



Exploring the Influence of Online Consumer Reviews on Sales of Umrah Travel Agencies: The Moderating Role of Package Pricing

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the influence of online consumer reviews on the sales of Umrah travel agencies, with the Umrah package price serving as a moderator. The sample included 82 of the 296 registered Malaysian Umrah travel agencies. Secondary data on online consumer reviews were obtained from the Google Reviews and matched with the 2019 sales data of these agencies. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling was applied for data analysis. The results reveal that the reviewer expertise positively influences the sales of Umrah travel agencies. Surprisingly, identity disclosure was found to be insignificant. Additionally, the findings demonstrate the positive moderating effect of Umrah package price on this relationship. This study suggests that Umrah travel agencies encourage past customers to leave feedback on Google Reviews to increase the presence of expert reviewers. Additionally, leveraging online consumer reviews can help agencies engage with consumers, particularly when promoting premium Umrah packages.

Keywords: Online Consumer Reviews, Umrah Travel Agencies, Sales Performance, Moderating Effect

JEL Classifications: M31, L83

1. INTRODUCTION

Umrah is an Islamic pilgrimage undertaken by Muslims from around the world. It involves specific rituals and prayers performed in and around the Kaaba in Mecca, Saudi Arabia (Othman et al., 2021). This act of worship consists of five steps: Beginning with the intention for ihram at the meeqat, followed by the circumambulation of the Kaaba 7 times (tawaf), performing the ritual walking between the hills of Safa and Marwa (sa'i), shaving or trimming the hair (tahallul), and maintaining an orderly and reverent manner throughout (Majid et al., 2016). Muslims perform Umrah as a means of purifying their minds and bodies, demonstrating devotion to Allah, and seeking redemption for their sins (Almuhri and Alsawafi, 2017). Unlike Hajj, which is obligatory and performed during specific dates, Umrah can be undertaken at any time of the year and is not mandatory (Rusli et al., 2022). Nevertheless, it remains a profound and deeply meaningful observance for many Muslims.

The Umrah pilgrimage is experiencing substantial expansion, with increased participation worldwide, highlighting its growing importance within the global Muslim community. Recent statistics show that over 26.8 million Muslims performed Umrah, including 23.1 million non-Saudi participants and 3.7 million Saudi performers, reflecting an 8.5% increase compared to 2022 (General Authority for Statistics, 2024). Malaysia contributed over 400,000 Umrah pilgrims in 2023, as of April (PAPUH, 2023). In comparison, Indonesia accounted for 1.3 million Umrah performers, while India recorded 1.8 million, making it the third-largest contributor globally (Deccan Herald, 2023). These figures show the rising demand for the Umrah pilgrimage and its growing worldwide significance.

However, the current challenge is to preserve the positive image of the Umrah industry, as this can influence consumer perceptions of both the industry and Umrah travel agencies. A prevalent issue

of Umrah fraud has been reported over time, potentially tarnishing the industry's reputation (Mohd and Khairul Faezi, 2019). This issue is not only present in Malaysia but also in other Muslim countries such as India, Pakistan, and Indonesia (Supriyanto and Nurhadiyanto, 2023). The study by Supriyanto and Nurhadiyanto (2023) reported that Umrah fraud in Indonesia occurred due to deceptive cheap Umrah packages. This is similar to the fraud in Malaysia, where many individuals were defrauded due to cheap Umrah packages, as mentioned by Mohd and Khairul Faezi (2019). In Indonesia, Setiawan and Soewarno (2023) highlighted that more than 86,000 Indonesians were unable to perform Umrah in 2018 due to fraudulent practices by a travel agency. The main reason for being victimized in these cases is excessive trust in Umrah travel agencies, without proper verification of their licenses and track records. This is also similar to Malaysia, where most victims made quick decisions without proper verification of the Umrah travel agency, driven by the appeal of cheap Umrah packages (Department of WAQF, ZAKAT and HAJJ, 2014). Therefore, to preserve the positive image of the Umrah industry, it is essential to encourage consumers to verify and research travel agencies before making any decisions.

Despite this challenge, Muslims intending to perform Umrah can seek reliable additional information about Umrah travel agencies through online consumer reviews (OCRs), particularly on platforms like Google Reviews (Lee, 2009). These reviews enable prospective pilgrims to research the experiences of previous Umrah travelers who have utilized specific travel agencies (Setiawan and Soewarno, 2023). Rather than relying solely on information provided by travel agencies, unbiased OCRs can help Muslims minimize the risk of fraud (Tripathi and Wasan, 2021). Previous studies have shown that OCRs provide consumers with valuable insights, helping them make informed decisions (Langan et al., 2017; Godes and Mayzlin, 2004; Hu et al., 2008; Ha et al., 2015). Therefore, it is advisable for Muslims intending to perform Umrah to consider OCRs before purchasing an Umrah package.

