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WhatsApp as a strategy to socialise funeral products during the Covid-19 pandemic

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Abstract The Covid-19 pandemic has forced many people to stay at home. People in Indonesia are encouraged to work from home (WFH) from 2020 until 2022. The WFH has significantly impacted the economy, especially among field workers. The Memorial Advisor (MA) from Al-Azhar Memorial Garden is one of a profession that was affected. The MA cannot promote its product and services during this time. Therefore, the sales are decreasing. This study describes how the MA uses WhatsApp to socialise their product and services to seek potential customers amid the pandemic. This research involved descriptive qualitative methods, with five MAs as respondents. This study showed that the MAs maximised WhatsApp in socialising funeral products to customers during the pandemic. MAs used WhatsApp features such as "Profile Picture" and "Status" to attract people by keeping their contact numbers. The funeral product details were later socialised in texts, photos, and videos. Culturally taboo, funeral prices will never be mentioned by the MA unless potential customers are asking about it.

Keywords: WhatsApp; communication; socialisation; media; memorial advisor

INTRODUCTION

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Some Indonesians are not too serious about the emergence of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) in China at the end of 2019 (Azanella, 2020). Due to the ignorance of the Indonesians in 2020, Covid-19 was spread out massively. In March 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the Covid-19 pandemic very dangerous all around the globe. This warning made many countries, including Indonesia, impose various restrictions to tackle this issue. One of the Indonesian government policies was to work from home or WFH (Purba, 2020). This regulation hit the Indonesian economy bases, as more than 50 per cent of its workforce is in the informal sectors (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020).

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People started to suffer and become frustrated. Many companies had difficulty running their business effectively and maximally due to a lack of employees. Many businesses closed, and some continued their operation by cutting their employees (Dwitama, 2020). However, some companies survive and gain benefits in this worse situation. The modern Muslim funeral house Al-Azhar Memorial Garden is one of them because their business is related to people who passed away due to the pandemic tragedy (Mihardi, 2020).

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, people in several regions of Indonesia have refused to bury the bodies of Covid-19 patients due to the unfounded assumption that the bodies may be a transmission source (Azanella, 2020). These rejections often trigger conflict in communities and societies. Funeral activities and ceremonies were increasingly important because of these kinds of rejections. People started to think wisely about dealing with funereal activities in case their family members died because of Covid-19.

Furthermore, Indonesians are concerned about burying the bodies of Covid-19 patients due to limited burial grounds. We took an example; based on data from the DKI Jakarta Park and Forestry Service in early 2021, the occupancy rate of 68 out of 82 Public Cemeteries (TPU) has almost reached 100 per cent (Anugrah, 2021). Meanwhile, three TPUs provided for the bodies of Covid-19 patients are fully occupied until January 2021. These three cemeteries are TPU Tegal Alur in West Jakarta, TPU Pondok Ranggon in East Jakarta, and TPU Srengseng Sawah in South Jakarta. The Head of the Data and Information Center (Pusdatin) of the DKI Jakarta City Park and Forest Service, Ivan Murcahyo, stated that the three cemeteries had overcapacity and were no longer possible to accept the funeral process in line with the Covid-19 protocol (Wijaya, 2021).

The refusal to bury the bodies of Covid-19 patients in several areas and the limited number of grave land are seen as opportunities by Al-Azhar Memorial Garden. This modern Muslim funeral home continues to accept the bodies of Covid-19 patients while adhering to the health protocols established by the government. When other business establishments experienced a decline in profits, the Al-Azhar Memorial Garden Muslim Cemetery experienced an increase in demand throughout 2020 (Kumparan Bisnis, 2020).

