

## Business Development Strategies of USK Tour and Travel: A SWOT Analysis from an Islamic Economic Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

USK Tour and Travel is a business unit under Universitas Syiah Kuala operating in the tourism and travel services sector, with opportunities to grow in the halal and educational tourism market in Aceh while facing internal limitations and increasing competition from online travel agencies. This study aims to analyze internal and external factors influencing the business development of USK Tour and Travel using a SWOT analysis approach and to examine the integration of Islamic economic values in its business strategy. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, with data collected through structured interviews, observation, and documentation involving management, employees, business partners, and customers. The results indicate that USK Tour and Travel is positioned in Quadrant I, reflecting strong internal capabilities and favorable external opportunities. Institutional support, legal legitimacy, and service diversification constitute the main strengths, while limited digital marketing and organizational structure remain key weaknesses. Islamic economic values such as shiddiq, amanah, fathanah, tabligh, and istiqamah have been applied in business practices, although their implementation requires further strengthening to support sustainable growth. The study concludes that an aggressive growth strategy is appropriate, emphasizing the optimization of institutional advantages, digital transformation, and the development of halal and educational tourism products. These findings provide practical implications for tourism businesses seeking to develop competitive and sustainable strategies within an Islamic ethical framework and contribute to the broader discourse on Sharia-compliant business development in the tourism industry.

**Keywords:** Business Strategy, SWOT, Islamic Economics, Tour and Travel

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Indonesia's tourism sector has experienced significant growth, driven by its large population and increasing public interest in travel for both business and recreational purposes (Hamdani & Hantono, 2021). The government has positioned tourism as one of the key pillars of the national economy, contributing approximately 4.01 percent to Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product in 2019 (Muslim et al., 2021).

As a province implementing Islamic law, Aceh holds great potential for developing Islamic-oriented tourism. According to *Aceh in Figures 2024*, there has been a strong post-pandemic recovery, with 2,031,539 domestic tourists and 53,144 international visitors recorded in 2023. This potential is further reinforced by regional policies such as Qanun Aceh No. 8 of 2013 concerning Tourism, which mandates that tourism activities must align with Islamic values and local wisdom (Sumaiya & Abdullah, 2022).

One of the business entities operating in this sector is USK Tour and Travel, a business unit established by Universitas Syiah Kuala in 2023. It provides various services,

including tour packages, umrah trips, ticket booking, vehicle rentals, VIP transfers, cargo services, and hotel reservations. However, operational challenges exist both internally—such as limited human resources, operational efficiency, and marketing strategy—and externally, such as competition from online travel agencies (OTAs), changing consumer preferences, and limited tourism infrastructure. Therefore, a comprehensive development strategy is needed to remain competitive and expand market share.

Previous studies have primarily focused on business development strategies for travel agencies using SWOT or Business Model Canvas approaches (Setiadi, 2024; Moeryawan & Wijaya, 2024; Baskoro et al., 2024). However, these studies mostly address conventional companies and rarely integrate SWOT analysis with Islamic economic values. This research contributes novelty by integrating SWOT analysis with Islamic economic principles in the context of a state-owned higher education institution business unit.

Based on the background described above, this study aims to achieve three main objectives. First, it seeks to examine the internal and external factors that influence the performance and development of USK Tour and Travel by applying a SWOT analysis approach. This analysis will help identify the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of its current business position. Second, the study intends to formulate relevant business development strategies derived from the results of the SWOT analysis. These strategies are expected to serve as practical recommendations for enhancing the company's competitiveness and sustainability in the tourism industry. Third, the research aims to evaluate the extent to which Islamic economic values namely shiddiq (truthfulness), amanah (trustworthiness), fathanah (wisdom), tabligh (communication), and istiqamah (consistency) are implemented in the company's strategic development. This evaluation will provide insights into how Islamic ethical principles are integrated into business practices, thereby aligning the company's operations with the broader objectives of Islamic economics.

The identification of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats in this study was conducted through a systematic qualitative assessment based on primary and secondary data. Strengths and weaknesses were derived from internal organizational conditions obtained through structured interviews with management, employees, business partners, and customers, as well as direct observation of operational activities and analysis of institutional documents. Opportunities and threats were identified by examining external factors such as market trends, regulatory environment, technological development, and competitive dynamics in the tourism industry. All factors were then categorized, weighted, and evaluated using IFAS and EFAS matrices to determine the strategic position of USK Tour and Travel.

