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SELLING RELIGIOUS RITUALS IN INDONESIA: Commodification of Umrah Pilgrimage by Travel Agents

Dede Nurohman

Abstract

The flourishing lucrative business of Umrah pilgrimage in Indonesia has disrupted pilgrims from the substantial meaning of Umrah as a form of worship. The travel business industry designs some umrah packages as merely commonplace travel packages, instead of as a form of devoted worship. Innumerable number of umrah travel agents relentlessly promote attractive packages for umrah pilgrimage at an affordable price using any possible marketing strategies to win customers, the attempts which downgrade the pilgrimage as a mere traded commodity. This paper aims to reveal the marketing strategies of Umrah travel agents to promote their umrah packages, which is highly correlated with the commodification of religion. This article finds two primary marketing strategies of umrah travel agents: product design in various umrah packages, celebrity endorsement, involvement of managers of religious social institutions as distributors, and giving bonuses. The process of commodification of Umrah is carried out by incorporating popular cultural sentiments in Umrah products, and turns umrah into a product of worship that offers convenience.

Keywords

umrah travel agency; umrah marketing; commodification of religion

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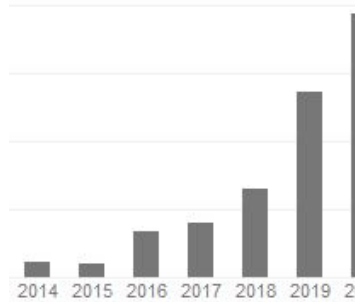
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