

Faking the Arabic Imagination Till We Make it: Language and Symbol Representation in the Indonesian E-Commerce

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Abstract—This study aimed to examine the relationship between Arabization and Islamization discourses by Arabic commodification in the Muslim's branding construction in Indonesian e-commerce media. Previous studies on Arabic commodification related to Islamism ideology were limited to textbooks, speeches, regulations, and news narratives. Similar practices can also occur in the digital economy by representing labels or brands of e-commerce products and services. The data collected was based on store labels, brands, and product descriptions using Arabic theological terms. It was then analyzed using a digital ethnographic design that combines an interdisciplinary approach to critical discourse analysis (CDA) and critical hermeneutics studies. The results showed that labels on Indonesian e-commerce contain pious political-economic ideology through Arabic commodification. This is represented by Muslim merchant agents that insert dogmatic theological terms as store labels, product brands, and descriptions. The practices are used as sellers and missionary tools to attract public attention to the positive Islamic economics image. This strategy has gained the trust of Muslim consumers in Indonesia regarding product quality and service satisfaction. Therefore, this study implied that some digital e-commerce businesses in non-Arab Muslim countries created Islamic missionary-based marketing.

Index Terms—Arabic Language, Commodification, E-commerce, The Ideology of Religiosity, Virtual Ethnography

I. INTRODUCTION

Arab culture has contributed to shaping the face of Islam in Indonesia so that Arab symbols seem synonymous with Islam itself (Kuipers & Askuri, 2017). This discourse has made the Muslim community believe that Arabic is an exclusive and sacred language (Yahya et al., 2021). This phenomenon is inseparable from the historical influence of the entry of Islam into Indonesia, which was spread by Muslim missionaries from the Middle East (Drewes, 1968a) and is known as the "Arabization of Islam." Similarly, Ghoshal (2010) reported that the "Arabization of Islam" is a form of hegemony of Arab cultural identity into the Islamic entity so that most Muslims in Indonesia represent the language, clothing, food, and lifestyle of Arabs as the Islamic entity itself. Especially for the language aspect, the Arabization of Islam discourse seems to have influenced the Muslim community in Indonesia, so that they believe Arabic as an exclusive and sacred language (Nawas et al., 2022).

The discourse of Arabic language commodification in this study is defined as an economic commodity practice using Arabic theological terms packaged by Muslim producers, mainly as labels or trademarks in e-commerce. This phenomenon is reflected in the widespread Muslim sellers' use of Arabic theological terms as store labels and product brands on social media and e-commerce applications, such as Shopee. The application has been popular in this country, with the highest customer visits and transactions than other e-commerce applications, specifically during the Covid-19 pandemic (The report of iPrice, 2020; SmilarWeb, 2022). Online shop owners have found several uses of Arabic theological terms through Shopee, such as *Sunnah*, *Nabawī*, *Islāmī*, *Syar'ī*, and *Da'wa*. Shirazi (2016) stated that the Halāl label legitimizes the products legalized in Islamic teachings. However, the product specifications contradict the

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Islamic law legality because commodity interests only drive them. This is the initial driving factor for the emergence of Arabic commodification as a commodity label hiding behind religious authority.

Previous studies did not examine e-commerce Arabic commodification as part of the ideological construction related to Islamism. They only explained the relationship between commodification and Islamism ideology through textbooks (Edres, 2022), mainstream media news (Fealy, 2008), regulatory texts (Hachimi, 2013; Solimando, 2022), and conversational interactions through online social media (Amir, 2019). Similarly, previous studies on the construction of Islamic branding in e-commerce were limited to CDA advertising (Feramayasari & Wiedarti, 2020), legal transaction system (Zainul et al., 2004), branding and consumer trust systems (Muhammad et al., 2013), and transaction ethics (Ashraf, 2019). Those studies did not examine the production and distribution of the ideology behind Arabic-language Islamic branding in e-commerce. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate Arabic commodification as a marker of the political-economic ideology of piety in Indonesian e-commerce by proposing three research problems.

First, how are representations of Arabic commodification practices constructed by merchants in Indonesia through the Indonesian e-commerce? and second, why do Arabic commodification practices tend to be produced and distributed through this platform? We use Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to the digital economy discourse based on digital ethnography research design to answer these two questions. This approach requires the availability of data related to discourse representation as part of discourse construction, which includes production, distribution, and consumption. All three are then elaborated to find the discourse construction's sociological context. Arabic theological terms as an Islamic Brand are collected and classified to ascertain the influence of their attraction from these terms. The research design was elaborated to reveal the characteristics of the religious ideology behind the use of Arabic theological terms (Islamic Brand) found in Shopee in-store labels, brands, and product descriptions. This study implies the presence of Arabic commodification through labeling shops and products, all the while inserting ideological dogmas.