This study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Academically, it broadens the literature on business strategy within the framework of Islamic economics. Practically, it provides managerial recommendations for USK Tour and Travel to achieve sustainable growth based on Islamic values.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Business Strategy**

A business strategy plays a critical role in helping organizations achieve long-term goals. Chandler (1962) defined strategy as a long-term plan through which a company allocates and utilizes key resources to accomplish its objectives. Similarly, Ramadhan and Fivi (2013) viewed strategy as a sequence of decisions involving planning, implementation,

and resource allocation to achieve targets. Thus, a business strategy not only focuses on goal achievement but also emphasizes how organizations manage resources effectively amid dynamic market environments.

### **Business Development Strategy**

Business development strategy refers to a series of actions designed by top management to achieve sustainable growth. Kuncoro (2005) explained that strategy reflects the application of an organization's philosophy through major decision-making. Hidayat (2007) emphasized that business development involves meeting the needs of customers, shareholders, and employees. According to David (2012), this process includes analyzing internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) factors to formulate long-term strategies. Therefore, business development strategy serves as a vital tool for organizational continuity.

### **Business Development Strategy in Islam**

In Islam, business development is not solely profit-oriented but also grounded in justice and blessings (barakah). Isfihany (2022) explained that muamalah regulates human interactions in business, emphasizing lawful income while avoiding prohibited elements such as riba (usury), gharar (uncertainty), and gambling. Hafidhuddin (2003) noted that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) practiced business guided by values of Shiddiq (honesty), Amanah (trustworthiness), Fathanah (intelligence), Tabligh (communication), and Istiqamah (consistency). These values form the ethical foundation for Islamic business success in both material and spiritual dimensions.

### **SWOT Analysis**

SWOT analysis is a strategic planning method used to evaluate Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (Mariantha, 2018). Strengths refer to internal advantages providing competitive value, while weaknesses are internal limitations hindering performance. Opportunities are external conditions that can enhance growth, and threats are external factors potentially disrupting objectives (Kurmanalina et al., 2020). SWOT aims to guide strategic decision-making by optimizing strengths and opportunities while minimizing weaknesses and threats (Chae & Lee, 2020).

According to Rangkuti (2001), SWOT produces four alternative strategies: S–O (using strengths to exploit opportunities), W–O (minimizing weaknesses through opportunities), S–T (using strengths to counter threats), and W–T (reducing weaknesses to face threats). This approach enables organizations to map their position and formulate strategies aligned with internal and external conditions.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, which aims to provide an in-depth understanding of phenomena based on non-numerical data (Fadli, 2021). A qualitative method was chosen because it captures complex contextual realities (Tariq et al., 2011). The study was conducted at the Flamboyan Building, 1st Floor, Academic Activity Center (AAC) Dayan Dawood, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh. Informants were selected using criterion sampling, which involves participants chosen according to criteria relevant to the research focus (Patton, 2002). Nine informants participated, including the Director of Business and Sustainable Funds at Universitas Syiah Kuala, the Manager, two employees, two business partners, and three customers of USK Tour and Travel.

Primary data were collected through structured interviews with these informants. Interview questions were designed to explore internal and external factors, as well as the implementation of Islamic economic values such as Shiddiq, Amanah, Fathanah, Tabligh, and Istiqamah. Secondary data were gathered from company documents such

as profiles, vision and mission statements, organizational structure, and relevant literature (Nugrahani, 2014).

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly monitor operational activities (Abdussamad, 2021). Structured interviews were conducted to obtain accurate and detailed information (Sugiyono, 2019). Documentation included photos, archives, and official reports to support other findings (Firman, 2015).

The data analysis in this study followed the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, as cited in Sugiyono (2019), which consists of three main stages. The first stage is data reduction, involving the process of filtering, simplifying, and organizing relevant information to focus on the essential aspects of the research. The second stage is data display, where the processed data are presented descriptively, and may also be displayed in tables or matrices to facilitate the identification of relationships and emerging patterns. The final stage is conclusion drawing and verification, which entails synthesizing the findings, identifying key patterns, and verifying their consistency to ensure the credibility and validity of the results.

