

Sustainability Strategies in the Halal Creative Industry: The Perspective of Convection MSMEs in Kedungwuni, Pekalongan

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Abstract

The increasing volatility of global markets requires Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the halal creative industry to develop sustainable business strategies that ensure resilience and long-term competitiveness. The integration of halal values into creative business models has emerged as a strategic approach to strengthening consumer trust and maintaining business sustainability amid economic uncertainty. This study aims to analyze the sustainability strategies implemented by MSMEs in the halal creative industry sector in Pekalongan, particularly within the Kedungwuni convection industry, in responding to global market fluctuations. The study also explores how halal principles are integrated into creative business practices to generate sustainable competitive advantages. This research employed a qualitative approach through systematic field observations conducted on ten leading creative MSMEs in the Kedungwuni convection cluster, Pekalongan. Observations focused on production processes, halal supply chain management, and market interactions to capture operational phenomena objectively. Data validity was ensured through methodological triangulation techniques. The findings reveal that the sustainability strategies of Kedungwuni convection MSMEs are primarily driven by the synergy between the utilization of environmentally friendly local raw materials and compliance with halal certification standards, which serve as mechanisms for enhancing consumer trust. Furthermore, MSMEs that adopted digital technologies in creative marketing demonstrated greater resilience to economic disruptions than those relying on conventional business practices. The study provides insights for policymakers in Pekalongan to formulate supportive regulations, including simplifying halal certification procedures and offering circular business management training for the creative sector. The research enriches the strategic management literature by highlighting the role of religious ethics and halal principles in fostering sustainable development within the people-centered economic ecosystem.

[Fluktuasi pasar global yang semakin dinamis menuntut pelaku Usaha Mikro, Kecil, dan Menengah (UMKM) pada sektor industri kreatif halal untuk menerapkan strategi keberlanjutan yang mampu meningkatkan daya saing dan ketahanan usaha. Integrasi nilai-nilai halal ke dalam model bisnis kreatif menjadi salah satu pendekatan strategis

yang dapat memperkuat kepercayaan konsumen sekaligus mendukung keberlanjutan usaha dalam jangka panjang. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi keberlanjutan yang diimplementasikan oleh pelaku UMKM pada sektor industri kreatif halal di Pekalongan, khususnya UMKM konveksi di Kedungwuni, dalam menghadapi fluktuasi pasar global. Penelitian ini juga mengkaji bagaimana prinsip-prinsip halal diintegrasikan ke dalam praktik bisnis kreatif guna menciptakan keunggulan kompetitif yang berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui observasi lapangan yang sistematis terhadap sepuluh UMKM kreatif unggulan pada sektor konveksi di Kedungwuni Pekalongan. Observasi difokuskan pada proses produksi, manajemen rantai pasok halal, dan interaksi pasar untuk memperoleh gambaran objektif mengenai fenomena operasional yang terjadi. Keabsahan data dijamin melalui teknik triangulasi metode. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi keberlanjutan UMKM konveksi di Kedungwuni Pekalongan bertumpu pada sinergi antara pemanfaatan bahan baku lokal yang ramah lingkungan dan kepatuhan terhadap standar sertifikasi halal sebagai instrumen untuk membangun kepercayaan konsumen. Selain itu, UMKM yang mengadopsi teknologi digital dalam pemasaran kreatif memiliki tingkat ketahanan yang lebih tinggi terhadap guncangan ekonomi dibandingkan dengan usaha yang masih dikelola secara konvensional. Penelitian ini memberikan rekomendasi bagi pemerintah daerah dan pemangku kebijakan untuk merumuskan regulasi yang mendukung pengembangan industri kreatif halal, seperti penyederhanaan akses sertifikasi halal dan penyelenggaraan pelatihan manajemen bisnis berbasis ekonomi sirkular. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini memperkuat literatur manajemen strategi dengan menunjukkan bahwa etika religius dan prinsip halal dapat menjadi fondasi penting dalam membangun keberlanjutan usaha pada ekosistem ekonomi kerakyatan.]

Keywords: Halal Creative Industry, MSMEs, Sustainability Strategy, Halal Certification, Digital Marketing.

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INTRODUCTION

The global halal industry has undergone a significant transformation, expanding beyond the food sector into the broader halal lifestyle domain, including Muslim fashion, cosmetics, tourism, and creative industries. This phenomenon has been driven by the growing awareness among Muslim consumers of products that not only comply with halal requirements but also embody ethical values, sustainability, and social responsibility. Within this context, the modest fashion industry has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors in the global halal economy. Indonesia occupies a strategic position in this development, as it is one of the world's largest markets for Muslim fashion consumers while simultaneously possessing substantial potential as a globally competitive producer of modest fashion products.

