



# Uncertainty Reduction Strategy by Prospective Hajj Pilgrims (Hajj Departure Cases Due Covid-19 Pandemic)

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**Abstract.** As a country with a Muslim majority population, the cancellation of the departure of Indonesian pilgrims for two consecutive years has become a major issue that has attracted quite a lot of attention. In 2022, prospective Hajj pilgrims are again feeling restless due to the uncertainty of the departure of the Hajj pilgrimage in the midst of the Omicron case slowly creeping up. This study aims to describe how communication conflicts occur in the process of providing information services. This study uses a qualitative approach by applying the case study method using the Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) strategy. The findings in this study are the occurrence of communication problems between prospective pilgrims as stakeholders. They have not fully obtained the Right to Information that should be given by the Ministry of Religion as a State Public Agency that is bound by Public Information Disclosure.

**Keywords:** Cancellation of Hajj · Public Information Disclosure · Uncertainty Reduction Theory

## 1 Introduction

Since the beginning of 2020, the world has been shocked by the outbreak of a virus known as the coronavirus, also known as COVID-19. To minimize the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the World Health Organization (WHO) urges every individual to stay active at home. Even governments in various countries also impose restrictive policies by means of lockdown. Lockdown is allegedly able to be a solution for health aspects, but this causes a series of problems with other aspects of life. Gradually, there are multidimensional crises in various countries, both from health, social, economic, cultural, and political aspects.

One of the impacts of the multidimensional crisis that occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic is the restriction of Hajj by the government of Saudi Arabia for 2 years in a row. For the implementation of the Hajj in 2022, the government of Saudi Arabia has not provided much information for now. However, based on the meeting of the Ministry

**Table 1.** Quota of pilgrims who can depart since 2020. Source: The Ministry of Religion issues Minister of Religion Decree Number 121 of 2020 concerning Determination of Hajj Quotas for the Year 1441H/2020M.

Reguler Hajj			Special Hajj		
203.320 quota			17.680 quota		
Regular pilgrims of the current year	Priority regular Hajj elderly	Regional Hajj officers	Special Hajj pilgrims current year	Hajj priority for elderly	Special Hajj officer
199.518 quota	2.040 quota	1.512 quota	15.951 quota	354 quota	1375 quota

of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia with the Ministry of Hajj of Saudi Arabia on March 20, 2022, there is good news that the government of Saudi Arabia has reopened opportunities for pilgrims from foreign countries.

As for quotas, he explained, the decision-making process on quotas, must involve other relevant agencies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Tawfiq F. Al-Rabiah also explained that the number of quotas will not be the same as before the pandemic. Certainty related to Hajj quota is awaited by all countries sending pilgrims, not only Indonesia. In addition to Menag Yaqut, a number of religious ministers from various countries have also met with the Minister of Hajj and Umrah, Saudi Arabia, to ask the same question, namely about quotas. Among them are Minister of Religious Affairs Uagama Malaysia, Minister of Religion, Turkey, Qatar, Tunisia, Etopia, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, and other countries [1].

The Indonesian government can do little other than follow the provisions of the Saudi Arabian government as the host. The Indonesian government remains optimistic that Indonesian pilgrims will go to the Holy Land to perform the Hajj. In Indonesia itself, it is certain that the pilgrims who are prioritized to depart are the pilgrims who should depart since 2020. From the Table 1, many people question their chances of being dispatched to the Holy Land considering that the Omicron variant virus still affects various countries. The prospective pilgrims believe there will certainly be adjustments in the implementation of this year's hajj, including the amount of quota that can be dispatched from each country.

This is consistent with a statement from Ahmad Ridani, the head of the Hajj and Umrah Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of East Kalimantan province, who stated that the process of preparing for the departure of Hajj in 2022 for East Kalimantan province does not encounter significant problems, however what has always been a question in society today is related to the certainty of Hajj departure, the amount of Hajj quota and the cost of Hajj travel (the presence or absence of additional costs for Hajj travel or Biph) [2].