## RESULTS

### Internal Strengths and Weaknesses

Findings indicate that USK Tour and Travel possesses several internal strengths forming the foundation for business growth. The most significant strength lies in institutional support from Universitas Syiah Kuala (USK), providing legitimacy, broad networks, and access to academic and managerial resources advantages not shared by many local competitors. This aligns with Chandler's (1962) notion that an effective business strategy is built on the structured use of core resources to achieve long-term goals. Moreover, USK Tour and Travel operates legally under an official Rector's Decree, enhancing consumer and partner trust (Ramadhan & Fivi, 2013). Service diversification from domestic to international tour packages also broadens its market reach.

However, notable weaknesses exist. Marketing remains limited, mainly through social media without an integrated digital marketing strategy. Given the digital nature of modern tourism, this is a significant limitation. Noviaty et al. (2022) emphasize that technology-based promotion improves competitiveness in tourism services. Additionally, an underdeveloped organizational structure and unclear job descriptions contribute to inefficiency. According to Lestari & Prapti (2011), weak internal management can hinder strategic achievement even when external opportunities exist.

Thus, although USK Tour and Travel demonstrates strong internal advantages, unresolved weaknesses may reduce its ability to fully leverage opportunities.

### External Opportunities and Threats

The external environment provides promising opportunities for USK Tour and Travel's development. Aceh's implementation of Islamic law offers potential for *halal* tourism growth. Qanun Aceh No. 8/2013 mandates Sharia-based tourism, creating a natural niche market aligned with USK Tour and Travel's vision. This supports Herizal et al. (2021), who argued that halal tourism in Aceh could become an international attraction if managed professionally. Technological advancements also present opportunities to expand promotion and sales through digital platforms. Online reservation systems and social media marketing can enhance market access (David, 2012).

Nevertheless, the company faces major threats from large online travel agencies (OTAs) such as Traveloka and Tiket.com, offering competitive prices and convenience.

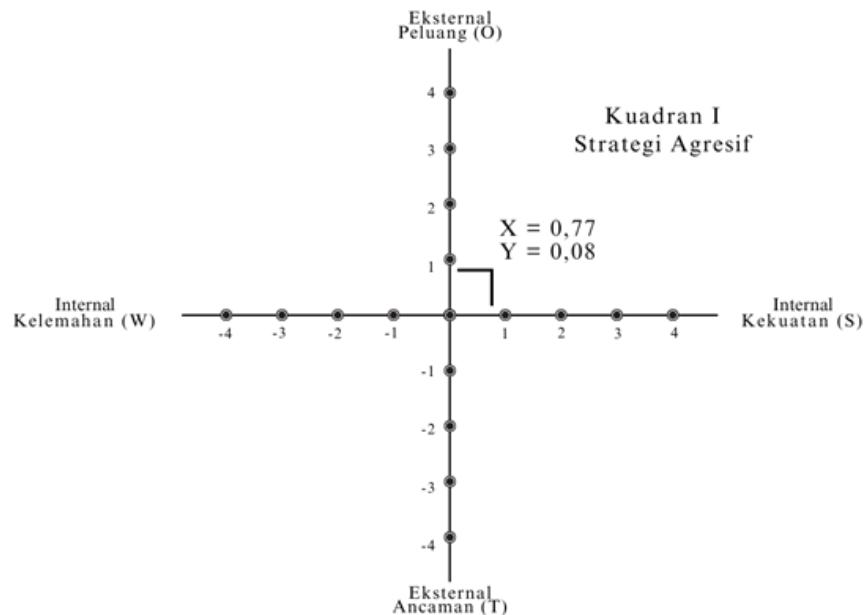
Economic fluctuations and government policy changes also pose risks. Sukarno and Ahsan (2021) highlight that such external volatility requires adaptive strategies. Overall, USK Tour and Travel's position remains favorable due to its strong institutional base and growing halal tourism potential, despite competitive pressure.

**Table 1.** Summary of Internal Factors (IFAS Matrix)

No	Internal Factors (Strengths & Weaknesses)	Weight	Rating	Score
1	Captive market from USK academic community	0.13	4.00	0.51
2	Institutional reputation and extensive network	0.13	2.00	0.26
3	Professional and trained human resources	0.10	4.00	0.41
4	Transparent and accountable management system	0.10	3.00	0.31
5	Supporting facilities and infrastructure	0.08	2.00	0.15
Total Strengths		0.54		1.64
6	Bureaucratic complexity	0.13	1.00	0.13
7	Limited service diversification (focused on ticketing)	0.10	2.00	0.21
8	Limited operational workforce	0.08	3.00	0.23
9	Lack of practical experience	0.08	2.00	0.15
10	Limited airline access and partnerships	0.08	2.00	0.15
Total Weaknesses		0.46		0.87
Total		1.00		2.51

