



## Shopee seller marketing strategy in the perspective of Islamic marketing ethics

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### Abstract

*This study aims to discuss the marketing strategies of Shopee sellers from the perspective of Islamic marketing ethics. This study uses descriptive qualitative research methods using primary data and secondary data. Data collection techniques are interviews, observations, and documentation conducted with 20 informants of 10 buyers and 10 sellers at Shopee. Promotions attract the attention of Generation Z are attractive product displays, discounts, free shipping, and viewing reviews or ratings of the products they want to buy. From the seller's side, in implementing their marketing strategy, they use the marketing mix concept, namely 4P (product, price, place, promotion), based on what Rasulullah SAW exemplified as a Muslim entrepreneur. That is, the business philosophy built by the owner is based on profit-oriented Sharia business and blessings. The Shopee sellers who became informants in this study were following the theories and concepts of Islamic marketing ethics and had implemented Islamic content consisting of three main things: first, the application of Islamic marketing characteristics; second, the application of Islamic business ethics; third, following the marketing practices of the Prophet Muhammad SAW based on the characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad, namely: Siddiq, Amanah, Fathanah, and Tabligh.*

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## Introduction

The community's use of e-commerce to meet their daily needs during the COVID-19 pandemic continues to increase. This is the impact of the efforts by the Indonesian government to limit

public mobility and inhibit the rate of transmission of COVID-19. This year, it is predicted that the development of E-Commerce will accelerate due to the pandemic situation that has yet to improve. Statista states that Indonesia's e-commerce users will reach 159 million in 2021, up 15% from the total number of e-commerce users in 2020, which reached 138 million. Meanwhile, in terms of revenue, the E-Commerce industry in 2021 is predicted to reach US\$ 38 million, an increase of 26% from last year's revenue of US\$ 30 million. In the e-Conomy SEA 2020 report, Google stated that 93% of Indonesian respondents in their survey stated that they would continue to use E-Commerce services even though the Covid 19 pandemic had ended (Yunarko, 2021).

One of the big players in Indonesian E-Commerce is Shopee. In the second quarter (Q2) 2021, the number of Shopee visitors reached 126,996,700/month and was ranked 1st in application downloads on the Playstore and 1st in the number of followers on social media (Iprice, 2021). The results of the Katadata Insight Center (KIC) survey of 1,146 respondents aged 18-29 years in several big cities in Indonesia showed that 56.6% of Indonesian youth had shopped through E-Commerce, and of this amount, 82% were aged 18-26 years or known as Generation Z (Lidwina, 2021a). Based on the research results by KIC and Kredivo, generation Z spends much of their salary shopping in E-Commerce, with an average transaction value of 5.4% of their monthly income (Lidwina, 2021b).

Manufacturers constantly innovate to develop marketing strategies so consumers become interested in their products or services. Manufacturers may apply various marketing strategies if the activities follow Sharia principles. However, Islam, in consumption behaviour, forbids its people to live in luxury and excess. So, a Muslim must refer to the principles of Islamic consumption when shopping (Komala, 2018).

The role of religion in consumption and marketing has been seriously taken into consideration (Hirschman, 1989). Islam is among the religions which are essentially and intimately linked to morality. According to Islam, commerce is vital for a person's livelihood, and he/she can continue it if the business is done in parallel with Islamic teachings. Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a successful businessman before his prophetic life (Antonio, 2007). If Muslims want to succeed in their lives and business, they should follow the Quran and Hadith in their marketing activities. The topic of Islamic marketing remains a hot debate among students, customers, practitioners, and academicians that it has demand or interest in either Muslim majority countries or Muslim minority countries (Wilson, 2012). Islam set some dietary laws to enhance human well-being, which comes from Allah (SWT). Based on some basic assumptions, Islamic marketing can be defined as The process and strategy (Hikmah) of fulfilling needs through Halal (Tayyibat) products and services with the mutual consent and welfare (Falah) of both parties, i.e. buyers and sellers to achieve material and spiritual well-being in the world here and the hereafter. Marketers are of great importance in delivering products or services according to the expectations of the customer, and besides this, companies are also striving hard to deliver products or services in a morally and ethically acceptable way. The platform for the implementation of such marketing can be provided by Islamic marketing. Therefore, Islam is a comprehensive way of life and provides rules for commercial activities (Arham, 2010).

Muslim societies have generated a set of ethics that was deduced from their intellectual root of *Shari'ah* law, whose root is in the Quran, which is "the most sacred source of law", embodying knowledge that God had revealed about human beliefs about God himself and about how the believer should conduct himself or herself in this world. This set of ethics is supposed to control all aspects of Muslim life including marketing business and practices, which in this paper is known as the Islamic marketing ethics, which are specific but not limited to the following: *Attaqwa*, *As-Sidq*, *Al-Amanah*, *Al-Ihsan*, *Al-Istiqamah*, *Annasihah*, *Attasamoh* and

Al-E'tedal. So, marketing businesses and activities in Islamic societies are governed by these Islamic behavioural ethics, and marketing practitioners must embrace them. For instance, they are required to seek Halal, i.e. whether any object or any action is permissible to use or engage in, according to Islamic law, in all their life and business' aspects and act honestly and give priority to public interest rather than their own (AlKhateeb & AlTurkistani, 2000). In addition, marketers in this modern world face numerous challenges to maintain a strong foothold in the market, as the global market is diverse. There are approximately 1.5 billion Muslims in the world; their different levels of religious commitments and practices pose a foremost challenge when one attempts to understand and practice business ethics from an Islamic perspective (Golam & Shariful Haque, 2012). So, marketers in Muslim regions need to rely on two sources of normative business ethics in Islam, which cover all life and business aspects – the Qur'an and Sunnah. They need to use these two sources, create their own marketing ethics' standard, abide by this standard in their business and finally share it with other cultures worldwide (Beekun & Badawi, 2005).

