

Islamic Digital Marketing Benchmark (IDMB): Initial Instrument Development by Deductive Approach

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ABSTRACT

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The emergence and revolution of Islamic digital economy has called for ethical digital marketing. The booming of digital marketing in social media platform enable the digital marketing and content creation exploring endless possible ways to gain views and boost sales. However, some of the marketing campaigns and content are not aligned with Shariah values and there are no regulations or guidelines for digital marketer and content creator for this. Thus, there is an urgent need for Islamic Digital Marketing Benchmark (IDMB). This paper explores the initial development of instruments in IDMB by deductive approach. This benchmark expects integration of Shariah-compliant digital marketing with 4Ps of marketing. This benchmark is expected to contribute to the Islamic digital economy robustness and ethical marketing.

1. Introduction

1.1 Islamic Digital Economy & Media

Based on the report by Thomson Reuters and Dinar Standard [1], the components of digital economy are broadly defined by e-marketers as follows: (i) digital ad spending on consumers, (ii) retail e-commerce, and (iii) digital travel spend. This report has identified 2168 consumer-centric and digital native products, 19 percent of which are under the category of "Media and Entertainment". The total digital economy is worth USD 4.3 trillion in 2020, in which USD 6.1 billion has been spent on digital advertisements targeting Muslim populations globally in 2014 [1].

In Malaysia, IDE in Malaysia is supported by Malaysia Digital Economic Corporation (MDEC) and other government bodies such as MITI, MATRADE, MOSTI, EPU and MOF (EPU, 2020). This not only supports the National IR4.0 Policy, but also to strengthen the Halal economy in Malaysia. Malaysia Economic Digital Blueprint or MyDIGITAL is one of the aspirations of Malaysia to transform the country into a high-income nation, digitally-driven and a regional leader in the digital economy [2],

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By 2025, the digital economy contribute to 22.6 percent from Malaysia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) [2].

The revolution of the digital economy and business in Malaysia has revolutionized the way of digital marketing via social media. This is the impact of external and internal factors that make digital marketing popular in advertising products and services and the way of consumption among the digital consumers.

1.2 Digital Marketing and Social Media

The rapid advancement of digital technologies over the past two decades has reconfigured marketing from one-way, mass communications into interactive, data-driven practices in which social media plays a central strategic role. Industry analyses for 2024–2025 report continued growth in online and social-media usage, rising ad spend toward social channels, and accelerating uptake of generative-AI and social-listening tools in marketing operations trends that together position social platforms as primary channels for brand discovery, audience engagement and measurable campaign performance [3,4].

Academic work provides the conceptual and empirical foundations for these developments. Foundational definitions [5] characterize social media as Internet-based applications enabling user-generated content and two-way interactions, while frameworks such as the 'honeycomb' model explain how platform functionalities (identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, groups) map to marketing objectives like awareness, engagement, and conversion. Systematic reviews covering the last twenty years find consistent short-term benefits (impressions, engagement, lead generation) but also note fragmentation in the literature and important gaps notably evidence on long-term ROI, sustained brand value, and ethical/privacy implications pointing to avenues for future, methodologically rigorous research [6,7].

1.3 Shariah-Compliant Digital Marketing in Social Media

The concept of Shariah compliance has gained attention among scholars, entrepreneurs and consumers in recent years. A bibliometric study by Sholihin *et al.*, [8] revealed an increase in academic research addressing Shariah-compliant business models, showing the rising demand for ethical practices in the marketplace. This growth aligns with Malaysia's strategic policies, such as the National Entrepreneurship Policy 2030 [9] introduced by the Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives (MECD). The policy aims to build a competitive entrepreneurial ecosystem to face Industry 4.0 challenges while placing an entrepreneurial culture within Malaysian society. DKN 2030 aspires to increase the number of resilient and Shariah-conscious entrepreneurs, especially within the SME sector [9].

Online business has become a vital platform for entrepreneurial growth, as enterprises can connect and transact with clients, business partners and suppliers through Internet-based systems [10]. Social media serves as a strategic medium for digital marketing due to its global reach, cost efficiency and interactive capabilities. However, while the adoption of online business continues to grow, empirical investigations into Shariah compliance in digital marketing remain limited. For example, many Muslim entrepreneurs are uncertain about whether their online transactions are fully aligned with Shariah principles and business ethics [10].

