

Bridging the Digital Divide with Spirituality: Social Commerce and Sharia Marketing Ethics among Rural Culinary MSMEs

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Abstract: Digital transformation in rural areas is frequently confronted with the characteristics of agrarian communities and infrastructural limitations. This study aims to analyze the contribution of digital marketing strategies toward increasing the revenue of culinary MSMEs in Mekarsari Village, map out the structural obstacles faced, and evaluate the alignment of these digital business operations with the principles of Sharia Marketing Ethics. Utilizing a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with three key informants, social media observations, and source triangulation. The results indicate that the adoption of simple social media platforms (WhatsApp and Facebook) significantly increased self-reported estimated monthly net revenue by IDR 2,500,000 to IDR 5,000,000 through the optimization of hyper-local social network effects and communal bulk orders. However, this implementation remains suboptimal due to structural constraints such as internet signal instability, low digital literacy, and a lack of formal training. From an Islamic economic perspective, the digital marketing activities of these business actors have internalized the values of *siddiq*, *amanah*, *tabligh*, and *fathanah*. Nonetheless, a gap persists within the formal-legality dimension, as none of the MSMEs possess an official Halal Certification from BPJPH. Theoretically, this study offers a novel contribution by bridging the gap between basic technology adoption and spiritual values. It extends the Digital Empowerment Theory by demonstrating that low-complexity social commerce, when embedded in strong rural social capital, effectively drives micro-level economic resilience. Furthermore, it enriches Islamic marketing literature by conceptualizing how Sharia ethics operate substantively in informal digital ecosystems before formal halal institutionalization. Practically, this study implies the importance of local government synergy in strengthening digital literacy and facilitating halal legality to foster spirituality-based rural economic sustainability.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Social Commerce, MSME Revenue, Rural Digitalization, Sharia Marketing, Halal Assurance.

INTRODUCTION

The Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector plays a crucial role as a pillar of national economic stability, particularly in job creation and poverty alleviation in rural areas (Arifa et al., 2025). In the contemporary era, the sustainability of MSMEs no longer relies solely on conventional methods, but rather on their capability to adapt to the digital ecosystem. Digital transformation through the utilization of e-commerce platforms and social media has proven to be a primary catalyst in expanding market reach, optimizing operational costs, and significantly increasing business revenue (Andayani et al., 2021; Sitompul et al., 2025). For culinary MSMEs in rural areas, the adoption of digital technology offers a great opportunity to circumvent geographical barriers that have historically restricted their access to urban consumers (Priambada,

2026). However, this digital acceleration is hindered by a stark structural divide. According to recent data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2024), internet penetration in rural areas remains significantly lower than in urban centers. Furthermore, reports from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (2024) indicate that a substantial percentage of rural MSMEs fail to sustain digital adoption beyond the initial trial phase, primarily due to infrastructural deficits and low digital literacy.

Nevertheless, the acceleration of MSME digitalization in rural regions is frequently confronted with a complex and problematic reality. Unlike urban areas supported by adequate infrastructure, rural MSMEs must operate amidst limited internet penetration and low digital literacy among business actors (Koswara, 2024). On the other hand, adaptation to cyberspace triggers new challenges related to business morality. Many business actors are trapped in manipulating product information for the sake of digital algorithms, which from an Islamic economic perspective prompts the practice of *tadlis* (deception) and *gharar* (uncertainty) (Luthfy & Mukhlis, 2024). Therefore, the application of Sharia Marketing based on ethical values such as *siddiq* (honesty), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *tabligh* (transparency), and *fathanah* (strategic intelligence) becomes an urgent regulatory instrument to prevent digitalization from diminishing economic blessings for the sake of mere profit (Azharuddin et al., 2025; Samudra & Tamamudin, 2025).

