

Word of Mouth and Testimonial Practices in Digital Marketing: Integrating Islamic Ethics into MSME Promotion

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Abstract

Digital marketing is becoming more dangerous because of phony reviews and information manipulation. To keep community-based enterprises going, it is important to follow ethical procedures. This study examines customer testimonials and Word of Mouth (WOM) practices in the digital marketing of Jipangta” Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs, also referred to as UMKM), investigates their influence on consumer trust and explores the integration of Islamic ethical values in digital promotional activities. Utilizing a qualitative case study methodology, the research incorporated comprehensive interviews with the business owner, social media administrator and consumers, alongside the observation of digital marketing practices on Instagram and WhatsApp Business and the documentation of social media content. Data were examined through the interactive model of Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, utilizing Islamic ethical principles (şidq, amanah, al-'adl, tadlis, gharar) as analytical frameworks. Jipangta” MSME uses customer reviews and word-of-mouth as their main digital marketing tools. Testimonials are a form of social proof that builds trust in customers by being real. Both digital (e-WOM) and conventional methods help WOM happen and the strong social ties in Bone Regency make it even stronger. Islamic ethical standards are applied in specific situations, such as honesty (şidq) in advertising and accountability (amanah) in customer service. However, it is still hard to keep up with the same level of openness all the time. This study enhances the digital marketing literature by including Islamic ethics as an empirical analytical framework into local MSME contexts, offering a contextual comprehension of value-based marketing strategies in religious groups.

Keywords: *Islamic Ethics; Digital Marketing; Testimonials; Word of Mouth; Consumer Trust.*

INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) constitute a strategic sector within both the national and regional economy. In Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, MSMEs contribute significantly to the growth of the Regional Gross Domestic Product (RGDP) and to employment absorption, thereby playing a vital role in promoting equitable community welfare.

The advancement of digital technology has transformed MSME marketing patterns from conventional models into social media-based marketing. This transformation not only requires entrepreneurs to adapt technically but also encourages the enhancement of entrepreneurial capacity, particularly in understanding digital communication strategies and consumer behavior (Firman et al.,

2023). Social media functions not merely as a promotional tool but also as an interactive medium that fosters two-way communication between entrepreneurs and consumers.

More than 78% of the population uses the internet and the majority of MSME actors employ social media to communicate with customers (APJII, 2023). Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and WhatsApp Business are among the most significant platforms for promoting and introducing products, engaging with customers and processing transactions. Within this context, customer testimonials and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) play a crucial role in shaping consumer trust amidst the vast flow of digital information. In this study, WOM is employed as a general concept, while e-WOM refers specifically to digital-based communication. Theoretically, e-WOM is understood as internet-mediated interpersonal communication that influences perceptions and purchasing decisions (Ngo, 2024; Hamzah & Fitriany, 2023).

From the perspective of modern marketing, trust constitutes a fundamental factor influencing consumer decisions and loyalty, particularly in digital environments characterized by limited direct interaction and high information asymmetry (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Customer testimonials function as a form of social proof, legitimizing product quality through the experiences of other users. Nevertheless, testimonial practices in digital marketing do not always represent fully authentic experiences. As digital promotional strategies evolve, testimonials may undergo processes of selection, packaging and reproduction by entrepreneurs, thereby potentially shifting the meaning of authenticity in such communication.

This phenomenon can be observed in the digital marketing practices of Jipangta MSMEs in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, which actively utilize social media to market traditional snacks. In practice, this MSME displays various customer testimonials through posts and repost features from consumer social media accounts (Sabil et al., 2022). However, there is a tendency toward the dominance of positive testimonials, the reuse of consumer experiences as promotional content and the blurring of boundaries between organic recommendations and constructed promotional material. Such conditions indicate that word of mouth in digital spaces is not entirely spontaneous, but rather subject to processes of construction that shape consumer trust perceptions, suggesting the presence of information curation by entrepreneurs.