The influence of OCRs has been extensively studied in the hospitality and e-commerce industries; however, a noticeable gap remains in research specifically concerning the tourism industry, particularly the Umrah pilgrimage (Ishak & Harun, 2023). In the hospitality industry, most research has focused on hotels (Xie and So, 2018; Kim et al., 2015; Phillips et al., 2017; Ye et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2017) and restaurants (Kim et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2021). In e-commerce, the literature is extensive, particularly in the context of the Amazon platform (Kaur and Singh, 2021; Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Chen et al., 2004; Hu et al., 2008; Zhang et al., 2013; Kim, 2014; Moen et al., 2017). This highlights the scarcity of OCR studies, especially regarding their influence on firm sales in tourism sectors like the Umrah pilgrimage.

In the field of Umrah marketing, existing studies have primarily focused on factors such as package design and marketing strategies that affect firm performance. For instance, Nurohman (2022) identified the design of Umrah packages as a key marketing strategy driving sales, while Putri and Sapriadi (2024) emphasized the role of innovative entrepreneurial marketing in enhancing

agency performance. However, the influence of OCRs on the sales of Umrah travel agencies remains unexplored, highlighting a significant research gap in this area.

Thus, the objective of this study is to investigate the influence of OCRs, particularly reviewer attributes, on the sales of Umrah travel agencies. The research also explores the moderating effect of the Umrah package in this relationship. This study aims to provide insights into how Umrah travel agencies can enhance their sales performance by leveraging OCRs and understanding the influence of the Umrah package on this relationship.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Influence of OCRs on Sales

The influence of OCRs on sales performance has been empirically tested in previous studies (Hyrnsalmi et al., 2015; Ye et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2016; Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Ha et al., 2015), which used OCR data from different review platforms. For example, Hyrnsalmi et al. (2015) studied OCRs of mobile applications on Google Play and found a positive influence of OCRs, specifically review valence, on mobile application sales performance. Another study by Kim et al. (2015) in the hotel industry revealed a positive influence of OCRs, particularly rating volume and review valence, on hotel room sales. These findings demonstrate that OCRs positively influence firm sales performance. While much of the existing research on OCRs focuses on various sectors within hospitality and e-commerce, there is a notable gap in studies addressing how OCRs influence sales within the specific field of Umrah. This study aims to bridge that gap by examining how OCRs influence the sales of Umrah travel agencies, providing insights into this niche area of religious tourism.

2.2. Reviewer Attributes

Most previous studies have defined reviewer attributes as the source-related features of OCRs (Hu et al., 2008; Hong et al., 2017; Lin and Xu, 2017; Zhao et al., 2015; Li et al., 2013; Filieri, 2015). According to Hong et al. (2017), reviewer attributes are factors related to the reviewer in OCRs, stemming from the reviewer's background and self-description on the platform, such as identity disclosure and expertise. Li et al. (2013) define reviewer attributes as elements of OCRs that originate from the source or origin of the OCRs on the platform, emphasizing that these attributes are tied to the characteristics of the reviewer who posted the OCR.

Previous studies have explored several reviewer-related dimensions, including information disclosure (Siering et al., 2018; Filieri, 2015; Hong et al., 2017; Hu et al., 2008; Floyd et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2015), expertise (Siering et al., 2018; Filieri, 2015; Hong et al., 2017; Hu et al., 2008; Floyd et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2015), credibility (Filieri, 2015), and gender (Liu et al., 2018). However, the presence of these dimensions depends on the platform hosting the review. For example, gender information is unavailable on the Google Reviews platform, while expertise and identity disclosure, particularly real name, are exposed on this platform.

In terms of function, reviewer attributes serve as a source of credibility, which can increase trust in the reviews (Hu et al., 2008;

Filieri, 2015; Lin and Xu, 2017; Langan et al., 2017). Hu et al. (2008) noted that consumers not only read the content of the OCR or the star rating but also examine the source (i.e., who posted the review). This suggests that the reviewer attribute, is crucial when investigating the influence of OCRs. Therefore, the operational definition of reviewer attributes in this study is the source feature of OCRs, measured by examining the reviewer's information on the OCR platform (Hu et al., 2008). Two dimensions are employed under this variable: identity disclosure and reviewer expertise.

2.2.1. Identity disclosure and sales performance

Identity disclosure in OCRs refers to the revelation of personal information, such as a real name, nickname, or self-image, by reviewers (Liu et al., 2019; Hong et al., 2017; Park and Nicolau, 2015; Yang et al., 2016; Forman et al., 2008). Previous research has identified a positive relationship between identity disclosure and sales performance. For instance, Forman et al. (2008) investigated the influence of identity disclosure—specifically, real name and location disclosure—on sales performance on the e-commerce site Amazon.com. They found that the presence of identity-relevant information in OCRs can influence the community's judgment of products and reviews, ultimately enhancing consumer purchase decisions and sales performance.

Other studies have explored the influence of identity disclosure on consumer behavior (Liu and Park, 2015; Filieri, 2015; Hong et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2015). For example, Liu and Park (2015) found a positive relationship between identity disclosure and perceived usefulness on a travel product website. Hong et al. (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of OCRs and established that reviewer identity disclosure positively influences review helpfulness. Siering et al. (2018) analyzed the influence of identity disclosure (e.g., real name) on review helpfulness and found a significant effect. Filieri (2015) discovered that source credibility, such as identity disclosure, positively affects consumers' perceived diagnosticity in the context of accommodations and restaurants. Kim et al. (2015) revealed that identity disclosure enhances the reliability of the OCR system, making readers more likely to trust the reviews. These findings demonstrate that identity disclosure has a positive influence on consumer behavior.