However, the reality on the ground indicates a complex dynamic. In the Banyuasin Regency area, specifically Mekarsari Village, the majority of the population works as farmers and plantation workers, making the integration of digital technology into business management an uncommon practice. Mekarsari Village presents a unique empirical context as a transitional agrarian society where strong communal social capital—manifested in traditional networks such as *pengajian* (religious gatherings) and *arisan* (communal savings)—intersects with sudden exposure to digital markets. This specific socio-cultural dynamic makes the village an ideal microcosm to observe how traditional trust mechanisms interact with modern digital tools. Nonetheless, several culinary MSME entrepreneurs in the village—such as vendors of processed meatballs, chicken noodles, smashed fried chicken (*ayam geprek*), and grilled chicken—have demonstrated a progressive modern adaptability. Initial observation results confirm that the utilization of online platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram yields a positive impact in the form of a significant revenue increase compared to when they utilized conventional methods. This digitalization has successfully created larger-scale ordering opportunities, such as orders for prayer gatherings (*pengajian*) at mosques, farm laborers, social gatherings (*arisan*), birthdays, and gratefulness celebrations (*tasyakuran*). Behind this potential, a crucial problem emerges where the implementation of digital marketing remains uneven due to structural constraints, including limited internet access, low digital literacy, lack of training, and limited knowledge of effective digital marketing tactics (Wiryanto et al., 2025). Furthermore, amidst the predominantly Muslim society of Mekarsari Village, not all culinary MSMEs have consistently applied *halal* principles from end to end. In fact, the integration of this digital aspect is closely intertwined with the urgency of Sharia marketing ethics, which emphasizes honesty, transparency, justice, and business blessings (Iswanto et al., 2026).

Several prior studies have extensively explored the impact of digital marketing on the financial performance of MSMEs. Research by (Ahsan et al., 2025; Pranata, 2023;

Susanto et al., 2023) consistently demonstrates that social media adoption correlates positively with the sales turnover of micro-enterprises in urban areas. Meanwhile, studies concerning Islamic business ethics in online marketing generally focus on large-scale marketplace platforms and macro consumer behavior (Amalia et al., 2023; Nurbaya & Rohman, 2025; Wahyuni et al., 2024). Despite these contributions, a substantial theoretical gap persists. Most previous studies are heavily anchored in conventional frameworks like the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which predominantly evaluates digital adoption through perceived usefulness and ease of use, while largely ignoring the role of spirituality and religiosity in communal societies. Consequently, research specifically conceptualizing how culinary MSMEs at the rural level integrate low-complexity social commerce with Sharia ethical boundaries to sustain their economic resilience remains extremely limited.

Addressing this theoretical void, this study advances the discourse on rural digitalization by conceptualizing the integration of simple digital platforms with Sharia marketing ethics not merely as a technical adaptation, but as a socio-spiritual resilience strategy. The scope of focus on culinary MSMEs in Mekarsari Village provides a unique empirical context regarding local economic resilience based on technology and spirituality. Based on this conceptualization, rather than merely describing the economic outcomes, this study seeks to answer a more conceptual problem: How does the interaction mechanism between communal social capital and Sharia Marketing Ethics mitigate the structural limitations of digital infrastructure in rural culinary MSMEs? Therefore, this study specifically aims to analyze the economic impact of digital marketing adoption, map out the operational constraints experienced, and evaluate the implementation of *siddiq*, *amanah*, *tabligh*, and *fathanah* values within the digital marketing activities of culinary MSMEs in the rural area.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs an interpretive multiple-case study design (Yin, 2017). Moving beyond a general descriptive approach, this design was selected to allow for an in-depth, contextual investigation of how digital transformation and Sharia ethics intersect within a specific rural setting. In this framework, each culinary MSME actor is treated not merely as an informant, but as a distinct "bounded system" or "case" that represents a unique model of digital adaptation and market segmentation in an agrarian community. This approach is highly appropriate when the boundaries between the contemporary phenomenon (digital adoption and ethical compliance) and its context (rural Mekarsari Village) are not clearly evident.

Key Informants

To address the specific context of Mekarsari Village, purposive sampling was utilized to select three key cases. While a sample size of $N=3$ might appear limited in conventional survey research, it is methodologically robust for a multiple-case study where each case provides literal and theoretical replication (Yin, 2017). Each informant represents a unique "bounded system" with distinct digital ecosystems and target markets:

1. Case 1 (Mrs. A)
Represents the hyper-local WhatsApp-Facebook model targeting agrarian workers, farm laborers, and communal arisan.
2. Case 2 (Mr. B)
Represents the youth-oriented digital model leveraging Instagram and direct WhatsApp messaging for school events and youth gatherings.
3. Case 3 (Mrs. C)
Represents the B2B (Business-to-Business) and large-scale catering model utilizing Facebook groups for village-level official events and tasyakuran.

Data saturation was achieved during the final stages of cross-case analysis, where no new thematic codes or behavioral patterns regarding digital adoption and Sharia compliance emerged from the informants. To ensure trustworthiness and data validity, two additional key informants (a local community leader and a loyal consumer) were included for source triangulation.

