Hajj known as a major pilgrimage. Every individual Muslim is required to perform Hajj at least once in his life but may do several times depending on their financial and physical abilities. The other one is Umrah known as a small pilgrimage. Umrah is an unnecessary pilgrimage to Mecca. It can be done by Muslims throughout the year. Umrah differs from Hajj which can be done once or repeatedly depending on the individual's physical and financial capabilities (Hassan, Mohamed Zainal, & Mohamed, 2015). Both are implemented in Saudi Arabia in the city of Holy Makkah.

## **2.0 Umrah Tourism in Malaysia**

Islamic tourists have been seen increasing in numbers from global rates and known as a major product in Malaysia (Laderlah, Rahman, Awang, & Man, 2011). Malaysia is very active in ensuring Islamic tourism to be well developed among consumers continued by Singapore in the Asian region (Lina & Hairul, 2012). Islamic tourism is one of the religious tourism occurs in Malaysia where people choose to visit Mecca to implement one of the pillars in Islam (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). A study conducted by Yezli et al., (2017) states that Umrah provides unique opportunities for future researchers because the scientific study of Umrah is still limited. Umrah in Malaysia has recorded for a remarkable growth in every year (Hassan, Mohamed Zainal, & Mohamed, 2015). The Minister of Economic Affairs from Malaysia, Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali stated that Malaysian Umrah tourists experienced an annual increase of 8.4 percent a year after the additional quota received by Malaysia from the Saudi government in 2013 (New Straits Times, 2019). The statistics announced by Saudi Hajj Ministry in 2015 mentioned that there are 202,538 performing Umrah from Malaysia. Based on the research conducted by Shukri et. al., (2017), at least 250 000 Malaysian performing Umrah in 2017 and the number is expected to increase up to 300 000 in 2018. Based on Abd (2019), the statistics for 2019 illustrates that 185,716 Malaysian pilgrims performed Umrah for only two months. In addition, the expenditure of Umrah and Hajj pilgrims in 2017 increased by 24 per cent a year from RM1.56 billion in 2014 to RM2.67 billion in 2017. The Pilgrims Board announced that the expenditure of Malaysian pilgrims in 2017 was RM926 million higher than in 2014 at RM443 million.

The Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA) intends to expand tourism-based business opportunities in Malaysia by opening its doors to foreign tourists after reviewing the effectiveness of the plan practiced by Saudi Arabia (Bernama, 2019). Umrah consumers who want to do Umrah need to have a visa and at the moment, visas for Umrah can only be obtained through a travel agent with a special Umrah license (New Straits Times, 2019). Malaysia is planning to carry out Umrah services without the use of travel agents and only through Umrah online packages (New Straits Times, 2019). However, there is only one study that has examined social media applications in hospitality and tourism (Leung, Law, *Res Militaris*, vol.13, n°1, Winter Spring 2023

Van Hoof, and Buhalis (2013). In addition, studies on the role of social media in the tourism industry in Malaysia are also limited (Lee et al., 2015). Most of Umrah travel agents also promoting their information about their Umrah packages through websites. It is limited to know the effectiveness of social media applications on Umrah consumers and Umrah travel players especially different generations have different approaches on getting information about Umrah either through technology or by applying the traditional Word of Mouth. In a study conducted by Tan et. al. (2012), explaining that there are differences in perception from different generations. Generation X grew up in a stream of technological improvements. McHenry & Ash (2013) emphasize that Generation Y is more inclined to the internet and instant messaging.

### ***Umrah Travel Agents in Malaysia***

The Malaysian tourism agency is divided into two parts: 1) the first one is general tourism agency known as a general tourism management agency such as holidays (Almuhri and Alsawafi (2017) and 2) Hajj and Umrah tourism agency which organizes Hajj and Umrah travels known as spiritual journey (Hairudin et al. (2016). History stated that the first organization entrusted to administer the Hajj and Umrah services in Malaysia is Tabung Haji (Zainal and Hasnah; 2018). According to statistics reported by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC), the report provides facts about the latest number of registered Umrah tourism agencies in Malaysia is actually around 6,701 agencies. The registered agency mentioned is the agency which has the permission from the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah of Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, according to Majlis Kawal Selia Umrah (MKSU) in its official websites illustrates that there are 129 companies under the list of Umrah Special License (LKU) companies with the status of Muassasah.