A. *The Relationship Between Arabization and Islamization in Indonesia*

Linguists articulate the term Arabization using different definitions. Pereira (2017), for example, expresses the term Arabization as the practice of vernacularizing Arabic into local cultures within non-Arabic communities. In this case, he examines the Arabic transmission process into local languages in North Africa. In contrast, Ghoshal (2010) tends to use the term Arabization as part of the ideological dogma of Islamism, as stated in the following quote:

“This process of homogenization and regimentation—a process I would like to call the ‘Arabization’ of Islam—puts greater emphasis on rituals and codes of conduct than on substance, through the Wahhabi and Salafi creeds, a rigidly puritanical branch of Islam exported from, and subsidized by, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.”

Arabization and Islamization discourses cannot be separated (Kuipers & Askuri, 2017). This is because Indonesia's Muslim community knows Arabic through Islamic missionization from the ocean-going missions of the Middle East (Arab merchants) and South Asia (Gujarati merchants) in the 13th century AD (Drewes, 1968b). Instead of using Arabic in their daily communication, most people use it as a marker of theological identity or religious ideology (Kaptein, 2017). This is seen in the Muslim community's enthusiasm to learn Arabic through the Quran in formal and non-formal educational institutions (Sanusi & Albantani, 2021). The phenomenon is in line with Maulana (2018) that language Islamization is undeniable when the process is carried out in any culture. Therefore, Arabic is popular in Indonesia because it is the official language of Islam.

Arabic popularity has reached its peak as an Islamization dogma since the rise of an Islamic state in the Reformation era or after the collapse of the New Order in Indonesia in the mid-1990s (Hasan, 2009). Islamic theological terms are part of the social, political, cultural, and economic interactions amid the country's majority Muslim population (Nurhajati & Fenton, 2020). This is seen by several Arabic terms that emerged as a resistance to political hegemony from anti-imperialist Islamism groups over the domination of liberalism and Western secularism (Rahman, 2017). The representation of religious identity symbols through Arabic by Muslim communities is adopted chiefly from the terms in the Qur'an and Hadith, the second primary source of Islamic teachings (Woodward, 1993). People use the terms *khalifah*, meaning Islamic political system, *riba'*, implying transactions violating Islamic law, and *syar'ah*, meaning Islamic law. Other terms are *sunnah*, which means according to the instructions of the Prophet Muhammad; *bid'ah*, representing practices contrary to the *sunnah*; and *kafir*, implying followers of religions outside of Islam. The use of Arabic Islamic theological terms and symbolisms appear to form a commodification practice of the language that illustrates the process of the transformation of Islamic discourse in Indonesia (Gade & Feener, 2004). Therefore, this study found the opportunity for Arabic commodification to be integrated into the economic discourse distributed by Muslims through e-commerce applications.

B. *The Language Commodification Discourse*

Language has transformed from a communication tool into a symbolic capital that mobilizes public ideology (Suleiman, 2013). It could also be exchanged as a commodity tool in material modalities (Woolard, 2020). Therefore, language is a communication tool and central to social control. Academics have widely discussed this discourse that created the commodification concept through scientific publications.

Heller (2003) conceptualizes commodification as something produced to be offered and sold in the market for the desired profit. Similarly, language commodification refers to the condition when language is used and valued for

economic gain. In the same vein, Lytra (2013) reports that the practice of language commodification is considered a form of social and economic symbol capital to increase employment and access to higher education. Previously, the concept of "linguistic market" analyzes how high the premium of the dominant language (standard variety) pertains to vernacular dialects for economic value. Therefore, the practice has been socially recognized as a global economic discourse characterized by terms such as tertiary, neoliberalism, and globalization to express a broad socio-economic context (Pujolar, 2018).

Language commodification is closely related to using language as a linguistic element integrated into ideological markers (Solimando, 2022). According to Mosco (1996), commodification transforms use values into exchange values. Irvine (1989) stated that linguistics construct meaning and social interaction, categorize identity, and map the political and economic conditions that limit the possibilities for making meaning and social relations. Moreover, Gal (1989) stated that commodification scope has shaped the language ideology and helps explain why linguistics is vulnerable to producing and reproducing social and moral order as the legitimacy of social identity. This is in line with the position of Arabic in Indonesia as a theological language and a marker of the political-economic ideology of piety.