Islamic marketing, particularly Islamic marketing ethics, requires further research and literature to be developed. Therefore, this study aims to identify the key features of Islamic marketing ethics that Shopee sellers implement in their marketing strategies and assess their impact on customer behaviour towards purchasing a product.

## Literature Review

### *Marketing Ethics*

Abela & Murphy (2007) define marketing ethics as a systematic study of how moral standards are applied to marketing decisions, behaviours and institutions. According to Williams & Aitken (2011), ethics refer to the formalised social norms (codes and rules) concerned with notions of right and wrong. Ethical norms are broadly divided into two categories: things that you should (or should not) do because they will have desirable (or undesirable) consequences, and things you should do for some other reason, usually expressed as 'duty' (Abela & Murphy, 2007). Hunt & Vitell (1986) distinguish the former as 'teleological' (usually known in the general ethics literature as 'consequentialist') and the latter as 'deontological' (Williams & Aitken, 2011). Similarly, normative and descriptive approaches to ethics represent teleological and deontological perspectives on marketing ethics. As such, normative approaches to marketing ethics involve developing guidelines or rules to assist marketers in their effort to behave ethically (Hunt & Vitell, 1986) whereas, in descriptive approaches to marketing ethics, marketers deal with ethical issues through a multi-stage reasoning process, which involves recognising the presence of an ethical issue and invoking an ethical evaluation (Abela & Murphy, 2007). In that sense, the consequences' overall sound or harmful effects are the significant factors in teleological theories, whereas the main factor to consider in one's deontological evaluation is the righteousness of a specific act (Vitell & Patwardhan, 2008).

The marketing literature suggests that many unethical marketing practices (particularly on the promotional and communication side) relate to the marketing mix (price, product, place, promotion, and people). They may involve false advertising, pressure selling, unsafe or harmful products (Schlegelmilch & Öberseder, 2009), deceptive or questionable pricing, deceptive communication, bribery, discriminatory distribution, and promotion of materialism (Brinkmann, 2002). Although most of these unethical practices remain unchanged, technological advancement has added further problems such as stealth marketing, predatory lending, promotion of off-label uses of pharmaceuticals, and online privacy intrusion (Abela & Murphy, 2007).

Despite the scepticism and debate on the use of marketing mix in the marketing literature, Saeed et al. (2001) relied on its simplicity to present a model of Islamic ethical marketing. Therefore, due to the relevance of the marketing mix to Islamic marketing practices and the

current analysis, we will take a closer look at the marketing mix (4Ps) and its origins in this research.

### *Islamic Marketing Ethics*

Religion has always been an essential part of the social fabric. A fundamental precept of all the major religions has been the consistent teachings about human beings' individual and collective behaviour (Williams & Aitken, 2011).

Islam is no exception. In Islam, ethics dominates economics (and not vice versa), leading to a greater emphasis on duties rather than rights in Islamic ethics. The wisdom behind this is that if everyone fulfils duties (relating to justice and trusteeship), self-interest is automatically held within bounds, and all rights are undoubtedly safeguarded (Rice, 1999). Elaborating on Shari'ah duties from a marketing perspective. Ayub (2007) describes fair dealing, honesty, straightforwardness, free consent and the negation of misstatement, misrepresentation and exaggerated product descriptions as essential pillars of marketing ethics from an Islamic perspective. He further contends that false swearing, lying and hiding facts must be avoided in transactions. This shows that the Islamic approach to ethics can be considered teleological or consequentialist—based on definitions by Hunt & Vitell (1986). However, there are also traces of the deontological approach, particularly regarding the emphasis on individual responsibility towards society. In that sense, Islamic ethics combine teleological and deontological ethical considerations due to their emphasis on duties and their concern for the consequences of fulfilling or non-fulfilling these duties.

Beekun & Badawi (2005) and Saeed et al. (2001) have discussed marketing ethics from an Islamic perspective, which can be equally applicable to IBs alongside other businesses. Saeed et al. (2001) propose a new ethical marketing model based on Islamic principles characterised by “value-maximisation” as opposed to “profit-maximisation” and argue that the application of the Islamic perspective to the field of international marketing is relevant and effective in developing and maintaining a strong culture of ethical behaviour. The authors believe that shifting the thrust of marketing away from profit-maximisation towards value-maximisation will create a collaborative and value-laden global order that does not harm an organisation's competitive advantage.

The general thrust in the existing marketing ethics theories adequately deals with justice and utility. They contend that these theories have ignored the transcendental aspects which render them incomplete, of limited application, and open to interpretation according to the whims of business people. Despite the dominance of ethical relativism, the emergence of a trans-societal global moral order may result from a natural universal desire for a more stringent moral and ethical value system. They believe this is because there are innate universal moral values at our core irrespective of time, religion, culture, economic status, race or creed. Hence, the desire for a global moral order could be better explained and facilitated by an ethics system based on Islamic principles, which are not relative but absolute and leave no room for misinterpretation by marketers. In that vein, they explain that two principles govern commercial activities from an Islamic perspective. The first is submission to the moral order of God, and the second is empathy and mercy to God's creation, which essentially means refraining from doing harm to others and thus preventing the spread of unethical practices. Therefore, they believe that a global ethical business framework (including marketing) based on the Islamic principles of value-maximisation will be applicable at all times and across all cultures as the human desire for a global moral code is enshrined within the natural inclination in Islam to achieve higher ideals (Saeed et al., 2001).



### *Prophet Muhammad SAW Characteristics regarding Islamic Marketing Ethics*

In doing business, of course, not only morals are applied, but business ethics as well. According to the Prophet SAW, business ethics includes unity, combination, similarity, intelligence, responsibility, accountability, honesty, openness, trustworthiness, kindness for others and togetherness in conducting business activities. The principles of Islamic marketing ethics and the nature of the Prophet are *al-shiddiq* (honest), *al-amanah* (trusted), *al-tabligh* (convey/transparent and communicative), and *al-fathonah* (smart, professional) (Anwar, 2020).