Although most studies have tested the influence of identity disclosure on consumer behavior, as noted by Mudambi and Schuff (2010), consumer behaviors such as purchase intention, perceived usefulness, and perceived trustworthiness ultimately influence purchase decisions and can influence sales. Thus, based on this evidence, identity disclosure is expected to positively influence the sales performance of Umrah travel agencies. The current study postulates that:

H₁: Identity disclosure positively influences the sales of Umrah travel agencies

2.2.2. Reviewer expertise and sales performance

Reviewer expertise refers to reviewers who possess more experience, knowledge, and ability to evaluate products or services, often indicated by badges or status markers on the review platform (Zhao et al., 2015). On the Google Reviews platform,

reviewers with more expertise are usually identified by the "Local Guide" badge.

Previous studies have found that reviewer expertise positively influences sales performance (Xie and So, 2018; Hu et al., 2008). For instance, Xie and So (2018), who examined 730 hotels in Texas, found that increasing the number of expert reviewers on the review platform—specifically those with higher badge status—led to improved sales performance. The study highlighted that when consumers are presented with multiple OCRs on the platform, they are more likely to trust the opinions of reviewers with greater expertise. This suggests that reviewer expertise plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes toward the posted OCRs, which in turn could influence purchase decisions and lead to increased sales (Zhao et al., 2015). A meta-analysis by Floyd et al. (2014) revealed that reviewer expertise can positively influence sales performance, identifying expertise as the most influential variable in their model due to its persuasive influence in reviews. Similarly, Hu et al. (2008) found that reviewer expertise positively influenced sales performance on the Amazon platform (for books, DVDs, and videos), demonstrating that consumers' purchase behaviors are driven by high-quality reviews written by experts. This further highlights the positive influence of reviewer expertise on sales performance.

Given these findings, it is evident that reviewer expertise can positively influence sales of Umrah travel agencies. The present study postulates that:

H₂: Reviewer expertise positively influences the sales of Umrah travel agencies.

2.2.3. Moderating effect of Umrah package price

The Umrah package price plays a crucial role in moderating the relationship between OCRs and sales performance. According to Hyrynsalmi et al. (2015), consumers often compare product prices before making a purchase decision and tend to rely more on OCRs when prices increase, as higher prices are perceived as riskier. De Maeyer (2012) noted that product price positively influences customers' purchasing decisions, which, in turn, affects sales. Floyd et al. (2014) found that varying price levels influence consumer perception of a product or service quality. As a result, consumers may rely on OCRs and proceed with caution when making a purchase, as higher prices are also associated with increased risks (Floyd et al., 2014). This highlights the moderating effect of price in the relationship between OCRs and sales.

In the field of Umrah, the minimum Umrah package price is MYR 4,854 (USD 1,036), while the highest exceeds MYR 10,000 (USD 2,140), involving high costs and increasing the associated risks (Department of WAQF, ZAKAT and HAJJ, 2014). As a result, Umrah customers are likely to thoroughly research travel agencies and refer to OCRs of Umrah travel agencies as additional information before making a decision. However, the moderating effect of Umrah package price on this relationship has not yet been tested. Therefore, it is essential to confirm the moderating effect of Umrah package price in the relationship between OCRs and the sales of Umrah travel agencies.

In addition, several previous studies have investigated the moderating effect of product price on the relationship between OCRs and sales performance (Hyrnsalmi et al., 2015; Ye et al., 2009; Moen et al., 2017; Archak et al., 2011; Maslowska et al., 2017). For example, a study by Hyrnsalmi et al. (2015) on OCRs of mobile applications explored the moderating effect of price on the relationship between OCRs and mobile application sales. The study found that the relationship between OCRs and sales performance becomes stronger and more effective as the price of the mobile application increases. This demonstrates the significant moderating effect of price on this relationship. However, research on this relationship remains limited. Moen et al. (2017) suggested the need for further investigation into the moderating effect of price on this relationship. Therefore, this study aims to examine the moderating effect of the Umrah package price on the relationship between OCRs (identity disclosure and expertise) and the sales performance of Umrah travel agencies, thereby extending the literature. The following hypotheses have been formulated:

H₃: The Umrah package price positively moderates the relationship between identity disclosure and the sales of Umrah travel agencies.

H₄: The Umrah package price positively moderates the relationship between reviewer expertise and the sales of Umrah travel agencies.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research approach by utilizing secondary data (Kaur and Singh, 2021). The sample consisted of 82 out of 296 Malaysian Umrah travel agencies registered with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture in 2019. Convenience sampling was used to select the agencies based on the availability of sales data, package prices, and OCRs for 2019 (Siering et al., 2018; Hyrnsalmi et al., 2015). Following the selection process, the required data for each agency were retrieved for further analysis.