MKSU is the organization that supervised the travel agencies in Malaysia. The Umrah Regulatory Council (MKSU) is a Government initiative established on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2014. The event is chaired by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture Malaysia under the Tourism Industry Act 1992. The event was also attended by the Department of Zakat and Hajj (JAWHAR), Ministry of Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism (KPDNKK), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (KLN), Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM), Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM), Competition Commission of Malaysia (MyCC), the Ministry of Transport (MOT), the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), the Pilgrims Board (TH), the Association of Malaysian Travel and Tourists Agents (MATTA) and the Association of Bumiputera Tourism and Travel Agencies (BUMITRA).

MKSU has been established to focus on controlling the Umrah fraud cases by introducing stricter terms including introducing a special license or sub license for Umrah consumers that seek for Umrah packages. The minimum package price is also set at RM4900. The Government has also taken steps to convey information about Umrah so that public awareness can be improved and cases of Umrah fraud can be reduced. One of these steps is to develop an i-umrah portal for local reference on the selection guidelines for umrah management agencies. JAWHAR has developed this portal which can be served as a reference for Muslims in Malaysia. Table 1 shows the total of headquarters and branches of Umrah companies available in Malaysia with the status of Muassasah.

According to Bernama (2019), Muassasah replaced the Umrah or Hajj pilgrim in managing the pilgrimage and welfare of pilgrims in the Holy Land and now the Tabung Haji, the organization that already in Hajj industry for 50 years has emerged as a well-respected organization in the world for systematic and orderly pilgrimage. Based on the former Malaysian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Datuk Syed Omar Al Saggofsaid, even the Saudi

government had informed him that Muslim countries around the world should emulate Malaysia in pilgrimage because Tabung Haji is considered as the best Umrah and Hajj organizer in the world. Currently, Tabung Haji is not only leading and guiding pilgrims but also managing all matters of pilgrims including providing catering with bringing in Malaysian cooks during the range of performing Umrah or Hajj. In addition, various support services are provided such as fundraising, medical services and providing customer service centers at all Tabung Haji branches. He said the families in the homeland had the opportunity to stay up to date on the pilgrimage as Tabung Haji also brought together a media troupe to channel the latest information and developments in the holy land.

**Table 1:** *Total of Headquarters and Branches of Umrah companies in Malaysia (Muhassasah)*

	<b>Umrah companies</b>
Headquarters	63
Branches	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>

**Source:** *Majlis Kawal Selia Umrah (MKSU) Official Websites*

From the table, it is clearly illustrated about the total number of Umrah companies in Malaysia is 129 companies. From that amount, there are 63 headquarters of Umrah companies; meanwhile 66 of them are the branches of Umrah companies.

**Table 2:** *Total of Umrah companies in Malaysia according to state in Malaysia (Muhassasah)*

<b>States</b>	<b>(Headquarters/ Branches)</b>	<b>Umrah Companies</b>
Kuala Lumpur	Headquarters	2
	Branches	5
Selangor	Headquarters	19
	Branches	12
Pulau Pinang	Headquarters	1
	Branches	3
Perak	Headquarters	0
	Branches	1
Kedah	Headquarters	11
	Branches	7
Perlis	Headquarters	0
	Branches	1
Negeri Sembilan	Headquarters	7
	Branches	3
Melaka	Headquarters	9
	Branches	4
Johor	Headquarters	1
	Branches	6
Pahang	Headquarters	1
	Branches	5
Kelantan	Headquarters	2
	Branches	7
Terengganu	Headquarters	6
	Branches	8
Sabah	Headquarters	0

	Branches	2	
Sarawak	Headquarters	2	3
	Branches	1	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>129</b>

**Source:** *Majlis Kawal Selia Umrah (MKSU) Official Websites*

For a clear view, this study also prepared for Table 2 which demonstrated in details the amounts of Umrah companies according to each state in Malaysia as below. The highest amount of Umrah companies belongs to Selangor with the total amount of 31 Umrah companies followed by Kedah with the total amount of 18 Umrah companies and Terengganu with the total amount of 16 Umrah companies. Other than that, most of the headquarters are located in Selangor which is known as the center and city of Malaysia. Perlis is the only state in Malaysia that has 1 Umrah company in Malaysia. The views also show that the headquarters are not located in three states; Perak, Perlis and Sabah. From Table 2, it can be stated that Umrah consumers in each state have the opportunities to perform Umrah after confirmed that Umrah companies have covered each state in Malaysia.