The increasing sales trend does not necessarily make it easier for the Memorial Advisor (MA), the name for Al-Azhar Memorial Garden's marketer. The demand for alternative burials amid the Covid-19 pandemic has increased, but many Indonesians are still unaware of Al-Azhar Memorial Garden. Therefore, as the main force of the Al-Azhar Memorial Garden, the MA is socialising products that are needed but not widely known by the public. Furthermore, the MA uses a socialisation approach rather than 'selling' because funeral and grief-related things are sensitive in Indonesia. Some Indonesians still consider funeral marketers as 'bad people' who take advantage of someone's grief. When

the MA offers funeral products like property commodities such as houses or apartments, they will most likely get rejected. Therefore, the MA uses a socialisation approach and only introduces and informs funeral products to make them known to the public. MA usually introduces modern Muslim funeral products to the community twice a week. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, their activities were hindered by WFH regulations. This research aims to answer the question, what should the MA do to meet the demand?

WFH and Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) are important to reduce the spread of Covid-19. This protocol forces many people to stay at home. It means that there are many potential customers out there who spend most of their time at home. MA tries to reach them by using digital technology. The internet is a virtual place to introduce products and services creatively, attractively, and relatively low cost (Shofan, 2022). They considered digital marketing because many potential customers can view the internet as an ideal means of shopping or simply browsing for products or services without having to be physically present at the place of business (Baah-Ofori & Amoako, 2015, p. 73).

WhatsApp is one of the world's most popular messaging applications. Asia Pacific Communications Director of WhatsApp, Sravanthi, said Indonesia is the world's third-largest WhatsApp user (Fajrina, 2020). Until June 2021, Indonesia remains in third place in the world, with the number of WhatsApp users reaching 84.8 million (Katadata, 2021). WhatsApp has become the main choice of many companies. They considered that those two are much more effective and efficient than other types of media (Bello, 2020, p. 226). Social communities in many countries use WhatsApp as the core digital communication tool via their smartphones or other devices (Boczek & Koppers, 2020; Pang & Woo, 2020; Syaifullah et al., 2021). As an alternative or substitute for a short messaging service (SMS), WhatsApp is an application that can send messages quickly in real time. A WhatsApp user can send messages easily in text, photos, audio, or video (Rachmasari, 2021; Walwema, 2021). Apart from being real-time, sending messages to individuals or groups via WhatsApp can also be conducted at no cost as long as there is an internet connection (Anggraini et al., 2022; Suarniki et al., 2019). WhatsApp does not restrict the number of messages (Batra, 2016; Sheth, 2021). Therefore, the MA can freely convey various information to potential customers.

Many people consider WhatsApp the safest and simplest messaging application, which has an active number of over 1.8 billion active users. Of this total, 70 per cent use WhatsApp every day. It is estimated that there are around 65 billion messages sent via WhatsApp daily, while for voice calls and video calls, the numbers reach 100 million and 55 million, respectively (Fernández-Robin, Cristobal; Yáñez, Diego; McCoy, 2019).

WhatsApp is a messaging application full of social elements, including interpersonal communication. Usually, people use WhatsApp

to interact with friends, family, colleagues, or even recently known acquaintances. These messages sent via WhatsApp can be more personalised by including photos, videos or voice messages (Zarouali et al., 2021, p. 253). WhatsApp helps MA find potential customers and introduce funeral products amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Even before the pandemic, MA already used WhatsApp, but its use became more intensive during WFH and PSBB throughout 2020. With WhatsApp, a group with the same interests can have collective discussions through the Group Chat feature. Concerning this research, the MA used a group chat to discuss various things, especially work-related (Resende et al., 2019, p. 818).

METHODOLOGY

This study is conducted by using descriptive qualitative methods. According to Bogdan and Taylor, a descriptive qualitative method produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behaviour (Moleong, 2018, p. 5). This method focuses on using the WhatsApp application as a form of socialisation media. It is important for MAs of the Al-Azhar Memorial Garden funeral home products amid the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. Furthermore, the data of this study will be collected from MAs' experience using various WhatsApp features.