Yahya et al. (2021) showed the tendency of Indonesia's Muslims to use Arabic as a commodification tool to distribute personal and communal piety ideologies. This originated from the position of Arabic as a representation of the exclusive and sacred eschatological language of God and the hereafter. For this reason, people proficient in Arabic are considered pious, which is not always the case. Jaspal and Coyle (2010) reported that a group of British-born Pakistani youths, when asked why they learned Arabic, replied that Arabic is the Muslim world's language, serving not only as a liturgical language but also a religious identity and can be commodified. The phenomenon inspired this study to examine the formation pattern of Arabic commodification practiced by the Islamism group through digital trade channels in e-commerce. This study aimed to ensure that the practice is a primary motivational indicator fueling the growth of the piety economic discourse in Indonesia.

C. Islamic Branding

A brand is a mark or symbol signifying a particular product. It serves as a tool to identify a company's or business's products to differentiate it from its competitors (Alfonsius et al., 2021). But on the other hand, branding not only defines identity but also creates an emotional bond between consumers' senses wherever they are so that, ultimately, a brand can provide awareness to consumers and make them re-evaluate all product categories to create their loyalty (De Chernatony & Riley, 1998). In particular, one of the essential advantages of an established brand is the brand commitment inherent in its loyal customers. From this, it can be concluded that brands have the power to attract consumer loyalty so that they return to buy products or use certain services (Tabaku & Zerellari, 2015). Therefore, it is not surprising that many consumers purchase certain brands with higher selling prices than other brands with lower prices for similar products or services.

In the *syarī'ah* economic system or Islamic law, not all products are traded as they must ensure the *halāl* or permissible according to Islamic jurisprudence criteria. Formal religious authority institutions issue this label to mark the permissibility of a product consumed or used by Muslims (Aman, 2020a). The Islamic or *halāl* brand refers to Islamic teachings in food and cosmetic product packaging, pharmaceuticals, logistics, clothing, finance, hospitality, and banking (Alserhan, 2010a). Consequently, Muslims prefer Arabic-language Islamic labels listed on product packaging traded as Islamic brandings, such as *halāl*, *sunnah*, and *nabawī* (Al-Kwifī et al., 2019). This notion supports Karoui and Khemakhem (2019), which stated that religion interacts with individual and community ideologies in a complex manner, influencing its adherents' consumption behavior and perceptions.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study applied a critical paradigm based on digital ethnographic design to explore the consequences of digital media in shaping ethnographic techniques and processes. The design also aimed to explain ethnographic studies' digital, methodological, practical, and theoretical dimensions (Pink et al., 2016). Arabic was traced to indicate language commodification practiced by Muslim sellers at Shopee. Therefore, the digital data on Arabic theological terms comprised labels and trademarks found on Shopee, such as *Sunnah*, *Syar'ī*, *Nabawī*, *Islāmī*, *Halāl*, and *Da'wa*. These terms were chosen because they are used massively in Shopee e-commerce as a means of commodifying diverse Islamic piety-values, norms, and identities-for the purpose of economic interests by Muslim merchants.

Similarly, using these Arabic theological terms is a marketing tool and a persuasive means to sell goods and services to attract Muslim consumers. This phenomenon utilizes not only religious motivations but also contemporary Islamic economic marketing and business strategies driven by the accelerating pace of globalization (Shirazi, 2016). The terms were grouped and described qualitatively, though some were also explained quantitatively. Furthermore, this design was elaborated using an interdisciplinary approach between critical discourse analysis and critical hermeneutic studies. The elaboration resulted in a collaboration to discuss the discourse in more complex aspects (Van Dijk, 2011).

Among the myriad of e-commerce platforms, we select Shopee as the basis for obtaining the data. This e-commerce provides a web and mobile-based application for most Southeast Asian users as the chosen brand with 129 million visits per month and increases to 421 million trips in 2022 (Survey of iPrice, 2020). Furthermore, SimilarWeb in March 2022 placed Shopee in the first rank as the most popular e-commerce application visited by the digital community

(SmilarWeb, 2022). It works like what the e-bay, Amazon, or Alibaba offers. While other competitors like Tokopedia, Lazada, or OLX present the same primary offerings, the massive promotion and discounts in Shopee outperform other e-commerce in Indonesia. It identifies with mostly young-aged users and is dominated by fashion offerings (source: link). Thus, most Muslim sellers use its popularity to insert their political-economic ideology, including religious doctrine, while fulfilling their economic agenda.