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Uncertainty Reduction Strategies

In life, we are always surrounded by uncertainty. We might reduce such uncertainty through communication and information selection. Whenever we interact with people, we tend to acquire information from them. The gathering of information is our natural approach to understanding our interlocutor so that we may subsequently develop a healthy relationship in conversation.

Uncertainty is the inability of a person to predict or explain the behavior, feelings, attitudes, or values of others. While anxiety refers to feelings of anxiety, tension, worry or anxiety about something that will happen. This theory explains how a person communicates under uncertain circumstances with the environment they encounter. Uncertainty reduction theory identifies uncertainty in two forms of uncertainty derived from dyadic interactions. Cognitive uncertainty refers to the uncertainty or doubt experienced by a person about their own beliefs and the beliefs of others. The second form of behavioral uncertainty refers to problems created by individuals that are self-inflicted.

The reduction of uncertainty about other individuals will lead to trust. Trust is a belief in others who behave well through their intelligence and character. Trust can therefore be described as a psychological phenomenon that can be achieved through interaction. Yoo said that a reduction in uncertainty is needed in building a trust. Communication with others can result in the formation of trust. So according to the facts based on the Journal entitled “Why Should I Trust You? The Path From Information Valence To Uncertainty Reduction, Cognitive Trust, and Behavioral Trust” [3].

In formulating the theory of uncertainty reduction has identified three types of strategies that individuals use to reduce uncertainty in finding information about others that are not yet known, namely passive strategies, active strategies, and interactive strategies. Currently, academics are starting to add another type of uncertainty reduction strategy in the context of computer-mediated communication, which is an extractive strategy that is a strategy for finding information that may be very common and often.

### 2.2 Public Information Disclosure

Public communication must be Transparent. This is the mandate of the law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14 of 2008 on Public Information Disclosure (KIP). This law states that KIP is a feature of democracy, human rights, people’s sovereignty for supervision in the implementation of the state. Therefore, the openness of Public Information Management is important. Public communication is necessary for the flow of information and social change to provide benefits in governance.

The Public Information Disclosure Law encourages all public bodies to open various public information, and provide access to the public. The information that must be disclosed can be information that must be announced periodically, must be available at all times, or information that must be announced. Access and disclosure of information can affect the level of community participation such as preparation, implementation, involvement and decision-making. The Public Information Disclosure Law is one of the regulations that aims to encourage good governance for public services and community

participation in national development. Disclosure of information creates transparency and accountability in resource management and Budget use [4].

### 3 Methods

This research uses qualitative approach by applying case study method using Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) strategy. Kholifah Siti explained that qualitative research is a research process that has a deeper level of criticism from all research processes carried out. While the type used in this study is a case study. [5] A case study is defined as a description and in-depth analysis of a restricted system [6]. Application of case studies using Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) strategy. Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) is a theory proposed by Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese. Data collection techniques are Indepth Interviewing and direct observation. Data analysis using the viewpoint that consists of three flow of activities that occur simultaneously, namely: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

### 4 Result and Discussion

#### 4.1 Pelaksanaan Haji 2022

Based on the mandate of Article 107 of Law No. 8 of 2019 on the Organization of Hajj and Umrah, it is stated that the organization of Hajj is a national task and is the responsibility of the government carried out by the Minister. Religion. The implementation of Hajj involves various related parties such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Law and human rights, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Transportation, Local Governments, the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the private sector.

The lack of government transparency regarding the 2022 Hajj departure information resulted in communication conflicts between prospective pilgrims as stakeholders. They have not fully obtained the right to information that should be provided by the Ministry of Religious Affairs as a state public body that is bound by Public Information Disclosure. A number of debates arose due to the lack of disclosure of information related to the departure of Hajj to prospective pilgrims. Facing an information crisis in the midst of a pandemic, organizations are required to respond immediately by communicating with prospective pilgrims. For this reason, it is very important to establish good communication, one of which is through messages and statements delivered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, either directly in a press conference in front of the media or through messages delivered in the official Indonesian media. Ministry of religion. Seeing the urgency of the message in the communication, it is interesting to study how the message in the communication crisis that occurred in the Ministry of Religion is related to the cancellation of the departure of Indonesian pilgrims in 2022.