The official websites of MKSU also clarified the list of Umrah and Pilgrim Operating Agencies registered with Saudi Arabia as in Table 3. From table 3, the table shows that most of the travel agencies that have registered with Saudi Arabis is located in Kuala Lumpur meanwhile no travel agency detected in Genting, Pahang. It means that no Umrah travel agency that have registered in Saudi Arabia in that location. Thus, most of the consumers may refer to Kuala Lumpur if they want to find varieties of Umrah travel agencies that offer for best services or no Umrah travel agency provided in their location because Kuala Lumpur is leading with the highest amount of 334 Umrah travel agencies that can be selected by the Umrah consumers.

**Table 3:** *Total of Umrah companies in Malaysia according to state in Malaysia (Muhassasah)*

City	Travel Agencies
Alor Setar	2
Genting	0
Johor Bahru	3
Kuala Terengganu	2
Kota Kinabalu	1
Kuala Lumpur	334
Kuching	1
Penang	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>444</b>

**Source:** *Majlis Kawal Selia Umrah (MKSU) Official Websites*

There is also a study conducted by Muslim et. al., (2019), the researchers have collected the data of travel agents preferred by Umrah consumers when they perform for Umrah, Table below shows the top 10 most travel agents preferred by the consumers according to the study conducted by Muslim et. al., (2019)



**Table 1:** *Top 10 travel agencies preferred by Umrah consumers*

<b>Travel Agents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Andalusia Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd	182	47.4
TH Travel & Services Sdn Bhd	143	37.2
Rayhar Travels Sdn Bhd	52	13.5
Felda Travel Sdn Bhd	30	7.8
Tiram Travel Sdn Bhd	30	7.8
Utas Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd	28	7.3
Wira Saujana Travel & Tours	24	6.3
Emraz Tracel & Tours Sdn Bhd	22	5.7
C.S. Holidays Sdn Bhd	17	4.4
Gemilang Travel and Tours	16	4.2

**Source:** *Muslim et. al., (2019)*

Table 1 illustrates the list of top 10 travel agents searched by the targeted respondents when seeking information and knowledge about Umrah travel agency. From the analysis above, Andalusia Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd has the highest percentage of 47.4 per cent (n=182). The second preferred travel agency was TH Travel & Services Sdn Bhd with the amount of 37.2 per cent (n=143). There was also 13.5 per cent (n=52) choose Rayhar Travels Sdn Bhd as their selected travel agency. The fourth choices were Felda Travel Sdn Bhd and Tiram Travel Sdn Berhad with 7.8 per cent (n=30). These were followed by Utas Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd with 7.3 per cent (n=28), Wira Saujana Travel & Tours with 6.3 per cent (n=24), Emraz Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd with 5.7 per cent (n=22) and C.S Holidays Sdn Bhd with 4.4 per cent (n=17). The tenth ranking in the list of top 10 travel agencies most selected by the targeted respondents was Gemilang Travel and Tours with 4.2 per cent (n=16).

#### **4.0 Issues and Challenges Facing Umrah Consumers and Umrah Travel Agents**

Malaysia nowadays faced the unlicensed Umrah and pilgrimage packages. According to [The Star Online](#) on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019, the Deputy Minister Muhammad Bakhtiar Wan Chik, mentioned that there are 48 complaints received by Tourism, Art, Culture Ministry related to the Umrah and pilgrimage travel package from January to October 2019. Other than that, seven cases have charged for compound worth around RM129, 500 under Tourism Industry Act 1992. The tourism ministry has also faced three cases involved with court regarding to the management of unlicensed Umrah and pilgrimage travel packages. The punishment based on law in Malaysia for those who are involved in promoting unlicensed packages need to be restricted to overcome these problems.

