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*By nanang setiawan*

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WORD COUNT

6227

TIME SUBMITTED

27-FEB-2026 02:41PM

PAPER ID

120576784



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## Islamic Business Ethics in Creative Industry: Honesty and Business Sustainability in Digital Era

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### ABSTRACT

Digitalization and increasing market competition require business actors to adapt rapidly, often giving rise to ethical dilemmas. This study aims to analyze the implementation of Islamic business ethics in the creative industry in the digital era, with a particular emphasis on honesty (*sidq*) as a fundamental principle supporting business sustainability. This qualitative study employs a literature review and in-depth interviews with three creative industry practitioners in Lamongan Regency, East Java, consisting of owners of a food and beverage (F&B) business, a mobile phone retail business, and a photography service (photo studio) business. Based on the empirical narratives of these three business owners, the findings reveal that honesty is operationalized in concrete business practices, including transparent pricing, truthful product descriptions, consistency between digital promotion and actual product quality, and openness in communicating service limitations. Despite challenges such as intense price competition, pressure for rapid production, and aggressive digital marketing practices, the informants consciously avoid misleading promotions and exaggerated claims. In the Lamongan context, honesty functions not only as a moral-religious value but also as a practical mechanism for building consumer trust and maintaining business reputation, which in turn supports long-term business sustainability. This study contributes to the literature by offering micro-level empirical insights into how honesty is enacted as a strategic ethical practice in small-scale digital creative businesses, rather than treating Islamic business ethics merely as a normative framework. Practically, the findings offer insights for practitioners and policymakers on integrating ethical and religious values into digital business strategies to enhance trust and sustainability.

**Keywords:** Islamic Business Ethics; Honesty; Business Sustainability; Digital Era; Creative Industry

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### INTRODUCTION

The creative industry has emerged as one of the economic sectors experiencing significant growth at both national and global levels, particularly since the rapid expansion of the digital era (Nuraini & Setiawan, 2025). In Indonesia, the contribution of the creative economy to national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has shown a consistently increasing trend over recent years (Firdaus et al., 2024). According to the Creative Economy Outlook Report published by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) of the Republic of Indonesia (2023), creative economy subsectors contribute approximately 7.3–7.4% of Indonesia's GDP in 2022 and absorb around 15% of the national workforce, particularly in areas such as culinary arts, fashion, visual communication design, and digital content, which have been growing rapidly through the utilization of digital platforms (Giriyanto et al., 2025). The same report documents that more than eight million creative business units were operating nationwide as of 2022, reflecting the large scale of public participation within this ecosystem. This development not only signifies a structural shift from a manufacturing-based economy toward a creativity-driven economy, but also highlights the strategic role of the creative industry in job creation, innovation enhancement, and the expansion of global market access through digital technologies and social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and online marketplaces. Globally, trends indicate that the creative economy generates trillions of dollars in world GDP and serves as a key driver of innovation in an increasingly competitive digital era, with subsectors such as animation, gaming, film, and other forms of digital content experiencing rapid international growth (Nabila & Muljaningsih, 2024).

Business actors in the creative industry face significant challenges related to unhealthy business practices and unfair competition (Pratama & Maulida, 2022). Competition within the creative industry often

involves intense pressure to offer highly competitive prices, sometimes beyond rational limits, which encourages the emergence of unfair competitive practices such as misleading promotions, violations of intellectual property rights, predatory pricing that harms other business actors, and pressure to produce content on a massive scale at the expense of quality (Kusumastuti et al., 2024). Such competition not only results in unstable profitability levels but also leads to market distortions, a reduction in creative value added, and psychological pressure on small business actors who lack substantial capital capacity. Furthermore, the dominance of large players on global digital platforms makes market access increasingly difficult for small enterprises, while negative competitive practices can damage overall business reputation and create uncertainty regarding business sustainability. From an economic perspective, these conditions increase transaction costs, heighten uncertainty, and weaken trust-based market relationships, underscoring the need to strengthen value-based governance in business practices that is not solely oriented toward profit maximization, but also incorporates ethical and long-term sustainability considerations.