From a strategic management perspective, business sustainability is no longer measured solely by the ability to generate economic profit but also by the capacity to create sustainable social and environmental value. The Triple Bottom Line concept proposed by Elkington (1997) emphasizes that business success is determined by a balance among economic (profit), social (people), and environmental (planet) dimensions. In the context of the Islamic economy, this concept is closely associated with the halal-thayyib principle, which requires business activities not only to comply with halal standards but also to promote public welfare, justice, and sustainability. Therefore, the integration of halal values into business models can be viewed as a sustainability strategy capable of generating long-term competitive advantage.

Pekalongan is one of Indonesia's major textile and garment manufacturing centers and plays an important role in the regional economy. The presence of thousands of garment-based Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) has made this sector a key driver of employment generation and local economic growth. However, changing consumer preferences, increasing competition from imported products, market digitalization, and growing demands for sustainable business practices have created new challenges for garment MSMEs. These conditions require business actors to move beyond production efficiency and competitive pricing by developing value-based differentiation strategies that are difficult for competitors to imitate.

A number of previous studies have examined the relationship between halal practices and business performance. Hasan (2020) found that halal certification positively influences the trust and loyalty of Muslim consumers. Other studies have demonstrated that the implementation of Islamic business ethics can enhance corporate reputation and strengthen long-term relationships with customers. Research on sustainable fashion has primarily focused on the concepts of slow fashion, the use of environmentally friendly materials, and the reduction of ecological impacts throughout the supply chain (Fletcher, 2014). More recent studies have also highlighted that digitalization and value-driven innovation are critical factors in enhancing MSME resilience in the face of market uncertainty.

Nevertheless, these studies still exhibit several limitations. First, most halal-related research focuses on consumer behavior and halal certification as marketing instruments, while the role of halal values as an organizational sustainability strategy remains underexplored. Second, research on sustainable fashion tends to emphasize environmental and economic dimensions without integrating religious values into the sustainability framework. Third, studies on garment MSMEs in Indonesia generally concentrate on production efficiency, product innovation, or digital marketing but provide limited explanation of how halal values are operationalized in everyday business practices to strengthen business resilience. Consequently, a research gap remains regarding the integration of sustainability strategies, halal creative industries, and management practices among garment MSMEs at the local level.

This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the sustainability strategies implemented by garment MSMEs in Kedungwuni, Pekalongan, from the perspective of the halal creative industry. Unlike previous studies that primarily view halal as a compliance or marketing instrument, this research positions halal values as an integral component of

business strategy that supports economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The study focuses on how MSME actors integrate halal principles into production processes, supply chain management, and marketing strategies to establish sustainable competitive advantages. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of value-based strategic management literature grounded in Islamic principles while also providing a foundation for policymaking aimed at fostering the development of halal creative industries in Pekalongan and other regions with similar characteristics.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive analytical methods. This approach was chosen to deeply understand the phenomenon of sustainability strategies from the perspective of business actors, in line with the nature of research that explores human perspectives in natural social situations (Creswell, 2014). The researcher acts as a key instrument to capture the meaning behind halal convection business practices in the field.

The research focuses on the convection industry center in Kedungwuni District, Pekalongan Regency. This location was chosen purposively because Kedungwuni is the largest epicenter of ready-made garment production in the Pekalongan region, characterized by strong religious characteristics. The research subjects consisted of 10 convection entrepreneurs selected using a purposive sampling technique with the following criteria: (1) having been operating for at least five years, (2) having an independent production line, and (3) implementing or being committed to halal industry values. This number of 10 informants was deemed sufficient to reach data saturation in the context of the Kedungwuni area (Sugiyono, 2019).

The researcher employed a combination of two primary data collection techniques to ensure the credibility of the results:

1. Moderate Participatory Observation: The researcher conducted direct observation of operational activities in the garment workshop. Observations focused on production workflows, raw material selection, fabric waste management, and social interactions in the workplace to determine the extent to which Halal-Thayyib principles were effectively implemented (Moleong, 2017).

2. In-depth Interviews: The researcher conducted semi-structured dialogues with 10 garment business owners. The interviews aimed to elicit narratives regarding their vision for business sustainability, challenges in integrating halal values, and adaptation strategies in the face of market fluctuations. This technique allowed the researcher to delve into the informants' thinking in a more personal and in-depth manner.

