

The Character and Work Ethos of Muslim Marketers in Modern Business Competition

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Abstract

The increasingly fierce competition in modern business, influenced by the development of digital technology and changing consumer behavior, demands marketing practices that are not only profit-oriented but also uphold ethical values and moral responsibility. In this context, Islamic marketing emerges as an approach that places Islamic values as the primary foundation for every marketing activity. This research aims to examine the character and work ethic of Muslim marketers in the face of modern business competition and to explain their role as a source of sustainable competitive advantage. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with a literature study approach. Data was obtained from various relevant library sources, such as scientific journals, books, and academic publications related to Sharia marketing and Islamic work ethic. The study results show that the characteristics of Muslim marketers that reflect honesty, trustworthiness, professionalism, and moral responsibility, as well as the Islamic work ethic that views work as worship, play an important role in building consumer trust, business reputation, and business sustainability amidst the dynamics of modern business competition

Keywords: *Islamic marketing, Islamic work ethic, Muslim marketer character, modern business competition*

Introduction

Modern business competition unfolds in increasingly complex dynamics, characterized by accelerating technology, changing consumer behavior, and growing intensity of competition among business players. In such conditions, marketing activities become a strategic element that determines the company's success in maintaining its existence and expanding its market share. However, the dominant marketing orientation focused on achieving profits often overlooks ethical values, leading to practices that could potentially harm consumers and erode public trust. This phenomenon indicates that marketing success cannot be measured solely by financial performance, but also by the extent to which marketing activities are conducted ethically and responsibly, especially in the context of increasingly fierce business competition (Ambarwati & Abroza, 2024).

The development of digital technology is increasingly strengthening ethical challenges in marketing practices. The utilization of social media, digital platforms, and information technology provides significant opportunities for companies to reach consumers more broadly and quickly. However, on the other hand, the use of technology also has the potential to encourage manipulative, less transparent marketing practices that disregard consumer interests. This condition demands a marketing approach that is not only adaptable to technological developments but also grounded in strong moral values. In this context, integrating ethics into marketing strategies becomes an urgent need for businesses to develop sustainably and not lose social legitimacy within society (Syaripudin et al., 2025).

Islamic economics offers an alternative perspective thru the concept of Sharia marketing, which places ethics as the main foundation in all marketing activities. Sharia marketing not only regulates the technical aspects of transactions but also emphasizes the importance of honesty, fairness, transparency, and social responsibility in interactions between producers and consumers. This approach aims to create a balance between business interests and societal well-being, so that marketing activities are not solely profit-oriented, but also focused on blessings and business sustainability. Several studies indicate that the application of Sharia ethics in marketing can build consumer trust and strengthen business competitiveness in the face of modern competition (Ambarwati & Abroza, 2024).

In the practice of Islamic marketing, the role of the marketer becomes crucial because they are the main actors who implement and represent the company's values to consumers. Marketers are not only required to have excellent technical skills and marketing strategies, but also a character and work ethic that aligns with Islamic principles. Character traits such as honesty, trustworthiness, professionalism, and a focus on the common good should be reflected in every marketing activity undertaken. In the midst of increasingly competitive and technology-based modern business competition, the character and work ethic of Muslim marketers become a key differentiator that can determine the quality of marketing practices and the sustainability of Islamic businesses (Syaripudin et al., 2025).

Although research on Sharia marketing strategies and ethics has grown, studies specifically highlighting the character and work ethic of Muslim marketers are still relatively limited. Most research focuses more on the strategic, technological, or impact aspects of Islamic marketing on business performance, while the personal dimension of marketing practitioners has not been extensively studied in depth. In fact, the

success of integrating ethics and technology in Islamic marketing heavily depends on the quality of the character and work ethic of marketers as the main implementers in the field. Therefore, this study aims to examine the character and work ethic of Muslim marketers in the face of modern business competition, and to explain how Islamic values can serve as an ethical foundation and a source of competitive advantage in contemporary marketing practices (Ambarwati & Abroza, 2024).

