

# Vocational-Based and Islamic Entrepreneurship Innovation How Kopi Jali Competes from a Non-Coffee Region

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the sustainable innovation strategies developed by Kopi Jali, a micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) in Lamongan, in addressing resource constraints and the dynamics of digital markets. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method, data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and reviews of online media documentation. The findings indicate that Kopi Jali's innovations are not solely focused on product differentiation but also function as value-based adaptive strategies. These findings align with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, which emphasizes the importance of managing unique and intangible resources, such as coffee brewing skills, ethical reputation, and Islamic values in business. Furthermore, the integration of vocational learning and digital technology through collaboration with students, alongside the utilization of e-commerce platforms and social media, demonstrates the establishment of a productive and sustainable vocational-based innovation ecosystem. This approach reinforces the relevance of the Open Innovation concept and the Triple Helix Model in the context of local MSMEs. The principles of honesty, patience, and blessings upheld by the business owner serve as strategic intangible assets that enhance both spiritual and social competitiveness. Theoretically, this study proposes a conceptual model of Vocational-Based Islamic Innovation, representing a synergy between technological innovation, vocational learning, and Islamic business ethics as the foundation for value-driven sustainable entrepreneurship at the MSME level. Practically, the findings provide guidance for the development of policies and support programs for MSMEs grounded in local wisdom and ethical digital transformation.

**Keywords:** sustainable innovation, MSMEs, Kopi Jali Lamongan, Islamic entrepreneurship, vocational learning, strategic management

## 1. Introduction

The development of entrepreneurship in the era of digital transformation indicates that innovation does not solely depend on the magnitude of capital or the production region, but also on the adaptive capabilities of entrepreneurs in identifying opportunities and integrating local values into their business strategies. In this context, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have become critical actors in the national economy, particularly within the creative industries that leverage local wisdom (BPS, 2024; Galloway & Brown, 2002). An intriguing phenomenon has emerged in Lamongan Regency, a region not traditionally known for coffee production, yet capable of producing a local coffee brand with a strong character and national competitiveness: Kopi Jali.

Kopi Jali exemplifies how innovation can emerge from limited natural resources through vocational expertise, creative branding, and entrepreneurship ethics grounded in Islamic values (Esmer, 2025). Established in 2006, Kopi Jali developed robusta coffee blends sourced from various regions in East Java, such as Malang and Sidoarjo, into a signature product recognized for its distinct "Lamongan taste." Its success lies not only in product quality but also in a differentiation strategy that emphasizes local authenticity, innovative packaging, and market expansion through digital platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, and social media channels (Wibowo & Nugraha, 2023).

The transformation of Kopi Jali from a home-based business into a corporate entity (PT Jali Jaya Abadi) reflects enhanced managerial capacity and the adoption of digital technology as a form of sustainable innovation. Notably, this innovation journey is inseparable from Islamic business ethics. For the owner, M. Jali, entrepreneurial efforts must be guided by honesty, patience, and sincerity. He underscores that business success is not merely the outcome of market strategies but the fruit of diligent effort accompanied by blessings. Such spiritual ethics serve as a differentiator and a resilience factor for small enterprises amid the highly competitive national coffee industry.

From an academic perspective, the Kopi Jali phenomenon demonstrates the integration of vocational-based innovation and Islamic entrepreneurship values within the frameworks of Resource-Based View (RBV) and Innovation Capability Theory. Vocational-based innovation positions technical skills and hands-on experience as strategic resources that are difficult to imitate (Barney, 1991). Simultaneously, Islamic entrepreneurial values constitute an intangible asset that reinforces reputation and customer loyalty (Ali & Al-Owaihah, 2008). The combination of these factors generates a unique and contextual innovation model: rooted in local skills yet oriented toward global competitiveness (Hasbullah et al., 2022).

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of innovation and spiritual values in MSME success. For example, Nasution and Suryana (2021) demonstrated that integrating Islamic ethical values in business enhances commitment and business sustainability. Putra and Raharjo (2022) emphasized the significance of product and packaging innovation in expanding the market segments of local-based MSMEs. Meanwhile, Wibowo and Nugraha (2023) showed that digital literacy and e-commerce adoption significantly contribute to improving the competitiveness of MSMEs in East Java. Nevertheless, research combining vocational innovation, Islamic entrepreneurship values, and digital strategies in non-commodity regions remains relatively scarce.