The study included four variables: Two independent variables, one dependent variable, and one moderator variable. The independent variables were identity disclosure and reviewer expertise, while the dependent variable was the sales performance of Umrah travel agencies. The average price of the Umrah package served as the moderator. Each variable was measured using a single item on a ratio scale, which is suitable for firm-fixed factors such as actual sales, price, and OCR data (Kim et al., 2016; Hair et al., 2021).

The identity disclosure variable was measured by counting the number of reviewers who disclosed their real names on the Google Reviews platform, following previous studies (Liu et al., 2019;

Hong et al., 2017). The reviewer expertise variable was measured by identifying reviewers labeled as 'Local Guides' on the Google Reviews platform, based on prior research (Xie and So, 2018; Zhao et al., 2015). Actual sales data were obtained from the annual reports of Umrah travel agencies, accessible online through the Companies Commission of Malaysia (Kim et al., 2016). The moderator variable was the average Umrah package price for each agency in 2019, as reported by Hyrnsalmi et al. (2015). Table 1 presents the measurements for each variable used in this study.

For data analysis, we first conducted a company profile analysis to examine the participating Umrah travel agencies. Descriptive analysis was then performed using SPSS version 23 to provide an overview of the study variables. The next step involved PLS-SEM analysis using SmartPLS version 3.3, which included both measurement and structural models to test the hypotheses and assess significant influences. Additionally, PLS-SEM is appropriate for secondary data analysis, as suggested by Hair et al. (2021). The following section provides a detailed discussion of the data analysis and findings.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Companies Profile Analysis

This study involved 82 Umrah travel agencies, comprising 44% (n = 36) muassasah operators and 56% (n = 46) non-muassasah operators. The classification of the agencies into mature, mid-aged, and young companies was based on previous studies (Ayyagari et al., 2011; Noordin and Mohtar, 2014; Abu Bakar, 2011). The analysis revealed that the majority were mature companies, with an operating history of 11 or more years, representing 46.34% of the sample. Mid-aged firms, operating for 6-10 years, accounted for 35.36% (n = 29) of the sample. Meanwhile, 18.29% (n = 15) of the agencies, categorized as young companies, had been in business for <5 years. These findings indicate that the majority of Umrah travel agencies in this study are well-established and experienced firms.

The data shows that most of the Umrah travel agencies in this study were registered as private limited companies (Sdn. Bhd.), rather than public limited companies (Berhad). Under the Malaysia Companies Act 1965 (Act 125), private limited companies are owned by their shareholders, whereas public limited companies have shares that are traded publicly. This finding suggests that Malaysian Umrah travel agencies tend to establish private limited companies to retain control and ownership within the organization.

The regional grouping in this study was based on Yuhaniz et al. (2016). The data indicates that the majority of Umrah travel

Table 1: Description of variables in this study

| Variables | Data | Measurements | Sources |
|---------------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| Identity disclosure | Google reviews | The number of reviewers who disclosed their real names on Google Reviews for each agency | Liu et al. (2019) Hong et al. (2017) |
| Reviewer expertise | Google reviews | The number of reviewers identified as "local guide" on Google Reviews for each agency | Xie and So (2018) Zhao et al. (2015) |
| Sales performance | Annual report | Actual sales data for each agency in 2019 | Kim et al. (2016). |
| Average price | Agency's official website | Average price of Umrah package for each agency in 2019 | Hyrnsalmi et al. (2015) Maslowska et al. (2017) |

agencies were located in the central region, specifically Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, and Negeri Sembilan, accounting for 58.5% ($n = 48$) of the sample. The northern region, encompassing Pulau Pinang, Kedah, Perak, and Perlis, represented 17% ($n = 14$) of the sample, followed by the southern region, which includes Johor and Malacca, with 9.7% ($n = 8$). The eastern states—Kelantan, Terengganu, and Pahang—comprised 12.2% ($n = 10$) of the sample. Only 2.2% ($n = 2$) of the Umrah travel agencies were located in Sarawak, and none were based in Sabah. This distribution highlights that the central region, particularly Kuala Lumpur, serves as the primary hub for Umrah travel agencies.

4.2. Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was conducted using SPSS version 23 to provide an overview of the variables used in this study. The results are summarized in Table 2. The variables were measured quantitatively on a ratio scale, which typically includes a true zero value (Hair et al., 2021). This is reflected in the range of minimum and maximum values in the statistics, as shown in Table 2, where some variables have a minimum value of zero.

The statistics indicate that, on average, Umrah travel agencies received ten OCRs from individuals who disclosed their identities using real names. A minimum score of zero suggests that some agencies did not receive any reviews from reviewers using real names. Experts in this study were identified by the local badge logo assigned by the Google Review platform, which is awarded based on their contributions to the platform (Zhao et al., 2015; Xie and So, 2018). On average, each Umrah travel agency received four OCRs from experts. The minimum score of zero indicates that some agencies did not receive reviews from expert reviewers.

For the moderating variable, the average price of an Umrah package was MYR 7,146 (USD 1,565), with a maximum price of MYR 10,605 (USD 2,324) and a minimum price of MYR 5,590 (USD 1,223). Regarding sales, the statistics show that, on average, the sales of Umrah travel agencies in 2019 amounted to MYR 10,921,627 (USD 2,392,596). Table 2 provides a summary of these statistics.