Islamic business ethics constitute an important and relevant value framework in the contemporary business environment (Dewi et al., 2023). Islamic business ethics comprise a set of moral principles and behavioral guidelines derived from the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, emphasizing values such as honesty (ʿiṣṣat), trustworthiness (amānah), justice (ʿadl), responsibility (mas'uliyah), and transparency in communication (tabliḡh) (Ulum et al., 2025). These principles are not solely aimed at achieving material profit but also emphasize the attainment of blessing (barakah), social benefit, and collective well-being. In line with signaling theory and reputation theory, ethical conduct—particularly honesty—functions as a credible signal that reduces information asymmetry in digital markets and strengthens business reputation over time. In the current global and digital context, Islamic business ethics offer an alternative business model that is more humane and oriented toward balancing economic objectives with universal moral values. Numerous studies have demonstrated that the implementation of Islamic business ethics can enhance consumer trust, strengthen relationships between business actors and stakeholders, and support business sustainability through fair and responsible practices.

One of the most essential ethical values is honesty, which serves as a fundamental moral foundation in all business transactions (Cooper et al., 2023). Honesty not only refers to telling the truth, but also encompasses information transparency, accurate product representation, appropriate pricing, and consistency between promises and the actual delivery of products or services to consumers. Drawing on reputation theory and transaction cost economics, honesty reduces dispute risks, minimizes monitoring and enforcement costs, and fosters repeated transactions, thereby supporting business sustainability. In the context of business sustainability, honesty plays a crucial role as it forms the basis for trust between business actors and consumers, business partners, and the wider community (Latifah et al., 2021). This trust subsequently becomes a form of social capital that supports customer loyalty, positive reputation, and long-term business stability (Rahmawati & Setiawan, 2024). In the absence of honesty, business actors are more likely to face reputational failure, legal disputes, and higher transaction costs resulting from consumer skepticism. The clarity and internalization of this value are particularly important in the digital era, where information spreads rapidly and business reputations can be quickly built or undermined through consumer reviews and social media.

Numerous previous studies have examined the relationship between Islamic business ethics, honesty, and business sustainability. First, several studies argue that the principles of Islamic business ethics, which emphasize honesty, justice, and trustworthiness (amānah), can support the development of sustainable business practices by enhancing trust and long-term stakeholder well-being (Mastapha et al., 2024). Systematic literature reviews indicate that the values of honesty and justice in Islamic business ethics contribute not only to economic stability but also to social welfare and the sustainability of the business environment (Koburtay et al., 2023). Second, empirical studies in the MSME sector show that business actors with a high level of ethical commitment tend to maintain better relationships with consumers and demonstrate greater resilience under competitive market pressures (Ulum et al., 2025). Third, research in the context of global digital markets indicates that the application of transparency and honesty principles can reduce the risk of consumer conflicts and enhance brand loyalty on digital platforms (Sholikhah et al., 2023). Fourth, studies examining the relevance of Islamic business ethics in the digital economy era affirm that these principles provide relevant moral guidance in addressing technological challenges, including issues related to misinformation and misleading marketing practices (Blau et al., 2021). However, these studies largely focus on general MSME contexts, platform-based firms, or macro-level analyses, with limited empirical attention to specific creative subsectors and local-level digital business practices in Indonesia.

Based on the foregoing discussion, the research gap lies in the lack of context-specific empirical studies that explain how honesty operates as an economic and ethical mechanism within local creative industries facing digital competition, particularly in Indonesia. While prior studies tend to treat Islamic business ethics as a general normative framework, there is limited qualitative evidence illustrating how honesty is enacted, negotiated, and maintained by creative industry actors across different subsectors and regional settings. This study aims to analyze the implementation of Islamic business ethics in the creative industry in the digital era, with particular emphasis on the role of honesty as a fundamental principle in fostering business sustainability. Theoretically, this research contributes by integrating Islamic business ethics with economic theories of trust, signaling, and reputation in digital markets. Practically, the findings offer recommendations for creative industry practitioners and policymakers on integrating ethical values into sustainable digital business strategies amid an increasingly competitive market environment.

## METHOD

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at obtaining an in-depth understanding of the implementation of Islamic business ethics in the creative industry in the digital era, particularly with regard to the role of honesty in achieving business sustainability. A qualitative approach is employed because the study focuses on exploring the values, meanings, and subjective experiences of business actors in implementing business practices grounded in Islamic principles, which cannot be adequately measured through quantitative methods (Sugiyono, 2020).