#### *Al-Shiddiq (Honest)*

The word Shiddiq comes from Arabic, which means honest. Etymologically, the word Siddiq has several meanings. Some say that Siddiq comes from sadaqah, which means proper, honest, telling the truth, right in action or deed. The word shidiq, in another sense, is to prove the exact words and deeds without anything being covered/hidden, the truth, which can be trusted, and honesty so that many like the truth (Anwar, 2020).

Exemplifying and practising the nature of Shiddiq (honesty) in the business world can undoubtedly be done. Honesty in other matters includes doing business or trading by not deceiving (playing the measures, sizes, and scales) to harm others. Meanwhile, in the transaction, no party should be harmed. This fraud is prone and often occurs in trade and business around us, so it forgets to apply the behaviour of the Prophet SAW (Aprianto et al., 2020).

#### *Al-Amanah (Trusted)*

As an entrepreneur who runs his business or trades, of course, it is honesty, trustworthiness, and trustworthiness. The word amanah comes from the Arabic word al-wadi'ah, which means deposit. In language, Amanah can be interpreted as something entrusted. In large dictionaries, Indonesian are Messages deposited, security, and trust. Amanah comes from the word a-muna, ya'munu, which means honest and trustworthy (Aprianto et al., 2020).

#### *Al-Tabligh (Convey / Transparent and communicative)*

The word tabligh is taken from the Arabic ballagha, yuballighu, tablighan, which means to convey. According to the Big Dictionary, Indonesian tabligh means to broadcast the teachings of Islam. According to the term tabligh, it means a segment of the Islamic da'wah system, namely conveying and spreading the message of Islam both individually and in groups (Anwar, 2020).

The wisdom of the tablighi nature of the Prophet that we can take is as follows. During the time of preaching, the Prophet SAW received orders and then conveyed and reminded about Islam to his uncle Abu Lahab, even though what the Prophet said to his uncle was not responded to and rejected, even to the point of threatening to kill the Prophet for conveying the actual teachings of Islam (Anwar, 2020).

#### *Al-Fathonah (Smart, Professional)*

The word Al-Fathonah means intelligent. The opposite of the nature of fathonah is balladah, which means stupid. The Prophets and Apostles had an intelligent nature; how could they not have the ability to argue against those who opposed their preaching? The nature of fathonah possessed by the Prophets and Apostles was obtained from direct guidance from Allah, through revelation. Some prophets and apostles are learning from earlier prophets and apostles. For example, Prophet Idris learned from Prophet Shith, Prophet Ismail learned from Prophet Ibrahim, his father, and Prophet Moses also learned from Prophet Khidir. Thus, their intelligence was obtained not from school as it is today but from God, and their intelligence could not be handled by any other human being (Anwar, 2020).

Thus, the basic principles outlined above, as substantially practised by the Prophet Muhammad, contain ethical principles in business and are the most appropriate to apply to various business activities today. So that it will realise business activities syar'i and not deviate from the ethics practised by Prophet Muhammad (Nurhisam, 2017).

## **Methodology**

The research is descriptive with a qualitative approach. The information determination technique used is a purposive technique. The research approach used is a descriptive case study with the aim of making a sequential and valid description of the facts about the marketing strategies implemented by Shopee sellers in terms of the Islamic Marketing Ethics Perspective. Data collection used observation, interviews, and documentation. While the analytical techniques used are data reduction, data presentation, data analysis, and conclusions.

## **Results and Discussion**

### *Shopee Marketing Strategy*

In running its business, Shopee uses several marketing strategies to increase sales. Some of the marketing strategies implemented by Shopee include the following.

### *Using Marketing Strategies Following Existing Trends*

Shopee's marketing strategy effectively appeals to its target audience, including young people and mothers who shop online. They have partnered with famous public figures, such as Indonesian boy band BTS and girl band Black Pink, to enhance their reach further. In addition, Shopee utilised the catchy tune of Baby Shark in one of their advertisements to create the brand association. They have also capitalised on the popularity of the soap opera Ikatan Cinta in Indonesia by featuring its main characters, Amanda Manopo and Arya Saloka, resulting in a significant increase in sales.

### *Light and Entertaining Ads*

If we listen to Shopee's advertisements, they rarely make advertisements that are too long or difficult to digest. Shopee has an advertising concept that is light and entertaining but easy to remember, not only by their consumers but also by everyone. For example, the Baby Shark advertisement features several people dancing in the style of the song. In addition, there is also an advertisement starring Tukul Arwana, who dances happily using the song 'Shopee COD Shopee COD'. In another concept, the advertisement is in the form of several dialogues by the characters Andin and Mas Al, who are raining and then show the Shopee application on their Android.

### *Using Striking Brand Colors*

This Shopee marketing strategy may be unique. Many other products and marketplaces also use striking colours for their business. Shopee chose a striking orange as the national colour, so many people nicknamed this application 'the orange'. This colour is rarely used in business, so orange is often synonymous with Shopee. Shopee itself always applies this colour dominantly to all its business attributes, such as ad visualisations, applications, or whatever. Identifying a business with a specific colour is a very profitable marketing strategy because the business becomes more accessible to remember.

### *Choosing the Right Media for Promotion*

Another marketing strategy Shopee uses to increase product sales is choosing the best media. We can see this from Shopee, which focuses on developing businesses for mobile users or

mobile applications. Based on Shopee's e-commerce analysis, mobile or smartphone users in Indonesia are proliferating compared to other countries in Southeast Asia. This increased orders from the Shopee mobile application by up to 90%.