The data obtained were analyzed using an interactive model that encompasses three simultaneous stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The researcher sorted raw data from interviews and field notes, organized them into specific strategic categories, and then verified them through source and method triangulation techniques. This process ensures that the findings regarding the sustainability strategies of convection MSMEs in Kedungwuni have a strong and systematic empirical basis.

Table 1. As a complement to research methods to strengthen validity

Informan Code	Business Scale	Year of Operation	Main Products	Market Focus
IF-01	Small	12 Year old	Gamis & Hijab	Nasional (E-commerce)
IF-02	Micro	6 Year old	Muslim Children's Clothing	Lokal & Regional Market
IF-03	Small	15 Year old	Koko Shirt	Nasional (E-commerce)
IF-04	Medium	20 Year old	Jeans	Retail (E-Commerce)
IF-05	Micro	5 Year old	Jeans	Retail (E-Commerce)
IF-06	Small	10 Year old	Embroidered Mukena	Domestik
IF-07	Small	8 Year old	Women's Pants and Skirts	Retail (E-Commerce)
IF-08	Medium	18 Year old	Women's Pants and Skirts	Domestik
IF-09	Micro	7 Year old	Hijab	Reseller & Dropship
IF-10	Small	11 Year old	Jeans	Retail (E-Commerce)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings present empirical findings from participant observation and interviews with 10 garment entrepreneurs in Kedungwuni District, Pekalongan Regency. Data were analyzed using an integrative approach, directly contrasting field findings with theoretical frameworks on strategic management, the halal industry, and business sustainability. The analysis focused on five main pillars: internalization of Halal-Thayyib values, locally based creative innovation, strengthening social capital, Islamic financial management, and digital adaptation.

Internalization of Halal-Thayyib Values as the Foundation of Business Sustainability

Observations indicate that MSME garment manufacturers in Kedungwuni do not view halal merely as a certification or regulatory compliance instrument, but rather as a principle that governs all business activities, from raw material selection and workforce management to consumer relations. These practices reflect the implementation of the halal-thayyib concept, which integrates the dimensions of halal, product quality, and social responsibility.

The following is a sample of in-depth interviews with garment manufacturers in Kedungwuni regarding their operational principles :

" For us in the Kedungwuni center, running a garment business is part of our religious obligations, so it must be honest. Our strategy for sustainability is to avoid deceiving customers. We ensure the fabric we purchase is sourced clearly, not illegal goods or defective fabric that is considered good. Halal means we

pay our tailors' wages before their sweat dries, in accordance with religious teachings. We also ensure a comfortable work environment, with breaks for prayer, and we manage the processing of scrap fabric so it doesn't pile up as waste in the village. If the process is clean and honest, customers will trust us, and that trust is what keeps us going despite the abundance of external competition." (interview with Khoirul, a jeans MSME entrepreneur).

These findings reinforce the literature on halal supply chain management, which confirms that halal supply chain integrity positively impacts consumer trust and business sustainability. Recent studies have shown that consistent implementation of a halal supply chain can increase the competitiveness of MSMEs by generating moral legitimacy and a stronger market reputation (Khan et al., 2024). From the perspective of Maqasid al-Shari'ah, these practices also reflect efforts to safeguard wealth (hifz al-mal) through fair and transparent transactions.

The sustainability of Kedungwuni MSMEs is built not only through operational efficiency but also through building trust (trust-based sustainability) stemming from the application of Islamic values in daily economic activities.

Table 2. Implementation Matrix of Halal-Thayyib Principles in the Production Value Chain

Production Stages	Sustainability Practices (Halal-Thayyib)	Strategic Impact
Input (Raw material)	Selection of certified safe fabrics and non-toxic dyeing processes.	Building consumer confidence in product safety (<i>Health Safety</i>).
Proses (Production)	Clean work environment, prayer times are maintained, and material cutting efficiency.	Increase productivity and minimize fabric waste (<i>Circular Economy</i>).
Labor	Fair piece rate system and timely payment.	High tailor loyalty, reducing employee turnover.
Output (product)	The design covers the aurat (syar'i) but remains innovative.	Strong product differentiation in the modest fashion market.
Marketing	Transparency of product descriptions and honest pricing without gharar.	Creating long-term relationships with customers (<i>Customer Retention</i>).

Creative Innovation as a Source of Resilience and Competitive Advantage

The research found that Kedungwuni garment manufacturers developed a product differentiation strategy through the integration of local cultural elements, modest fashion designs, and creativity based on market needs. This strategy enabled them to avoid direct price competition with mass-produced and imported products.

