

## The moderating role of Al-Falah values in the effect of digital marketing and product innovation on the competitive advantage of micro, small, and medium enterprises in Sinjai Regency

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### **Abstract**

#### **Keywords:**

*digital marketing adaptation;  
product innovation; Al-Falah  
values; competitive advantage;  
MSMEs*

*This study aims to examine the effects of digital marketing adaptation and product innovation on the competitive advantage of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Sinjai Regency, Indonesia, and to investigate the moderating role of Al-Falah values. A quantitative approach was employed using a survey method involving 220 MSME owners. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 4.0. The results indicate that digital marketing adaptation has a positive and significant effect on competitive advantage ( $\beta = 0.215$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), while product innovation shows a stronger positive effect ( $\beta = 0.355$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Al-Falah values also have a positive and significant direct effect on competitive advantage ( $\beta = 0.325$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The structural model demonstrates strong predictive power, with an  $R^2$  value of 0.712, indicating that 71.2% of the variance in competitive advantage is explained by the proposed model. However, the moderating effects of Al-Falah values on the relationship between digital marketing adaptation and competitive advantage ( $\beta = -0.014$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ), as well as between product innovation and competitive advantage ( $\beta = -0.020$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ), are not statistically significant. These findings suggest that digital marketing adaptation and product innovation independently enhance MSMEs' competitive advantage, while Al-Falah values primarily function as an ethical foundation rather than a reinforcing moderator. This study contributes to the literature by integrating Islamic ethical values into a digital competitiveness framework and offers practical implications for strengthening sustainable MSME competitiveness.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing adaptation is the process of adjusting marketing strategies by utilizing digital technology to reach a wider, more efficient, and relevant market (Abbas et al., 2025; Zaroni, 2024). In the context of MSMEs, this adaptation is a strategic element in building competitive advantages in the midst of a change in the business environment that is increasingly dynamic and competitive (Putra et al., 2025). The development of information technology and the internet has changed the pattern of interaction between producers and consumers, thus requiring MSME actors to not only rely on conventional marketing, but also to be able to adapt to the demands of the digital era in order to survive and develop (Santiago, 2023).

Digital marketing offers various advantages for MSMEs, including the ability to reach consumers more widely, efficiency of promotional costs, and flexibility in conveying product information (Aramita, 2025; Fajriah et al., 2025). The use of digital platforms such as social media, websites, and marketplaces has helped MSMEs increase product visibility and significantly expand market share (Annazwa & Faradila, 2025). However, the implementation of digital marketing

strategies still faces various obstacles, especially for MSMEs located in areas with limited infrastructure and access to technology, such as Sinjai Regency.

In the perspective of Islamic economics, digital marketing is not only seen as a promotional tool, but also as a means to carry out business activities that uphold the values of honesty, justice, and ethics (Fatin et al., 2025; Yusfiarto & Pambekti, 2019). Sharia marketing plays an important role in improving business reputation because it is able to build public trust through transparent and responsible business practices (Azmi et al., 2024). Islam also encourages humans to make productive efforts, including utilizing technology, as long as it does not conflict with sharia principles (Arrizah et al., 2025; Safari & Riyanti, 2024).

Along with the development of marketplaces and other digital platforms, digital marketing is becoming an increasingly popular strategy among MSME actors (Zujajatul 'Ilmi, Mukhtar Adinugroho, 2025). Through digital marketing, MSMEs can increase product visibility, expand market reach, and optimize sales more effectively (Aziz & Fitriyah, 2025; Nabil & Ersya Faraby, 2023). However, in practice, there are still many MSME actors who have not integrated their business activities with Islamic principles, so that the orientation of ethics and spiritual values in digital marketing has not been fully realized.

The use of social media, e-commerce, and various digital platforms has become an important part of MSME marketing strategies (Al-Atsari, 2025; Syaichoni et al., 2025). However, the adoption of digital marketing still faces obstacles such as limited knowledge, skills, costs, and a lack of marketing strategies that are in line with local cultural and religious values (Damanik et al., 2023; Rahayu et al., 2024). In the context of Sinjai Regency, whose community upholds Islamic values, the implementation of digital marketing strategies that are sensitive to local values is very important to ensure the acceptance and sustainability of the business (Adisaksana, 2022; Fiona et al., 2024).

MSMEs are the backbone of the Indonesian economy because of their significant contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and job creation (Adisaksana, 2022; Novianti, 2024). In the midst of the era of digitalization and globalization, MSMEs are required to adapt to technological developments in order to be able to compete sustainably (González-varona et al., 2021; Nur et al., 2025). One of the strategies that is considered effective in facing these challenges is the application of digital marketing as a means to expand the market and increase operational efficiency (Permana & Harsanto, 2025; Rofiq et al., 2024).