Data Collection and Trustworthiness

Data collection was conducted rigorously through in-depth interviews, structured digital observation, and document analysis. Recognizing the researcher as the primary human instrument, a structured interview protocol was developed to operationalize abstract Sharia concepts. The protocol utilized situational and behavioral questions (e.g., "How do you handle a situation when a product is sold out but a consumer has already transferred the money?" to measure Amanah, or "How do you present the product photo compared to the actual portion?" to measure Siddiq).

Digital observation was not merely passive; it involved systematic digital footprint tracking over three months. Parameters included analyzing archived WhatsApp status updates, tracking comment interactions and response times in local Facebook groups, and documenting the frequency of digital transactions. Document study included reviewing chat histories (as proof of tabligh/transparency) and informal revenue recapitulations. Trustworthiness was ensured through method and source triangulation, cross-verifying the business actors' claims of ethical compliance with actual digital footprints and consumer perspectives.

Operational Focus of the Research

To avoid ambiguity and provide clear boundaries for analysis, the following table outlines the operational definitions of the research focus:

Table 1. Operational Definitions of Research Focus

No	Research Focus	Operational Definition	Empirical Indicators
1	Digital Marketing Strategy (Kumbara, 2025)	Promotion, communication, and transaction activities carried out by MSME actors by utilizing internet platforms.	1. The use of Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. 2. Frequency of uploads and online interaction with consumers.
2	MSME Revenue (Husna et al., 2021)	The financial outcomes or turnover received by culinary business actors from product sales.	1. Nominal changes in monthly income (pre- vs. post-digitalisation).

No	Research Focus	Operational Definition	Empirical Indicators
			2. Volume of online orders (social gatherings, prayer meetings, celebrations).
3	Implementation Constraints (Irfan & Anirwan, 2024)	Internal and external barriers faced when adopting technology in rural areas.	1. Limited internet infrastructure/signal. 2. Low digital literacy levels among business actors. 3. Absence of formal training programs.
4	Sharia Marketing Ethics (Hasan, 2021)	Digital marketing practices aligned with the moral values of Islamic economics.	1. Siddiq: Honesty regarding quality and accuracy of product photos. 2. Amanah: Timeliness of delivery and product accountability. 3. Tabligh: Transparency in pricing and specifications. 4. Fathanah: Intelligence in managing business tactics devoid of gharar (uncertainty) & tadlis (deception).

Data Analysis Procedure

1. Phase 1: Transcribing and Data Familiarization
 All audio recordings from in-depth interviews were transcribed verbatim. The researcher repeatedly read the transcripts alongside field notes and digital observation logs to immerse in the data and identify initial patterns.
2. Phase 2: Conceptual Coding
 A manual two-cycle coding process was applied. In the first cycle (open coding), raw data were coded based on empirical indicators (e.g., highlighting statements about using original food photos as "Siddiq-Honesty", or noting delivery delays as "Amanah-Accountability"). In the second cycle (pattern coding), these initial codes were categorized into the four pillars of Sharia Marketing Ethics and mapped against revenue fluctuation indicators.
3. Phase 3: Cross-Case Synthesis
 The coded data from Case 1, Case 2, and Case 3 were compared to identify convergent and divergent patterns. This synthesis allowed the researcher to draw valid, cross-case conclusions regarding how different digital models interact with Sharia ethics to mitigate rural structural constraints and drive revenue growth.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

Informant Profiles

To understand the empirical context of culinary MSMEs in Mekarsari Village, Banyuasin Regency, data were gathered from three key informants who meet the predetermined criteria. The profiles of these informants are structured in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Profiles of Culinary MSME Informants in Mekarsari Village

Informant	Age	Business Type	Digital Platforms Used	Length of Digital Adoption	Primary Customer Base
Informant 1 (Mrs. A)	42	Meatballs & Chicken Noodles (Bakso & Mie Ayam)	WhatsApp, Facebook	2 Years	Local villagers, farm laborers, communal gatherings (arisan)
Informant 2 (Mr. B)	35	Smashed Fried Chicken (Ayam Geprek)	WhatsApp, Instagram	1.5 Years	Youth, school events, mosque prayer meetings (pengajian)
Informant 3 (Mrs. C)	48	Grilled Chicken & Catering (Ayam Bakar)	Facebook, WhatsApp	3 Years	Village officials, tasyakuran (thanksgiving events), birthdays

Source: Field research, processed data (2026)

Based on Table 2, the informants represent the active productive age group with diverse culinary products. Although operating in a predominantly agrarian rural environment, these informants have actively migrated from purely conventional marketing to utilizing basic digital networks.