From the perspective of Islamic ethics, marketing activities are evaluated not only in terms of effectiveness but also in relation to their conformity with moral values in mu'āmalah. The principles of honesty (*ṣidq*), responsibility (*amānah*), justice (*al-'adl*) and the prohibition of deceit (*tadlīs*) and uncertainty (*gharar*) serve as foundational elements in establishing ethical business communication. These values emphasize the importance of transparency and informational integrity in building trust and sustaining long-term relationships with consumers (Beekun, 1997; El-Bassiouny, 2014).

The ethical principles in Islamic business, such as *ṣidq* (honesty), *amānah* (responsibility), *al-'adl* (justice), along with the prohibitions against *gharar* (uncertainty) and *tadlīs* (deception), have

strong foundations in the classical scholarly tradition of *fiqh al-mu'āmalah*. Scholars such as Abu Hamid al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of honesty and moral integrity in economic activities as part of a Muslim's ethical conduct (Al-Ghazali, 2004). Meanwhile, Ibn Taymiyyah asserted that justice and transparency are fundamental principles in maintaining transactional balance and safeguarding the rights of all parties in economic activities (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995). In the contemporary context, these principles have been systematized within the framework of modern Islamic business ethics by Abbas J. Ali Beekun, who integrated Islamic moral values into modern business practices, including digital marketing activities (Beekun, 1997).

Several previous studies have examined the role of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and testimonials in digital marketing, particularly in influencing consumer behavior and purchasing decisions. Research by Ngo (2024) and Latief and Mokhtar (2025) demonstrated that e-WOM and online customer reviews have a significant impact on purchasing decisions, although the approaches employed were predominantly quantitative and focused on variable relationships (Romadhoni et al., 2025). Conversely, studies on Islamic marketing ethics, such as those by Zaroni (2024) and Ayulira (2025), have primarily emphasized normative aspects related to honesty (*ṣidq*), responsibility (*amānah*) and justice (*al-'adl*) in business activities, without empirically examining their implementation in digital marketing practices. Moreover, research on digital marketing in MSMEs generally remains oriented toward performance, promotional effectiveness and technological utilization, without integrating ethical dimensions as a comprehensive analytical framework (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022; Firman et al., 2023).

Although studies on e-WOM and digital marketing have developed rapidly, most remain dominated by quantitative approaches that emphasize relationships among consumer behavior variables. Meanwhile, research on Islamic marketing ethics tends to be normative and has not yet been integrated into empirical analysis, particularly in the MSME context. Furthermore, studies specifically examining testimonials as a constructed form of digital marketing communication remain relatively limited.

In light of these gaps, this study offers novelty by integrating the analysis of testimonial practices as a constructed form of digital marketing communication with the perspective of Islamic ethics. Unlike previous research that has focused primarily on variable relationships or normative analysis, this study reveals that testimonials in MSME digital marketing are not entirely organic but rather curated by entrepreneurs. This finding highlights a gray area between authentic word of mouth and constructed promotional strategies, which carries ethical implications for transparency and honesty in digital marketing communication. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze testimonial and word of mouth practices in MSME digital marketing, particularly as a constructed form of marketing communication and to examine these practices from the perspective of Islamic ethics. In addition, the

study seeks to understand how testimonial curation is constructed and interpreted in the process of building consumer trust within the MSME context.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of digital marketing practices based on testimonials and word of mouth (WOM) within the socio-religious context of Bone Regency. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research focuses on exploring meaning, processes and social constructions in digital marketing practices, rather than statistically testing relationships among variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The case study design was utilized to enable a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon of testimonial and e-WOM management within a single unit of analysis, namely the Jipangta MSME, thereby producing a profound contextual understanding (Yin, 2024). This approach is relevant because the study does not only examine marketing strategies but also incorporates Islamic ethical dimensions, including the values of honesty (*ṣidq*), responsibility (*amānah*), justice (*al-‘adl*) and the prohibitions against *tadlīs* and *gharar* (Beekun, 1997; El-Bassiouny, 2014).

The research was conducted at Jipangta MSME in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, during the period of February to April 2026. The study involved five informants selected purposively based on their direct involvement in digital marketing practices, consisting of the business owner, the social media manager and three customers who had provided testimonials or interacted through social media. The number of informants was determined according to the principle of data saturation, namely when the information obtained revealed recurring patterns and no significant new data emerged.