MSMEs in Sinjai Regency are spread across various business sectors, such as agriculture, fisheries, culinary, and local handicrafts, which have great potential in driving the regional economy (Ijomah et al., 2024; Ranjani et al., 2024). The use of digital marketing allows these local products to reach a wider market without being bound by geographical limitations (Amin et al., 2025; Khan et al., 2024). However, MSME actors are also faced with the challenge of maintaining cultural values and sharia principles in every business activity.

The concept of Al-Falah in Islam offers a comprehensive approach in interpreting the success of a business. Al-Falah is not only oriented towards material gains, but also includes spiritual, moral, and social well-being (Sipos et al., 2025). This principle directs business actors to conduct business fairly, honestly, and sustainably, including in digital marketing practices that avoid elements of fraud and manipulation (Noer et al., 2025). Therefore, MSME marketing strategies need to be designed to remain effective and in line with sharia values.

The Al-Falah-based digital marketing approach emphasizes the values of honesty (siddiq), trust, transparency, and sustainability in every marketing activity (Tinggi & Islam, 2022). This

approach is different from conventional marketing which tends to be purely profit-oriented without considering social and ethical impacts (Sharabati et al., 2024). The integration of digital technology with Islamic values is believed to be able to create a more sustainable competitive advantage for MSMEs while maintaining business morality (Doorn et al., 2021; Saleh & Al-hakimi, 2022).

Indicative data on MSMEs in Sinjai Regency in 2020–2024 shows an increase in the practice of Islamic values in business activities, such as honesty, price transparency, and social involvement. This is reflected in the following Table 1.1, which shows the increasing trend of the number of MSMEs that have the potential to adopt Al-Falah's values in their business practices.

**Table 1.1: Indications of MSMEs that Have the Potential to Adopt Al-Islamic Values in Sinjai Regency Year (2020–2024)**

Year	Total Active MSMEs	Number of MSMEs with Indications of Islamic Value Practices	Persentase (%)	Activities That Reflect Islamic Values
2020	4.200	± 850	20,2%	Honesty in product labels, involvement of business zakat, price transparency, non-deception in promotion, quality commitment, responsibility to consumers, fair business practices, use of environmentally friendly materials, providing social benefits, encouraging community welfare
2021	4.500	±1.150	25,6%	
2022	5.000	±1.600	32,0%	
2023	5.500	±2.200	40,0%	
2024	6.000	±3.000	50,0%	

Source: Activity report of the Sinjai Regency MSME Cooperative and Training Office

These preliminary findings show that Islamic values have been present in the practices of MSMEs in Sinjai Regency and are an important basis for analyzing the relationship between digital marketing adaptation, product innovation, and competitive advantage within the framework of Al-Falah. In this context, digital marketing adaptation and product innovation are seen as strategic factors to increase the competitiveness of MSMEs, while Al-Falah's value has the potential to strengthen the influence of these two factors. Therefore, this study is directed to examine the influence of digital marketing and product innovation on the competitive advantage of MSMEs in Sinjai Regency, as well as examine the role of Al-Falah values as a moderation variable in this relationship.

## METHODS

This study uses an associative quantitative approach with a survey method to examine the relationship and influence between research variables (Daruhadi, 2024). This approach was chosen because it allows the measurement of the causal relationship between digital marketing adaptation and product innovation to the competitive advantage of MSMEs, as well as testing the role of Al-Falah value as a moderation variable. Data was collected quantitatively through the distribution of structured questionnaires to MSME actors.

The research was carried out in Sinjai Regency, South Sulawesi Province, with a focus on MSMEs that have utilized digital marketing in their business activities (Azhari et al., 2023). The research location was chosen purposively because Sinjai Regency shows a significant development of MSMEs, accompanied by the increasing use of digital technology and the tendency to apply Islamic values in business practices.

The research population is all MSME actors in Sinjai Regency who actively use digital marketing and have the potential to apply Al-Falah values in their business activities (Subhaktiyasa, 2024). The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, with the following criteria: (1) MSMEs active in Sinjai Regency, (2) using digital media in marketing, and (3) understanding and applying Islamic values in business activities. The number of samples is determined based on the Hair formula, which is 5–10 times the number of indicators. With a total of 44 indicators, the minimum number of samples was 220 respondents, which was used in this study.