**Table 2.** Summary of External Factors (EFAS Matrix)

No	External Factors (Opportunities & Threats)	Weight	Rating	Score
1	Rising trend of halal, educational, and religious tourism	0.11	2.00	0.21
2	Digitalization of reservation and ticketing systems	0.11	2.00	0.21
3	Market expansion beyond academic community	0.11	1.00	0.11
4	Strategic partnerships	0.11	2.00	0.21
5	Digital marketing opportunities	0.11	1.00	0.11
Total Opportunities		0.53		0.85
6	Policy uncertainty and government dependence	0.11	2.00	0.21
7	Competition from commercial travel and OTAs	0.11	2.00	0.21
8	Global events and political instability	0.09	2.00	0.17
9	Fluctuations in ticket prices and airline policies	0.09	1.00	0.09
10	Changing consumer behavior	0.09	1.00	0.09
Total Threats		0.47		0.77
Total		1.00		1.62



**Figure 1. SWOT Strategy Matrix**

Based on the IFAS matrix, the total strength score is 1.64 and the total weakness score is 0.87, producing an X-axis value of 0.77 ( $1.64 - 0.87$ ). The EFAS matrix shows a total opportunity score of 0.85 and threat score of 0.77, giving a Y-axis value of 0.08 ( $0.85 - 0.77$ ). These coordinates position USK Tour and Travel in Quadrant I, representing a growth-oriented (aggressive) strategy, where strong internal capabilities meet favorable external conditions (Ahmad, 2020).

## DISCUSSION

One of the main findings is the need for deeper integration of Islamic economic values into business strategy. Values such as *Shiddiq*, *Amanah*, *Fathanah*, *Tabligh*, and *Istiqamah* serve as ethical cornerstones for Islamic business. Respondents emphasized that customer trust stems from transparent services, fulfillment of promises, and clear communication. Antonio (2001) argued that Islamic business aims not only for profit but also for justice and *maslahah* (collective welfare).

Applying Sharia principles gives USK Tour and Travel a unique differentiation advantage, appealing to Muslim customers seeking trustworthy, ethical, and spiritually aligned services. Chapra (1992) asserted that the ultimate objective of Islamic economics is not profit maximization, but equitable welfare distribution and social justice. Hence, USK Tour and Travel's alignment with these principles can enhance both its competitiveness and spiritual integrity.

Integrating SWOT analysis with Islamic principles suggests that USK Tour and Travel should prioritize several strategic areas. First, the company needs to strengthen its internal governance and enhance staff capacity to ensure efficient and ethical management practices aligned with Islamic values. Second, leveraging digitalization for marketing and service delivery can improve competitiveness and customer engagement, particularly by expanding market reach through innovative technology. Third, developing halal and educational tourism products is essential to differentiate the company's offerings while promoting Islamic cultural values. Finally, establishing long-term strategic partnerships with stakeholders such as educational institutions, government agencies, and halal certification bodies can enhance business sustainability and reinforce the company's commitment to Sharia compliance.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that USK Tour and Travel possesses strong internal capabilities and operates within a favorable external environment, as reflected by its position in Quadrant I of the SWOT matrix. This position indicates that a growth-oriented (S-O) strategy is the most appropriate approach, whereby institutional support, legal legitimacy, and service diversification can be optimally utilized to capture opportunities in halal, educational, and religious tourism in Aceh.

The findings further reveal that while these strengths provide a solid foundation for development, internal weaknesses particularly in digital marketing, organizational structure, and human resource optimization must be addressed to sustain competitiveness against online travel agencies and changing consumer behavior. The implementation of Islamic economic values such as shiddiq, amanah, fathanah, tabligh, and istiqamah has been initiated in business practices; however, their integration needs to be strengthened through systematic governance and operational policies to ensure consistency between ethical principles and strategic execution.

Practically, the results suggest that USK Tour and Travel should focus on strengthening digital transformation, expanding strategic partnerships, and developing halal and educational tourism products grounded in Islamic values. Theoretically, this study confirms that integrating SWOT analysis with Islamic economic principles provides a relevant and comprehensive framework for formulating business development strategies that balance competitiveness with ethical orientation. Future studies are encouraged to apply quantitative or comparative approaches using alternative strategic tools to further validate and enrich the understanding of Sharia-based business strategy development in the tourism sector.

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