Data collection techniques included semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory observation of digital marketing activities on Instagram and WhatsApp Business and documentation of promotional content, customer testimonials and digital reviews. Interviews were conducted using guidelines developed from concepts of digital marketing, e-WOM, consumer trust and Islamic ethical principles.

Data analysis was carried out using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2020), which comprises three main stages: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data reduction stage, the researcher selected, focused and categorized data based on relevant themes, such as testimonial curation practices, forms of e-WOM and indicators of Islamic ethics. Subsequently, the data were presented in structured thematic narratives to facilitate interpretation.

The analysis process also involved open and thematic coding techniques, whereby data were classified into analytical categories referring to the framework of Islamic ethics, namely *ṣidq*, *amānah*, *al-‘adl*, *tadlīs* and *gharar*. This categorization enabled the researcher to identify patterns, relationships and meanings emerging from the digital marketing practices under study.

To ensure data validity, the study employed source and methodological triangulation, by comparing data obtained from interviews, observations and documentation. In addition, member checks were conducted with informants to confirm that the researcher's interpretations aligned with their experiences and perspectives. The study also applied the principle of audit trail by systematically documenting the data collection and analysis process, thereby enhancing transparency and research credibility.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digital Marketing Practices: Testimonials and Word of Mouth as Social Legitimacy

The findings indicate that Jipangta MSMEs utilize customer testimonials and word of mouth in digital form (e-WOM) as their primary strategy in digital marketing. This practice functions as an instrument of social legitimacy, particularly within the context of Bone Regency, where collective social characteristics and strong interpersonal relations prevail. Two main forms of testimonials are employed: screenshots of customer conversations via WhatsApp Business and Instagram and direct comments on promotional posts. This practice aligns with the concept of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), namely interpersonal communication in digital spaces documented in the form of reviews, comments and user-generated content (Ngo, 2024). These findings address the first research question, demonstrating that the use of testimonials and e-WOM in Jipangta MSMEs has been systematically implemented through various social media features as tools of marketing communication.

Based on interviews with entrepreneurs, testimonials are collected through direct interactions with customers after receiving the product. Entrepreneurs stated that they first sought permission to use screenshots of conversations as promotional material, ensuring that the displayed testimonials originated from genuine consumer experiences. This practice reflects efforts to preserve informational authenticity, which, from the perspective of Islamic ethics, can be categorized as the implementation of the principle of *ṣidq* (honesty), since the information conveyed is not fabricated but derived from real customer experiences. Moreover, this practice embodies the principle of *amānah* (responsibility), as entrepreneurs assume accountability in delivering trustworthy information to the public. These findings resonate with Silverman (2001), who argued that testimonials and authentic narratives possess strong persuasive power by providing social proof that is both genuine and easily comprehensible to prospective consumers. This demonstrates that testimonials serve not only as promotional tools but also as influential factors in consumer purchasing decisions, as noted by Latief and Mokhtar (2025). Furthermore, the practice suggests that entrepreneurs implicitly understand the importance of honesty and responsibility in marketing, even if not explicitly framed within Islamic ethical concepts.

Nevertheless, further analysis reveals that testimonial management is conducted selectively, with a tendency to display only positive testimonials. While such selection aims to enhance marketing appeal, it may not fully reflect the principle of *al-'adl* (justice), as the information presented to

consumers lacks balance. The absence of negative or neutral testimonials can foster less objective perceptions, preventing consumers from obtaining a comprehensive view of product quality. In this regard, testimonial selection demonstrates that testimonials function not only as promotional tools but also as mechanisms for shaping consumer perceptions and trust, albeit in a partial manner.

From the perspective of the prohibition against *tadlīs* (deception), the use of screenshots of conversations as testimonials does not explicitly indicate manipulation. However, this testimonial format leaves room for doubt, as not all information can be independently verified by the public. Thus, although no clear evidence of deception was found, greater transparency remains necessary to avoid potential *tadlīs*. This issue is particularly relevant given the prevalence of testimonial misuse in contemporary digital marketing, such as fake reviews or misleading claims, as highlighted by Arum (2024).