Islam places strong priority on justice, honesty and fairness in trade. The Qur'an warns against fraudulent dealings: "Woe to those that give less [than due], who when they take a measure from people take in full. But if they give them by measure or by weight, they cause loss" (Qur'an 83:1–3). This principle applies equally to digital marketplaces, where misrepresentation of products, unfair pricing or hidden costs undermine both Shariah and consumer trust. Truthfulness is a core value in marketing as reflected in the verse: "O you who have believed, fear Allah and be with those who are truthful" (Qur'an 9:119). The Prophet Muhammad also highlighted integrity in transactions "He who deceives is not one of us" (Sahih Muslim 102). These scriptural guidelines highlight that digital marketing must go beyond profitability to express transparency, accountability and ethical conduct.

1.4 Integration of Shariah-Compliant Digital Marketing and 4Ps

The marketing mix is known as one of the most influential strategies in the field of marketing. Originally conceptualized as four fundamental elements such as product, price, place and promotion. This framework is known as the 4Ps. It became the cornerstone of modern marketing practices [12]. In the context of Islamic digital marketing, these elements require reinterpretation to align with Shariah principles. This integration not only adapts the conventional mix but also enriches it by including values of justice, transparency, modesty and social responsibility. The 4Ps provide a foundation for the Islamic Digital Marketing Benchmark (IDMB) by enabling digital strategies that are both effective and ethical.

Product, Shariah highlights that goods and services must be halal, *thoyyib* and beneficial. The Qur'an cautions against harmful and prohibited products: "O you who have believed, indeed intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful" (Qur'an 5:90). The marketing of products must also uphold *sidq* (truthfulness). The Qur'an reminds: "O you who have believed, fear Allah and be with those who are truthful" (Qur'an 9:119). In practice, this means products must be disclosed transparently to consumers including full ingredient information, halal certification and halal labeling. This provides security and safety for consumers to make sure that items like ice cream, marshmallows, chocolates and candies containing gelatin or chemical coatings are verified as halal before being marketed [11].

For price, Shariah requires fairness, justice and transparency. Islam strictly prohibits exploitation, *riba* and manipulative practices. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated: "He who deceives is not of us" (Muslim, Hadith 102). This Hadith underscores the obligation of clear disclosure in pricing especially in digital transactions where hidden costs, subscription traps and unfair markups are common. Thus, Shariah digital marketing ensures that pricing in marketing is compulsory to remain transparent and not allow to take something that is not right [123].

The promotion dimension in Shariah-compliant marketing is not only a commercial activity but also a form of *dakwah* that must be conducted with honesty, modesty and wisdom. The Qur'an highlight truthfulness: "O you who have believed, fear Allah and be with those who are truthful" (Qur'an 9:119) and encourages ethical persuasion: "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best" (Qur'an 16:125). By contrast, many contemporary marketing practices both in Muslim and non-Muslim societies violate ethical standards with many firms using sexual innuendo and double-meaning references in advertisements [12]. Studies show that advertising often employs provocative gestures and sexualized imagery [14,37] deceptive messages [15] and even encourages *ikhtilat* (free mixing or flirtatious interaction) in promotional content [16]. Therefore, Shariah-compliant digital promotion requires marketers to

avoid falsehood, fraud and obscenity while ensuring that messages promote halal lifestyles, ethical content and beneficial knowledge [13].

Along with pricing, product and promotion, place is a significant element in marketing as well [17]. Place in the context of Islamic Digital Marketing Benchmark (IDMB) not only about accessibility or convenience but about values and trust, transparency and shariah compliance into every stage of product delivery whether online and off line. In Islam, distribution channels must avoid haram environments, consumer safety and trust. The Qur'an warns against prohibited elements such as intoxicants and gambling (Qur'an 5:90), while Islamic commercial law also prohibits *gharar* in transactions. In the digital era, place is beyond physical outlets to include online platforms such as e-commerce sites and social media marketplaces. Shariah compliant digital marketing requires that these platforms uphold consumer privacy, protect personal data and avoid environments associated with unethical practices. The Qur'an points up the privacy: "*And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it*" (Qur'an 49:12). Thus, protecting digital users' data and ensuring confidentiality is not just a technical requirement but a religious obligation. At the same time, research highlights that fraudulent practices and breaches of confidentiality are increased in digital marketplaces. Marketers often request sensitive consumer information such as credit card details or bank account numbers. When this information is misused, the place of exchange directly undermines consumer trust [19]. This demonstrates the importance of strengthening the "place" element in IDMB, ensuring that digital distribution channels safeguard not only efficiency and convenience but also ethics, security and compliance with Shariah principles.