Research informants explained their creative strategy as follows:

" We realize that if we simply compete on price with big manufacturers or imported goods, we will definitely lose. So, our survival strategy is to rely on design strength. We make convection clothes with touches of Kedungwuni's signature hand-embroidered embroidery or artistic applications of batik scraps. This is what we call the halal creative industry; the clothes are modest, cover

the body, but still fashionable. This creativity is what gives our products their own loyal market segment. We always do small research on social media to find out what styles and colors are trending, then we modify them to suit our own characteristics. Innovation is our lifeblood, because if the designs were always the same, within six months our business would be crushed by new trends." (interview with Ms. Yuni, Koko Shirt MSME Entrepreneur).

From a Resource-Based View (RBV) perspective, design capabilities, creativity, and local knowledge are intangible resources that are difficult for competitors to imitate. This finding aligns with recent research on creative economy resilience, which shows that the ability to innovate and leverage local identity are key factors determining the resilience of creative businesses in the era of digital disruption (Naldi et al., 2023).

Creativity combined with a halal identity creates a unique value proposition. Products not only meet consumers' functional needs but also provide symbolic value in the form of religious and cultural identity. Therefore, creative innovation plays a strategic role in strengthening the sustainability of garment MSMEs.

Social Capital and Islamic Entrepreneurship in Strengthening Community Resilience

Research findings indicate that relationships between business actors in Kedungwuni are characterized by high levels of trust, production collaboration, and the exchange of market information. This pattern creates a risk-sharing mechanism that helps MSMEs survive conditions of economic uncertainty.

A summary of informants' perspectives on inter-business relationships is as follows:

"There's competition here, but we don't tear each other down. If I get an order for 1,000 pieces and my machine can't handle it, I'll share it with my neighbor who has a smaller business. We often gather for religious study or just sit at the stall to share information about fabric prices or who the bad buyers are. This camaraderie is our security strategy. If there's a crisis or capital difficulties, our fellow entrepreneurs in Kedungwuni are the first to help. We feel strong because we're together. Halal isn't just about the product, but how we relate well with fellow entrepreneurs as brothers. This is what keeps the Kedungwuni convection business going despite repeated economic crises." (Interview with Halim, Jeans MSME Entrepreneur).

This phenomenon can be explained through the concept of Islamic entrepreneurship, namely entrepreneurial activity that is not solely profit-oriented but also prioritizes the values of brotherhood, justice, and the common good. Recent studies have shown that social capital based on Islamic values contributes significantly to increasing the resilience of small businesses by strengthening collaborative networks and resource access (Alam et al., 2024).

In contrast to conventional competitive approaches that emphasize individual competition, the Kedungwuni MSMEs demonstrate a collective entrepreneurship model based on social solidarity. These findings demonstrate that local economic resilience is determined not only by financial capacity but also by the quality of social relationships among business actors.

Ethical Financial Management and Access to Capital, Digital Transformation and Ethical Marketing

The research results indicate that most informants rely on internal financing, profit reinvestment, and profit-sharing partnerships as their business capital management strategies. This approach reflects a strong application of prudential principles in financial decision-making.

The entrepreneurs expressed their views on capital as follows:

" Our biggest obstacle used to be capital, but we avoided high-interest bank loans as much as possible. Our survival strategy was to leverage our own capital or collaborate with market shop owners on profit-sharing. We prefer a small but blessed profit to having large capital but being chased by suffocating interest rates. We believe that business sustainability means having peace of mind while working. We manage our finances very strictly; profits are not immediately used for lifestyle, but are instead used to buy raw materials when prices are low. Careful money management and avoiding usury are the keys to our garment factory's survival, even though many others with large bank loans have failed. (Interview with Alhan, Jeans MSME Entrepreneur).

These findings support research on sustainable SMEs, which states that a healthy capital structure and low debt dependency contribute to long-term business stability (Soto-Acosta et al., 2023). In the context of Islamic economics, the preference for profit-sharing financing also reflects an effort to mitigate financial risks stemming from market uncertainty.

Although the self-financing model has the potential to slow business expansion, this approach has been shown to increase MSME resilience to external economic pressures, including rising production costs and fluctuations in market demand.

The final pillar of the sustainability strategy identified is digitalization, which is a key strategy implemented by the Kedungwuni garment MSME. The use of social media and e-commerce platforms allows for national market reach expansion without requiring significant physical investment.

