

Chapter 13

Strategizing Islamic Medicine Marketing Through Social Media: The Case of Northern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explored the role of social media in marketing Islamic medicine. The chapter utilized qualitative case study approach through interviews and participant observation. Using purposive sampling, a sample of ten respondents were interviewed in Kano and Kaduna. The author found that social media has strategic positive implications for the marketing of Islamic medicines in Northern Nigeria. In addition, Islamic medicine practitioners use content creation and influencer marketing to create awareness and increase visibility of their products. The prospects of social media adoption lie in the promotion and customization of advertising strategies such as influencer marketing and content creation, which draw attention and aid in promoting a product. Despite its prospect in expanding market share, lack of regulation and the spread of fake news pose serious challenges. Therefore, the chapter suggested that the Nigerian government should support and encourage the business of Islamic medicine through regulations on health standards, fair marketing policies and sound digital innovation.

INTRODUCTION

The global adoption of Islamic medicine products, commonly referred to as prophetic medicines, has experienced a rapid and substantial expansion in recent time. Moreover, Alrawi & Fetters, (2012) sees Islamic medicine as a healing method used within the framework of Islamic religious influences. In addition, it consists of herbal medicine, nutritional habits, mental-physical therapies, and spiritual healing. The medication process is crucial in treating several diseases such as HIV, COVID-19, sexual and

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spiritual-related problems (Tocco, 2011; Maideen, 2020; Muhammad, 2022; Bello & Isah, 2015; Aliyu Gobir et al., 2018). However, the practice is very common in Northern Nigeria – a Muslim dominated region. It is a lucrative business providing employment opportunities to many. With the evolution of the digital era, the Islamic pharmacist adopts the use of social media for marketing Islamic Medicine, besides the traditional marketing strategies. Interestingly, social media has influenced how people interact and communicate with one another. Accordingly, people can communicate virtually using social media, particularly those socially connected on the Internet. In addition, social media's unique features and popularity have influenced traditional marketing strategies. It has a significant impact on dissemination of information across to the target audiences be it marketing, sermon, and related issues.

Cheung et al., (2021) maintain that social media marketing is currently the most essential element of a marketing strategy due to its interactive nature. Also, Assaad & Gomez, (2013) argue that Social media platforms offer the opportunity to interact personally with clients, which is frequently hard or challenging to do via traditional means. Thus, it should be understood that Marketing on social media does not take over the role of traditional marketing strategies. Rather, it should be viewed as an additional medium with unique capabilities that support more marketing activities. Therefore, strategizing social media to promote its marketing will have many benefits in upgrading the business. First, it is expected to foster market penetration by increasing market share, thereby improving revenue and increasing production. Second, modernizing Islamic medicine marketing is necessary due to intense competition between Islamic medicine and conventional (modern) medicine. Through a well- coordinated social media marketing, the entrepreneurs could increase consumer awareness about the effectiveness of their products. This is important because there are many people who perceive Islamic medicine as ineffective and inferior to modern medications. However, many Islamic medicinal products have been tested and trusted but such vital information is not widely circulated to the potential customers. Third, social media would be instrumental in promoting cooperation among the business stakeholders. Due to proliferation of sub-standard Islamic medicines and incompetent practitioners, the business owners may lean on social media as a platform to educate the masses on how to differentiate between original and sub-standard products, and between competence and incompetence. This would help in sanitizing the business and boost consumer confidence to patronizing the products.

Against the above background, the aim of this study is to discuss Islamic medicine entrepreneurship in the context of northern Nigeria by investigating how social media is used as a strategy to promote Islamic medicine marketing and exploring how Islamic medicine, social media, and marketing interact. The study will examine the potential benefits as well as the challenges that arise when Islamic medication processes adopt the use of social media for marketing. To achieve this goal, the study raised the following questions:

- 1- To what extent does successful social media marketing promote Islamic medicine in Northern Nigeria?
- 2- What variables contributed to the success of an effective social media Islamic medicine marketing campaign?

The current study contributes to the literature and practice in the following ways:

- 1- It offers policy suggestion to the authorities on the importance of regulating and monitoring the practice of Islamic medicine both online and offline so as to guarantee the safety, quality, and efficacy of the products.

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