The information about unlicensed Umrah and pilgrimage packages are very important to be shared among the consumers in order to avoid the same consequences occurred to those who are new and searching for Umrah packages. The information is an important factor for Muslim tourists to plan and have early booking for appropriate travel destinations (CRnojevac, Gugic, & Karlovcan (2010). Tourism industry seems to have greatest impact because of the continuous changes occurred in technology over the last two years. For example, hotel booking decisions are one example that influenced by consumer feedback which is available via social media sites (Molinillo et al., 2016).

Umrah pilgrims also confronted with fraud Umrah packages. Consumer complaints have been raised against Umrah services in Malaysia. Based on the [Sun Daily \(2018\)](#), a total of 214 complaints were filed regarding Umrah travel fraud between 2012 and 2016. During the same period, 2482 cases with the amount of RM21 million were brought to the Tribunal for Consumer Claims (TCC). In addition, the police received 231 complaints relating to flight

ticket fraud, failure to obtain pilgrim visa, Umrah packages cancelled or suspended without prior notice or strong reason, breach of conditions in package contract and reduction of performing day of Umrah that differs from the ads provided and carries a loss of RM9 million (Borneo Post, 2017). Umrah consumers need to make the decision to choose Umrah package wisely to ensure that they are not involved in the Umrah package fraud. Umrah consumers need to get accurate information about selected Umrah travel agents and feedback from customers who have used the same Umrah services. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Tourism Industry Act 1992. In addition, consumers must contact the ministry to ensure that selected Umrah travel agents are registered and licensed by MOTAC. A platform that can interact one Umrah consumers are needed in order for them to share their experiences and sharing contents about Umrah worldwide.

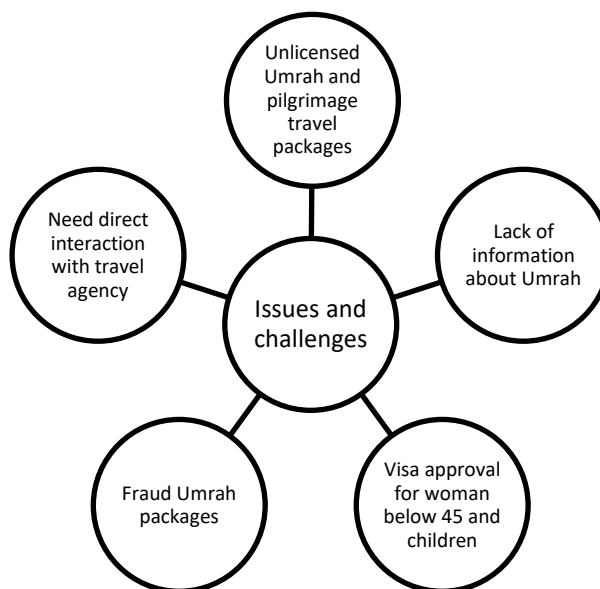
Other current issues are related to visa approval for women below 45 and children to perform Umrah where those people need to be accompanied by mahram in order for them to perform Umrah. The condition is loose for woman with range of age more than 45 which have the ability to perform Umrah without Umrah. However, according to the statistic conducted by [Countrymeters \(2019\)](#), a website that analysed the demographic of Malaysian population, the population in Malaysia stated that the population around 15 to 64 years old is higher with the amount of 10,301,466 females. It is a huge number compared to woman above 64 years old with the amount of 841,452 females in Malaysia. Others around that numbers that still not yet married and below 45 years old is still huge and most of them do not have the chances to perform Umrah even though they have enough money on them. According to the Malaysian Reserve 2019, The Head of Tradewinds Travel Services Umrah Department, Zulhasymi Hamidon mentioned that if both Malaysian and Saudi Arabia governments can negotiate with the restriction that rules for women travellers, the market size of Umrah tourism can be increased at least reach to 30%.

Other than that, there is lack of information about Umrah packages among the consumers. The travel agency cannot guarantee the potential visitors to have an intention on finding the information via websites platform. The study of travel intentions is one of the research studies in the field of tourism that has been studied over the years, but the decision-making process is complicated as the choice of tourism destination has not been well-researched (Lam & Hsu, 2006). Researchers are also mostly interested in studying religious tourism focused on the quality of services provided by the tour operators to increase tourism sectors. Meanwhile, the study of [Armstrong et. al., \(2011\)](#) mentioned that most Muslim tourists rely on word of mouth from family and friends rather than may be involved in collecting information via online.