This research data was based on interviews with five informants, labelled with M1 (Bogor, 38, M), M2 (Bekasi, M, 42), M3 (Bekasi, 48, F), M4 (Jakarta, 40, F), and M5 (Jakarta, 45, F). The period of time was around three months, between October-December 2020. The five informants consisted of three MAs, while two were Memorial Advisor Managers (MAM). All of them came from Al-Azhar Memorial Garden. Five informants were contacted via phone because physical meetings were limited due to Covid-19. Besides interviews, literature studies are also important to comprehend the field of research. A series of questions were brought up for the five informants can be traced on table 1.

Table 1. Question list Guidelines

Number	Questions
Q1	How do you socialise funeral products during the Covid-19 pandemic?
Q2	How do you obtain potential customer contact numbers?
Q3	How do you introduce yourself to potential customers?
Q4	What is the most useful feature of WhatsApp in finding potential customers and socialising funeral products?
Q5	What can language styles be suitably applied in socialising the products?
Q6	what are the strategies to attract potential customers via WhatsApp?

Source: Data Processed by Author (2020)

Data analysis in this study referred to Miles & Huberman's concept, specifically collecting data before, during, and after writing. Afterwards, the research data was reduced by setting aside irrelevant information.

The data presentation was systematically arranged to make it easy to understand, and the five informants verified the conclusion to ensure its validity (Miles et al., 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The author classifies the research data into two aspects. First, the use of WhatsApp features to obtain potential customers, and the second is MA's communication with potential consumers via WhatsApp.

Features of WhatsApp as a Way to Get Potential Customers

During the Covid-19 pandemic, MA from Al-Azhar Memorial Garden could not work easily because there was a health protocol from the Indonesian government to work outside. Therefore, messaging app becomes an important tool for the MA to seek potential customers and convey funeral product information. During the Work From Home (WFH), MA stated that they used WhatsApp as a communication medium to find and interact with potential customers.

M2 said that during the Covid-19 pandemic, he could not seek new prospects but only followed up on the list of potential customer contact numbers that he had previously. M1 expressed the same thing by saying, "I am also following up on the contact numbers that I already have." (M1, Personal Interview 21 October 2020). He added, "WhatsApp is suitable in informing funeral home products when I work from home." (M1, Personal Interview 21 October 2020).

M3 added that following up on the existing list of potential customer contact numbers, she also asked for prospect recommendations from former customers. She said, "I ask for recommendations from my previous customers. Sometimes I ask my customers to recommend me to people who might want to buy funeral products. I also follow up with some people who have given their contact numbers." (M3, Personal Interview 17 November 2020)

M4 and M5 said that during the Covid-19 pandemic, they tried to socialise funeral products with their closest people like relatives, friends, and neighbours. They also ask some former customers to promote funeral products to others. Sometimes M4 and M5 also found potential customer contact numbers from the office. People looking for information about funeral products via Al-Azhar Memorial Garden's website will be directed to the office. From there, they are referred to the MA who was on duty shift. Here is the M5 statement:

"Now it is the age of the internet. Companies also have websites. Potential customers can easily find information through the website. If there are interested in potential customers, the office will guide them to the MA on duty." (M5, Personal Interview 23 November 2020)

M4 explained the importance of maintaining good relations with consumers. Here is the statement:

"I always keep in touch with all of my customers. If we maintain a good relationship, customers will be kind to us. Usually, they recommended some prospects to me. So building good relationships and maintaining customers' trust is very important to me." ((M4, Personal Interview 18 November 2020)

According to the MAs, WhatsApp helped them to find and to communicate with potential customers amid the Covid-19 pandemic because WhatsApp has many features such as video calls, voice notes, and sending documents, photos, or videos. With WhatsApp, MAs can send supporting documents such as files, photo brochures, and videos regarding funeral home products.

The MAs said that the "Profile Picture" is one of the main supporting features in informing the funeral product. In the introduction phase, potential customers tend to check the "Profile Picture" of MAs. M3 said that when using that feature, she used a photo of the Al-Azhar Memorial Garden burial complex with informative messages.