The data collection instrument was a closed questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire was compiled based on variable indicators of digital marketing adaptation, product innovation, MSME competitive advantages, and Al-Falah values that have been tested for validity and reliability. The data collected are primary data obtained directly from respondents, while secondary data is obtained from scientific journals, related agency reports, and supporting literature (Retnawati, 2016).

The data analysis technique used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach, which was processed using SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM was chosen because it is suitable for complex research models, involves moderation variables, and does not demand normal distribution assumptions and large sample sizes (Firmansyah & Article, 2021). The analysis was carried out through the evaluation stages of the measurement model (outer model) to test the validity and reliability of the construct, as well as the evaluation of the structural model (inner model) to test the relationship between variables.

The Moderation Test of Al-Falah values is carried out by forming an interaction variable between independent variables and moderation variables. The significance of the influence was tested through path coefficient values, t-statistic, and p-value with a significance level of 5 percent.

This research model is designed to explain the direct influence of digital marketing adaptation and product innovation on the competitive advantage of MSMEs, as well as the indirect influence through the role of Al-Falah value moderation.

## HIPOTESIS

Based on the objectives and research model, the hypotheses tested in this study are formulated as follows:

**H1:** Digital marketing adaptation has a positive effect on the competitive advantage of MSMEs in Sinjai Regency.

**H2:** Product innovation has a positive effect on the competitive advantage of MSMEs in Sinjai Regency.

**H3:** The value of Al-Falah has a positive effect on the competitive advantage of MSMEs in Sinjai Regency.

**H4:** Al-Falah value moderates the influence of digital marketing adaptation on the competitive advantage of MSMEs in Sinjai Regency.

**H5:** Al-Falah values moderate the influence of product innovation on the competitive advantage of MSMEs in Sinjai Regency.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### RESULTS

The data analysis in this study was carried out using the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach with the help of SmartPLS software version 4.1.1.4. The analysis is focused on testing measurement models (outer model) and structural models (inner model) to determine the influence of digital marketing adaptation and product innovation on the competitive advantage of MSMEs, as well as the role of Al-Falah value as a moderation variable.

#### Evaluation of Measurement Models (Outer Model)

The results of the convergent validity test showed that all indicators in each construct had an outer loading value of  $\geq 0.70$  after the second stage of indicator selection. This indicates that all indicators are able to adequately represent the construction of digital marketing adaptation, product innovation, competitive advantage, and Al-Falah's value. In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value for the entire construct is above 0.50, which indicates that the variance of the indicator can be well explained by the latent construct being measured.

**Table 2. Value of AVE Construct Research**

Variabel	AVE	Remarks
Digital Marketing Adaptation	0,539	Valid
Product Innovation	0,562	Valid
Competitive Advantage	0,574	Valid
The Value of Al-Falah	0,635	Valid

Source: SEM-PLS Analysis Data

Testing the validity of the discriminant through the cross loading method showed that each indicator had the highest loading value on its original construct compared to other constructs. Thus, it can be concluded that all constructs in the model are unique and do not overlap with each other.

Furthermore, the results of the construct reliability test showed excellent Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values, all of which were above the minimum limit of 0.70. This indicates that the research instrument has high internal consistency.

**Table 3. Construct Reliability Test**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Digital Marketing Adaptation	0.947	Reliable
Product Innovation	0.929	Reliable
Competitive Advantage	0.938	Reliable
Al-Falah Values	0.959	Reliable

Source: SEM-PLS Analysis Data

### Evaluation of Structural Models (Inner Model)

The results of the structural model test showed that the R-Square ( $R^2$ ) value for the competitive advantage variable was 0.712, which means that the adaptation of digital marketing, product innovation, and Al-Falah value was able to explain 71.2% of the variation in the competitive advantage of MSMEs in Sinjai Regency. This value is relatively strong and shows good predictive ability of the model.