The design was implemented by tracing the store labels and product brands using these terms by entering their keywords in the Shopee search field. The data collected were described and analyzed using Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach (Fairclough, 1993, 1995, 2013b). The analysis involved representing the data to determine the production, distribution, and consumption construction, followed by interpretation using critical hermeneutic reading (Byrne, 2001). Interpretation involved linguistically analyzing the Arabic language shop labels and product brands used by Muslim sellers, including inserting the holy book text in the thumbnail section and product descriptions. This analysis aimed to find a functional semantic relationship between these terms and their meanings to determine the ideological characteristics behind Islamic branding on Shopee (Fairclough, 2013a).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Representation of Islamic Branding in Arabic on E-Commerce

In the introduction, we raise two crucial questions for this research to answer. The first question is related to how Muslim merchants in Indonesia construct the representation of Arabization through Shopee. The second question is associated with the construction of Arabization discourse by Muslim merchants through e-commerce, in this case, Shopee. For the first question, the results of our data exploration show that the representation of Arabic commodification practices constructed by traders in Indonesia through the Shopee platform can be observed in three ways: discourse production, distribution, and consumption.

(a). Discourse Production

The search reports the popularity of Shopee in Indonesia shown by an increase of 45% in the number of stores and 60% of products on Shopee that use Islamic Branding labels over the past five years. Although not all stores in Shopee use Islamic Branding labels and brands, the significant increase shows its popularity among merchants and buyers in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia compared to other religions (Catholic Christianity, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism). This phenomenon is in line with the report of Purwaningwulan et al. (2019), which states that the Muslim market in Indonesia has been dynamic and surprising in the last ten years.

The results of our data search reveal six labels or brands that Muslim merchants predominantly use on Shopee, namely *Sunnah*, *Shar'i*, *Nabawī*, *Islāmī*, *Halāl*, and *Da'wa*. These findings are based on our search through keyword exploration in the Shopee search bar. These labels are used by Shopee entrepreneurs as store labels and their product brands, as in Table 1 and evident in Figures 1 and 2. Manufacturers use these store labels to market books, clothing, herbal medicines, cosmetics, perfumes, food, furniture, and sports equipment in Table 3. at Shopee using Arabic Islamic branding. A theological genre is used to attract consumer attention in predominantly-Muslim Indonesia.

TABLE 1
ISLAMIC STORE LABELS ON A LEADING E-COMMERCE

Store Label	Frequency
<i>Sunnah</i> /Sunnah	34.4%
<i>Nabawī</i> /Nabawi	33.1%
<i>Syar'ī</i> /Syar'i	2.1%
<i>Halāl</i> /Halal	23.4
<i>Islāmī</i> /Islamic	3.9%
<i>Da'wa</i> /Dakwah	3.1%

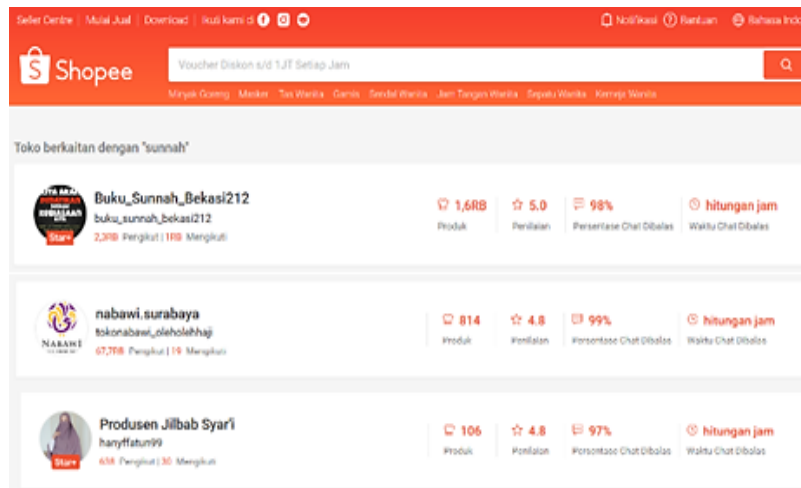


Figure 1. Store Label: Link, (accessed, 02/Jan/2022)

The data in table 1 shows that the label of *Sunnah* is the most utilized term (34.4%) that appears on Shopee from a total of 1600 products that use Islamic branding. Merchants combine these labels with those for product types, store locations, and other Arabic tags associated with Islamism symbols, as in Figures 2 and 3. The *Sunnah* labels with product types include *Sunnah Book Store*, *Herbal Sunnah Shop*, *Sunnah Kurma*, and *Sunnah Outfit*. Examples of labels with names of store locations are *Sunnah Store Solo*, *Sunnahjogja*, *Sunnah Store Bandung*, *Galeri Sunnah Makassar*, *Sunnahstore Balikpapan*, *Gamis Sunnah Purwokerto*, and *Pustaka Sunnah Gorontalo*. The labels using other Islamic dictions include *Yuk Hijrah Ke Sunnah*, *Lapak Dakwah Sunnah*, *Sunnah Rasulullah Store*, *Khalifa Sunnah*, and *Toko Sunnah Berkah*. Sellers use the dictions in Arabic as Islamic branding offered at Shopee. Additionally, the *Nabawī*, *Syar'i*, *Halāl*, *Islāmī*, and *Da'wa* dictions are found on the platform. Examples include *Nabawī Herbal Official*, *Produsen Jilbab Syar'i*, *Halal Korean Food*, *Lapak Islami*, and *Akhir Zaman Muslim Store*. Nevertheless, the *Sunnah* diction as a store label on Shopee is still widely used by sellers.