#### *Have a Clear Target Market*

Targeting a clear target market is also one of Shopee's strategies in increasing its sales. One of the proofs is Shopee's strategy of targeting the target market with the priority being women. Compared to creating a broad but unclear target market, it would be better and clearer if Shopee's e-commerce targets a more focused target. No wonder many products sold at Shopee are women's needs such as fashion and beauty products.

#### *Low Price Guarantee*

Providing competitive prices is also one of Shopee's strategies to increase sales. To be able to compete with other marketplaces, Shopee has the jargon "Guarantee Cheapest Price, 2x Money Back". This method of marketing products on Shopee by providing low prices effectively attracts consumers to shop. Despite offering low prices, the products' quality remains a top priority. Not only does Shopee guarantee low prices, but it also provides many promotions and discounts for its loyal customers. With the sales strategy at Shopee, it is no wonder that e-commerce is number one in Indonesia. It is no longer a secret that Shopee is one of Indonesia's best and largest e-commerce sites. This is inseparable from the marketing strategy used by Shopee's e-commerce to increase its sales.

#### *Provide Many Promotions for Customers*

Free shipping and XTRA cashback are among the reasons consumers love this application. Until now, this platform still provides users with free shipping and XTRA cashback promos. Shipping costs are given with a particular purchase limit. Even though the nominal looks small, free shipping can be an attractive attraction for potential consumers.

#### *Provides Many Promo Options for Sellers*

Shopee provides sellers with a range of promotional opportunities designed to bolster sales. These include free shipping, XTRA cashback, discounts on specific total purchases, and store vouchers. Shopee's marketing strategy is a win-win for both consumers and sellers, providing a comprehensive platform for store development. To take advantage of these promotions, sellers must complete a provided form. While some of these promotions come at no cost, others require a fee.

#### *Take Advantage of the Special Moment*

Shopee, the renowned online shopping platform, offers many promotional opportunities for its sellers and exclusive deals for all its users. These exceptional promos are typically held on select dates or special occasions, including the Shopee Big Sale Ramadhan, the 12.12 Birthday Sale, and the 11.11 Big Sale. Shopee stands out as the most dynamic and lively platform for promotions compared to its rivals due to its innovative and thrilling events.

#### *Service Features Very Varied*

In addition to marketing promotions and advertisements, Shopee also explores various exciting services to make its consumers happy. Call it the Shopee games service, plant a Shopee tree, and shake Shopee to get coins. These various fluid and fun services have generated enthusiasm towards Shopee from people of all ages. Thus, the popularity of Shopee continues to increase consistently by itself.

### *Many Participate in Events*

Not only flooding various application platforms with their advertisements, Shopee also actively sponsors many events held at television stations, such as charity concerts and singing competitions. Not a few of Shopee's strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic, by intensifying various special promos such as free shipping. In the pandemic era, where people get an appeal to shop online (reducing physical contact), Shopee managed to increase its sales. One of the events that Shopee regularly participates in is Harbolnas (National Online Shopping Day). Shopee provides exciting promos during the event, such as flash sales and cashback.

### *Transaction Security Features as Priority*

Shopee offers a comprehensive set of measures to ensure secure transactions for both buyers and sellers. One of these measures is the COD (Cash on Delivery) delivery feature, which allows buyers to pay for their orders in cash upon receiving them. Shopee also provides a return feature, which allows buyers to return items that do not meet their expectations or are defective. In addition, the platform offers telephone customer support in case of any complaints or issues that arise during the transaction process. With these features, Shopee provides a safe and reliable online marketplace for buyers and sellers alike.

### *Maximum Ad Quantity*

The prevalence of Shopee ads across various social media platforms is worth noting. The frequency of these advertisements indicates Shopee's marketing strategy to establish a strong presence and capture the attention of its target audience. However, it is essential to acknowledge that this approach can sometimes be perceived as intrusive and lead to negative perceptions of the brand. Despite this, most individuals appear to be unaffected by the frequency of Shopee's ads and are influenced by them. Consequently, Shopee has positioned itself as a reliable and trustworthy platform for online shopping. This highlights the efficacy of Shopee's marketing strategy in creating a sense of familiarity with its target audience and fostering consumer trust.

### *Application of Islamic Marketing Ethics in Marketing Strategy*

The application of Islamic marketing ethics to the marketing strategy carried out by shopee sellers has the aim that no party is harmed in buying and selling transactions, especially the buyer. The seller must make every effort so that every transaction does not harm the buyer. If Islamic ethics are applied correctly and consistently in business, all parties benefit the businessman himself, consumers, the environment and other parties involved in the business process. This is possible because the characteristic of someone who has Islamic ethics (morals) is not to do anything that will harm anyone, himself, or others (Baidan, 2014). This kind of business management needs to be applied in marketing activities, namely management that has the value of worship and gets two rewards from Allah SWT, namely in this world and the hereafter. Several ethical values of Islamic marketing refer to the nature of the Prophet and the ethical principles in the Qur'an, including the following.

### *Honest (Siddiq)*

This means honesty and underpinning words, beliefs, and actions based on Islamic teachings. A marketer should not lie or exaggerate the products sold to pursue sales targets. In work and business, honesty is displayed in the form of sincerity and punctuality, promises, services, reporting, acknowledging the weaknesses and strengths of the product and then making improvements to it. Maintaining honesty will encourage a marketer to be fair. Justice is defined as giving rights to someone with the right to receive them without less and receive rights without more. No one may take over the rights of others illegally (Rivai, 2012).



### *Intelligent and Wise (Fathonah)*

The nature of *fathanah* means understanding and intensely appreciating all the things that are their duties and obligations. *Fathanah* emphasises intelligence not only in world knowledge but also in the hereafter (religious teachings). This intelligence must be used wisely not to manipulate others but, on the contrary, can bring good to others. In addition to understanding all the products offered, a marketer must also be able to maintain the trust given by consumers for purchasing these products. In addition, marketers must act pretty in service and offer product prices to consumers without discriminating against religion, race, and social status.