"The Profile Picture must show my identity, that I am an MA from Al-Azhar Memorial Garden. So I use a photo of the burial complex with a description of my name and contact number and other informative information such as 'providing Covid-19 funeral' and other supporting messages." ((M3, Personal Interview 17 November 2020)

M1 and M4 also use photos of the Al-Azhar Memorial Garden burial complex for their "Profile Pictures," without informative messages. Meanwhile, M2 and M5 combine images of the burial complex with their self-portrait, names, and contact numbers. Although they differed on the "Profile Picture," the five MAs agreed that this feature should be able to show their identity as part of the Al-Azhar Memorial Garden.

The MA uses "Status" on WhatsApp to update information, such as ongoing promotions, videos about funeral products, and others. The goal is to attract customers' attention. M2 said, "posting information on Status is important because I can update product photos and videos and socialise all information more quickly."

The MA said the information content about funeral products posted in the "Status" needs to be updated regularly. It could be every day, two or three times a week, or even within hours, depending on the development of information from the Al-Azhar Memorial Garden. M1 said the "Status" is useful for socialising the latest information to potential or former customers.

"I am updating my status so that people who save my contact number can see it. Someone might be interested and asks further. Who knows, right? I will socialise the latest products and promos, regardless of whether those who ask are potential customers or former consumers. I will also ask them to socialise funeral products to other people and ask if some prospects have reachable contact numbers." ((M1, Personal Interview 19 October 2020)

The MA does not use the "Broadcast" and "WhatsApp Group" features to socialise information. M1 said that he was socialising grief-related products that some people might find unwelcome, so it will only be conveyed to certain groups of people. The five MAs used the messaging feature in WhatsApp to comprehensively socialise funeral products. These are the details of the brief information previously mentioned in the "Profile Picture" and "Status" features. M5 states that these two features are to attract people who see them. The information in the "Profile Picture" and "Status" is expected to encourage the viewers' desire to ask questions. When asked, the MA will respond and start a conversation. After that, they will socialise on funeral products during conversations. The information conveyed can be in writing, photos, videos, or a combination of the three.

Memorial Advisor Interaction with Potential Customers via WhatsApp

Language style also determines the success of MAs in getting customers. There are two targets for socialising funeral products: former and potential consumers. M1 said, "The way to initiate communication with everyone on WhatsApp is different."

The MA agreed that they initiate the conversation with greetings and small talks to potential customers and former consumers. If the response is good, the MA will begin socialising the product. M3 said, "I usually say greetings like, 'good morning, sir/madam, how are you?' If the response is good, I will start socialising product information."

The five MA said they socialise product promotions for potential and former customers.

"I will again try to offer funeral products to former consumers, whether it's the same product or a different one. Maybe their need changes. Who knows, right? If they are not interested, I will ask, 'Do you know anyone who might need a funeral product?' or 'are there potential customers I can contact later on?' Usually, my former consumers are willing to help." (M1, Personal Interview 19 October 2020)

The MA will first socialise product promotions or price discounts if it is a potential customer. The following is the statement from M2:

"Well, for potential customers, I will ask permission to share the introduction video of funeral products. If the responses are well, then I will share the video. If they are interested in the video, I will emphasise the word 'promotion' or 'discount.' For example, 'we have a promotion until the end of the month.' Usually, people will become interested when they hear the word 'promotion.'" (M2, Personal Interview 21 October 2020)

The MA uses three language styles in socialising products via WhatsApp: formal, semi-formal, or informal. The MA uses formal and semi-formal language styles when dealing with potential customers. When facing former consumers, the MA will use the informal one. The formal style includes using the 'Perfected Indonesian Spelling' or (EYD). For semi-formal, message-telling combines standard and non-standard elements related to word usage and sentence structure. Lastly, the informal style includes casual language between peers or those with personal closeness. M5 said the language style needed to be adjusted depending on the situation.