Accordingly, this study offers novelty in three main aspects. First, theoretically, it develops an integrative model linking vocational-based innovation with Islamic entrepreneurship ethics within the MSME context. Second, empirically, it examines entrepreneurial practices in a non-coffee-producing region that successfully generate competitive advantage through product and branding innovation. Third, practically, it provides insights for vocational institutions and higher education to utilize MSMEs like Kopi Jali as a learning laboratory that integrates digital technology with spiritual values.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze how Kopi Jali develops vocational-based innovation strategies and Islamic entrepreneurship values to achieve competitive advantage amid dynamic digital markets. This investigation is expected to enrich the management and entrepreneurship literature, particularly regarding the development of value- and skill-based MSMEs capable of global competitiveness.

## 2.Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, focusing on the Kopi Jali SME in Lamongan Regency, East Java. This approach was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of product innovation dynamics, digital marketing strategies, and the implementation of Islamic entrepreneurial values that characterize the enterprise. The case study method is considered most appropriate for understanding unique and contextual phenomena, where the experiences, values, and strategies of entrepreneurs play a significant role in shaping the nature of innovation.

Kopi Jali was chosen as the research subject due to its distinct combination of local traditions, vocational-based entrepreneurial practices, and adaptation to digital technology. Despite limited resources, the enterprise has successfully established an extensive marketing network through social media and e-commerce platforms such as Shopee. Beyond being a small business, Kopi Jali serves as a learning laboratory for vocational students interested in studying SME innovation and developing practice-based learning. Thus, the context of this research extends beyond business strategy analysis to encompass vocational education and the integration of Islamic business ethics.

The research was conducted in South Lamongan, where Kopi Jali produces and markets its specialty coffee blends. The primary research subject is the business owner, M. Jali, who serves as the key informant. Additionally, several supporting informants were involved, including employees, customers, vocational students undertaking internships at Kopi Jali, and local government officials engaged in community economic empowerment. A participatory approach was adopted to enable the researchers to engage directly in production and marketing activities, thereby obtaining a holistic understanding of business practices.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation of the enterprise's digital activities. Interviews were conducted to explore the business philosophy, innovation strategies, and the implementation of Islamic values in business management. Observations involved following coffee brewing processes, customer service interactions, and engagements with consumers both online and offline. Documentation was obtained from social media posts, e-commerce websites, and digital promotional materials used to expand market reach.

Data analysis followed the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction entailed selecting information relevant to the research focus, namely product innovation, digitalization strategies, and Islamic business ethics. Subsequently, the data were organized into thematic narratives illustrating the relationship between vocational innovation and spiritual values in entrepreneurial practice. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verifying findings through source triangulation and member checking with the key informant to ensure data validity.

This study also develops a conceptual framework integrating three main dimensions: vocational-based innovation, digital marketing strategies, and Islamic entrepreneurship. The first dimension emphasizes the role of collaboration between vocational education institutions and SMEs in generating contextual and applicable product innovations. The second dimension demonstrates how the utilization of digital technologies, such as social media and marketplaces, serves as a crucial factor in expanding consumer networks and enhancing the competitiveness of small enterprises. The third dimension highlights that SME success is determined not solely by economic strategies but also by the ethical and spiritual foundations guiding entrepreneurial behavior.

Through the integration of these three dimensions, this study aims to formulate a sustainable, contextual, and locally rooted business innovation model based on Islamic values. This model is expected to inspire other SMEs seeking to develop product innovations while maintaining the blessing and ethical integrity in their business practices.

### **3. Findings and Discussion**

#### **Product Innovation and Local Identity**

Kopi Jali builds its product identity through packaging innovation and a strong local image. The packaging is designed with a simple yet elegant style, highlighting the name “Kopi Jali” as a symbol of regional pride. The narrative on the packaging goes beyond merely describing the flavor; it communicates the story that Lamongan, despite not being a coffee-producing region, is capable of producing high-quality coffee blends. This storytelling branding approach aligns with the Strategic Brand Narrative theory (Escalas & Bettman, 2019), which emphasizes the importance of authentic narratives in fostering emotional trust between brands and consumers.

In the context of innovation management, Kopi Jali’s approach can be classified as incremental innovation (Tidd & Bessant, 2020), involving continuous improvements in packaging, taste, and product communication while maintaining its local roots. This strategy strengthens Kopi Jali’s position in the local market and simultaneously opens opportunities for national expansion.

#### **Vocational-Based Digital Marketing Strategy**

Field observations indicate that Kopi Jali’s success is closely linked to its ability to adapt to developments in information technology. Through e-commerce platforms such as Shopee and promotional support on social media, Kopi Jali expands its market reach beyond Lamongan. The digital strategy is implemented not through large-scale investment, but via collaboration with vocational students engaged in research and internships. Students contribute to content creation, visual design, and online shop management.