Figure 2. *Sunnah* and *Nabawī* Presentation
Source: links 1 and 2 (accessed 02/Jan/2022)

Merchants employ Islamic branding in Arabic at Shopee as a store label and a product brand. The various products traded use *Sunnah*, *Nabawī*, *Syar'i*, *Halāl*, *Islāmī*, and *Da'wa* as their brandings, such as *Sirwal Sunnah*, *Nabawi Oil*, *Syar'i robes*, and *Da'wah T-shirts*. These products are easily found on Shopee by searching for keywords according to the dictions. The search results showed that more than 1,200 products use these dictions, mainly books, clothing, herbal medicines, cosmetics, food, furniture, and sports equipment, as shown in Table 2. Books are one foundational means of knowledge transmission such that they present as the product that utilizes Arabic terms or symbols. The next is clothing lines to emphasize the presentation of Islamic looks to maintain spiritual eyes.

TABLE 2
TYPES OF ISLAMIC PRODUCTS ON E-COMMERCE

Types of product	Percentage
Book	35%
Clothing	25%
Herbal medicines	15%
Cosmetics	10%
Perfume	9%
Food	3%
Furniture	2%
Sport equipment	1%

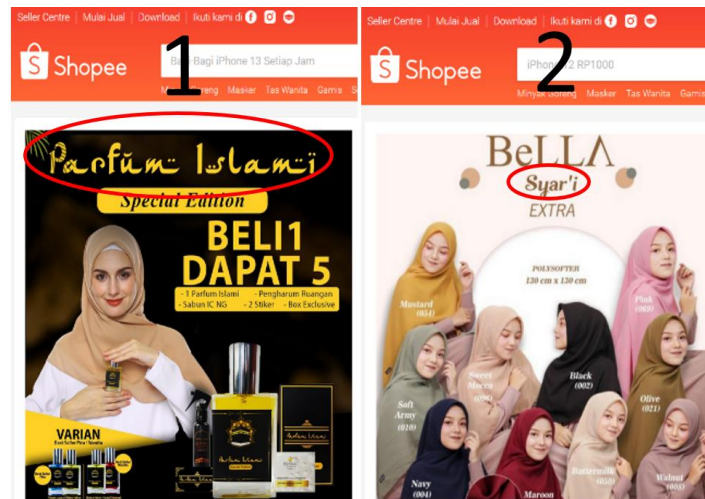


Figure 3. The Presentation of Islamic Branding Commodification
Source: Link 1 & 2 (accessed 03/Jan/2022)

The use of the terms *Sunnah*, *Shar'i*, *Nabawī*, *Islāmī*, and *Da'wa* as part of Islamic branding in Shopee shows that there has been a functional linguistic expansion from theological terms to economic terms. In functional meaning, these terms are different from the term *Halāl*, where this term has an inherent function as a marker of the legality of financial products that have been officially agreed upon by Muslims throughout the world (Aman, 2020b). In contrast, the terms *Sunnah*, *Shar'i*, *Nabawī*, *Islāmī*, and *Da'wa* are specifically recognized in the Islamic tradition not as economic labels but as theological terms. Al-Ḥanafī (1966) explains that the term *Sunnah* is used in Islamic terminology to mean "*Fī-mā ṣadar 'an Rasūlillāh gair al-Qur'ān*" or everything attributed to the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon Him/PBUH) apart from the Qur'an. In addition, he also mentions another articulation of the Islamic legal term "*al-'Ibāda an-nāfila*," or the suggestion of ritual worship that is not obligatory. Similarly, the term *Shar'i* is articulated in Islamic literature as "*Khitāb Allāh Ta'ālā bimā yatawaqqaf 'alā ash-shar'i, wa lā yudrak lau-lā khitāb ash-shar'i ka-wujūb aṣ-ṣalā,*" or the command of God Almighty based on Islamic law, and the law is unknown if it is not commanded, such as prayer (p. 1019). Another term is *Nabawī* as "*Aḥādīth an-nabawiyya - al-kalām an-nabawī,*" or any saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (Umar, 2008). The term *Islāmī* is "*Nisbat ilā al-Islām,*" or everything that is attributed to the teachings of Islam. The term *Da'wa* is "*Ṭalab isbāt ḥaqq lah 'alā gairih,*" or the assertion of the truth of something over something else (Umar, 2008).