1.5 Problem Statement

Recent trends in digital marketing show a disturbing normalization of behaviours that are clearly non-Shariah-compliant. Provocative gestures, *ikhtilat* free mixing of genders, oversexualization and misleading promotional content are often employed to gain views, likes and sales. Such approaches, while effective in terms of engagement, compromise Islamic ethical standards and contribute to the desensitization of haram behaviour especially among youth. This unethical transformation calls for serious reflection and immediate corrective action from the Muslim digital marketing community.

Given these concerns, there is a growing need to develop a benchmark that provides the guidelines for Shariah-compliant digital marketing. The benchmarks can give the rating for the digital marketers to comply with ethical marketing in promoting their products and services.

So far there is no Islamic digital marketing benchmark developed by any organisations because mostly the framework is discussed in the phase of proposal or general guidelines with no measures. Thus, this study tries to develop the Islamic digital marketing benchmark (IDMB) for digital marketers for promoting their products or services in social media.

1.6 Research Objective

This study intends to develop the Islamic digital marketing benchmark (IDMB) based on the Shariah framework in line with the Quran and Hadith. The benchmark integrates with marketing principles of 4Ps.

2. Methodology

2.1 Deductive Qualitative Analysis

This study follows the procedure of item development by Boateng *et al.*, [20] and Nur Farhana Ramli *et al.*, [21]. Based on the work of Boateng *et al.*, [20], the scale development has three phases: (i) item development, (ii) scale development and (iii) scale evaluation. Nur Farhana Ramli *et al.*, (2018) has mentioned that the item development itself consists of two phases which are (i) Phase 1: Development Phase (ii) Phase 2: Validation Phase.

There are three methods in the item development phase. The first is deductive approach where the item development is based on literature review, document analysis, and the perusal of journal articles. The second one is an inductive approach where the item development is based on experts' opinions, personal experience or the focus group analysis. The third one is the mixed method approach which is the combination of deductive approach and inductive approach.

This study applies only to the deductive approach since IDMB is still in the development phase. This is because there is no existing scale or existing benchmark for Islamic digital marketing in social media. The current index on marketing are like Digital Marketing Utilization Index (Masrianto *et al.*, 2022). The other Shariah benchmark or index are like Malaysia Shariah Index by JAKIM (2015), Maqasid Index by JAKIM & Securities Commission (2023), the Shariah-compliant benchmark for stocks and shares by Securities Commission (2025) and Global Islamic Fintech Score (GIFT) by Dinar Standard for Islamic Fintech products (2022).

2.2 Guiding Theories- 4 Ps (Product, Price, Place, Promotion)

This study adopts the 4Ps marketing mix product, price, promotion and place as guiding theory. Originally introduced by McCarthy [23], the 4Ps framework has become one of the most influential models in modern marketing, providing a systematic approach to understanding how businesses create and deliver value to consumers [12]. Philip Kotler further points out that in order to achieve marketing goals, the marketing perspective must be translated into a marketing strategy that includes identifying target markets, identifying positioning, allocating marketing budgets and developing marketing mixes [24].

In the Islamic context, the conventional marketing mix requires reinterpretation to make sure compliance with Shariah principles. The concept of product says that all goods and services must be halal and *thoyyib*, lawful, safe and beneficial protecting consumer rights and aligning with Islamic values. Price must be determined with fairness and transparency, avoiding elements of exploitation, *riba* or practices that could harm consumers. Promotion is pictured not only as persuasion but as ethical communication and *dakwah* that require truthfulness (*sidq*), modesty (*haya*) and wisdom (*hikmah*) while forbid deception, obscenity or exaggeration. Place, highlights ethical distribution where consumer privacy, trust and dignity are safeguarded. Both physical and digital channels operate free from haram environments or fraudulent practices.

By integrating the 4Ps with Shariah values, this study establishes a theoretical foundation for the Islamic Digital Marketing Benchmark (IDMB), where the marketing mix serves not only as an operational tool but also as a value-driven model that ensures both effectiveness and Shariah compliance [13].