4.3. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) involves two assessments: The measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model) (Ramayah et al., 2016). The measurement model focuses on evaluating reliability and validity. In contrast, the structural model assesses relationships between constructs, including collinearity, the significance of path coefficients, R-squared values, effect sizes, and predictive relevance. This study utilized SmartPLS version 3.3.3 to evaluate both the measurement and structural models.

4.3.1. Measurement model

The measurement model assessment was conducted first to confirm the structural model (Hair et al., 2021). The evaluation included internal consistency reliability and discriminant validity to assess the measurement model (Ramayah et al., 2016; Hair et al., 2021). Figure 1 presents the results of the measurement model, obtained after running the PLS algorithm in the SmartPLS software.

For the reliability assessment, the use of single-item measures for all constructs results in a Cronbach's alpha value of 1. However, this value does not necessarily indicate perfect reliability (Hair et al., 2021). The use of single-item measures is considered acceptable and appropriate in PLS-SEM, particularly in research utilizing secondary data from firm-fixed factors (Hair et al., 2021; Cai et al., 2023). This is because firm databases, being artifactual in nature, often rely on single-item measurements, which can provide valuable insights for research purposes (Hair et al., 2021).

In this study, discriminant validity was assessed using convergent validity based on Fornell and Larcker's criterion (Hameed Memon et al., 2013; Hair et al., 2021). According to this method, the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) on the diagonal should be higher than the correlations off the diagonal. Table 3 presents the squared roots of AVEs for all constructs. The results show that all constructs exhibit discriminant validity, as the squared roots of AVEs on the diagonal were higher than the inter-construct correlations in the corresponding rows and columns. Therefore, the measures meet the criteria set by Fornell and Larcker.

4.3.2. Structural model

4.3.2.1. Collinearity assessment

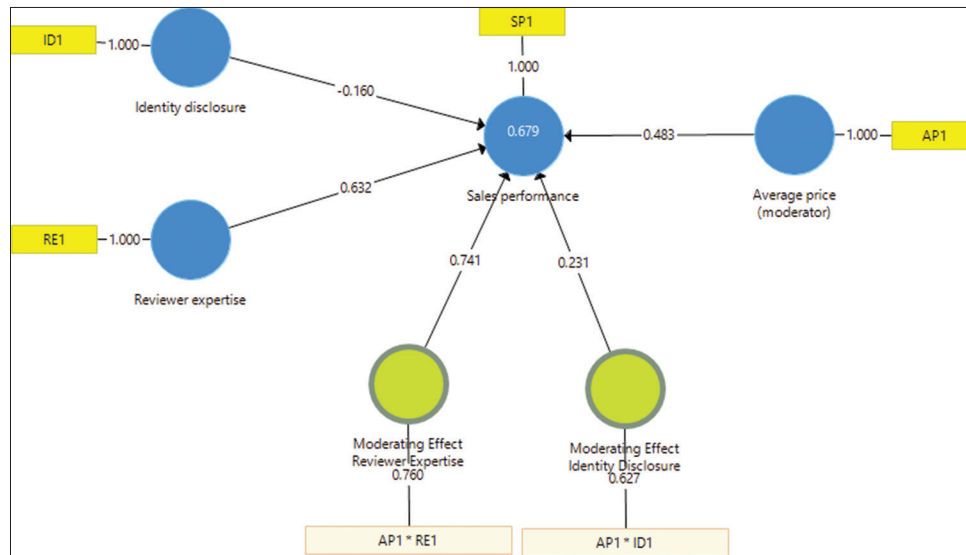
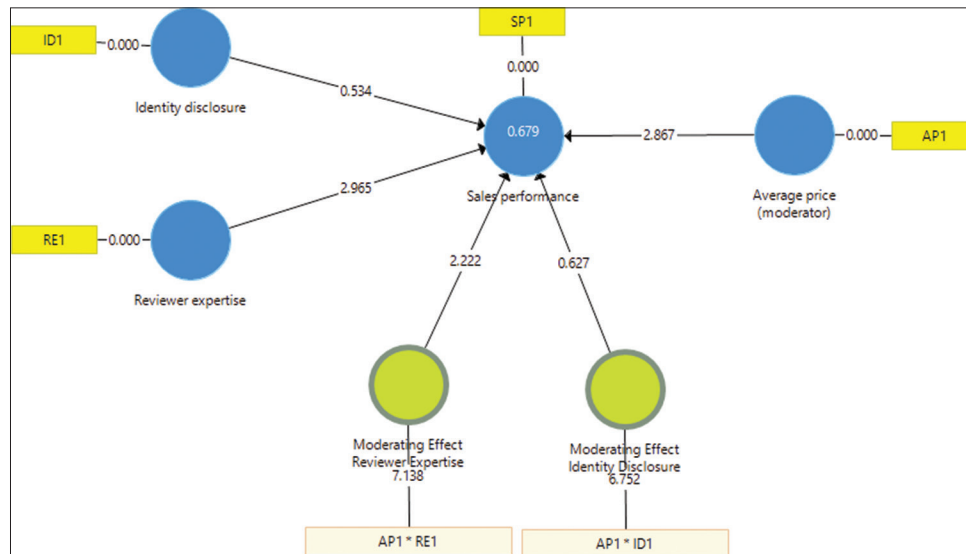
The first assessment involves evaluating structural model collinearity issues. The rule of thumb is that the inner variance inflation factor (VIF) value should be <5 (Hair et al., 2021; Ramayah et al., 2016) or, at most, <10 (Hair et al., 1995; Kim et al., 2016). Table 4 presents the results of the lateral collinearity test for this study. It shows that all inner VIF values for the independent variables are below 5, ranging from 1.695 to 4.629. Therefore, lateral collinearity is not an issue in this study's model.