Literature review

1. The Concept of Marketing in an Islamic Perspective

Marketing from an Islamic perspective is understood as a business activity that not only aims to meet the needs and desires of consumers, but must also be conducted in accordance with Sharia values. The concept of Islamic marketing places ethics as the main foundation in all marketing processes, from product planning, pricing, promotion, to distribution. Marketing is not positioned solely as a tool to maximize profits, but rather as a means to achieve common good and maintain a balanced relationship between business operators and consumers. Therefore, every marketing activity must be based on the principles of fairness, honesty, and moral responsibility to align with the objectives of Sharia in economic activities (Prihatta, 2018).

The basic principles of Islamic marketing are reflected in the values of honesty, trustworthiness, transparency, and justice, which must be applied in every marketing practice. These principles are the main differentiator between Islamic marketing and conventional marketing, which tends to emphasize the effectiveness of strategies and profit achievement. In the context of modern business characterized by intense competition and the utilization of digital technology, the application of Sharia marketing ethics serves as a mechanism for moral control to ensure that marketing activities do not harm consumers or society. Research indicates that integrating Sharia ethics into marketing practices can build consumer trust and strengthen business sustainability and competitiveness in the long run (Ambarwati & Abroza, 2024). Additionally, strengthening marketing ethics that are adaptable to technological developments is also an important factor in maintaining the relevance of Sharia marketing amidst the dynamics of modern business (Syaripudin et al., 2025).

2. Characteristics of a Muslim Marketer

The work ethic of Muslim marketers is a set of values and work attitudes derived from Islamic teachings and internalized in the professional behavior of a marketer. This work ethic is not only oriented toward achieving sales targets, but also places marketing activities as part of worship and moral responsibility to Allah SWT. In the context of Islamic marketing, the work ethic of Muslim marketers is reflected thru the theistic, ethical, realistic, and humanistic characteristics that serve as guidelines in carrying out marketing activities. Theistic values instill the awareness that every work activity is always under God's supervision, thus encouraging marketers to avoid fraudulent and immoral practices. This awareness shapes an honest, disciplined, and responsible work ethic, which ultimately strengthens the personal integrity of marketers in fulfilling their roles amidst business competition (Hasanah, 2016).

Furthermore, the work ethic of Muslim marketers can be positioned as a strategic resource because it is capable of creating sustainable competitive advantage. Ethical values encourage marketers to prioritize noble virtues such as honesty, courtesy, and concern for consumers, thereby building trust and long-term relationships with customers. Realistic values shape a professional, flexible, and adaptive attitude toward changes in the business environment without abandoning Sharia principles, while humanistic values place consumers as equal partners who must be respected and served fairly. The integration of these values makes the work ethic of Muslim marketers not just an individual attitude, but an organizational asset that plays a crucial role in enhancing reputation, consumer loyalty, and the sustainability of Islamic business in the face of modern competition (Hasanah, 2016).

3. Work Ethos in Islam

Work ethic in Islam is a value concept rooted in a Muslim's worldview regarding the meaning of work and the purpose of life. Work ethic is not only understood as a habit or attitude toward work, but also reflects the character, beliefs, and value system that shape the work behavior of individuals and groups. From an Islamic perspective, work is viewed as an activity with spiritual and moral dimensions, and therefore cannot be separated from ethical values and religious responsibility. Islamic work ethic stems from the awareness that humans were

created as caliphs on earth, entrusted with the responsibility to manage life productively, responsibly, and with a focus on the common good. Therefore, work in Islam is not merely an effort to meet material needs, but also a means of self-actualization as a servant of God and the embodiment of righteous deeds in daily life (Kirom, 2018).

Furthermore, the work ethic in Islam emphasizes that every work activity has devotional value if it is done with the right intention and in a manner that is in accordance with the teachings of Islamic law. Islam not only encourages its followers to work, but also demands that the work be done diligently, professionally, honestly, and with integrity. Islamic work ethic rejects laziness, dependence, and indiscipline because they contradict the value of monotheism and human moral responsibility. Work based on the Islamic ethos will produce productive, efficient, and quality-oriented behavior, while also maintaining a balance between worldly and afterlife interests. Thus, the work ethic in Islam serves as a normative foundation that shapes the quality of individuals and society to enable sustainable development without losing moral and spiritual integrity (Kirom, 2018).