The Impact of Digital Marketing on MSME Revenue

The adoption of digital marketing via WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram has profoundly transformed the revenue streams of the three culinary MSMEs in Mekarsari Village. Before digitalization, these businesses relied entirely on walk-in customers (*dine-in* or passing traders), resulting in highly unpredictable daily turnovers.

Following the strategic shift to online promotions (such as posting daily WhatsApp statuses, sharing product photos in local Facebook groups, and offering direct messaging for orders), all three informants experienced a significant surge in sales volume. The empirical financial impact is detailed in Table 3:

Table 3. Monthly Revenue Comparison Pre- and Post-Digitalization

Informant	Average Pre-Digital Revenue (Monthly)	Average Post-Digital Revenue (Monthly)	Net Revenue Increase (Monthly)	Dominant Order Channels Post-Digital
Informant 1	IDR 4,500,000	IDR 7,000,000	IDR 2,500,000	WhatsApp Status, Facebook Groups
Informant 2	IDR 6,000,000	IDR 9,500,000	IDR 3,500,000	WhatsApp Direct Message, Instagram
Informant 3	IDR 8,000,000	IDR 13,000,000	IDR 5,000,000	Facebook Posts, WhatsApp Group Chats

Source: Field research, processed data (2026)

Beyond the nominal figures, a distinct structural pattern emerges from the data: the transition from volatile, unpredictable walk-in daily sales to predictable, high-volume communal bulk orders. Digital platforms did not merely increase the number of transactions; they fundamentally altered the nature of the revenue stream. The informants successfully converted sporadic daily consumer demand into scheduled, large-scale

catering for communal events, thereby stabilizing their cash flow against the seasonal income fluctuations typical of agrarian communities.

Informant 1 explained that by utilizing WhatsApp status updates, she regularly obtains catering orders for farm laborers during harvest seasons as well as family *arisan* events. Meanwhile, Informant 3 emphasized that showcasing large-scale catering menus on Facebook enabled her to capture high-volume orders for major village-level events, such as *tasyakuran* (thanksgiving feasts) and mosque *pengajian* (religious gatherings). These communal markets were previously unreachable due to geographical constraints and traditional marketing methods.

Implementation Constraints of Digital Marketing in Mekarsari Village

Although the utilization of social media yields significant financial impacts, the adoption of this technology faces challenging structural constraints. These barriers are not merely technical but reflect broader systemic inequalities:

1. Limited Internet Access and Infrastructure

As a rural region, Mekarsari experiences unstable cellular signals. This micro-level reality reflects the macro-level digital divide; according to the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2024), internet penetration in rural areas still lags significantly behind urban centers, and the Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Kominfo, 2023) notes that rural digital infrastructure remains heavily skewed toward Java, leaving outer regions like Banyuasin with suboptimal connectivity. This causes delays in responding to orders, occasionally resulting in cancellations.

2. Low Digital Literacy among Business Actors

Age and educational background act as primary barriers. Informant 3 (48 years old) struggles with photo editing or analytical tools, relying purely on self-taught, basic navigation.

3. Lack of Online Marketing Training Programs

There has been an absence of formal, continuous assistance from relevant agencies. The top-down digitalization policies often fail to reach the grassroots level, leaving rural entrepreneurs to rely on trial and error.

4. Limited Knowledge of Effective Marketing Tactics

The actors do not yet understand algorithm optimization, copywriting, or digital financial recording, restricting their market reach to the sub-district level.

Compliance Analysis of Halal Principles in Culinary MSMEs

In a village where the majority of the population is Muslim, product halalality is a sensitive and crucial matter. However, field observations revealed a gap between moral awareness and administrative fulfillment. The three informants verbally guaranteed that all raw materials (chicken and beef) are purchased from Muslim slaughterhouses in the local traditional market and processed in an Islamic manner.

Nevertheless, none of the three culinary MSMEs possess an official Halal Certification from the BPJPH (Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency). Their main obstacles include unfamiliarity with the bureaucratic registration workflow, concerns over hidden costs, and the perception that certification is not highly urgent since local

consumers already know each other and place full trust in the personal integrity of the business owners.