"As an MA, I have to be flexible in communicating. I have to see who the person I am facing is. For example, I tend to use formal language if the potential customers I face are 45 years and over. But if the people I face are around 25, I will use a semi-formal style. Nevertheless, I tend to use informal language when communicating with people I already know and have personal closeness." (M5, Personal Interview 23 November 2020)

Apart from using written messages, MA also included the use of emoticons. However, emoticons are only for semi-formal and informal styles. Emoticons commonly used by MA are icons that show hospitality, such as 'smiley face' or 'person with folded hands as a sign of gratitude. M5 stated, "For me, emoticons are very helpful in expressing myself. Text messages have no intonation, so emoticons can help show my expression to avoid misunderstandings."

M2 and M4 also use emoticons. According to them, using emoticons can strengthen the feeling of hospitality in socialising the product.

"I often use 'smiley face' emoticons to 'warm-up' the messages." (M2, Personal Interview 21 October 2020)

"I usually use 'person with folded hands' at the end of messages as a sign of gratitude and politeness." (M4, Personal Interview 18 November 2020)

When communicating with potential consumers, face-to-face or via WhatsApp, the MA will never mention the price unless potential consumers ask. M1 said, "our approach in this is not to sell things, but socialising. So, we will never mention prices unless potential customers

ask for it." Sometimes, potential customers state their needs first rather than asking about the price.

"One potential customer asks, 'I want to buy five grave lots; are they available?' I replied, 'Yes, sir, the Family type is available with five lots.' I only start telling the price if the potential customer asks for it. If it turns out that the potential consumer's finances are not sufficient, then I will offer a single type of five lots, which is cheaper." (M4, Personal Interview 18 November 2020)

Some potential customers may be surprised when they find out that funeral product prices are relatively high even though they have already received a discount. At this phase, the five MA will offer an instalment option.

"I realise that this product is not cheap, so it is natural that many customers are surprised. If that happens, I usually offer instalments for a period of 6 months to 1 year." (M3, Personal Interview 17 November 2020)

"From the start, I emphasised that there is an instalment option. The instalment process is easy because it does not go through the bank but directly from the office. I also tell potential customers that it is enough to pay all costs one time upfront, so there is no need to bother paying for anything ever again." (M2, Personal Interview 21 October 2020)

After talking about prices, potential customers will usually ask what they will get after the purchase. The MA will then emphasise land ownership certificates and grave land maintenance for free forever. According to M1, those features usually attract potential customers' attention.

"Because the product price is relatively high, potential customers usually ask, 'what will I get at this price?' I will be mentioning a land ownership certificate and maintenance of the grave area free of charge forever. I will send a sample photo of the certificate via WhatsApp to convince potential customers." ((M1, Personal Interview 19 October 2020)

Potential customers interested in funeral products but cannot decide just yet usually want to conduct a location survey. In this phase, the MA will determine the date of the location survey. M3 said, "if a potential customer seems interested, then I will say, '*Sir/Madam, let us do a location survey this Saturday, shall we?*' I do not give potential customers the option to determine the date, except for those who have already paid the down payment. If the down payment has been paid, I will ask, '*Sir / Madam, when will you want to survey the location?*'"

The five MAs will remind potential customers to always comply with health protocols when conducting location surveys. M3 said, "if

potential customers are willing to conduct a survey, then I will remind them via WhatsApp to always comply with health protocols, especially about using masks because that is the most important thing."

The MA claim that the Covid-19 pandemic has had little impact on demand for Al-Azhar Memorial Garden's funeral products. During the pandemic, the Al-Azhar Memorial Garden accepts patients who have passed away from the virus, and the funeral process complies with health protocols.