4. Modern Business Competition and the Challenges for Muslim Marketers

Modern business competition is characterized by increasingly open, dynamic, and competitive market structures due to accelerated globalization and digital transformation. The utilization of digital technology, online platforms, and cross-border market integration has eliminated many geographical boundaries in business activities. This condition creates significant opportunities for businesses to reach a wider market, but it also intensifies competition between companies. In this context, companies are not only competing on price and product quality, but also on speed of innovation, data mastery, and the ability to effectively leverage technology. This change in market structure requires business players to be adaptable in order to survive and thrive amidst increasingly fierce global competition (Sasmita & Suryadi, 2025).

Amidst this competitive dynamic, Muslim marketers face more complex challenges because they are required to adhere to Sharia principles. Modern marketing practices are often driven by aggressive strategies, information manipulation, and the

exploitation of consumer data, which potentially conflict with the values of honesty, transparency, and fairness in Islam. The main challenge faced by Muslim marketers is how to integrate digital technology and modern marketing strategies without violating Sharia ethics. Limitations in utilizing technology that aligns with Islamic principles, as well as competition with non-Sharia companies that are more flexible in their marketing strategies, pose real obstacles to the practice of Sharia marketing in the modern era (Ambarwati & Abroza, 2024).

Beside technological challenges and global competition, changing consumer behavior also poses a significant challenge for Muslim marketers. Modern consumers are increasingly critical, digitally informed, and demand speed and convenience in transactions. On the other hand, consumers are also showing increased awareness of ethical values, social responsibility, and business sustainability. This condition opens up opportunities for Muslim marketers to make Sharia values a strategic differentiator in modern business competition. By prioritizing ethics, honesty, and social responsibility, Muslim marketers can build consumer trust and loyalty as a sustainable competitive advantage, while also addressing the challenges of an increasingly complex market competition (Sasmita & Suryadi, 2025).

Research methods

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method with a literature study (library research) approach to deeply examine the character and work ethic of Muslim marketers in the face of modern business competition. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on understanding the meanings, values, and concepts derived from academic studies related to Islamic marketing. Research data were obtained from secondary data sources, including scientific journals, books, and research reports relevant to the topics of Islamic marketing, Islamic work ethic, Muslim marketer character, and the dynamics of modern business competition.

Data collection techniques were carried out thru documentation by tracing, inventorying, and reviewing literature relevant to the research focus. The collected data was then analyzed systematically thru data reduction stages to filter relevant information, followed by concept categorization to group main themes, and thematic analysis based on Islamic values. Thru these analysis stages, this research aims to produce a comprehensive understanding of the role of character and

work ethic in Muslim marketers as an ethical foundation and a source of competitive advantage in marketing practices amidst modern business competition.

Results and Discussion

1. The Ideal Character of a Muslim Marketer in Business Competition

The character of a Muslim marketer from a Sharia perspective cannot be separated from the main goal of marketing activities in Islam, which is the simultaneous achievement of worldly and otherworldly satisfaction. Sharia marketing is not just a set of promotional techniques, but a process rooted in the spiritual character development of individual marketers. A Muslim marketer is required to have purity of soul, sincerity, and a focus on seeking God's pleasure in all their business activities. This confirms that marketing behavior must be guided by Islamic ethical values, so that marketing activities are not solely focused on consumer satisfaction, but also on moral and spiritual accountability before Allah SWT (Budiharjo, 2020). With strong spiritual character, Muslim marketers will be able to refrain from manipulative and misleading marketing practices, even under high business competition pressure.

Furthermore, the character of a Muslim marketer is reflected in the application of the core values of the Prophet Muhammad's morals, which serve as the foundation of sharia marketing ethics. These values include shiddiq (truthful), amanah (trustworthy), tabligh (communicative), and fathanah (intelligent). This character is the main differentiator between Islamic marketing and conventional marketing, as it places honesty and justice as fundamental principles in building relationships with consumers and business partners. Sharia marketers are not permitted to manipulate product information, make false oaths, or resort to any means for material gain. Conversely, marketing is understood as a form of worship with transcendental value, so every transaction must be carried out with full moral responsibility (Hamdan et al., 2022).