4.3.2.2. Significance of path coefficient

The next step in evaluating the structural model is assessing the significance and relevance of the relationships. All hypothesis results were obtained in this step. The bootstrapping technique was applied using 5000 sub-samples (Hair et al., 2012; Ramayah et al., 2016). The bootstrapping results are presented in Figure 2, with the hypothesis testing decisions summarized in Table 5. A path is considered significant for a one-tailed test if the t-value is >1.645 (for a significance level of 5%) or 2.33 (for a significance level of 1%) (Ramayah et al., 2016). Four relationships were found to have t-values >1.645 , indicating significance at the 0.05 level.

Table 2: The descriptive statistic of all variables

| Variable | N | Mean | Med. | Mode | SD | Range | Min | Max |
|---------------------|----|----------|---------|-------|----------|-----------|-------|-----------|
| Identity disclosure | 82 | 9.51 | 4 | 1 | 15.34 | 83 | 0 | 83 |
| Reviewer expertise | 82 | 3.66 | 2 | 0 | 4.94 | 23 | 0 | 23 |
| Sales performance | 82 | 10921627 | 3684294 | 41280 | 25000599 | 211120854 | 41280 | 211162134 |
| Average price | 82 | 7146 | 6978 | 7240 | 896 | 5015 | 5590 | 10605 |

Figure 1: PLS model graph (PLS algorithm)**Figure 2:** PLS model graph (Bootstrapping)**Table 3: Fornell and Lacker's criterion**

| Construct | Average price | Identity disclosure | Reviewer expertise | Sales performance |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Average price | 1 | | | |
| Identity disclosure | 0.006 | 1 | | |
| Reviewer expertise | -0.05 | 0.708 | 1 | |
| Sales performance | 0.128 | 0.393 | 0.556 | 1 |

Table 4: Lateral collinearity assessment

| No. | Construct | Inner VIF |
|-----|---------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Average price | 1.695 |
| 2 | Identity disclosure | 4.629 |
| 3 | Reviewer expertise | 3.151 |

4.3.2.3. Identity disclosure and sales performance

Hypothesis 1 (H_1) examined whether identity disclosure (i.e., real name) has a positive influence on the sales of the Umrah travel agency. The results in Table 5 show that identity disclosure ($\beta = -0.160$, $t = 0.534$, $P > 0.05$) did not have a significant influence

on Umrah sales performance. Therefore, H_1 was not supported in this study.

4.3.2.4. Reviewer expertise and sales performance

Hypothesis 2 (H_2) examined whether reviewer expertise has a positive influence on the sales of the Umrah travel agency. The results in Table 5 reveal that reviewer expertise ($\beta = 0.632$, $t = 2.965$, $P < 0.01$) positively influences Umrah sales performance, as expected. Therefore, H_2 was supported in this study.

4.3.2.5. Moderating effect of umrah package price

Hypotheses 3 (H_3) and 4 (H_4) investigated the moderating effect of the average price of the Umrah package. The purpose of employing a moderator is to examine whether it can affect the strength or direction of the relationship between independent variables (X) and dependent variables (Y) (Memon et al., 2019; Baron and Kenny, 1986).

Table 5 indicates that the relationship between reviewer expertise and Umrah travel agency sales performance is positively

moderated by the average price of the Umrah package ($\beta = 0.741$, $t = 2.222$, $P < 0.05$), while identity disclosure shows no such effect. The simple slope visual in Figure 3 further illustrates this two-way interaction effect. The graph shows that when the price of the Umrah package increases by one standard deviation, the relationship between reviewer expertise and sales performance strengthens by 1.373 ($0.741 + 0.632$). Conversely, a decrease in price by one standard deviation results in a relationship of 0.109 ($0.741 - 0.632$). This suggests that the effect of reviewer expertise on the sales of Umrah travel agency is stronger when the price of the Umrah package is higher. Therefore, H_4 was supported, while H_3 was not.

4.3.3. Coefficient of determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) results, presented in Figure 1, represent the third step in evaluating the structural model. This value was derived using the PLS Algorithm. The R^2 value measures the proportion of variance in an endogenous construct that is explained by its predictor constructs (Hair et al., 2021). It reflects the model's ability to account for variation in the endogenous construct. The R^2 value ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating stronger explanatory power. According to Hair et al. (2012), R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 correspond to strong, moderate, and weak explanatory power, respectively, in social science research. In this study, the R^2 value for the endogenous construct (Umrah agency sales performance) was 0.679, rounded to 0.68, indicating that the predictor constructs explain 68% of the variance in the endogenous construct. Thus, the model demonstrates moderate explanatory power.