"Many people are looking for the Al-Azhar Memorial Garden during the Covid-19 pandemic. We accept Covid-19 patients by adhering to government health protocols. Some people want to bury their family members in this modern funeral home to appreciate their beloved ones." (M2, Personal Interview 21 October 2020)

Discussion and Theoretical Implication

WhatsApp is a messaging application that works as a means of communication. With WhatsApp, one can communicate with other people with ease. The features also make it easier for someone to convey information in various forms. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the five Memorial Advisors used WhatsApp to find potential customers and socialise funeral products through the Word of Mouth (WOM) communication. Specifically, the MA uses Organic Word of Mouth, a type of Word-of-Mouth communication that occurs naturally. Happy and satisfied with products or services tend to share their enthusiasm with others, becoming advocates (Sumardy et al., 2011, p. 68). Unlike the general use of WOM, the procedure is slightly different during a pandemic. The essence of WOM marketing is applied virtually through delivering information in texts and photos, and people become advocates. MA can only rely on virtual means such as WhatsApp amid their limited movement during the implementation the Work From Home (WFH) policy. Although funeral product socialisation is spoken virtually without a physical presence, the MA hopes that potential or former customers can still receive the message and information well so that they relay it to others, consciously or unconsciously. The purpose of WOM carried out by the MAs is achieved when potential or former customers convey information about the funeral products to their family, relatives, or friends.

The "Profile Picture" feature in WhatsApp shows MA's identity. This is known as Personal Branding, which is based on the values of life, has high relevance to who a person is, and becomes a brand that sticks to the minds of others when thinking about that person (McNally & Speak, 2009, p. 2). Personal Branding has certain functions and purposes, i.e. introducing and sharpening self-image, making it easier for others to remember and make choices (Parengkuan & Tumewu, 2015, p. 28). By utilising the "Profile Picture," the MAs show they are from a well-known institution, Al-Azhar Memorial Garden. The Al-Azhar Memorial Garden is

not very familiar in Indonesia, but "Al-Azhar" is well known. Most Indonesian people recognise "Al-Azhar" as one of the leading private educational institutions. Therefore, this good reputation is attached to the Al-Azhar Memorial Garden, which is also a part of the Al-Azhar brand.' By presenting an image as someone from a well-known institution through the "Profile Picture," the MA hopes to be perceived as credible and trusted. Based on the Source Credibility Theory by Hovland, Janis, and Kelly, funeral product socialisation will become effective if potential or former customers view MAs as credible. This theory states that the reception of information and ideas is based on who says it (Epega, 2008, p. 3).

The MA also uses the "Status" feature in socialising funeral products. The MA uses this feature daily to update various information, such as ongoing promos, videos about funeral products, and other important information about modern funerals. Unlike "Profile Picture," which only displays static information, "Status" is more dynamic. The MA uses this feature to share text, photos, videos, and GIFs that disappear after 24 hours. This is similar to "stories" on Snapchat, Facebook, and Instagram.

10 Furthermore, socialisation through "Status" is appropriate because not all individuals are willing to receive information about funeral products. All of the information in "Status" can only be seen by the person that saved the sender's phone number, not everyone on the contact list. According to the MA, daily product socialisation through "Status" can increase knowledge and awareness for people who see it. According to Jean Piaget, the level of knowledge is a reason based on cognitive aspects that will affect behaviour change (Ali & Asrori, 2014, p. 26). In other words, behavioural change is likely when potential or former customers are much more knowledgeable about funeral products than before. When this happens, then MA has succeeded in persuading them.

The interaction between MAs and potential or former customers occurs in the message column. This column serves as a place for question-and-answer sessions. Sometimes, potential or former customers inquire after viewing the information in the "Profile Picture" and "Status." However, the MA may take the initiative and asks permission to send information about funeral products. The MAs use three language styles when socialising funeral products: formal, semi-formal and informal. Depending on the situation, one of these styles is sometimes used or combined with two or three. The MA uses formal and semi-formal language styles when dealing with potential customers and informal when facing former customers. The informal style or colloquial language is usually spoken in the inner circle, such as friends or relatives with personal closeness. Meanwhile, a stranger or respectable person generally uses formal language styles (Rumintang, 2008, p. 41).