Furthermore, when viewed from the aspect of *gharar* (uncertainty), marketing practices that focus on testimonials without providing complete product information may generate ambiguity for consumers. Essential details, such as product specifications, composition and other particulars, are not always explicitly conveyed in promotional content. This indicates that while testimonials can foster emotional trust, they are not fully supported by adequate informational clarity, thereby potentially containing elements of *gharar*. Consequently, although testimonials play a significant role in building consumer trust, such trust tends to be more emotional than rational if not accompanied by transparency of information.

In a broader context, these findings reinforce the perspective of Mangold and Faulds (2009), who argue that social media represents a hybrid element within the promotional mix, integrating communication between entrepreneurs and consumers. Within Bone Regency, the strength of word of mouth (WOM) manifests not only in digital communication (e-WOM) but also in direct social interactions that carry strong social and moral dimensions. Recommendations from family, friends and local communities have proven to exert significant influence on purchasing decisions, thereby establishing social legitimacy that strengthens consumer trust. Consequently, the effectiveness of digital marketing is determined not solely by social media-based communication strategies but also by the synergy between e-WOM and traditional WOM, as well as their alignment with ethical values and prevailing social norms.

Furthermore, the study's findings reveal that Jipangta MSMEs demonstrate awareness of the importance of maintaining testimonial authenticity and avoiding manipulative practices, such as the creation of fake reviews. This commitment reflects the application of the principles of *ṣidq* (honesty) and *amānah* (responsibility) in digital marketing activities. Nevertheless, achieving more comprehensive conformity with Islamic ethics requires greater transparency of information and the presentation of more balanced content, ensuring that marketing practices are not only effective but also uphold the principle of *al-'adl* (justice) while avoiding elements of *gharar* (uncertainty) and potential

tadlīs (deception). This indicates that the application of Islamic ethics in digital marketing practices remains partial and not yet fully comprehensive. Thus, the study concludes that testimonial and WOM practices function not only as marketing strategies but also play a significant role in shaping consumer trust through social legitimacy. At the same time, Islamic ethical values have been implicitly understood and applied by entrepreneurs, particularly in aspects of honesty and responsibility, though further reinforcement is required in the areas of justice and informational transparency.

Building Trust with Customers Through Word of Mouth and Testimonials

The research findings indicate that testimonials and word-of-mouth (WOM) play a role in building customer confidence through a number of interconnected pathways. Customers trust UMKM Jipangta” because they are honest in their testimonials, open in their business communication, quick to respond to consumer encounters and supported by community validation. These strategies are in line with what the Edelman Trust Barometer (2024) says about how important it is to be open about communication and make sure that promotional claims match what consumers actually experience.

A consumer informant explained the role of authenticity in building trust: "What makes me trust Jipangta” is that their testimonials look real, not staged. When I see screenshots of actual conversations, I can tell it's genuine. Also, when I commented asking about the product, they responded quickly and honestly, even admitting when a certain flavor wasn't available at that time. That honesty made me trust them more." This response shows that consumers are smart enough to tell the difference between real and fake endorsements. The fact that the firm is ready to be honest about the limits of its products, rather than lying about how easy they are to get, makes customers trust them more.

Being open and honest in business communication goes beyond managing testimonials to include all parts of how you communicate with customers. We saw that UMKM Jipangta”s was always quick to respond to client questions on social media, with an average response time of less than 30 minutes during business hours. The social media admin said, "We see customer questions and complaints as responsibilities, not burdens. When someone asks about product availability or delivery time, we respond quickly and correctly. If there is a delay, we tell them the truth. This is part of being trustworthy in business." This responsiveness shows that the company is responsible for keeping good relationships with customers, which is a key part of building trust over time.