In the context of the modern market, Muslim marketers are also required to be adaptable without abandoning Islamic principles. The Islamic market has a strong emotional character because it is driven by religious awareness, while the conventional market emphasizes only the rationality of profit.

This condition demands that Muslim marketers possess social sensitivity, empathy, and the ability to fully understand consumer needs, both from material and spiritual aspects. Thus, Islamic marketing not only serves as a means of product distribution but also as a medium for spreading Islamic values thru ethical, fair, and humanistic business practices. This character is the main foundation for building long-term trust and business sustainability from an Islamic perspective (Hamdan et al., 2022).

2. The Work Ethos of Muslim Marketers as a Strategic Resource

Islamic work ethic is a set of values that shapes the work attitudes and behavior of a Muslim based on Islamic teachings. This work ethic doesn't just view work as an economic activity, but also as part of worship with spiritual and moral dimensions. From an Islamic perspective, every work activity must be based on the right intention, carried out in a permissible manner, and directed toward obtaining blessings. The Islamic work ethic encourages individuals to work diligently, honestly, and responsibly because every job will be accounted for, both socially and spiritually. Thus, Islamic work ethic becomes the main foundation in shaping work professionalism oriented toward Islamic moral and ethical values (Dwiyanti, 2023).

Furthermore, the Islamic work ethic serves as a source of internal motivation that encourages Muslim workers to have a high commitment to work quality. Values such as discipline, trustworthiness, hard work, and consistency must be ingrained in a Muslim's character when carrying out their professional activities. The Islamic work ethic rejects laziness, irresponsibility, and excessive dependence on others, as these are contrary to the principle of humans being God's vicegerents on earth. With a strong work ethic, individuals are not only results-oriented but also pay attention to ethical and dignified work processes (Widiarto, 2022).

In the context of modern marketing and business competition, Islamic work ethic plays a strategic role for Muslim marketers in facing target pressures and market dynamics. Marketers who adhere to the Islamic work ethic will maintain integrity, honesty, and social responsibility even in highly competitive situations. Islamic work ethic does not hinder performance; rather, it strengthens consumer trust and company reputation. By making Islamic work ethic the main guideline, Muslim marketers are able to achieve sustainable performance

while maintaining moral values in modern marketing practices (Dwiyanti, 2023).

3. Integrating Character and Work Ethos in Modern Marketing Practices

The integration of the character and work ethic of Muslim marketers in modern marketing practices is reflected thru the application of Islamic values into marketing strategies, particularly in the realm of digital marketing, which demands speed, transparency, and public trust. The values of honesty and trustworthiness are the main foundation in product information delivery, ensuring that promotional practices do not contain elements of manipulation, deception, or consumer exploitation. Research findings indicate that internalizing Islamic character values can shape work behavior that is both ethical and responsible, which is then reflected in how marketers build ethical and professional marketing communication (Mukhlis, 2024). In the context of digital marketing, this integration is realized thru clear product descriptions, price transparency, and alignment between promotional promises and service delivery, ensuring that marketing is not only sales-oriented but also focused on building long-term trust.

Compared to conventional marketing practices that tend to focus solely on achieving targets and profits, character-based marketing and Islamic work ethic have a more holistic orientation. Conventional practices often separate the moral aspect from marketing strategies, while the Islamic approach views work as worship that must be carried out with full responsibility and sincerity. Islamic work ethic emphasizes hard work, discipline, and innovation that remain within the framework of ethical values and the blessings of effort. Research indicates that organizations integrating Quranic values into their work culture and business strategies tend to have a fairer, more transparent, and socially beneficial work environment, including in marketing activities (Halik et al., 2024). Thus, the fundamental difference lies in the ultimate goal of marketing, where Islamic marketing not only pursues market effectiveness but also considers the moral and social impact of each promotional activity.