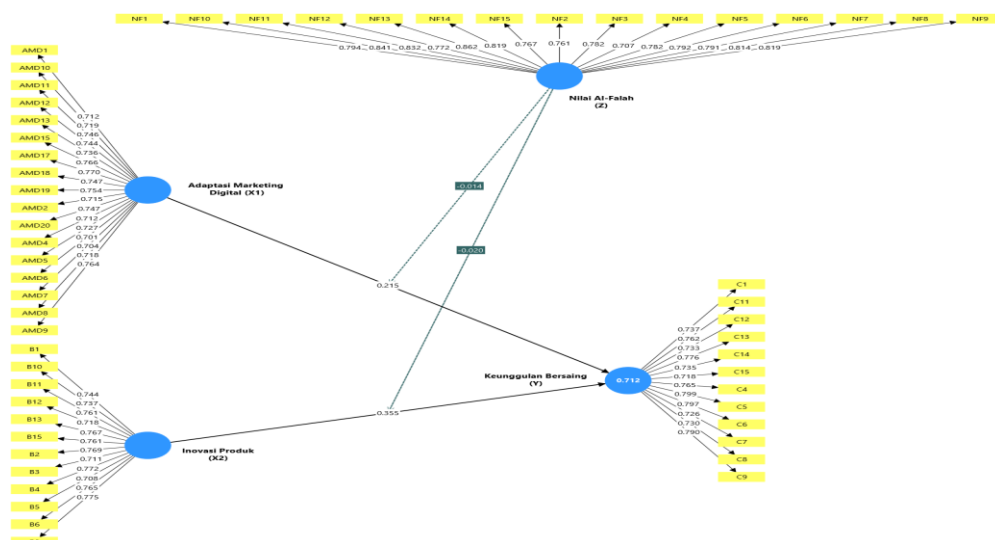
**Table 4. R-Square Value**

Variabel Dependen	$R^2$	$R^2$ Adjusted
Competitive Advantage	0,712	0,706

Source: SEM-PLS Analysis Data

Based on Table 3, an Adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.706 indicates that the model remains stable and consistent after considering the number of predictor variables used. This indicates that the structural model built has a good level of accuracy in explaining the competitive advantages of MSMEs in Sinjai Regency.

**Figure 1. Output Model PLS-SEM (PLS Algorithm)**



The results of the effect size ( $f^2$ ) test showed that digital marketing adaptation, product innovation, and Al-Falah value each had a small to close to moderate effect on competitive advantage. Meanwhile, the effect of interaction (moderation) of Al-Falah values on the relationship between independent and dependent variables shows a very small value.

### Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was carried out through bootstrapping techniques to obtain path coefficient, t-statistic, and p-value values. The results of the direct influence and moderation tests are presented in the following table.

**Table 5. Hypothesis Test Results**

Hypothesis	Relationship	Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value	Decision
H1	Digital Marketing → Competitive Advantage	0.215	3.358	0.000	Accepted
H2	Product Innovation → Competitive Advantage	0.355	5.531	0.000	Accepted
H3	Al-Falah Values → Competitive Advantage	0.325	5.394	0.000	Accepted
H4	Digital Marketing × Al-Falah → Competitive Advantage	-0.014	0.171	0.432	Rejected
H5	Product Innovation × Al-Falah → Competitive Advantage	-0.020	0.221	0.412	Rejected

Source: SEM-PLS Analysis Data

The results of the study show that digital marketing adaptation, product innovation, and Al-Falah values have a positive and significant effect on the competitive advantage of MSMEs. Product innovation has the strongest influence compared to other variables. However, the value of Al-Falah has not been proven to play a role as a moderation variable in the relationship between digital marketing adaptation and product innovation to competitive advantage.

The results of this study confirm that the increase in the competitive advantage of MSMEs in Sinjai Regency is more determined by the ability to adapt to digital marketing, product innovation, and direct internalization of Al-Falah values. Although conceptually the value of Al-Falah is important in Islamic business practice, its role as a moderation variable in this model is not statistically proven.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that digital marketing adaptation has a positive and significant effect on the competitive advantage of MSMEs in Sinjai Regency. These findings indicate that the ability of MSME actors to utilize social media, marketplaces, and other digital platforms can increase business competitiveness through expanding market reach, increasing product visibility, and efficiency of marketing activities. This adaptation reflects the response of MSMEs to changes in consumer behavior that are increasingly digitally connected, so that more

adaptive business actors have a greater chance of surviving and excelling in competition.

These findings can be explained through the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which emphasizes the importance of perception of the usefulness and ease of use of technology in encouraging technology adoption. In the context of MSMEs in Sinjai Regency, digital marketing is perceived to be able to improve business performance, both in terms of promotion and sales, thereby encouraging MSME actors to adopt it sustainably. The results of this study are in line with the findings of Nuvriasari et al. (2024) and Hudha et al. (2022), which show that digital marketing makes a positive contribution to the competitive advantage of MSMEs. However, this finding is different from Farhas and Ependi (2022) who emphasize that the effectiveness of digital marketing is highly dependent on internal readiness and business structure.