[Khan and Khan \(2017\)](#) mentioned in the research that the purpose of Muslim tourists using social networks or related platforms is not yet known, which may be more closely related to the travel destination that they wish to choose or reach, or else related to the decision when choosing accommodation, sightseeing or restaurants during travels. According to Most travellers search for travel information, buy airline tickets, booking accommodation and other amenities online and do not rely too much on travel agencies to do so. As a result, most travel agencies introduce internet technology as a marketing and communication platform for their products with customers. However, the same implications on Umrah industry cannot guaranteed because Malaysia still lacking on promoting Umrah services via online and Umrah tourists still prefer to have the travel agents as their advisor on choosing the Umrah packages.

In addition, Umrah consumers unfortunately need direct interaction with Umrah travel agency when they need help in planning for their Umrah travel. Thus, the services issues among Umrah travel agency needs to be improved in order for the customers to be comfortable when dealing with them. It is compulsory for the Umrah travel agencies to provide for best services to Umrah consumers. In another hand, every single travel agency will promote for the same Umrah packages with the same services includes accommodation, airlines, location of the hotel and others. Therefore, the competitive advantages in term of marketing strategies in promoting best services are needed in order for the Umrah travel agency to reach Umrah consumers' attention. The advance marketing strategies are needed for the consumers and internet platform is suitable for nowadays' generation to reach the information and promotion made by the Umrah travel agency.

Figure 1 show the summary of the issues and challenges appeared in Umrah consumers and Umrah Travel Agents. Both side either Umrah consumers or Umrah Travel Agents faced the same problems thus, future researchers have the opportunities to further the studies on how to overcome the problems listed as below.



**Figure 1:** *Issues and Challenges faced by Umrah Consumers and Umrah travel Agents in Malaysia*

#### **4.0 Implication of Social Media in Umrah Industry**

According to Palfrey (2010) in the study made by Ramadani, Demiri, & Saiti-Demiri (2014), internet consists of four phases. The first phase of the internet is the period of the 'open internet'; this phase was the internet's initial formation through about the year 2000. This term was intended to convey predictive, descriptive and normative meanings. The second phase is the 'access denied' period, the phase of development of the internet from 2000 until 2005. At this phase, activities and expression on the internet needed to be blocked or managed in various ways. The third phase is the 'access controlled' phase which lasts from 2005 to about 2010, at this phase they have emphasized regulatory approaches that function not only like filters or blocks, but also as variable controls. The last phase is the phase in which we are now; it is called 'access contested' phase, the period of social media.

According to the research conducted by Suanpang (2013), social media is an application that uses the internet to run the system and communicate users' messages using a



variety of approaches such as video, pictures and text to connect with others through online experiences and sharing. In 2002, the commonly accepted definition of social media defined system is a web based service that enables users to connect with one another and build public or private communications networks with shared relationships. Based on [Ramadani et al. \(2014\)](#), people no more connect to the internet just to find the information they want, but they also interact and contribute with their ideas. These platforms where people share information, ideas, photos, videos and other contents are called social media ([Drury, 2008](#)). According to [As'ad & Alhadid \(2014\)](#), social media marketing consist of the following dimensions; online communities, interactions, sharing of content, accessibility and credibility. Social media nowadays has enough complexity to allow marketers to be examined independently from different perspectives and currently there are few literatures have investigated the linked between the five mentioned components such as [Kim & Ko \(2012\)](#), [Kim & Ko \(2009\)](#) and [Babac \(2011\)](#).

Social media have revolutionized communication in tourism industry. Review of the current literature revealed that previous studies have examined the role of information technology in tourism, but still there is a lack of study to reveal how social media promote knowledge sharing processes ([Nezakati et al., 2015](#)). According to [Cao, Yu, & Tian Tian \(2017\)](#), social media provide tourism consumers with a two-way communication and interaction platform. They can not only search and adopt tourism evaluation information of others when making travelling decisions, but also instantly share tourism experience and satisfaction when travelling.