In Bone's communal society, the role of collective legitimacy in building trust is very important. A consumer informant said, "When I saw Jipangta” being talked about positively in local WhatsApp groups, that collective endorsement was powerful. It wasn't just one person's opinion; many people from our community confirmed that the product is good and the seller is trustworthy." This shows that in situations where social ties are strong, trust building involves both individual cognitive processes and community social validation. When a lot of people in a community independently say they had good experiences, they form a collective endorsement that is stronger than any one commercial message or even any one testimony.

This occurrence corresponds with the social construction viewpoint, which posits that business reputation is established through narratives and social recognition developed in public interactions (Yin, 2024). In the case of UMKM Jipangta's, reputation is built by gathering favorable reviews from people in the community, both online and in person. The business's active participation in community networks, both online and offline, allows it to take part in these stories that develop its reputation instead of just being a passive recipient of customer reviews.

The study also found that consumers trust UMKM Jipangta" more when the digital claims match their real-life experiences with the products. Several consumers said that their expectations, which were based on watching ads and reading reviews, were met or even exceeded when they actually used the product. One informant said, "The product looked great in the pictures and when I got it, it was exactly like the pictures. Sometimes, products look better in pictures than they do in real life, but Jipangta" was honest in how they showed it." This consistency between promise and delivery is important for keeping trust, since trust is hard to rebuild once it's broken (Kotler & Keller, 2016). This demonstrates that consumer trust is highly dependent on the alignment between digital representation and product reality, such that any form of discrepancy has the potential to undermine the trust that has been established. The research further revealed that maintaining trust may be challenging over time. The business owner stated: "At times when we are very busy with many orders, it may be difficult to respond to all customer inquiries promptly, which can make them think we are unreliable." This illustrates that trust maintenance is a continuous process; trust is not built once and then sustained indefinitely, but must be consistently reinforced through reliable performance. For MSMEs with limited resources, managing trust is a constant issue, as they must balance responsiveness with other operational demands. Nevertheless, this condition also highlights the challenges in consistently applying the principle of amānah (responsibility), thereby requiring ongoing efforts to maintain service quality in accordance with Islamic ethical values.

Figure 1: Example of a WhatsApp testimonial screenshot on Instagram (with a caption).



Source: Instagram

Accordingly, the findings of this study affirm that testimonials and word of mouth play a significant role in shaping consumer trust through a combination of informational authenticity, communicative responsiveness and social legitimacy within the community. From the perspective of Islamic ethics, the process of building trust is rooted in the application of the principles of *ṣidq* (honesty) and *amānah* (responsibility), although in practice challenges remain in consistently upholding these values.

Putting Islamic moral values into practice in digital marketing

The research shows that the people who work at UMKM Jipangta” understand and use Islamic ethical standards in their digital marketing, showing that religious ideas are not just abstract rules but also useful guidance for how to run a business. Honesty is shown through real testimonials and honest advertising promises. The business owner said, "As a Muslim, honesty is not up for debate in business. When we sell things, we have to be honest about what we're selling. If there are limits, we have to tell customers the truth. This is not only good business practice, but it is also our religious duty." This understanding is in line with what the Qur'an says in QS. Al-Ahzab: 70–71 says that speaking honestly is the basis for good deeds (al-Ṭabarī, 2001). Moreover, Beekun (1997) emphasizes that honesty (*ṣidq*) constitutes the fundamental foundation of Islamic business ethics, determining the moral legitimacy of an economic activity.

You may see the use of *ṣidq* in digital marketing in how UMKM Jipangta”s promotes its products. Looking at the business's social media posts demonstrates that they don't perform too much photo manipulation or make promises that are too good to be true about the benefits of their products. Most of the time, the descriptions of products match what customers really get. A consumer informant confirmed this: "The prices are clearly stated and when I asked about shipping costs, they honestly explained them based on location. There were no hidden costs. This fairness makes me feel respected as a customer." This shows that honesty in business communication can lead to promotional information that matches the reality of the product. These findings indicate that the application of *ṣidq* (honesty) not only affects the moral dimension but also constitutes a crucial factor in building credibility and consumer trust.