(b). *Discourse Distribution*

Shopee provides sellers with product display and description features through verbal and visual narratives, such as images and videos. Every product item displayed by manufacturers is equipped with a thumbnail, title, and description. Manufacturers say information in the store's header image accompanied by quotes from the Qur'an and *Hadīth* to support the product's functions and advantages, e.g., Figure 4.

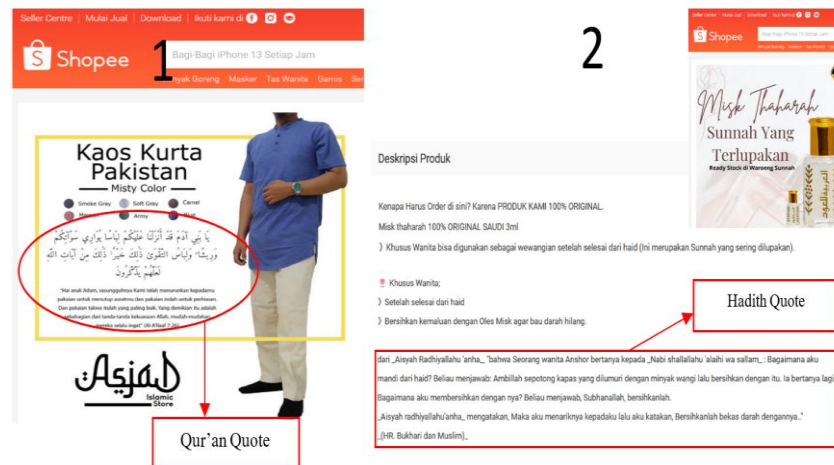


Figure 4. Thumbnails and Product Description
Source: Link 1 & 2 (accessed 02/Jan/2022)

Figure 4 shows the Qur'an and Hadith excerpts inserted by merchants in their thumbnails and product descriptions. This allows sellers to explain that their products are legal in Islamic teachings. The Arabic Qur'an verse quotations accompanied by their translations (QS al-A'raf/7:26) are seen in the thumbnail section. The Hadith quotes only display their translation in Indonesian, appearing in the product description section. This shows the popularity of the discourse on Islamic branding production at Shopee among the Muslim merchants.

The Qur'an quote is translated as: "O children of Adam, let not Satan tempt you as he removed your parents from Paradise, stripping them of their clothing to show them their private parts. Indeed, he sees you, he and his tribe, from where you do not see them. Indeed, We have made the devils allies to those who do not believe." (The Qur'an Project, 2010).

The Hadith quote is translated as: "A'isyah said that a woman of the Ansar asked the Prophet about washing after menstruation, and he instructed her how to do it, saying, "Take a piece of cotton with musk and purify yourself with it." She asked how she should do this, and he replied, "Purify yourself with it." She asked again how she should do this, and he replied, Praise be to God! Purify yourself with it." 'A'isha then drew her aside and said, "Go over the mark of the blood with it." (translation source: link, accessed 02/Jan/2022).

The insertion of quotations of scriptural texts by these Muslim merchants, both in Arabic and those that they have translated into Indonesian. These can be found in the thumbnail and product description sections (see figure 3). There is an example of a Qur'anic verse in al-A'raf/7:26 quoted in Figure 4 as part of the product legality statement. The Qur'anic verse explains the function of clothing as a tool to cover the aura (ugliness) ordered by God to humans. The representation can be seen from one of the phrases in the Qur'anic verse, "*Libās at-taqwā zālik khair*," or the best clothing is the garment of taqwa (piety). Referring to the literature on Qur'anic exegesis, the meaning of the phrase does not speak of the garment of righteousness in the literal sense but as "*al-'Amal aṣ-ṣāliḥ*," or good deeds, so the word "*libās*" (apparel) in verse is a "*kināya*" or parables (Ar-Rāzī, 2000).

A similar practice also appears in the product description (see Figure 5), which shows a Muslim trader's insertion of a Hadith as a legal dogma for the fragrant oil product. The Hadith quoted explains a Muslim woman who asked the Prophet about the procedure for cleaning the vital parts of their body when having a *junub* (mandatory bath) after menstruation. At the same time, in the product thumbnail, the merchant also wrote the phrase "The forgotten *sunnah* (prophetic customs)." These insertions of scriptural texts seem to send a dogmatic message to consumers that the perfumed female genital cleansing oil products they offer conform to the specifications suggested by the revelation texts.