## 4.2 Government Openness in Submission of Information

In line with the enactment of the Public Information Disclosure Act, good governance which requires accountability, transparency, and community participation in every process of public policy is strengthening. Every public body as mandated in Law No. 14 of 2008 article 7 Paragraph 3 shall build and develop information systems and documentation to manage public information properly and efficiently so that information services can provide access easily. Even further every public body needs to carry out the management of information and documentation that can guarantee the provision of information that is easy, careful, fast, and accurate. The implementation of the KIP law as one of the ways to good governance, has been widely implemented by Government Public Bodies, but not all government public bodies have properly and correctly implemented it, in the sense that there are still many provisions in the Public Information Disclosure Act law that have not been implemented as optimally as possible.

This is evident from the results of research that the authors have done, namely *adanya* uncertainty in communication, one of which can arise in public relations with the government. The government as a public servant must listen to the voice of the public and answer their questions regarding the uncertainty of an issue. Such as the 2022 Hajj pilgrims who feel they are not entitled to information that should be provided by the Ministry of religion as a state public body related to the departure of Hajj. Most prospective pilgrims have not received exact information regarding the cancellation of the 2022 Hajj.

The state of Indonesia's constitution explicitly states that "everyone has the right to communicate and get information to build their personal and social environment, and has the right to seek, obtain, hold, store, process, and disseminate information through all sorts of accessible channels" (Article 28 F of the 1945 Constitution). This demonstrates that every Indonesian person has the right to acquire information, both general and government-related, from a variety of sources. This information disclosure is supposed to realize *transparansi* to the public, hence reducing the risk of corruption, collusion, and nepotism in state implementation.

## 4.3 Uncertainty Reduction Strategy by Prospective Hajj Pilgrims

The government can reduce the uncertainty of information disclosure related to Hajj departure by using Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) strategy. Berger & Calabrese, the originators of the uncertainty reduction theory or URT, stated that over time, uncertainty will decrease by itself due to the closeness and openness that is built. Due to the development of the Times, URT has also undergone developments with how this theory can be used not only at the beginning of a relationship, but also in ongoing and completed relationships. So that this theory can be used in the long term [7].

Through the problem of uncertainty, the use of uncertainty reduction theory by Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese can be used as a reference in reducing the uncertainty faced. Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) provides an explanation of how a person communicates when faced with an uncertain situation for himself [8]. URT seeks to explain and predict when, why, and how individuals use communication to reduce uncertainty when interacting with others. Research by Shania and Ratri describes the

use of URT in direct interactions. [9] Research (Tang & Lin) sees URT as something that can not only be applied in face-to-face situations, but also situations that do not need to be face-to-face [10].

Fatwasuci & Irwansyah research explains that deep URT can be associated with contemporary cases to be applied in network-based or online situations. [11] Based on the above description, the researcher aims to describe how communication conflicts occur in the process of providing information services.

Information searching behavior carried out by prospective pilgrims, either passively, actively, or interactively, becomes very important when searching for information related to Hajj departure. This behavior is necessary so that users can reduce the uncertainty of information and News found from invalid sources. Not only that, it can also reduce other unwanted adverse events. Using the URT information to be obtained can help determine whether the information is worthy of a reference source or definitive information or not.

Efforts being undertaken by the government in public information disclosure to offer the public as much information as possible on the implementation of Hajj include uploading a large amount of material on the official government channel. Streaming work meetings on YouTube channels, for example, or putting work meeting points on the official government website. However, the administration experienced difficulties in putting the plan into action on the ground.