### *Trustworthy (Amanah)*

*Amanah* means responsibility in carrying out each task and obligation. Trust is displayed in openness, honesty, excellent service and *ihsan* (trying to produce the best). In a business, a marketer who has a trustworthy nature means that he has a strong faith in Allah within him. A marketer who always maintains the trust will gain the trust of his consumers.

### *Argumentative and Communicative (Tabligh)*

*Tabligh* means can communicate well. This term is also translated into management language as sociable, intelligent, task description, delegation of authority, teamwork, responsiveness, coordination, control and supervision. Meanwhile, (Kartajaya & Sula, 2006) explained that the *tabligh* process means that a marketer must be able to convey the advantages of his product honestly and not have to lie and deceive customers. Marketers must also be excellent and faithful communicators and *bil hikmah* (wise and on target). This is according to His Word: "O you who believe! Fear Allah and speak the truth." (Qs. Al-Ahzab: 70).

### *Shopee Seller Marketing Strategy Analysis Viewed from the Perspective of Islamic Marketing Ethics*

The marketing strategy of the Shopee seller who became the informant in this study will be analysed based on four variables in the marketing mix and the nature of the Prophet Muhammad.

### *Product*

Product is anything offered to the market to get attention, buy, and use that can satisfy consumers' wants or needs. This section will explain the nature of the Prophet Muhammad SAW in business, i.e., *siddiq* (honest), *amanah* (can be trusted), *fathanah* (intelligent), and *tabligh* (communicative), which are related to Shoppee sellers' product strategy.

The nature of this Shiddiq is very much needed because the product to be marketed must be based on honesty, and the product must be completely new and halal to use. To increase consumer confidence in the products produced, Shopee sellers who became informants in this study provided the best fashion products, snacks and beauty products with the best quality and uniqueness in the presentation of their products, and the most important of these products were halal and suitable. This is reinforced by the statement of AI as the owner of one of the fashion SMEs as follows:

*"We always provide the best quality products, sir. In addition, we also provide more variants of product choices from other stores but still provide guaranteed quality assurance and are profitable for consumers. And always be honest with every product that exists"*

RO also expressed the same thing as the owner of food SMEs and AA as the owner of skincare SMEs, who stated that product innovation/product diversification is part of the

company's strategy so that consumers are not bored and even interested in making repeat purchases, especially from food and beverage products. Beauty products with a consumer market of various ages and cross-regions are also done according to market needs. In addition, observation/walking by doing introspection and knowing the company's position at the market level is also used as a strategy to position the product in the eyes of consumers. The use of unique packaging and the determination of SOP (Standard of Procedure) is used in the production process as a rule of corporate. To maintain product quality because with the SOP, the quality of the products issued will be maintained and not changed. As the word of Allah in QS. An-Nisa: 29, which means: "O you who believe, do not eat each other's property with vanity (not true), except in trade that applies on the basis of consensual between you. And do not kill yourself. Indeed, Allah is Most Merciful to you."

Furthermore, the product must be completely trustworthy and safe for use by consumers. Products that are believed to be genuine new products are not old goods. The product has passed a series of quality controls to ensure that the product is fit for use and of good quality. This is by the statement from HFMA as an owner of Batik SMEs follows:

*"One form of our responsibility to consumers is to maintain the quality of our products. We always carry out quality control of every product we produce, so that consumer confidence in the quality of our products is always maintained and creates consumer loyalty to our products."*

Likewise, the Messenger of Allah, as a Muslim entrepreneur who orders when buying and selling products, must provide the best quality and clear product conditions. The most important thing is honesty in transactions because it will increase consumers' trust and loyalty to the products, so the profits obtained will increase and, of course, get blessings from Allah SWT. As the Prophet SAW said:

*"You should always try to be a true and honest person because honesty will give birth to goodness (benefits). And goodness will show the way to heaven. If someone continues to try to be an honest person, then Allah will surely record him as a person who is always honest. Stay away from lying and deceiving because lying will give birth to evil and evil will show the way to hell. If someone continues to lie, it will be recorded by Allah as a liar. "(HR. Mutafaqun Alaih)*

However, fathanah means understanding deeply everything that happens in their duties and obligations. Fathanah is concerned with emotional and spiritual intelligence. Marketers must understand all the products offered by the company. Fathonah can also be interpreted as intelligent, creative, brave, and confident. This reflects the willingness to strive to seek and discover new, prospective, and future-oriented business opportunities but pay attention to the current principles. This is in line with the statement of AA as the owner of craft SMEs as follows:

*"The products we produce are the result of the creativity and innovation of our craftsmen. Innovation is very important to maintain the loyalty of our customers. Because with this innovation, the products we produce are not monotonous, have their own uniqueness and added value, thereby increasing the competitiveness of our products in the market."*

The nature of *fathonah* is also seen as a life strategy for every Muslim because to achieve his life goals a Muslim must optimize all the potential that has been given by Him. And one of the characteristics of the most pious people are people who are able to optimize their potential for thought. In the Qur'an, people who always optimize their thinking potential are referred to as *Ulul Albab*, namely people whose faith and knowledge interact in a balanced way, as His word:

*"And no one will believe "And no one will believe except by Allah's permission and Allah inflicts wrath on those who do not use their minds." (Qs. Yunus: 100).*

*Tabligh* can communicate the products it sells to consumers well. A marketer must be able to convey the advantages of his product honestly and not have to lie and deceive customers. Marketers must also be excellent and faithful communicators with wisdom (wise and on target). This is in line with the statement from NM, owner of fashion SMEs, as follows:

*"We always give an appeal to all of our marketing team to always convey the advantages of the product in an attractive and targeted manner without leaving honesty and truth. Therein lies the blessing, sir."*

The statement from the NM is following the word of Allah SWT as follows:

*"O you who believe! Fear Allah and speak the truth." (Qs. Al-Ahzab: 70).*

#### *Place (Distribution Channel)*

A place/distribution channel is a series of interdependent organisations involved in making a product or service ready for use or consumption. This section will explain the nature of the Prophet Muhammad SAW in business, i.e., *siddiq* (honest), *amanah* (can be trusted), *fathanah* (intelligent), and *tabligh* (communicative), which are related to Shopee sellers' place (distribution channel) strategy.