However, this study found that digital transformation does not neglect halal identity. Marketing practices are still carried out based on the principles of transparency, honesty in product information, and ethical communication in accordance with Islamic values. These findings demonstrate a hybridization process between modern technology and religious values.

These results align with recent research showing that integrating digital technology and ethical business values can increase consumer trust and strengthen the competitiveness of MSMEs in the halal-based creative economy (Rahman et al., 2024). Therefore, digitalization serves not only as a marketing tool but also as a means of building a sustainable business reputation and legitimacy.

Synthesis of Findings: A Theological-Creative Resilience Model

Based on the overall findings, this study proposes a "Theological-Creative Resilience" model as a conceptual framework for the sustainability of convection MSMEs in Kedungwuni. This model is built on four main pillars: (1) internalization of halal-thayyib

values in the business value chain, (2) locality-based creative innovation, (3) socio-religious capital as a risk mitigation mechanism, and (4) digital adaptation based on Islamic business ethics.

Unlike conventional sustainability models that focus on economic efficiency and regulatory compliance, this model demonstrates that business sustainability in the context of halal MSMEs is also influenced by spiritual and social factors. These findings expand the literature on the halal creative industry by demonstrating that religious values are not merely cultural identities but strategic resources capable of enhancing business resilience in the face of global market dynamics.

Comparison with Previous Research

Compared to Moore & Manring's (2007) study, which focused on supply chain efficiency as key to the sustainability of MSMEs in the West, the Kedungwuni study shows that in Eastern societies that tend to be religious, the variables "Blessing" and "Silaturahmi" are equally important as cost efficiency. Furthermore, while Hasan's (2020) study focused heavily on halal from a state legal perspective, this finding broadens the perspective that halal at the grassroots level is a living law practiced as a daily business strategy. The novelty of this study lies in the revelation that the creative garment sector in Kedungwuni has succeeded in creating a self-sufficient and sustainable halal industrial ecosystem without having to constantly rely on rigid government policy intervention.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the sustainability of garment MSMEs in Kedungwuni, Pekalongan, is built through a combination of the application of halal-thayyib values, locally based creative innovation, strengthening social capital, prudent financial management, and adapting to digital technology. The research findings indicate that Islamic values are not only understood as aspects of normative compliance but are also implemented in daily business practices through supply chain management, work relationships, marketing, and interactions between business actors.

The research also shows that social capital based on trust and collaboration between business actors plays a crucial role in supporting MSME resilience in the face of market uncertainty. The use of digital technology while adhering to Islamic business ethics principles also helps business actors expand their market reach without abandoning the local identity and religious values that are key characteristics of the halal creative industry in Kedungwuni.

This research provides empirical support for the view that MSME sustainability is influenced not only by economic factors and internal resources, but also by social factors and the values embedded within the business community. These findings demonstrate that the integration of halal values, local creativity, and social networks can be a mechanism supporting business resilience in the context of community-based MSMEs.

This study has several limitations. First, the relatively limited number of informants, drawn only from garment MSMEs in Kedungwuni District, means the results cannot be generalized to the entire halal creative industry sector in Indonesia. Second, the use of a

qualitative approach based on observation and interviews yielded an in-depth understanding of the phenomena studied, but did not allow for statistical measurement of causal relationships between variables. Third, this study focused more on the perspective of business actors and therefore did not accommodate the perspectives of consumers, local governments, or halal certification institutions, which also play a role in the halal creative industry ecosystem.

Future research is recommended to develop a quantitative or mixed methods approach to empirically test the effect of the application of halal principles, social capital, and digitalization on the performance and sustainability of MSMEs. Furthermore, comparative studies across regions or subsectors of the halal creative industry are needed to gain a broader understanding of the factors influencing business resilience. Future research could also examine the role of government policies, the Islamic financial ecosystem, and consumer behavior in supporting the development of a sustainable halal creative industry.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

The authors declare that all authors have contributed significantly to the research and preparation of this article. Contributions include conceptualization of the study, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of the results, drafting the manuscript, revising the substance of the article, and approving the final published version of the manuscript. All authors are responsible for the integrity and accuracy of the content of the article.

AI USAGE STATEMENT

In preparing this article, the author utilized artificial intelligence (AI) technology as a tool to support the language editing process, grammar checking, and improving the manuscript's readability. All ideas, research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of results, and conclusions are entirely the author's responsibility.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article. This research was conducted independently, and the findings are reported objectively without influence from personal, financial, or institutional relationships that could bias the results and discussion presented in this study.

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