2.3 Sample of Documents

The documents analyzed are Quranic verses, hadith, digital marketing academic literature and Islamic marketing academic literature. To compile all themes are exhaustive list, thus this study have convenience sampling in the documents studied to achieve the research objective. Furthermore, this study is deductive, the integration of 4Ps and principles of Shariah is covering the aspects stated in the operational definition and need further studies on the validity testing.

3. Results

3.1 Definition of Constructs

3.1.1 Shariah-compliant

Shariah compliance refers to adherence to Islamic legal and ethical principles in business practices, including avoidance of prohibited elements such as *riba* (interest), *gharar* (excessive uncertainty) and *maysir* (gambling), while ensuring that operations are conducted with fairness, transparency and prevention of exploitation, as says in recent literature on Shariah compliance [8].

3.1.2 Digital marketing

Digital marketing refers to a set of marketing tactics and strategies that leverage digital platforms and information technology to interact with target audiences more efficiently and effectively. It encompasses the use of diverse digital channels such as social media, websites, search engines, email, online content and digital advertising. Through these platforms, companies are able to reach potential customers more precisely and engage with them directly and build personalized relationships that strengthen customer loyalty [26].

3.1.3 Social media

Social media refers to digital platforms that have become an integral part of everyday life allowing individuals and organizations to communicate, share content and build networks in the digital era. Supported by the rapid development of online infrastructures, social media serves as a powerful channel for businesses to reach mass audiences and strengthen brand engagement. Recent findings indicate that social media advertising has become the primary medium through which people aged 16 to 44 gain awareness of brands, products and services [27].

3.2 Generation of Items

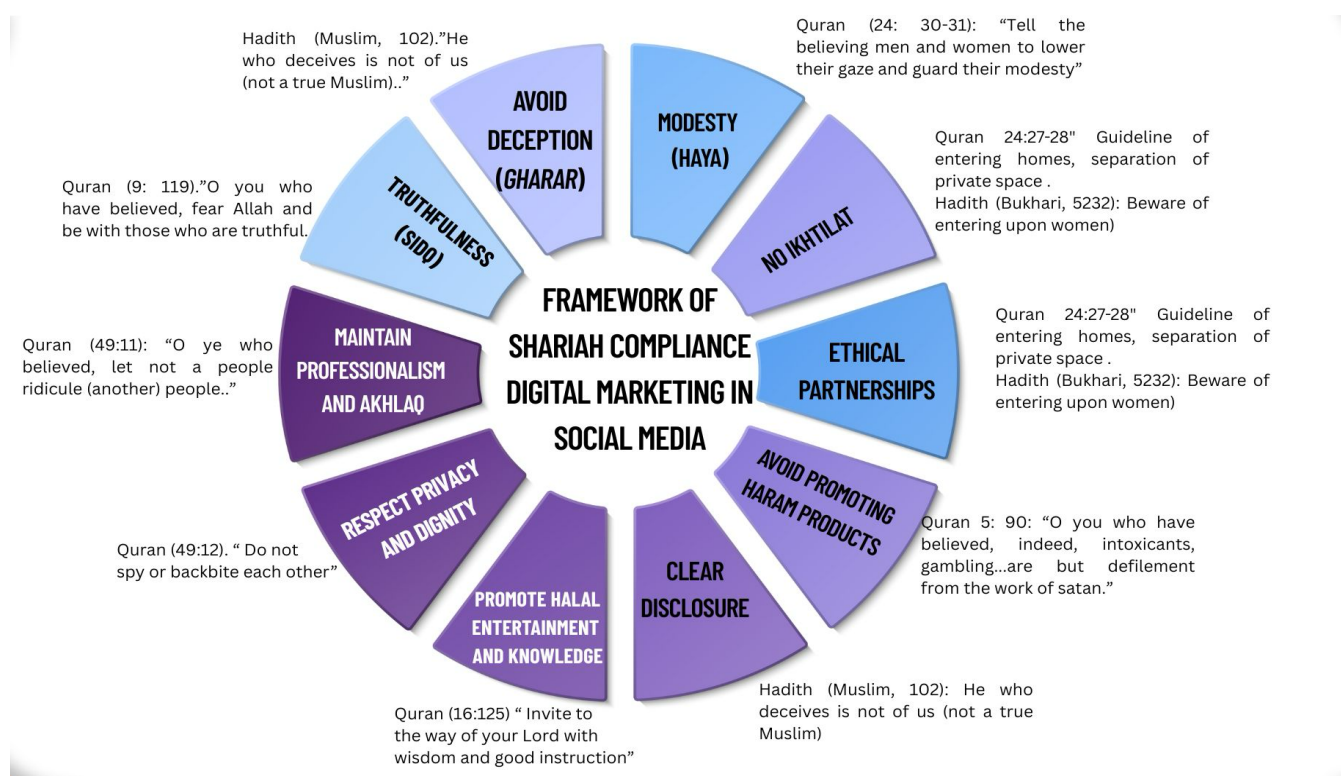
Constructs (Conceptual Definition)	Aspect (Operational Definition)	Item number	References
PRODUCT Anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a want or need	This study includes the terms product with products, services, digital products and digital services.	PR 1 - PR 4	Karambut [28]
PRICE The amount of money customers pay for the product or service. Pricing strategies significantly influence customer choices and confidence in the product's value.	In this study, the price operational definition is following the common practice where the price is charged based on the price imposed by the sellers.	PC 5 - PC 8	Bradford and Boyd [30]
PLACE How and where the product is distributed and made available to customers. This involves distribution channels and logistics.	In this study, the element of place in digital marketing is like e-commerce website, online marketplace, social media platforms, digital stores and apps, online content, blogs and any online resources	PL 9 - PL 12	Juhaidi [29]
PROMOTION The activities a company uses to communicate the product's value and persuade target consumers to purchase it. This includes advertising, sales, and other forms of marketing communication.	In this study, the promotions are implemented digitally, online and using the social medias and any online marketplace.	PM 13- PM 16	Nghiêm-Phú [31]