The selection of the Shopee marketplace as a distribution channel from the sellers who became informants in this study was the right choice. Because Shopee has good integrity and credibility in the eyes of the public, as Indonesia's top marketplace with a total visit of 961.51 million visits per month with external and internal expedition connections owned by Shopee, making transactions between sellers and buyers more transparent, secure and can be traced the journey of the product from the seller to the buyer. This is in line with the statement from MSM, the owner of Batik SMEs, as follows:

*"We chose Shopee as a marketing and distribution medium for our products because of the integrity and credibility of Shopee as Indonesia's top marketplace. A safe and transparent support system as well as expedition support that is owned makes sales transactions faster and safer for buyers because buyers can check the position of the product ordered via their smartphone."*

Based on the findings of this research, utilising Shopee as a product distribution platform is an excellent choice for SMEs. System reliability, transparency, expedition network owned, and the existence of a Guarantee feature from Shopee for product distribution from seller to buyer, where there is protection to buyers and sellers by holding funds between buyers and sellers until the buyer confirms receiving the product purchased without any problems or submissions return of goods/funds. After that, the payment funds from the new buyer will be released to the seller. Through this Shopee guarantee feature, buyers feel safe with the funds

they spend on transactions, so buyers avoid fraud and fraud committed by the seller. This increases the trust of buyers to transact through the Shopee marketplace. This is following the statement from MRNA, the owner of Batik SMEs, as follows:

*"Alhamdulillah, since we started partnering with Shopee and marketing our products through the Shopee marketplace, there has been a significant increase in sales due to consumer confidence in the security and guarantee of transactions provided by Shopee Indonesia"*

Furthermore, the online store product layout arrangement on the Shopee marketplace dramatically determines the store's sales level. The better the arrangement and classification of products, the easier it is for buyers to find the products they want. This will impact the traffic of buyer visits to our online store and the conversion rate of our store sales. This is following the statement from MAS, owner of Batik SMEs as follows:

*"The product clustering system really determines the conversion rate of our product sales, the better the product classification and product layout design that we do, the better the conversion rate of our product sales will be."*

Using the ChatBot feature, Auto Responder, and the fast response rate of an online store on the Shopee marketplace will determine consumer satisfaction with the online store. The better service and responsibility provided by our customer service team and good engagement with consumers can increase the level of consumer satisfaction with our online store and lead to an increase in the level of consumer loyalty to our products. This is in line with the statement from Mohammad Fatkhurrohmah, owner of fashion SMEs, as follows:

*"The Shopee ChatBot and Auto Responder features really help us answer common questions that are often asked by customers, thereby increasing our fast response rate in front of customers. They will feel well served and feel comfortable when visiting our store and as a result they will come back to our store to find the products they want and make purchases again and again..."*

Moreover, in the concept of place/distribution strategy, Rasulullah SAW also gave an example: not being allowed to cut distribution lines, harming various parties. However, for the present context, it needs to be adapted to the times and the needs of people who want satisfaction and comfort. The most important of this strategy is honesty and openness as part of the business process and the achievement of blessings from Allah SWT.

The concept of a good and attractive marketing place is intended for customer satisfaction and convenience in making buying and selling transactions and providing the best service by utilising various attractive and satisfying facilities. This follows the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad, who always provides optimal service.

### *Promotion*

Marketing needs more than product development, pricing and making the products offered reachable to consumers. Nevertheless, it also provides information about the products or services offered through promotional activities. This section will explain the nature of the Prophet Muhammad SAW in business, i.e., *siddiq* (honest), *amanah* (can be trusted), *fathanah* (intelligent), and *tabligh* (communicative), which are related to Shoppee sellers' promotion strategy.

Providing information about products or services a company offers honestly through promotional activities is necessary. One is luring consumers through a live stream on Shopee (Shopee Live). The siddiq attitude applied by Shopee sellers explains that the products from the store are reasonable and of good quality. This is following the statement from AI, owner of fashion SMEs, as follows:

*“Shopee Live is one of the mainstay features of Shopee that we use to introduce our products, bro. Through Shopee Live, we can communicate directly online to all of our followers and consumers. Product details and product descriptions can clearly be seen directly online by consumers, so consumers can freely choose products that suit their tastes directly via Shopee Live.”*

Promotion, based on an honest attitude (Siddiq), can be trusted following potential consumers. Promoting products that are sold honestly by the actual conditions of the products being sold, promoting products honestly according to the advantages and disadvantages of the product, not exaggerating in attracting buyers, and not making fictitious offers and acknowledgements of the products being sold. This is in accordance with the statement from NM, owner of fashion SMEs, as follows:

*“In our promotional activities, we always prioritize honesty in reviewing our products. We review our products in accordance with detailed product specifications and the real condition of the product as it is. Without exaggerating our products so that consumers buy. Consumer trust in our reviews is our priority. Starting from that trust will create consumer trust, satisfaction and loyalty to our products.”*

Being competent in reading the situation of the target market and looking for loopholes so that the promotions carried out can be different from those of competitors' products is a necessity. The rapid development of technology creates new alternatives in terms of promotion by utilising the novelty of technology. For example, the use of 3D catalogues or the use of Augmented Reality technology to display accurate product details online so that consumers can directly see product details even though they do not hold the product directly. This is in accordance with the statement from AA, owner craft SMEs, as follows:

*“Innovation in terms of promotion is very much needed in this era of information technology, mas. My business itself has adopted the use of 3D catalogs to promote products. The use of this 3D catalog makes it very easy for consumers to see the details of the product to be purchased. Making a new experience for consumers in shopping, thus making consumers more interested in our products.”*

Communicative promotions can make potential consumers enthusiastic about the promotion. Communicative here is intended so the seller and prospective buyer know the product clearly. In promoting a product, the salesman not only highlights the product's advantages without describing the shortcomings, but this is also tantamount to fooling consumers. Given the importance of honesty in business, ethics must be put forward as a *wasilah* to get blessings and create a good relationship between consumers and producers. This is in line with the statement from AA, owner of skincare SMEs, as follows:



*"In terms of promotion, we always emphasize to our marketing team to convey detailed information about our products to consumers, what are the advantages, disadvantages and side effects of the beauty products we sell. With this transparency of information, it is hoped that it will increase the level of consumer confidence in our products so as to create a good long-term relationship between us and our customers."*

Along with the development of the times, more creativity is needed in buying and selling transactions, not least in promotions that use various media. Rasulullah SAW also had promotional activities at that time. He emphasised that the promotions carried out were reasonable in attracting buyers, not making fictitious offers and acknowledgements of the products being sold, especially for the current context of advertisements or promotions that are inappropriate with their original condition, which is a lie or perjury.

Likewise, in selling products, it is not only highlighting the advantages without telling the supporting factors or side effects that may arise. This behaviour is tantamount to fooling consumers. Given the importance of honesty in business, ethics must be put forward as a *wasilah* to get blessings and create a good relationship between consumers and producers. Rasulullah SAW said:

*"From Abu Sa'id that the Prophet Muhammad SAW said: An honest and trustworthy trader will be with the prophets, the shiddiqin, those who are martyred in battle (later in heaven)." (HR. Tirmidhi)*

From this hadith, the Messenger of Allah has promised that honest traders will be placed with the prophets and given glory by Him by getting His Paradise.

The findings of this study indicate that promoting products through ethical means and ensuring compatibility with the original product can be an effective strategy for expanding the consumer base. The prioritisations of ethical practices in advertising can build trust and establish positive brand recognition while ensuring that the product is promoted in a manner that is consistent with its intended use and benefits, which can enhance consumer satisfaction and loyalty. These efforts can contribute to a product's long-term success and a business's overall growth.

### *Price*

Price is a unit of measure regarding the quality of a product, the price or the amount of money needed to obtain a combination of goods and accompanying services. This section will explain the nature of the Prophet Muhammad SAW in business, i.e., *siddiq* (honest), *Amanah* (can be trusted), *fathanah* (intelligent), and *tabligh* (communicative), which are related to Shoppee sellers' price strategy.

In determining the price of a product, Shopee sellers who became informants in this study set the price of their products based on honesty, where honesty means that product pricing is determined based on the cost of production as it is. This price is following the quality of a product to be made. Without mutual harm between consumers and producers. This is in accordance with RO's statement as owner of food SMEs, as follows:

*"Pricing for our products is determined based on the cost of production and consideration of market prices and market conditions as well as competitors for similar products, sir."*

Trustworthy means that the price of a product matches its quality, giving consumers a sense of satisfaction when making a purchase. This is because the price reflects the quality provided by the product. This definition corresponds with the statement made by MF, owner of fashion SMEs, as follows.

*“Customer satisfaction is our priority in selling our products. Therefore, as much as possible, we fix the price of our products according to the quality of the products we provide to consumers.”*

The right pricing strategy will determine a product's sales conversion rate. The price strategy used mainly by Shopee sellers who are informants in this study is to provide store discount vouchers, product discount vouchers, product bundling discounts, free shipping vouchers and extra cashback vouchers for products being sold. This is in accordance with the statement from NM, owner of fashion SMEs, as follows:

*“We provide special treatment in our product pricing strategy, bro. Among other things, providing store vouchers for consumers who follow our store on Shopee. In addition, we also provide product discount vouchers, product bundling discounts, free shipping vouchers and xtra cashback vouchers for some of our products. The implementation of this strategy has proven to be successful in increasing the conversion rate of our product sales, bro.”*

Shopee sellers who are informants in this study are communicative in determining prices. This is due to the combination of products and services provided by Shopee sellers to their consumers. This is in accordance with the statement from HFMA, owner of Batik SMEs, as follows:

*“The combination of product quality, competitive pricing and excellent service and fast response is our company's slogan. As much as possible these factors have always been the spirit and foundation of each of our activities. Customer satisfaction and loyalty is the goal of our company. We always maintain customer satisfaction and loyalty as much as possible for the sustainability of our business.”*

In setting prices, there is a strategy that Shopee sellers who become informants in this study use, namely by looking at supply and demand, market conditions, competitor conditions, and the company's current position. Because there is a link between the price set and the service provided in terms of costs and capital spent. In addition, it is nominally recognised by Shopee Sellers that their prices are relatively high. However, they provide feedback by providing good product quality/quality and the comfort and safety of the product as proof that consumers still believe and are loyal to the products provided. In addition, Shopee sellers also segment the market by considering demographic, geographic, economic-social, and psychological aspects as part of setting prices and products to be issued because it is crucial to do this as an effort to make the company's performance effective and efficient and achieve targets. This is done by adjusting consumers' products, prices, and purchasing power.

In one of his teachings, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) gave an example of how to set prices fairly. He discouraged businesspeople from engaging in a price war, which can ultimately harm the seller. Instead, he emphasised the importance of competing based on quality, service, and added value. This concept of fair competition aims to ensure that prices are determined just and ethically.