One of the obstacles to the departure of Hajj in 2022 is the absence of an official statement by the Government of Saudi Arabia that has not determined the amount of Hajj quota for each country even though the time for Hajj preparation is getting narrower. Uncertainty from the Government of Saudi Arabia resulted in the government providing information that tends to float and speculative.

### **Information Searching**

People can reduce the uncertainty of information disclosure related to the departure of Hajj using the Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) strategy. Berger & Calabrese, the originators of the uncertainty reduction theory or URT, stated that over time, the uncertainty will decrease by itself due to the closeness and openness that is built. Due to the development of the times, URT has also experienced developments with how this theory can be used not only at the beginning of a relationship, but also in ongoing and completed relationships. So this theory can be used in the long term [7].

Information-seeking behavior or information seeking performed by prospective pilgrims, either passively, actively, or interactively, is very important when looking for information related to the departure of Hajj. This behavior is needed so that users can reduce the uncertainty of information and news found from invalid sources. Not only that, it can also reduce other unwanted bad events. By using the URT the information that will be obtained can help determine whether the information is worthy of being a source of reference or definite information or not. Without certainty in the information obtained.

**Passive strategy** is a strategy that is carried out by individuals in an effort to reduce uncertainty by seeking information without carrying out activities (passive) or observing the environment around the target to be identified. This observation activity does not have to involve other people, but only makes observations in informal situations.

At the first time in uncertain situations and conditions, people usually make observations around them. In passive information seeking, prospective Hajj pilgrims make observations by viewing, reading, or listening to the news. News can be obtained from electronic media and internet media.

**Active strategies** require individuals to take action to obtain information without interacting with the target directly. Behaviors that fall into this category include asking third parties for information and managing situations to see how the target responds.

At this stage, prospective Hajj pilgrims actively seek information through searching the media and asking questions to third parties without the involvement of the target. At this active search stage, the process of gathering information is mostly carried out by prospective Hajj pilgrims through a process of interaction, either personally, on social media, or through creating special situations that involve a third person as a source of information. For example, by participating in interacting indirectly with fellow netizens on official government publication channels. Or participate in group discussion forums organized by the Office of the Ministry of Religion in each region.

**Interactive strategy** requires direct communication with the intended target. For example, asking questions, expressing the hope that the target will respond well, and feeling comfortable sharing information with the target.

Interactive strategy is done by doing massive interaction. The hope of interacting is that by finding other people with the same fate and establishing direct communication, they find it easier to exchange ideas and seek certainty of information regarding the 2022 Hajj pilgrimage. The prospective Hajj pilgrims also build relationships by forming whatsapp groups or social media groups, like Facebook. In addition, some of them even dared to vent and write articles in readers' letters. So, in addition to obtaining information certainty by reducing uncertainty, there is a sense of comfort obtained by joining people who have the same fate [12].

## 5 Conclusion

The Government of Saudi Arabia announced that the implementation of Hajj will be regulated by observing strict health protocols. However, the Government of Saudi Arabia has not given certainty about the quota of pilgrims from each country. Because of this uncertainty, the government does not provide information openly and transparently to prospective pilgrims. So it happened communication problems between prospective pilgrims as stakeholders. They have not fully obtained the right to information that should be provided by the Ministry of religious affairs as a state public body that is bound by Public Information Disclosure. The government needs to continue to make diplomatic efforts to the Government of Saudi Arabia related to the certainty of the departure of Indonesian pilgrims considering the approaching time of the implementation of the Hajj ibadah.

The government's involvement is critical in order to continue to strive for public information disclosure by completing all of its responsibilities under the Public Information Disclosure Law. Public bodies (Ministry of Religious Affairs) must support public information disclosure by providing information to prospective pilgrims on a regular basis to ensure the implementation of policies that are open, transparent, and accountable and

can be accessed quickly, timely, effectively, affordably, and simply. The availability of public information can be used to facilitate government collaboration with other stakeholders. People will be encouraged to get incorrect or even false information if they do not have access to information disclosure.

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