Discussion

Hyper-Local Social Commerce as an Economic Equalizer in Rural Landscapes

The empirical findings prove that digital transformation, even when executed through simple social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook, functions as a powerful economic equalizer for rural culinary MSMEs. The post-digitalization revenue surge, ranging from IDR 2.5 million to IDR 5 million per month, confirms that internet-based marketing successfully dismantles the spatial and logistical barriers inherent in rural geographies. Unlike previous studies that predominantly focus on how urban MSMEs leverage complex marketplace algorithms to drive sales (Idrus & Farida, 2025; J. D. Sari et al., 2025), this study demonstrates that in agrarian settings, simple messaging apps act as vital catalysts that transform bonding social capital (kinship and neighborhood ties within *pengajian* or *arisan*) into bridging social capital (access to wider, cross-village communal markets).

In Mekarsari Village, digital marketing does not operate anonymously. Platform features like WhatsApp statuses expand traditional word-of-mouth into cyberspace. As substantiated by (N. Sari & Raniyah, 2024), the utilization of social media by rural entrepreneurs transforms existing communal relationships into direct commercial opportunities, enabling them to capture highly lucrative bulk orders for farm laborers and village events. Consequently, digital tools stabilize their cash flows against the volatile income cycles typically associated with agricultural communities. Furthermore, these results indicate that costly and highly complex e-commerce marketplaces are not an absolute prerequisite for the initial stage of rural digital transformation. Simple, user-friendly applications are highly sufficient to optimize business performance in societies with emerging digital literacy. This phenomenon strongly corroborates the Digital Empowerment Theory championed by (Suryani et al., 2021), suggesting that the economic return on technology adoption is maximized when tools align with users' technical competence. By leveraging familiar interfaces, culinary traders in Mekarsari Village successfully bypassed deep structural tech barriers, translating digital presence into tangible financial welfare.

Navigating the Second-Level Digital Divide through Communal Digital Adaptation

The findings regarding the disparity of technology adoption in Mekarsari Village confirm that rural digitalization cannot be equated with urban ecosystems. Inconsistent signals and low digital literacy act as a "barrier wall" that hampers the growth pace of MSMEs. These structural obstacles transcend the traditional "first-level" digital divide (mere access to devices) and highlight the existence of the second-level digital divide—where inequality lies not in internet access, but in the capability and digital skills required to use technology for economic productivity (APJII, 2024; Kominfo, 2023). This reflects the failure of top-down rural digitalization policies that provide infrastructure without continuous capability building.

However, rather than being passive victims of this divide, the MSME actors exhibit what this study conceptualizes as "communal digital adaptation" or "rural digital resilience." To overcome limited marketing tactics and lack of formal training, they

leverage traditional kinship networks to disseminate product information organically. This mirrors findings from the Global South, such as rural India and Bangladesh (Begum et al., 2026; Parthiban et al., 2024), where micro-entrepreneurs bypass infrastructural deficits by relying on communal trust and peer-to-peer digital learning. In Mekarsari, the community acts as a collective digital buffer, sharing informal knowledge and compensating for the absence of state-sponsored programs. Nevertheless, as stated by (Nurhalizah et al., 2025), marketing strategies that rely purely on intuition without creative content management tend to stagnate. Therefore, local government intervention through community-based digital literacy programs remains absolutely vital to bridge the second-level divide sustainably.

Substantive vs. Formal Sharia Compliance: The Tension between Interpersonal Trust and Institutional Legality

When marketing activities shift to digital spaces, moral hazards such as information manipulation become significantly higher. In Mekarsari Village, the integration of technology and Islamic spiritual values reveals a profound paradox. The MSME actors demonstrate high compliance with the four ethical pillars, representing what can be conceptualized as "Substantive Sharia Compliance." They avoid *tadlis* (deception) by using authentic photos (*Siddiq*), ensure punctuality and transparent communication during delays (*Amanah*), disclose all costs openly (*Tabligh*), and strategically select accessible platforms over complex ones (*Fathanah*). This reinforces the theory by (Burhanudin & Puspita, 2023) that in rural social commerce, mutual trust built upon personal ethics is far more valuable than algorithmic efficiency.

However, a stark contrast exists in the formal-legality dimension: none possess an official BPJPH Halal Certification ("Formal Sharia Compliance"). Drawing on the *Maqasid al-Shariah* framework in the digital economy (Sulistiyah & Hidayah, 2026), this gap is driven by the overwhelming dominance of interpersonal trust in rural sociological structures. In agrarian communities like Mekarsari, the market is governed by moral reputation and face-to-face relational trust; consumers trust the person (the seller's religious integrity) far more than a bureaucratic piece of paper. The perceived high cost, complex bureaucracy, and lack of urgency render formal certification seemingly redundant in a closed, high-trust local ecosystem.