In determining the price, it is left to the market mechanism by looking at the supply and demand factors, depending on the strength of market supply and demand. Moreover, the supply and demand meeting must occur voluntarily ('an taradhin), not to persecute and be wronged. Regarding the strategy above, Allah says:

*"O you who believe! Don't eat your neighbor's wealth in a false way, except by trade that is consensual between you. And don't kill yourself. Verily Allah is Most Merciful to you." (Qs. An-Nisa: 29).*

Although the Shopee sellers who became informants in this study applied the theories and concepts of conventional marketing strategies, they also applied Islamic marketing ethics, i.e., Islamic marketing ethics and business ethics, following the marketing practices of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. The ethical principles of Islamic marketing applied by Shopee sellers who became informants in this study include divinity (rabbaniyyah), ethical (akhlaqiyyah), realistic (al waqiyyah), and humanistic (al insaniyah).

#### *Divinity (Rabbaniyyah)*

MSM, owner of Batik SMEs, explained as follows:

*"I run my business following Islamic characteristics, which are not only looking at the worldly aspect, but also we always remember God that everyone who runs his business is legal to use various marketing strategies but must remember God's rules should not be ignored."*

Theistic or divinity or rabbaniyah is a belief held unanimously that all human actions are always under the supervision of Allah SWT. Therefore, all human beings should conduct themselves in the best possible manner and refrain from being deceitful, cheating, stealing other people's property, or misusing other people's property to prevent disgraceful actions in the business world.

#### *Ethical (Akhlaqiyyah)*

NM, as owner of fashion SMEs, said:

*"Akhlaqul karimah is the motto of Navyza Hijab. Daily activities at Navyza Hijab highly uphold the values of akhlaqul karimah. I personally and all employees here are required to instill moral values in our daily activities. The key is morals, because the Prophet Muhammad was sent to the earth is to perfect morals. Well, hopefully Navyza Hijab can contribute morally, especially for women to cover their aurat through hijab and Muslim clothing."*

According to NM, a fashion SME owner, being ethical or moral does not just mean following the generally accepted ethical norms. Ethics is central to having a conscience, and it cannot be compromised. As a result, this serves as a guide for Islamic marketers to ensure that they uphold ethical behaviour in their business dealings with all parties, including consumers, distributors, boutiques, suppliers, and competitors.

#### *Realistic (Al Waqiyyah)*

The term "al-waqiyyah," which is Arabic for "according to reality," refers to being truthful and avoiding fabrication, particularly in matters that may lead to deception. It is imperative that all

transactions are grounded in reality and that all actions are characterised by honesty. The Prophet Muhammad, who exemplified this realistic nature, taught his followers to be honest and truthful in all their dealings. For instance, when selling a defective item, the buyer ought to be informed of the defect, as espoused in the noble teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. Notably, the Prophet never engaged in any deception, and his followers are thus obligated to follow his example.

#### *Humanistic (Al Insaniyah)*

The concept of humanistic or al-insaniyah pertains to being humane and respectful of others. Marketing endeavours to enhance the quality of life. However, marketing activities must not disrupt social order or damage the community. Marketers must also avoid avaricious tendencies and the desire to control everything, which can lead to oppression and injury towards others. In a recent study, Shopee sellers who acted as informants displayed characteristics of Islamic marketing, including divinity, ethics, realism, and humanitarianism. These features follow the principles of Islamic marketing (Alma & Priansa, 2014).

Furthermore, the Islamic business ethics applied by Shopee sellers is reflected in the statement of AA as skincare SMEs as follows:

*“Magic Skin Roro Mendut's marketing strategy is based on Islamic business. We really put forward the concept of grace and pleasure, both from the seller and the buyer, to Allah SWT. Thus, marketing activities must be based on ethics. Marketing ethics in relation to products, namely products that are halal and thoyyib, products that are useful and needed, products that have economic potential, products that have high added value, and products that can satisfy the community.”*

Finally, following the marketing practices of the Prophet Muhammad SAW applied by Shopee sellers, referring to the Prophet Muhammad SAW as an Islamic marketer. Therefore, this marketing uses segmentation and targeting, practised by the Prophet Muhammad SAW when he traded in Sham. Thus, the Shopee sellers who became informants in this study had implemented the marketing practices of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

#### **Conclusion**

In implementing their marketing strategy, Shopee sellers use the concept of a marketing mix, namely the 4Ps (product, price, place, promotion) based on what was exemplified by Rasulullah SAW as a Muslim entrepreneur. This means that the business philosophy built by the owners is based on a Sharia business oriented towards profit and blessing, even though it does not use the Sharia label in naming its business. This is evidenced in the form of strategic efforts carried out by Shopee sellers. Although the owners know there is still flexibility, its application has yet to be fully implemented. However, there is hoped to make the business that is carried out as a Sharia business unit.

Viewed from the perspective of Islamic marketing ethics, the shopee sellers who became informants in this study were following the theories and concepts of Islamic marketing ethics and had implemented Islamic content consisting of three main things: first, the application of Islamic marketing characteristics; second, the application of Islamic business ethics; third, following the marketing practices of the Prophet Muhammad SAW based on the characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad, namely: Siddiq, Amanah, Fathanah, and Tabligh. This research raises a further research agenda to develop and validate marketing ethics measurements specific

to e-commerce and SMEs. To achieve research results that can be generalised, it is imperative to employ a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic and more reliable and applicable findings.

### Author Contribution

Mohammad Rosyada: Creating and designing analysis, Collecting the data, Contributing the data or analysis tools, and Writing paper.

Yuniarsih Endah Palupi: Collecting the data, Contributing the data or analysis tools, and Writing paper.

Tamamudin: Contributing the data or analysis tools, and Writing paper.

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript

### Declaration of Competing Interest

We declare that we have no conflict of interest.

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