Social media is a popular strategy not only applied to web marketing but also used in business as a whole. Social media is known as one of the most powerful media in every aspect of life for today. There are many social networking sites nowadays such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube among all of them; Facebook has recorded as the highest number of users ([Haque, Momen, Sultana, & Yasmin, 2013](#)). According to Statcounter, better known as web traffic analysis tool, an analysis has been conducted until January 2018 on the statistics of social media usage worldwide. From the results, it indicates that the rate of Facebook usage is the highest at 75.45 percent followed by Pinterest 10.31 percent, Twitter 5.51 percent, Youtube 4.91 percent, Instagram 1.7 percent and Tumblr 0.64 percent. In the context of Malaysia, the results of the analysis from the Statcounter show that the rate of Facebook usage is still leading the other social media usage with 82.49 percent followed by Youtube 5.02 percent, Twitter 4.86 percent, Pinterest 4.65 percent, Instagram 1.11 percent and Tumblr 0.81 percent. However, according to [Hassan, Mohamed Zainal, & Mohamed \(2015\)](#), little attention has been paid to the relationship between pilgrimage and web activity. Thus, a research on social media might be benefits for the future references.

In Umrah tourism, a virtual medium is needed for users to interact socially by sharing experiences and opinions about Umrah travel industry on the internet. Hence, social media which known as a unique platform established from the occurrence of Web 2.0 technology might become suitable medium from the issues arises. It is built specifically for communicating and exchanging information. It allows users to share ideas and opinions more easily and interactively ([Yilmaz, 2016](#)). Social media platform has been widely developed today for the purpose of online sharing information. Individuals use social media tools like Facebook, Youtube and Twitter for different purposes such as forums and online communities, suggestions, ratings and reviews made by interacting with other online users ([Hajli, 2014](#)). The development of internet and the enhancement of information and

communication technology enable users to share travel experience when performing Umrah with other users via electronic Word of Mouth. Travel industry is known as a sector that has a very close relationship with the development of information technology. Today, social media can provide a variety of opportunities for individuals who perform Umrah to be able to share the experience that they gained from their travel through mediated online media. Sharing information that has been done to others indirectly attracts anyone who reads it to work on Umrah and make the travel more meaningful and memorable.

However, according to Shaw & Johnson (2011) in the current economic climate of public austerity National Tourism Organizations and more regionally and locally focused Destination Marketing Tools and tourism boards, are losing elements of their funding, offices and the ability to market as widely as they did previously, thus turns to social media as a relative low-cost and global reach marketing tool. Thus, Umrah tourism should take this low-cost opportunity as the main marketing tools in order to develop Malaysian Umrah Tourism in the future.

## **Conclusion**

Social media communication is a decisive factor behind the choice of Umrah consumers towards Umrah travel agency to perform Umrah. When making intention of booking Umrah decision, Umrah consumers seems relied on the positive or negative sharing of contents incurred via online medium. The sharing of contents medium includes photo sharing, blogging, micro-blogging, RSS, widgets, social networking, chat rooms, message boards, podcasts and video sharing which encourage users and travellers to post and share their travel experiences, comments, opinions to serve as a source of information for other users. Thus, further study on the relationship between social media experience includes two types of dimension such as interaction and sharing of contents may be conducted towards behavioral intention of consumers in order to know in facts the statistics of Umrah consumers' decision either social media is well practiced among Umrah consumers or vice versa. Other than that, mediating effect of attitudes can be included in the analysis to understand further the reaction of the customers either giving good or bad response towards social media application in Umrah tourism. The behavioral intention of the consumers can be analyzed further on their booking decision and intention of eWOM after social media has been applied in tourism industry seems eWOM has been declared much powerful than the traditional eWOM. The impact towards EWOM intention could be worthy to be studied. Other than that, lack of analysis occurred on the comparison between different generations when adapting with social media application. It is very important for businesses to understand how to interact with customers via social media especially from different generations. Different generations applied for different assumption in applying for technology. Different marketing strategies are needed to suites both generations. Further study on Generation X and Generation Y on their social media experience can be conducted. Generation Z could be out of the list because their maturity to make the decision is still doubted.

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