The diagram illustrates the Framework of Shariah Compliance Digital Marketing in Social Media, which is built upon ten guiding principles derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. These principles emphasize truthfulness (*sidq*), avoidance of deception (*gharar*), modesty (*haya*), ethical partnerships, and the prohibition of promoting haram products. For example, the Qur'an explicitly commands believers to "fear Allah and be with those who are truthful" (Qur'an 9:119), while the Prophet (peace be upon him) warned that "he who deceives is not of us" (Muslim, 102). Together, these sources provide a foundation for ethical marketing practices that ensure honesty, transparency, and alignment with Islamic values [32,33].

Another key principle highlighted in the framework is modesty and social boundaries in communication. The Qur'an instructs believing men and women to lower their gaze and guard their modesty (Qur'an 24:30–31), underscoring the importance of avoiding provocative imagery and

unrestricted gender interaction (ikhtilat). In marketing practice, this principle translates into modest representation in visuals, respectful engagement in online campaigns, and rejection of oversexualized or exploitative strategies. These guidelines not only preserve Islamic ethics but also strengthen consumer trust by portraying brands as responsible and value-driven [26].

The framework also extends to maintaining professionalism, respecting privacy, and promoting halal knowledge. The Qur'an prohibits ridicule (Qur'an 49:11) and backbiting (Qur'an 49:12), reinforcing the need for dignity and respect in digital interactions. Ethical marketers are thus expected to avoid exploiting personal or family issues for publicity, while instead focusing on content that benefits society (maslahah). The Qur'an also calls believers to "invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction" (Qur'an 16:125), encouraging marketers to share educational and value-adding content. By integrating these Shariah principles into digital strategies, businesses can create sustainable, ethical, and socially impactful marketing practices that align with the spirit of Islamic economics [35,36].



3.3 IDM Benchmark Scoring

The following table shows the IDM Benchmark Scoring. The experts or authorities are able to put scoring 0 to 5 at dimensions to rate the compliancy of the digital marketing or promotion content in social media.