Data were collected through a literature review and in-depth interviews. The literature review involved examining relevant and credible sources, including textbooks, scholarly journal articles, and academic publications addressing Islamic entrepreneurship, Islamic business ethics, honesty in business practices, and challenges to business sustainability in the digital era (Sugiyono, 2020). Data were collected through a narrative literature review and in-depth interviews. The literature review was conducted as a narrative review to synthesize relevant theoretical and empirical studies rather than to exhaustively map the literature. Sources were retrieved from academic databases such as Google Scholar and Scopus using keywords including "Islamic business ethics," "honesty in business," "Islamic entrepreneurship," and "business sustainability". Inclusion criteria were peer-reviewed journal articles and academic books published in English or Indonesian that explicitly discuss Islamic ethical principles in business contexts. These sources were used to establish the theoretical foundation and conceptual framework of the study, as well as to support the analysis of empirical findings.

This qualitative study employs a literature review and in-depth interviews with three creative industry practitioners in Lamongan Regency, East Java, consisting of owners of a food and beverage (F&B) business, a mobile phone retail business, and a photography service (photo studio) business. The three informants have been operating their businesses for more than five years, represent small-to-medium business scales, and actively utilize digital platforms such as WhatsApp Business, Instagram, and online marketplaces to engage with customers. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with three creative industry entrepreneurs who independently manage their businesses (the informants' identities are anonymized to ensure publication ethics). Informants were selected purposively based on their direct experience in managing businesses, engaging with customers through digital platforms, and understanding the dynamics of market competition in the digital era. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore informants' perspectives on the implementation of honesty, the ethical challenges encountered, and the strategies employed to maintain business integrity amid the pressures of digitalization and price competition (Narsa, 2025). Each interview was conducted face-to-face and lasted between 45–60 minutes, allowing for in-depth exploration of ethical practices and lived experiences of the informants.

To ensure data validity and credibility, several qualitative validation strategies were applied (Hermawan & Amirullah, 2016). First, source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from different informants across diverse creative business sectors. Second, methodological triangulation was achieved by integrating interview findings with insights derived from the literature review. Third, member checking was carried out by confirming key interpretations and summaries of interview results with the respective informants to ensure accuracy and consistency with their intended meanings. These procedures were employed to strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings despite the limited number of informants. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis techniques, involving data reduction, classification, and interpretation according to the research themes. This approach enables the researchers to systematically relate field findings to the concepts of Islamic business ethics, thereby providing a comprehensive depiction of the role of honesty as a core value in supporting the sustainability

of creative industry businesses in the digital era.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, informants were provided with clear information regarding the research objectives and procedures, and informed consent was obtained. Anonymity was ensured by using pseudonyms, and all interview data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes (Narsa, 2025).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Entrepreneurship from an Islamic Perspective

Entrepreneurship from an Islamic perspective is not merely understood as an economic activity oriented toward the pursuit of material profit, but rather as a form of worship grounded in the values of monotheism (tawḥīd), honesty, and moral responsibility (Safri et al., 2023). Business activities in Islam are viewed as a means of attaining falāḥ, which refers to success encompassing both worldly well-being and happiness in the hereafter. Therefore, a Muslim entrepreneur is required to uphold integrity, ethical conduct, and noble character (akhlāq al-karīmah) throughout every business process undertaken (Muntholip & Setiawan, 2025).

Islamic history demonstrates that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) serves as a role model in ethical entrepreneurial practice. Prior to his prophethood, the Prophet was widely recognized as an honest (al-ṣādiq) and trustworthy (al-amīn) merchant, earning extensive trust from business partners and the broader community. This exemplary conduct affirms that business success is determined not only by entrepreneurial competence but also by the morality and honesty of business actors (Charim & Mohklas, 2020). Accordingly, Islamic entrepreneurship places ethics as the foundational pillar of economic activity.

Islamic entrepreneurship emphasizes fundamental principles such as justice, balance, and social responsibility. Business practices in Islam must avoid elements of usury (ribā), fraud (tadlīs), transactional uncertainty (gharar), and monopolistic practices that harm other parties. Abdullah & Misbah (2021) assert that the primary objective of entrepreneurship in Islam is not solely to enhance individual welfare, but also to generate broad social benefits and promote justice in economic distribution. This underscores the strong ethical and social dimensions of Islamic entrepreneurship, distinguishing it from conventional business approaches that tend to focus primarily on profit maximization.