4.3.4. Effect size (f^2)

The fourth step in assessing structural models involves determining the effect size, known as f^2 , using the PLS Algorithm. The effect size (f^2) results are reported in Table 5. In PLS-SEM, the P-value indicates the statistical significance of the path in the model, while the effect size (f^2) represents the substantive significance, revealing whether the observed effect is large enough to be meaningful (Ramayah et al., 2016). According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, effect sizes of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are considered small, medium, and large, respectively. As shown in Table 5, reviewer expertise has the largest effect on the R^2 for Umrah sales performance, with an f^2 value of 0.395. This is followed by the interaction term of price*reviewer_expertise, which has an f^2 value of 0.274. The interaction term of price*identity_disclosure has a small effect, with an f^2 value of 0.011, and the effect of identity disclosure is similarly small, with an f^2 value of 0.017.

4.3.5. Predictive relevance (Q^2)

The final step in assessing a structural model is evaluating the path model's predictive relevance (Q^2). To assess the predictive relevance of the current study model, the blindfolding procedure proposed by Geisser (1975) and Stone (1974) was applied. According to Hair et al. (2012), a Q^2 value >0 indicates that the exogenous constructs have predictive relevance. The Q^2 value for Umrah sales performance in this study is 0.372, which is >0 . Therefore, this indicates that the predictive relevance of the research model in this study has been established.

4.4. Theoretical Implication

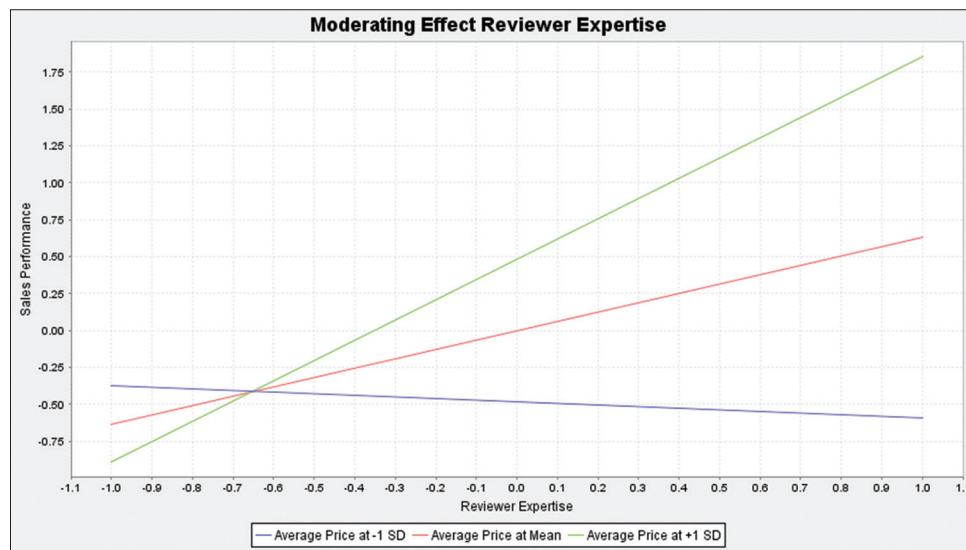
This study examines the influence of OCRs on the sales performance of Umrah travel agencies, with a particular focus

Table 5: Result of hypothesis testing

| No. | Age | Standard beta | Standard error | Effect size | t-value | Result |
|----------------|---|---------------|----------------|-------------|---------|---------------|
| H ₁ | Identity disclosure>sales performance | -0.160 | 0.303 | 0.017 | 0.534 | Not supported |
| H ₂ | Reviewer expertise>sales performance | 0.632 | 0.217 | 0.395 | 2.965** | Supported |
| H ₃ | Moderating effect identity disclosure>sales performance | 0.231 | 0.373 | 0.011 | 0.627 | Not supported |
| H ₄ | Moderating effect reviewer expertise>sales performance | 0.741 | 0.334 | 0.274 | 2.222* | Supported |

** $P < 0.01$ (2.33); * $P < 0.05$ (1.645)

Figure 3: Simple slot plot moderating effect reviewer expertise



on the moderating effect of Umrah package price. Our findings show that OCRs, particularly through reviewer expertise, positively influences the sales performance of Umrah travel agencies. This aligns with previous research (Xie and So, 2018; Zhao et al., 2015; Hu et al., 2008). However, our study offers different perspectives and contributes new insights to the literature.

The difference in our findings lies in the crucial role of reviewer expertise in shaping consumers' purchase decisions, particularly for high-priced products like Umrah packages. This finding supports prior studies (Floyd et al., 2014; Xie and So, 2018), which assert that expert reviewers are perceived as more trustworthy and reliable, thereby exerting a greater influence on consumer behavior. Given that Umrah packages are typically priced at RM7,146 (USD 1,565), the perceived risk is heightened. As a result, consumers are more likely to rely on OCRs from expert reviewers on Google Reviews. These expert reviewers are seen as having extensive knowledge and credibility, making their reviews influential in reducing consumer uncertainty when purchasing Umrah packages (Zhao et al., 2015; Purnawirawan et al., 2014; Mitchell and Dacin, 1996). This highlights the critical role of OCRs, particularly expert reviews, in driving sales for Umrah travel agencies.