UMKM Jipangta” shows the notion of *amanah* (responsibility) by keeping their promises to customers and keeping their trust. The social media admin's comment about treating client questions as obligations instead of burdens shows that they recognize that *amanah* goes beyond only the quality of the product to include all parts of the customer experience. This fits with Ibn Kathīr's (1999) definition of *amanah* as all kinds of duty, both in business and in social interactions. In digital marketing, *amanah* means keeping information honest, not hiding flaws in products and not making false claims that could trick customers. In this context, El-Bassiouny (2014) explains that responsibility (*amānah*) in Islamic business is not limited to regulatory compliance but also encompasses a moral commitment to continuously safeguarding consumer interests.

The research also found that UMKM Jipangta's uses *al-'adl* (justice) in its digital marketing by being honest about prices, product details and delivery methods. The company always gives clear information about the sizes, costs and how to order products, which helps customers make smart choices. This openness makes it less likely that the buyer and seller will have different amounts of knowledge, which is in line with the Islamic ideal of fairness in business. Kamali (2021) contends that justice in Islamic economics necessitates that all participants in a transaction possess access to correct information essential for prudent decision-making. The study indicated that UMKM Jipangta" keeps testimonials real without any alteration, which is against the rules of *tadlīs* (deceit). The owner's clear remark that they never make fraudulent testimonials or ask non-customers to leave favorable evaluations shows that they know the moral limits of using recommendations. This strategy sets UMKM Jipangta" apart from other organizations that use dishonest methods that are popular in the digital world, such buying phony reviews or changing consumer feedback (Arum, 2024). This suggests that the marketing practices undertaken tend to avoid elements of *tadlīs* (deception), although they still require reinforcement in terms of informational balance.

UMKM Jipangta's work to reduce information ambiguity is an example of the notion of avoiding *gharar* (uncertainty). The admin said, "We try to give all the information up front. For example, we clearly say how long the product will last, what it contains and how long it will take to deliver. This way, customers know exactly what to expect and there won't be any confusion later." This practice is in line with the Islamic rule against transactions that have too much uncertainty, which could lead to disputes or unfairness. When it comes to digital marketing, where customers can't touch or see items before they buy them, it's more crucial to give clear and accurate information to avoid *gharar* (Ayulira, 2025). Nevertheless, previous findings indicate that the clarity of such information has not been consistently maintained across all promotional content, thereby leaving room for potential elements of *gharar* (uncertainty) within the digital marketing practices employed. The study found that although while people are always trying to use Islamic moral standards, it is still hard to apply these values to digital marketing. The business owner said, "Sometimes when we're excited about selling products, we might unintentionally overemphasize certain things. We have to keep reminding ourselves to stay balanced and not exaggerate." This shows that keeping ethical practices requires constant awareness and self-correction, especially in the fast-paced, competitive world of social media marketing, where the urge to exaggerate for a competitive edge is always there.

Table 1: Alignment of Marketing Practices with Islamic Ethical Principles

| Principle | Definition | Application in Marketing | Alignment |
|--|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| <i>Sidq (Honesty)</i> | Truthfulness and authenticity | Using genuine customer testimonials | ✓ Authentic Testimonials |
| <i>Amānah (Responsibility)</i> | Trustworthiness and accountability | Ensuring reliable and responsive communication | ✓ Commitment to Service |
| <i>Al-Adl (Justice)</i> | Fairness and balance | Providing balanced and complete information | ⚠ Selective Content |
| <i>Gharar (Avoidance of Uncertainty)</i> | Avoiding deception and ambiguity | Minimizing unclear or misleading content | ⚠ Risk of Ambiguity |

Source: Author's analysis

Another problem is that limited resources make it hard to consistently apply amanah. The owner said, "When we're busy, it can be hard to answer all of our customers' questions right away, which could hurt our amanah." These practical limitations illustrate the tension between ideal ethical standards and the realities of operating a small business with limited staff. Recognizing this tension as an ethical issue reflects the integration of Islamic ideals as fundamental principles rather than mere external obligations of compliance. The findings suggest that the implementation of Islamic ethics depends not only on intention but also on the operational capacity of entrepreneurs.