### Islamic Business Ethics

Islamic business ethics constitute a set of values, norms, and moral principles that guide Muslims in conducting economic and business activities (Hasibuan & M. Nawawi, 2016). These ethical principles are derived from the Qur'an and the Hadith, and further developed through the intellectual contributions of Muslim scholars and thinkers. The core principles of Islamic business ethics include honesty (ṣidq), justice ('adl), trustworthiness (amānah), responsibility, and the prohibition of causing harm or loss to others in business transactions.

Ulum et al. (2025) argue that, from an Islamic perspective, business actors are not permitted to engage in deception, information manipulation, or misrepresentation of product quality and quantity for the sake of personal gain. Honesty serves as a central value that must be reflected across all aspects of business activities, ranging from production processes and pricing decisions to promotional practices and customer service. Islamic business ethics also emphasize the importance of transparency and information disclosure to prevent information asymmetry that may disadvantage one of the parties involved.

Islamic business ethics are not limited to the relationship between sellers and buyers, but also encompass responsibilities toward society and the environment. Business success in Islam is measured not only by financial performance, but also by the extent to which a business provides benefits, maintains public trust, and contributes to social welfare. Consequently, the integrity and moral character of business actors become key factors in building long-term relationships with customers and other stakeholders.

### Challenges of Creative Businesses in the Digital Era

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to the business landscape, including the creative sector and the creative industry more broadly (Resavita & Setiawan, 2024). Digitalization has created opportunities for business actors to expand market reach through online platforms, social media, and marketplaces, while simultaneously increasing efficiency in marketing and product distribution processes. However, on the other hand, digitalization has also generated new challenges in the form of increasingly intense and transparent competition.

Maghfiroh & Setiawan (2024) reveal that, in practice, some creative business actors face pressure to compete aggressively, particularly in terms of pricing and production speed. Such pressures often encourage the emergence of less ethical business practices, including promotions that do not accurately

reflect product conditions, visual manipulation through misleading photos or descriptions, and the reduction of material quality to minimize production costs. These practices have the potential to erode consumer trust and contradict the principles of Islamic business ethics.

These conditions illustrate the ethical dilemmas faced by creative business actors in the digital era. On the one hand, they are required to survive and compete in an increasingly competitive market; on the other hand, they also bear a moral obligation to uphold honesty and Islamic principles in conducting business activities. Therefore, studies on the implementation of Islamic business ethics—particularly the value of honesty are highly relevant for understanding how business actors can achieve business sustainability without compromising ethical and spiritual values.

## Discussion

### Principles of Islamic Business Ethics in Creative Enterprises

Business ethics in Islam comprise a set of moral values that regulate the behavior of individuals and groups in conducting economic activities in a just, responsible, and welfare-oriented manner. These ethical principles function not only as normative guidelines governing human interactions, but also as a form of devotion to Allah SWT, reflected in every business transaction and decision. Setiawan et al. (2024) emphasize that the core principles of Islamic business ethics include honesty (sidq), justice ('adl), trustworthiness (amānah), responsibility, as well as the prohibition of fraud and uncertainty (gharar) (Riofita, 2025). These principles form a moral foundation that distinguishes Islamic business practices from conventional business approaches that are often primarily oriented toward profit maximization.

In the context of creative enterprises as part of the creative industry, the principles of Islamic business ethics are manifested across various operational aspects (Ulum et al., 2025). Honesty is reflected in business actors' transparency in explaining material quality, production processes, and final product outcomes to consumers. Justice is realized through fair and proportional pricing that does not disadvantage either consumers or business actors. Trustworthiness (amānah) is demonstrated by the ability of entrepreneurs to fulfill orders according to agreed timelines and specifications, while responsibility is evident in their willingness to correct mistakes or product deficiencies without violating moral obligations.

Beyond technical aspects of production and transactions, Islamic business ethics also emphasize the importance of propriety and courtesy in interactions with consumers. Business actors are expected to maintain polite, honest, and empathetic communication, both in direct interactions and through digital media. Misleading promotional practices, visual manipulation of products, and exaggerated claims that do not reflect reality constitute ethical violations that contradict Islamic values.

The exemplary conduct of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in business serves as a primary reference for the application of Islamic business ethics. A hadith states: "The honest and trustworthy merchant will be with the prophets, the truthful, and the martyrs" (Reported by al-Tirmidhi). This narration affirms that business practices grounded in honesty and trustworthiness possess not only economic value but also a profound spiritual dimension. Accordingly, the implementation of Islamic business ethics in creative enterprises contributes not only to material profitability, but also to the development of consumer trust, the attainment of barakah (blessing), and the positive representation of Islam within the modern business landscape.