In addition to digital marketing adaptation, product innovation has also been proven to have a positive and significant effect on the competitive advantage of MSMEs in Sinjai Regency. Innovation enables MSMEs to create differentiation through design updates, quality improvements, more attractive packaging, and product value addition. In the context of local MSMEs, innovation is not always radical, but can be in the form of incremental innovations that are tailored to market needs and tastes. These findings reinforce the view that product innovation is the main source of competitive advantage, as proposed by Kotler and Keller and Schumpeter's theory of innovation.

Product innovation carried out by MSMEs can also be understood within the framework of Al-Falah values, especially when innovation is directed at benefits, sustainability, and social benefits. Innovations that are carried out honestly, do not deceive, and use safe and halal materials not only increase competitiveness, but also build consumer trust and loyalty. These findings are in line with the research of Putri and Ardila (2023), although it is different from Ahmad and Wahyuni (2024) who found that process innovation is more dominant than product innovation in certain business contexts.

This study also found that the value of Al-Falah has a positive and significant effect on the competitive advantage of MSMEs. The application of values such as honesty, trust, fairness, and *maslahah* orientation forms ethical and responsible business behavior, thereby creating a sustainable reputation and consumer trust. The advantages built through these values are non-material and difficult for competitors to imitate, so they become a source of long-term competitive advantage. These findings reinforce an Islamic perspective of business ethics that places spiritual and social values as an integral part of business strategy.

Although Al-Falah's value has a direct effect on competitive advantage, this study shows that it does not moderate the influence of digital marketing adaptation on competitive advantage. The influence of digital marketing on competitiveness is independent and is more influenced by technical factors such as platform algorithms, content quality, and consumer rating systems. In a digital ecosystem controlled by marketplaces, religious values have not fully interacted with technocratic digital market mechanisms.

Similar findings were also found in the relationship between product innovation and competitive advantage, where Al-Falah's values were not shown to moderate the relationship. Product innovation is determined more by market and technical aspects, such as design, quality, and differentiation, than by the integration of religious values in the innovation process. This condition shows that the value of Al-Falah in the context of MSMEs in Sinjai Regency still plays a role as the foundation of ethics and business orientation, but has not been strategically internalized in innovation and digital marketing activities.

Overall, the results of this study show that digital marketing adaptation, product innovation, and Al-Falah values have an important role in shaping the competitive advantage of MSMEs. However, the role of Al-Falah's values is more dominant as a direct factor than as a moderation variable. These findings imply that strengthening the competitiveness of MSMEs in the digital era needs to be carried out holistically, by combining technology and innovation strategies with the internalization of Islamic ethical values in a more substantive manner so that the advantages achieved are not only competitive, but also sustainable.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that digital marketing adaptation has a positive and significant effect on the competitive advantage of MSMEs in Sinjai Regency. These findings indicate that the higher the level of adaptation of MSME actors to digital technology in marketing activities, the greater their chances of gaining a competitive advantage. The use of social media, digital platforms, and internet-based marketing strategies has been proven to be able to expand market reach, increase product visibility, and strengthen the position of MSMEs in the face of business competition.

In addition, product innovation has also been proven to have a positive and significant effect on the competitive advantage of MSMEs. Innovation in the form of product design development, quality improvement, addition of variants, and packaging improvements provide added value that is able to attract consumer interest and increase product competitiveness. The more creative and responsive MSME actors are in adapting their products to market needs and preferences, the greater the competitive advantage that can be achieved compared to competitors.

This study also found that Al-Falah's values have a positive and significant effect on the competitive advantage of MSMEs. The application of Islamic ethical principles such as honesty, justice, social responsibility, and orientation to the common good has been proven to be able to strengthen consumer trust and improve business reputation. The advantages built through these values are sustainable because they are not only oriented to short-term profits, but also to the blessings and stability of the business in the long term.

However, Al-Falah's value has not been proven to moderate the relationship between digital marketing adaptation and the competitive advantage of MSMEs. These findings show that the influence of digital marketing strategies on the competitiveness of businesses runs independently and has not been strengthened by the application of Islamic ethical values. This condition indicates that ethical values have not been fully integrated strategically in the digital marketing practices carried out by MSME actors. Similar results were also found in the relationship between product innovation and competitive advantage, where the value of Al-Falah did not play a role as a moderation variable. Although innovation and religious values are equally important in the development of sharia-based MSMEs, Al-Falah's values have not been able to significantly strengthen the relationship between the two. These findings affirm the need for a more integrative approach between product innovation and the internalization of spiritual values so that Islamic business ethics are not only symbolic, but truly part of the strategy to develop MSMEs' competitive advantage.

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