20 This interaction through WhatsApp can be analysed using the Symbolic Interaction Theory by George Herbert Mead. According to him,

symbolic interaction is a characteristic of human activities in which individuals send written or verbal messages to others. The symbols in that interaction are interpreted according to the purpose of the message. The parties involved in the interaction agreed upon the message in a consensus. According to Herbert Mead, there are three symbolic interaction dialectics: Mind, Self, and Society. These three concepts influence each other in symbolic interactionism. The human Mind and social interactions (between Self and others) are used to interpret and mediate the Society in which we live. Meaning comes from interaction and not in any other way.

At the same time, "Mind" and "Self" arise in the society's social context. The reciprocal influence between society, individual experience, and interaction becomes the material for study in the symbolic interactionist tradition (Ardianto, 2007, p. 136). Mind is defined by Herbert Mead as the process of conversation itself, a linguistic behaviour on the part of an individual. The mind is also defined as an overall response to a community, which creates meaning for one person and society (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). While the Self is defined as a social process with communication between "I," the pure form of self, and "Me," the social form of self, "I" becomes a response to "Me" and vice versa. The Self is where the person responds to what he/she addresses to others and where his/her response becomes a part of his/her actions. He/she not only listens to himself/herself but also responds, speaks, and answers himself/herself as other people answer to him/her. In this behaviour, a person becomes an object for himself/herself (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004).

Herbert Mead said that the self-process is a social process that gives meaning or response to others. However, the response is not only a response to the person but also part of the meaning in society. The self-process is a process of exchanging meaning which is then processed in the Mind. As for Society, Mead calls it a non-stop social process that precedes the Mind and the Self. Society plays an important role in shaping the Mind and Self. At a higher level, Herbert Mead mentions that Society is a social institution; that is, shared meanings are formed and processed in society. Based on the dialectic of Mind, Self, and Society, the MA sends symbols in written messages regarding funeral product education to potential customers. Potential customers receive the message and begin to respond, whether it is about the price of a product, its features, benefits, etc. The social process here is the interaction between the MA and potential customers via WhatsApp. The interaction process that occurs is the Self stage. After interpreting the educational message by the MA, potential customers give personal meaning to their society that preparing for a funeral is necessary. This process is in the Society category, while the results of shared meanings are in the Mind.

Meanwhile, based on an analysis using the New Media Theory proposed by Pierre Levy, it is explained that there are two assumptions regarding new media in face-to-face interactions. New Media Theory

views WWW (World Wide Web) as a flexible, open, and dynamic information environment, allowing humans to develop new knowledge orientations. New media is considered a self-development ecosystem. Another view considers the media as not a piece of information, interaction, or tool for spreading messages but as a means of creating society. Based on the above theory, the MA considers WhatsApp, as an intermediary for messages or a forum for disseminating information and a medium to create a customer community. The creation of this community is done by sending messages to many people at once through the Broadcast Message feature. With this feature, not only one or two potential customers may be interested in funeral products, but 4, 10, or even more may be willing to give their attention. Potential customers who are interested in these funeral products can become an ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic has had little impact on the demand for products from the Al-Azhar Memorial Garden funeral home. The Memorial Advisors (MAs) strive to fulfil this demand by actively seeking potential customers and socialising products through WhatsApp. They maximise the use of this app, as they have limited movement to seek customers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The MAs use WhatsApp's "Profile Picture" and "Status" features to attract people who save their contact numbers. Meanwhile, detailed product promotion is socialised afterwards through text, photos, and videos. The funeral product socialisation via WhatsApp is carried out by the MAs directed to potential and former customers. MAs use formal and semi-formal language styles based on age to find potential customers or former consumers. The Mas uses the informal language style to someone already familiarly known. MAs never mention the price of socialising funeral products unless potential customers inquire about it. Although the MAs only stay at home amid the Covid-19 pandemic, they eagerly seek their customers with the best socialising funeral products through WhatsApp.

According to the above explanation, we will argue that WhatsApp and its features are important tools informants use as socialisation media for seeking potential customers amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This research can guide MA or marketers in any field in socialising their products and services via WhatsApp when their movement is limited, and they have to Work From Home (WFH).

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