Nonetheless, our study found that identity disclosure had no influence on the sales of Umrah travel agencies. This finding differs from previous studies (Forman et al., 2008; Hong et al., 2017), which suggested that a more detailed identity disclosure could help reduce consumer uncertainty. In this study, identity disclosure refers to the number of reviewers who revealed their real names on Google Reviews. The limited nature of identity disclosure on this platform, primarily restricted to reviewers' names, may explain why it did not significantly affect sales performance. This limitation contrasts with studies like that of Forman et al. (2008), who found that more comprehensive identity information (e.g., hobbies, locations) on platforms like Amazon had a significant influence on sales. As Umrah packages are high-stakes purchases, the lack of additional identity information on Google Reviews may prevent consumers from fully trusting the OCRs, thereby reducing the influence of this factor on sales of Umrah travel agencies. Thus, while identity disclosure remains important, its influence may be platform-dependent (Liu et al., 2019).

Another novel contribution of our study is the exploration of the moderating effect of Umrah package price in the relationship between OCR and sales. Our findings indicate that the influence of reviewer expertise on sales performance strengthens as the Umrah package price increases. This aligns with existing literature, which suggests that consumers are more likely to seek additional information when making high-risk purchases (Kim et al., 2015). Factors such as price are closely linked with trust, which is crucial in online purchase decisions, as highlighted by Joo (2015). Therefore, for high-priced products, customers may seek more information from OCRs, especially expert reviews, to enhance their trust. This finding underscores the essential role

of Umrah package pricing in shaping consumers' information-seeking behavior when making purchase decisions.

Overall, we established that OCRs significantly influence the sales performance of Umrah travel agencies, particularly through the reviewer expertise dimension. This finding highlights the importance of incorporating OCRs into the marketing strategies of Umrah travel agencies. Furthermore, Umrah package price positively moderates this relationship. Therefore, when an Umrah travel agency offers higher-priced packages compared to competitors, OCRs from expert reviewers should be prominently featured in marketing materials and advertisements to help potential customers make informed decisions. Additionally, this finding provides valuable insight for Umrah travel agencies in re-evaluating their pricing strategies.

4.5. Managerial Implication

There are three key implications for Umrah travel agencies. Firstly, the positive influence of reviewer expertise on Umrah travel agencies' sales performance suggests that agencies should focus on increasing the number of expert reviewers on platforms like Google Reviews. This can be achieved by consistently encouraging past customers to leave reviews, fostering a culture where both positive and negative feedback is welcomed. By doing so, Umrah travel agencies can not only increase the presence of expert reviewers but also continuously enhance their services based on valuable customer input.

Secondly, Umrah travel agencies should pay special attention to OCRs from expert reviewers, as these carry greater influence on consumer decisions. Staff managing Google Reviews should be trained to recognize and respond effectively to expert feedback. This will help build a stronger relationship between the agency and expert reviewers, enhancing the agency's overall reputation on the platform and contributing to improved sales performance.

Lastly, the influence of reviewer expertise on sales is stronger when associated with premium Umrah packages, due to the moderating effect of price. Umrah travel agencies should leverage OCR, both online and offline, to engage with customers. Given the higher cost and perceived risk of premium packages, customers often seek more comprehensive information to reduce uncertainty. Expert reviews, as a reliable source of information, become especially critical in this context. Therefore, Umrah travel agencies should ensure that OCR, particularly from expert reviewers, is easily accessible to assist potential customers in making informed decisions.

5. CONCLUSION

The current study aims to examine the influence of OCR on the sales performance of travel agencies in the Umrah pilgrimage sector, with the Umrah package price serving as a moderator. Our findings on the positive influence of OCR, particularly through the reviewer expertise dimension, offer a meaningful contribution. Umrah travel agencies can leverage OCR, especially from expert reviewers, in their marketing campaigns to enhance sales

performance. Additionally, the study highlights the important role of Umrah package pricing, providing valuable insights into pricing strategies. Specifically, premium Umrah packages require more comprehensive information to assist consumers in making informed decisions. Based on these significant findings, Umrah travel agencies should fully utilize OCR and strategically incorporate it into their marketing efforts. In conclusion, OCR has a significant influence on the sales performance of Umrah travel agencies. Although it is not the only factor influencing sales, it could play a crucial role in driving sales for these agencies. Furthermore, this study on the influence of OCR in the context of the Islamic Umrah pilgrimage suggests that OCR is a generalizable strategy that can be adopted across various industries. Consequently, businesses in various industries should adopt OCR as part of their marketing strategy. The limitation of this study is the measurement of the “identity disclosure” dimension, which is currently assessed solely based on the reviewer’s real name. This limitation arises from the nature of Google Reviews, where information about the reviewer’s identity is limited. Thus, future studies should explore additional aspects of identity disclosure across different review platforms, such as Amazon, Yelp, Airbnb, and others, to better understand its influence.

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