The articulation of Arabic theological terms in the form of Islamic Branding shows that there has been a linguistic functional shift or meaning, from those used initially in theological areas are drawn into economic regions. This phenomenon is in line with the definition of language commodification as "the process of transforming use values into exchange values" (Mosco, 1996, p. 141). This is what is also intended in this article as a practice of language commodification that includes the textual meaning of a term and how the text is practiced. This is in line with (Brown & Yule, 1988) statement, "We not only analyze the language but also analyze the use of the language". This phenomenon is in line with (Daniels & Der Ruhr, 2010).

(c). Discourse Consumption

The Shopee e-commerce platform provides buyers with product information, comment services, and rating markers as stars. The highest star rating is based on the number of acquisitions, starting from five to one star. These features are a service strategy for Shopee to evaluate the buyers' satisfaction with the credibility of the producers' or sellers' services. The comments in figure 5 mostly reasoned that Arabic stores with Islamic branding products provide transaction security for Muslims. Most buyers commented on each Islamic branding product positively. They received

an average of five stars on each product, meaning consumers were satisfied with the quality of the merchant's products and services. However, some consumers complain about product quality, as seen from the following image excerpt.



Figure 5. Buyer Response

Figure 5 shows the rating obtained for one shop labeled *Sunnah* that provides pants or *sirwal* products. The ratings were 919 five-star, 70 four-star, 11 three-star, and one two-star out of 1001 customers who responded to the store's product and service quality. From 428 comments, most buyers responded positively, indicating their satisfaction with the quality of the store's products and services. The following is the text excerpt from the comments shown in Figure 5.

The buyer's remark translated, "All praises are to Allah, the package has arrived, the product is good, the seller is friendly, kind, I got another bonus. Thank you for the bonus, guys. The product is recommended. Do not hesitate when you want to shop, please. I hope it sells better, guys."

The seller's remark translated as *All Praise is to Allah, Allah repays your kindness, brother Dito. May Allah the Almighty bless our commerce.*

Not all customers commented positively. At least 12 other comments gave three and two buyer star ratings, indicating disappointment with the product quality and delivery delay. The narrative excerpt of the comment shows the consumer's response to the quality of the product he bought with a statement praising the quality of the product and the service of the merchant who gave him the bonus. The comment written by the consumer is inserted with the phrase "*Alḥamdulillāh*/All praises be to Allah," to which the merchant replies, "*Tabāarakawata'ālā*/Allah repays your kindness." Both quoted phrases show the process of negotiating the ideology of piety in the transaction relationship between the two. This is also evident in the trader's last clause, which explicitly states, "May Allah the Almighty bless our commerce." Although these utterances seem normal in the dialogue between Muslims, the Arabic terms become their markers in the interaction of Muslims with the ideology of "Islamism" through the discourse of "*gazwat al-fikr*" or ideological warfare (Bruinessen, 2015).

The trend of Arabic Islamic branding terms in Shopee reveals that the *Ḥalāl* label is not the only term used by Muslim merchants to signify the legality of their products. Instead, they also use the terms *Sunnah*, *Shar'ī*, *Nabawī*, *Islāmī*, and *Da'wa* in Shopee as store labels or product brands. The problem is not a matter of normativity or whether or not these theological terms can be used as branding for a product in Islamic law. However, it is more of a promotional strategy or marketing politics to attract consumers. This is in line with the report of Karoui and Khemakhem (2019), which states that not all products labeled with Islamic branding can guarantee product quality per the legality of Islamic law.

B. The Emergence of E-Commerce as the Commodification Platform in Indonesia

(a). Situational Context

The Arabic Islamic branding terms in e-commerce emerged due to the revival of Salafism in Indonesia through the propaganda of "Back to the Qur'an and Sunnah." This started following the collapse of the New Order era or after the rise of the Reformation era (Jahroni, 2015). Since then, information disclosure and freedom of expression have become strategic opportunities utilized by digital society to be involved in political piety. Furthermore, Arabic terms emerged due to the influence of the popular liberalism and puritanism movements that opposed the assimilation of Islamic teachings into local wisdom. The movements produced and distributed these discourses through religious studies on social media dominated by the Salafi-Wahabism group (Wahid, 2012). Since the mid-1980s, the Salafism movement has propagated *Sunnah* through spiritual practices, fashion trends, appearances, and Arabic-style communication dialects claimed to be consistent with the traditions of the early three generations of Islam (6th century Hijri) (Hasan, 2007). The movement denounced the Western-style lifestyle through heretical propaganda. This discourse has triggered the emergence of Islamic brands that use *Ḥalāl* to symbolize Islamic products' legality. Additionally, the brands have

drawn dogmatic theological terms, such as *Sunnah*, *Islāmī*, *Syar'ī*, and *Da'wa*, into the political-economic ideology of piety.