- 0 = no compliancy
- 1 = weak compliancy
- 2 = slight compliancy
- 3 = moderate compliancy
- 4 = strong compliancy
- 5 = full compliancy

4Ps	Code	Indicator	Rating					
PRODUCT	PR 1	Product is halal (no alcohol, gambling, pork, riba-based finance	0	1	2	3	4	5
	PR 2	Honest labeling & clear disclosure (no deception/ <i>gharar</i>)						
	PR 3	Ethical partnerships (no collaboration with haram/immoral brands)						
	PR 4	Respect for modesty & dignity in packaging and digital visuals						
PRICE	PC 5	No riba (interest-based pricing)						
	PC 6	No price exploitation or excessive markups (profiteering)						
	PC 7	Transparent pricing (no hidden costs).						
	PC 8	Fair discounts & promotions (no misleading flash sales).						
PLACE	PL 9	Platforms used respect Shariah (no reliance on haram-based apps or unethical content-sharing)						
	PL 10	Accessibility for Muslim consumers (availability in halal markets).						
	PL 11	Ethical digital logistics (respecting customer privacy & dignity).						
	PL 12	Avoid <i>ikhtilat</i> (unnecessary gender mixing in distribution touchpoints, events)						
PROMOTION	PM 13	Truthful communication (<i>Sidq</i> – no exaggeration, fake claims).						
	PM 14	Modesty (<i>Haya</i> – no oversexualized content, provocative gestures).						
	PM 15	Clear disclosure (ads, sponsorship, influencer marketing).						
	PM 16	Promote halal knowledge & <i>maslahah</i> (benefit to society).						
TOTAL MARKS			/80					

Each of the 4Ps contained four dimensions, making a maximum of 20 points per P. The scores were summed across the four Ps to produce an overall IDMI score (0–80).

The compliance level was categorized as:

0–20 = Low Shariah Compliance

21–40 = Moderate Shariah Compliance

41–60 = High Shariah Compliance

61–80 = Excellent Shariah Compliance

The usage is beneficial to the digital marketing world from a Shariah-compliance perspective. The authorities or regulators for example if they want to certify particular digital marketers content or content from content creators in promoting products or services, this rubrics can be used for evaluation and certification.

Let say a cosmetics brand named Elisabetha Cosmetics (a hypothetical one), self-proclaimed that their products are *Halaalan Topyiban* and promote their product via digital form in social media such as TikTok, Instagram, Youtube, etc. This certification of IDMB enables them to penetrate in all markets because their product is not only good and wholesome, but their content and promotion comply with Shariah guidelines .

Let say their Elisabetha Cosmetics get this rating:

Product: 16/20 (Halal certified, but weak ethical partnership screening).

Price: 18/20 (Transparent & fair).

Place: 14/20 (Some reliance on global platforms with mixed ethical content).

Promotion: 12/20 (Good disclosure, but uses trendy music/dance bordering on non-modest).

IDMI Score = 60/80 → High Shariah Compliance

Thus, the Islamic Digital Marketing Benchmark (IDMB) is the aggregate score of Shariah compliance across the 4Ps, derived through systematic coding and evaluation of digital marketing practices.

4. Conclusions

This study has proposed and operationalized the Islamic Digital Marketing Benchmark (IDMB), a rubric integrating Shariah-compliant ethical principles with the conventional 4Ps of marketing (Product, Price, Place, Promotion). Drawing on Qur'anic injunctions and the Prophetic traditions, as well as contemporary literature in digital marketing, the IDMB facilitates systematic evaluation of digital marketing practices from an Islamic ethical perspective. This deductive research demonstrates that faith-based criteria such as truthfulness (*sidiq*), avoidance of deception (*gharar*), modesty (*haya*), respect for privacy, and promotion of beneficial knowledge can be meaningfully operationalized into measurable constructs.

For a way forward, the validity testing from experts will further reinforce the benchmark credibility and relevance for both academics and practitioners and also marketing and Shariah players such as IIMM, JAKIM or MCMC. The factor analysis and further refinement of the benchmarks is needed to operationalize the rubrics into better adoption by the digital marketers.

The development of the Islamic Digital Marketing Benchmark (IDMB) offers significant policy benefits, particularly in shaping ethical, regulatory, and socio-economic frameworks for the digital economy. By providing measurable indicators of Shariah compliance, the benchmark can guide policymakers such as JAKIM, MCMC, and industry regulators in formulating clear standards and certification schemes for digital marketing practices aligned with Islamic values. This, in turn, enhances consumer protection against deceptive, harmful, or unethical online content while encouraging businesses to adopt transparent and socially responsible strategies. Moreover, the IDMB supports national agendas like the Halal Economy Masterplan and digital transformation policies by embedding Islamic ethics into commercial activities, thereby fostering public trust, strengthening Malaysia's position as a global halal hub, and promoting inclusive growth that benefits Muslim and non-Muslim consumers alike.

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