### The Implementation of Honesty Values in Creative Business Processes

Honesty constitutes the primary foundation of Islamic business ethics and serves as a central value in determining the quality of relationships between business actors and consumers (Aravik et al., 2023). In the context of creative enterprises, honesty must be consistently implemented at every stage of the business process, starting from the selection of raw materials, production processes, pricing decisions, and extending to after-sales services. Business actors who uphold honesty will not conceal product deficiencies, manipulate information, or make promises that they are unable to fulfill.

In the practice of garment orders, such as school uniforms or workwear, honesty is reflected in transparent information regarding fabric type, material thickness, stitching durability, and realistic estimates of production timelines. Substituting materials without the consumer's knowledge, delaying order completion without clear justification, or unilaterally increasing prices constitute forms of dishonesty that contradict the principles of Islamic business ethics (Ariatin et al., 2024). Such practices not only disadvantage consumers but also pose long-term risks to business reputation.

Honesty in business has been shown to foster sustainable consumer trust. Consumers who feel they are treated honestly and fairly tend to demonstrate high levels of loyalty and are more willing to recommend

products or services to others. This aligns with the concept of trust in business sustainability theory, where long-term relationships with customers represent highly valuable intangible assets.

The value of honesty is also strongly emphasized in the Qur'an, as stated in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:42), which prohibits the mixing of truth with falsehood and the deliberate concealment of truth. This verse affirms that honesty is not merely a moral expectation but a religious command that must be manifested in all aspects of life, including economic activities. Accordingly, creative business actors who uphold honesty not only gain worldly benefits in the form of consumer trust and loyalty, but also earn spiritual merit as an expression of Islamic values in daily business practices.

#### **Challenges to Islamic Business Ethics in the Digital Era**

Digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped the business landscape, including the creative sector and the creative industry more broadly. The utilization of social media, e-commerce, and other digital platforms offers substantial opportunities for business actors to expand market reach, improve efficiency, and build brands more rapidly (Hussain & Wang, 2024). However, alongside these opportunities, the digital era also presents serious challenges to the implementation of Islamic business ethics.

One of the primary challenges is the pressure to compete aggressively in highly competitive digital markets. Many business actors are tempted to manipulate product appearances, use images that do not accurately reflect actual product conditions, or provide exaggerated descriptions in order to attract consumer attention. Chandrayanti (2020) notes that digital competition often encourages business actors to prioritize visual appeal and instant promotional impact over honesty in product information. In the context of creative enterprises, such practices may include using materials different from those promised or setting unrealistic production timelines.

These practices clearly contradict Islamic ethical principles that emphasize honesty, transparency, and responsibility. The Qur'an explicitly condemns fraudulent practices in transactions, as stated in Surah Al-Mutaffifin (83:1-3). Although these verses specifically address cheating in weights and measures, the underlying moral message remains highly relevant to modern business contexts, namely the prohibition of gaining profit through deception or by causing harm to others.

Beyond challenges related to promotion and product quality, the digital era also poses ethical challenges in maintaining proper communication conduct. Rapid and instantaneous interactions through short messages or social media comments often neglect Islamic values such as patience, courtesy, and empathy. In fact, ethical communication can strengthen relationships with consumers and reflect the professional and virtuous character of Muslim business actors.

#### **Strategies for Upholding Business Ethics Amid Market Competition**

In facing increasingly intense market competition, creative business actors need to develop strategies that are not solely profit-oriented but are also grounded in the values of Islamic business ethics. One of the primary strategies is maintaining product quality and consistency. Aziz & Setiawan (2025) emphasize that Islamic business management promotes a balance between operational efficiency and moral responsibility; therefore, product quality should not be sacrificed for short-term gains.

Business actors who are able to maintain the quality of materials, precision in workmanship, and punctuality in order fulfillment are more likely to build a strong reputation among consumers. Such reputation constitutes an important asset in achieving business sustainability. This strategy aligns with the Islamic principle of ihsan, which emphasizes performing one's work with excellence and a strong sense of responsibility.

Another equally important strategy is transparency and consumer education. By providing honest explanations regarding material selection, production techniques, and pricing structures, business actors can prevent misunderstandings and foster long-term relationships with customers. This transparency reflects the values of honesty and trustworthiness (amanah) that lie at the core of Islamic business ethics.