The research findings indicate that the incorporation of Islamic ethical standards into digital marketing techniques is not solely an issue of religious adherence but possesses significant ramifications for corporate survival. People who bought from UMKM Jipangta" always said they trusted the company more because they thought it was honest and reliable. "I trust them because they seem honest. That's the most important thing in business," one informant said. This link between ethical behavior and customer trust backs up Zaroni's (2024) claim that honesty is the basis of ethical digital marketing and necessary for building long-term customer relationships. Moreover, the contextualization of Islamic ethics in UMKM Jipangta"s digital marketing practices illustrates that religious values may be integrated into modern business environments without necessitating a departure from contemporary marketing strategies. The company successfully mixes traditional Islamic ethical ideals with social media, digital content creation and online customer service. This synthesis contests the presumption that contemporary corporate methods inherently contradict traditional values, instead illustrating that values may be modified and utilized in novel circumstances while preserving their fundamental significance and purpose.

Thus, the application of Islamic ethical values in the digital marketing practices of Jipangta MSMEs can be categorized as substantive, particularly in the aspects of *ṣidq* (honesty) and *amānah* (responsibility). Nevertheless, weaknesses remain in the dimensions of *al-ʿadl* (justice) and *gharar*

(uncertainty), indicating that the implementation of Islamic ethics is not yet fully comprehensive and still requires reinforcement to achieve greater consistency and inclusiveness.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aims to analyze the utilization of customer testimonials and word of mouth (WOM), particularly in the form of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), in the digital marketing practices of Jipangta MSMEs, as well as to understand the interpretation and application of Islamic ethical values in digital promotional activities. The findings confirm that Jipangta MSMEs employ customer testimonials and e-WOM as their primary digital marketing strategy. Testimonials are presented in the form of screenshots of conversations and customer comments, selected based on their authenticity and relevance to prospective consumers. Meanwhile, WOM operates simultaneously through digital communication (e-WOM) and direct social interaction, reinforced by the strong social bonds characteristic of Bone Regency communities.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that testimonials and e-WOM play a significant role in shaping consumer trust. Authentic testimonials function as social proof that reduces uncertainty, while WOM, particularly when supported by community validation, provides social legitimacy that strengthens customer confidence. In addition, entrepreneurial responsiveness and open communication emerge as crucial factors in building and sustaining consumer trust. From the perspective of Islamic ethics, moral values have been substantively understood and applied in the digital marketing practices of Jipangta MSMEs. The principle of *ṣidq* (honesty) is reflected in the use of authentic testimonials and the delivery of realistic information, while *amānah* (responsibility) is manifested through responsiveness and commitment to customer service. However, the application of *al-ʿadl* (justice) has not yet been fully optimized, as the information presented remains selective and certain promotional content still contains potential elements of *gharar* (uncertainty) due to incomplete product information. Nevertheless, marketing practices have relatively avoided *tadlīs* (deception) through the use of authentic testimonials.

The study indicates that digital marketing practices based on testimonials and WOM serve not merely as communication strategies but also as manifestations of the integration between e-WOM and traditional WOM, which collectively shape consumer trust within social and ethical contexts. Nonetheless, their implementation still requires refinement to achieve greater comprehensiveness and consistency. The study also affirms that testimonial practices in MSME digital marketing are not entirely organic but rather represent constructed communication involving curation processes by entrepreneurs. This finding suggests that the boundary between authentic word of mouth and constructed marketing communication is increasingly blurred, indicating that testimonials function not merely as promotional tools but as social mechanisms in shaping legitimacy and consumer trust within the context of digital marketing.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that Jipangta MSME entrepreneurs enhance product information transparency more comprehensively and consistently across all promotional content, thereby minimizing potential elements of *gharar* (uncertainty) and optimizing the application of the principle of *al-'adl* (justice). In addition, testimonial management should be conducted in a more balanced manner by not exclusively presenting positive aspects, so that the information received by consumers becomes more objective and reflects fairness in communication. On the other hand, future researchers are advised to further develop studies on digital marketing grounded in Islamic ethics within a broader MSME sector and through diverse methodological approaches, in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the application of Islamic ethics and the level of consumer trust.

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