Integrating Islamic character and work ethic into modern marketing has significant implications for customer loyalty and business reputation. A Muslim marketer who views their work as part of their worship will be more consistent in maintaining service quality, professionalism, and commitment to customer satisfaction. The study results indicate that the values of trustworthiness, benevolence, and excellence are capable of increasing intrinsic motivation, work discipline, and professional work behavior, which directly impacts the company's positive image in the eyes of consumers (Rahmadanti et al., 2025). A

business reputation built thru ethical and principled marketing practices not only increases customer loyalty but also strengthens business sustainability in an increasingly competitive business environment. Thus, the integration of character and work ethic in Muslim marketers is not merely a normative value, but a strategic resource that is relevant and applicable in modern marketing practices.

4. The Relevance of Muslim Marketers' Character and Work Ethos to the Dynamics of Modern Marketing

Based on the discussion presented regarding the character and work ethic of Muslim marketers, it is evident that the integration of these values has a strong relevance to the dynamics of modern marketing, which is characterized by intense competition and increasingly high ethical demands. The values of honesty, trustworthiness, and professionalism inherent in the character of Muslim marketers play a crucial role in building consumer trust and creating differentiation amidst marketing practices that tend to be transactional. This finding aligns with Prasetyo and Fahrullah, who emphasize that Islamic work ethics have a significant impact on the credibility and performance of Islamic business actors, especially in maintaining public trust (Rahmadanti et al., 2025). Additionally, Pratama and Khaidarmansyah demonstrate that the Islamic Work Ethic can serve as a guide for professional behavior that is adaptable to the demands of globalization without disregarding Islamic moral values (Halik et al., 2024). Thus, the character of the Muslim marketer can be understood as a relevant strategic element in contemporary marketing practices.

From a work ethic perspective, the orientation of work as worship, discipline, and hard work encourages Muslim marketers to work consistently, innovatively, and responsibly. Islamic work ethic not only serves as spiritual motivation but also as a strategic resource that supports performance and business sustainability. This aligns with the findings of Sahabuddin et al., who proved that Islamic Work Ethics positively influences work engagement and individual performance thru increased intrinsic motivation (Mukhlis, 2024). Sopiati et al.'s research also showed that Islamic work ethics contributes to the formation of a disciplined and value-oriented work culture, thereby impacting employee performance (DwiYanti, 2023). In the context of marketing, this work ethic is reflected in consistent service, accurate product information delivery, and a commitment to building long-term relationships with customers.

The integration of character and work ethic in Muslim marketers also has important implications for customer loyalty and business reputation. Marketing practices based on trust and honesty foster a positive consumer perception of the company, ultimately strengthening its image and public trust. This finding is consistent with Saragih and Rachman, who stated that religiosity and corporate image significantly influence customer loyalty in Islamic financial institutions (Dwiyanti, 2023). Additionally, the study by Rahmadanti et al. emphasizes that the internalization of Islamic work ethic values contributes to business reputation and sustainability by strengthening ethical and value-oriented business practices (Rahmadanti et al., 2025). Therefore, the character and work ethic of Muslim marketers can be seen as the foundation of value-based marketing that is relevant for enhancing competitiveness while ensuring long-term business sustainability.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study and discussion, it can be concluded that the character and work ethic of Muslim marketers play a very important role in facing the increasingly complex and competitive modern business environment. Marketing from an Islamic perspective is not only understood as an economic activity to achieve profit, but also as part of worship that must be carried out while upholding Islamic ethical and moral values. Key characters such as honesty, trustworthiness, professionalism, intelligence, and moral responsibility serve as the main foundation for Muslim marketers in conducting marketing activities that are oriented toward blessings and business sustainability. These characters function as a significant differentiator between sharia marketing and conventional marketing, which tends to be solely focused on achieving targets and profits.

Beside character, the Islamic work ethic, which views work as a trust and worship, encourages Muslim marketers to work in a disciplined, consistent, and responsible manner without neglecting sharia values. This work ethic not only strengthens the personal integrity of marketers but also contributes to building consumer trust, customer loyalty, and business reputation in the long run. The integration of Islamic character and work ethic into modern marketing practices, including the use of digital technology, demonstrates that Islamic values remain relevant and adaptable to contemporary business dynamics. Thus, the character and work ethic of Muslim marketers can be seen as a strategic resource capable of enhancing competitiveness while

ensuring the sustainability of sharia business amidst increasingly fierce modern business competition.

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