(b). *Institutional Context*

The puritanism movement in Indonesia is mobilized by the Islamic community organizations divided into mainstream Islamism, Salafism, and Neo-Islamism. The first group represented by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is trying to Islamize or assimilate Islamic teachings and local wisdom traditions. Salafism is concerned with theological purification or those proactively opposing the first group. It is represented by *Salafi Wahabi*, *Tablighi Jama'ah*, and mass organizations in line with their mission. This group is a collection of mass organizations engaged in practical politics based on religious ideology. The organizations were represented by the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), Wahdah Islamiyah, the 212 Alumni Association, and other groups affiliated with transnational-based ideological movements (Abdullah & Osman, 2018). Furthermore, Neo-Islamism calls for a political revolution from a democratic to an Islamization base. This group was represented by Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (MII), Jama'ah Ansar Daulah (JAD) affiliated to ISIS, and Jama'ah Islamiyah affiliated to Al-Qaeda. Although these mass organization groups have different directions, they promote digital Islamism using Arabic theological terms such as Islamic branding on social media and e-commerce.

The emergence of Neo-Islamic social movements has supported development that has shaped the political landscape in recent decades (Wiktorowicz, 2007). The campaign puts forward a homogeneous and static collectivity and is motivated by resistance to Western-style modernization or secular modernity (Esposito, 1998). It is a reactionary collectivity and a militant group seeking regime change to a *Shari'ah*-based government. Moreover, Neo-Islamism has grown as a strategic activist structure organized around loosely defined networks and groups (Bayat, 2005). It also promotes Arab cultural values through proper adherence to Islamic teachings. According to Melucci (1996), the group supports the logic of the new social movement that seeks to create a collaborative meaning network by mobilizing religious ideologies. The network to be created comprises political parties, religious organizations, Social Community Institutions (NGOs), schools, and social networks. Like the Gulen community based in Turkey, these movements provide their followers with strategic economic, educational, cultural, and social resources (Agai, 2007). Boubekeur (2005) stated that the e-commerce market system also creates a consumption culture that plays a vital role in the movement's growth and development.

(c). *Socio-Cultural Context*

The influence of Arabic as a theological language through its vernacularizing into Indonesian determines the popularity of Islamic branding in e-commerce (Levy et al., 2021). *Sunnah*, *Islam*, *Syar'ī*, and *Da'wa* are familiar terms among Muslims, specifically religious rituals (Kaptein, 2017; Kuipers & Askuri, 2017). Therefore, these terms seem normal when used as store labels or product brands in e-commerce in Indonesia. For Muslim consumers, Islamic branding is buying and selling worldly products and the motivation to live religion as a social life (Alserhan, 2010b). This lies the strength of Islamic brands compared to conventional brands. However, not all Arabic-labeled branding represents Islamic teachings strictly. Islamic branding symbols could also be inserted with ideological dogma to produce political resistance. Traditional Arabic-style clothing products, such as *Sirwal* or pants above the ankles in Figure 2, are used to oppose conventional clothing. However, Islamic branding has found its marketing strategy that attracts consumers through religious motivation (Zaid et al., 2022). It is a challenge for conventional entrepreneurs to be oriented to material values and present social, spiritual, or moral values by embedding business ethics in their transaction systems. This shows that consumer trust is sourced from the sellers' product and service quality through guaranteed transaction security in language representation (Qian & Law, 2021).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Arabization has strongly influenced the growth and development of Islamization discourse in Non-Arabic Muslim countries like Indonesia. Indonesia is one of the concrete examples of the growth of this discourse. One of the sources of production and distribution of this discourse is through the negotiation process of digital trade mediatized through e-commerce. Thus, this study investigated this seemingly-neglected theme by employing the digital ethnographic design and critical discourse analysis in Indonesian e-commerce to clarify two research questions, i.e., the presentation of Arabic commodification in the digital marketing sphere and the reasonings for this movement.

This study observes the proliferation of Arabic-language labels originating from theological terms in Islamic teachings. We report the new emerging theological terms such as *Sunnah*, *Nabawī*, *Syar'ī*, *Islāmī*, and *Da'wa* in Islamic branding in the economic area. This is because Muslims in Indonesia consider Arabic the official, sacred, exclusive, and ideological theological truth language. Although this is considered language commodification because placing a linguistic term does not match its ideal meaning, such practices have attracted consumer interest. Secondly, this movement emerges from the situational, institutional, and socio-cultural contexts. Furthermore, language commodification should not be viewed skeptically in theological discussions but as a spiritual marketing strategy to complement the limitations of services offered by conventional marketing.

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