Nevertheless, this study argues that interpersonal trust has a geographical limit. While it sustains the hyper-local market, it becomes a barrier when MSMEs attempt to scale up (scaling up) to broader, anonymous digital markets where consumers cannot verify the seller's moral character physically. Based on the arguments of (Azharuddin et al., 2025), halal certification has transformed into a crucial Sharia marketing tool to build product differentiation and enhance remote consumer trust. To achieve sustainable growth in the wider digital economy, rural MSMEs must transform their interpersonal trust into institutional trust. Therefore, integrating substantive personal ethics with formal halal legality is not merely an administrative burden but a strategic imperative to mitigate information asymmetry for distant consumers and achieve comprehensive business blessings (*barakah*).

Proposed Conceptual Model of Rural MSME Sustainability

Based on the synthesis of the findings, this study proposes a conceptual model illustrating the mechanism of rural culinary MSME sustainability in the digital era:

**Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Rural Digital-Spiritual MSME Sustainability:
From Hyper-Local Social Commerce to Institutional Trust**



Based on the synthesis of the empirical findings and theoretical analysis, this study proposes a conceptual model (Figure 1) illustrating the mechanism of rural culinary MSME sustainability. The model highlights how simple digital platforms activate social capital and substantive Sharia ethics to drive local revenue, while emphasizing that Institutional Trust (Formal Halal Certification) remains the critical missing bridge for macro-scaling

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that in agrarian rural contexts like Mekarsari Village, the success of digital transformation for culinary MSMEs is not primarily driven by technological sophistication, but rather by the synergistic activation of hyper-local social capital and substantive Sharia marketing ethics. The empirical evidence demonstrates that simple platforms (WhatsApp/Facebook) function effectively as economic equalizers precisely because they align with the technical competence of rural actors and leverage existing communal trust networks to convert bonding social capital into bridging commercial opportunities. This finding advances the Digital Empowerment Theory by proving that low-tech digital adoption, when embedded in strong socio-spiritual ecosystems, can generate significant micro-level economic resilience without requiring complex e-commerce infrastructure. Furthermore, this research makes a novel theoretical contribution by conceptualizing the "Substantive vs. Formal Sharia Compliance"

paradox: while rural MSMEs exhibit high internalization of ethical pillars (siddiq, amanah, tabligh, fathanah) through interpersonal trust, their lack of formal Halal Certification reveals that institutional legitimacy remains the critical missing bridge for macro-scaling in anonymous digital markets. Thus, this study explicitly answers its core research question by demonstrating that rural digital sustainability relies on a dual mechanism: social-ethical adaptation for local survival, and institutional legalization for broader market penetration.

These conclusions must be interpreted within specific methodological boundaries inherent to interpretive multiple-case studies. First, the focus on three bounded systems (N=3) reflects a deliberate design choice to achieve deep contextual understanding and theoretical replication rather than statistical generalizability; each case provides rich insights into distinct digital adaptation models that larger samples might obscure. Second, the reliance on self-reported financial estimates, validated through source triangulation, accurately captures the informal accounting realities of rural micro-enterprises where standardized bookkeeping is culturally absent. Rather than representing fatal flaws, these characteristics authentically reflect the naturalistic setting of rural MSME research and highlight the need for context-sensitive methodologies in studying informal economies.

Practical and Policy Implications: For rural culinary MSME actors, sustaining growth requires transforming interpersonal trust into institutional trust by pursuing official Halal Certification through free government facilitation programs, thereby enabling access to broader digital markets beyond hyper-local networks. For local governments and village apparatuses, policy interventions should shift from generic digital literacy training to targeted programs that integrate technical skills with Sharia business ethics education, while proactively streamlining halal certification processes specifically designed for remote rural entrepreneurs who face bureaucratic and informational barriers.

Future research should empirically test the proposed conceptual model (Figure 1) using quantitative or mixed-methods approaches across diverse rural regions to validate whether the relationship between social capital activation, substantive Sharia compliance, and revenue growth holds universally or is context-dependent. Additionally, scholars are encouraged to investigate the longitudinal impact of transitioning from interpersonal to institutional trust on MSME scaling trajectories, and to explore how platform-specific features (e.g., WhatsApp Business API vs. Facebook Groups) differentially moderate the effectiveness of Sharia-compliant digital marketing in varying agrarian settings. Comparative cross-national studies examining similar phenomena in other Global South contexts would further enrich the theoretical discourse on rural digital-spiritual resilience.

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