The ethical utilization of technology also represents a crucial strategy. Social media platforms can be used to authentically showcase production processes, share genuine customer testimonials, and deliver prompt yet courteous services. In this way, technology does not become a tool for manipulation, but rather a means to strengthen trust and enhance business professionalism.

#### **Reflections on Islamic Business Ethics from Creative Entrepreneurs (Interview Findings)**

The results of an interview with a home-based creative entrepreneur in Lamongan Regency provide empirical insights into the practical implementation of Islamic business ethics. The informant emphasized that price competition constitutes the greatest challenge in operating a creative business. Nevertheless, the informant chose to maintain product quality and refrain from engaging in unreasonable price reductions merely to attract customers.

The informant also applied honesty in promotional activities by using authentic product photographs and providing information that accurately reflects actual conditions. According to the informant, maintaining customer trust is far more important than obtaining short-term profits. The principles of honesty, responsibility, and trustworthiness (amānah) serve as the core values guiding the informant's business practices.

Furthermore, the informant perceived business success not only in material terms, but also in terms of barakah (blessing) and the social benefits generated. This perspective indicates that Islamic business ethics function not only as a moral guideline, but also as a source of spiritual motivation in sustaining business activities.

### Opportunities and Innovation for Islamic Creative Businesses in the Digital Era

The advancement of digital technology presents substantial opportunities for creative enterprises that uphold Islamic business ethics (Dewi et al., 2024). Contemporary consumers are increasingly concerned with transparency, honesty, and product quality; consequently, businesses that adhere to these values possess strong potential for growth. Innovations such as education-based promotion, transparency in production processes, and the development of Muslim fashion products can enhance the competitiveness of Islamic creative enterprises in the global market. By integrating technology with ethical values, creative businesses can not only survive market competition but also serve as a medium for da'wah and make positive contributions to the broader Muslim economy.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to examine the implementation of Islamic business ethics in creative enterprises and to analyze the role of honesty in supporting business sustainability, particularly amid the dynamics of market competition and the rapid development of digital technology. Conceptually, the study is grounded in the view that Islamic business ethics function not only as moral guidelines but also as long-term business strategies capable of fostering trust, reputation, and barakah (blessing). The primary focus of this research is on the core values of Islamic business ethics—namely honesty (ṣiḍq), trustworthiness (amānah), justice, and transparency—and how these values are implemented in the daily practices of creative businesses. Using a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with three creative industry practitioners, this study provides contextual empirical insights into the lived experiences of Islamic business practices in the digital era.

The interview findings suggest that the implementation of Islamic business ethics, particularly honesty, contributes to the development of consumer trust and supports the sustainability of creative enterprises. The informants reported that consistently providing honest information regarding material quality, production processes, pricing, and order completion timelines helped foster customer loyalty and a positive business reputation. Rather than claiming a highly significant causal effect, these findings indicate that honesty is perceived by business actors as an important ethical foundation that complements marketing strategies and competitive positioning. While the digital era offers substantial opportunities to expand markets and improve efficiency, it also presents ethical challenges, including pressures toward manipulative practices and unfair competition. The informants' accounts illustrate how commitment to Islamic values enables them to navigate these tensions while maintaining ethical integrity.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the Islamic business ethics literature by offering qualitative evidence from small-scale creative enterprises, an area that remains underexplored in empirical research. Practically, the findings may serve as a reflective reference for Muslim entrepreneurs seeking to integrate ethical values into their business strategies, particularly in digitally mediated markets, and for stakeholders promoting ethical and sustainable business practices.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations that warrant consideration. First, although the research involved three creative industry practitioners from different subsectors, the limited number of informants restricts the breadth of empirical representation and does not allow for broad generalization across the creative industry. Second, the qualitative approach prioritizes depth and contextual understanding and therefore does not permit quantitative testing of causal relationships between Islamic business ethics, honesty, trust, loyalty, and business performance or sustainability outcomes.

Accordingly, future research is encouraged to involve larger and more diverse samples and to adopt mixed-methods approaches in order to empirically test proposed mechanisms, such as honesty and transparency → trust → loyalty → business performance, using measurable constructs. If remaining qualitative, future studies could employ a multi-case design across different creative subsectors and digital platforms to enable more meaningful comparative analysis. Such efforts are expected to strengthen the

empirical foundation of Islamic business ethics research and enhance its relevance for economic and managerial scholarship

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