This student involvement demonstrates the formation of a vocational-based innovation ecosystem, where learning, practice, and research are directly applied within a real business context. Theoretically, this supports the concept of entrepreneurial learning (Rae, 2006), emphasizing experiential entrepreneurship education. Integrating vocational education with SMEs enhances competitiveness based on local human resources, consistent with the Resource-Based View framework (Barney, 1991).

From a strategic perspective, the digitalization implemented by Kopi Jali reflects the principle of strategic agility (Doz & Kosonen, 2010), i.e., the ability to rapidly adapt to market changes through digital innovation. The SME does not only sell coffee as a product, but also as an experience and social identity, merging local values with global technology.

#### **Islamic Business Ethics as the Spirit of Innovation**

The spiritual dimension and Islamic business ethics constitute a fundamental strength that distinguishes Kopi Jali from many other SMEs. For the owner, the principles of honesty, patience, and blessing form the foundation of every business decision. The owner’s statement, “We continuously maintain our efforts, hoping the results bring blessings,” reflects the practical application of Islamic Work Ethics (Ali & Al-Owaidan, 2008), emphasizing effort (ikhtiar), integrity (sidq), and blessing (barakah) as drivers of innovation.

These ethics extend beyond personal behavior, becoming part of the corporate culture within the SME. For example, in production, Kopi Jali refuses to use chemical additives that compromise coffee quality for quick profit. Such practices demonstrate moral awareness and business sustainability, in line with sustainable entrepreneurship principles (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011), where innovation aims to create both economic and socio-spiritual value.

Furthermore, Islamic values shape the leadership style of the entrepreneur. The owner positions himself not as a superior but as a moral role model for employees and partners. Working relationships are built on mutual respect and collective blessing, in accordance with *ukhuwah fi al-‘amal* principles. This work culture fosters a sense of collective ownership, enhancing internal loyalty and service quality for customers.

#### **Synergy of Innovation, Digitalization, and Spirituality: The Kopi Jali Model**

Empirical findings and theoretical analysis formulate a conceptual model explaining Kopi Jali’s success through the integration of three pillars: vocational-based innovation, adaptive digital strategies, and Islamic business ethics. The model illustrates that SME sustainability arises not only from innovative capability but also from the depth of values and social engagement accompanying it.

In the context of strategic management, this model can be framed as the Vocational-Based Islamic Innovation Model (VBIIM), integrating three dimensions: (1) vocational learning as a source of creativity; (2) digital entrepreneurship as a vehicle for market expansion; and (3) Islamic ethics as a moral compass for business. The synergy

of these dimensions positions Kopi Jali not only as a market actor but also as a social change agent inspiring youth and academics (hof et al., 2020).

This model demonstrates that innovation in the SME sector does not need to rely on geographic advantages or large capital. Instead, local values, perseverance, and integrity serve as differentiating factors that are difficult to replicate. This reinforces the argument of dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, 2007), whereby sustainable competitive advantage emerges from the ability to adapt, learn, and internalize values during the innovation process.

### **Implications and Academic Relevance**

The study offers two main implications. First, theoretically, it enriches innovation management literature by adding spiritual and vocational dimensions as determinants of SME success. Second, practically, the VBIIIM model can serve as a reference for vocational universities, training institutions, and SME practitioners in designing collaborative learning and ethical business innovation. Consequently, Kopi Jali not only exemplifies local economic success but also symbolizes value- and knowledge-based entrepreneurship.

### **Discussion**

The findings indicate that the innovations implemented by the Kopi Jali MSME are not solely aimed at creating product differentiation, but rather serve as an adaptive strategy in response to resource limitations and changing business environments. From a strategic management perspective, this approach aligns with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory (Barney, 1991), which emphasizes that sustainable competitive advantage is derived from managing internal resources that are unique, difficult to imitate, and valuable. In the case of Kopi Jali, these resources do not consist of large capital or a strategic geographic location, but rather the distinctive coffee brewing skills of Lamongan, the owner's honest and personable reputation, and the Islamic values that underpin every business activity.

### **Integration of Local Values and Innovation Orientation**

Field observations demonstrate that Kopi Jali successfully leverages local values as the basis for contextual innovation. Although Lamongan is not a coffee-producing region, its local identity has been transformed into a distinctive identity that differentiates Kopi Jali from similar products. This strategy exemplifies a place-based entrepreneurship approach (Müller & Korsgaard, 2018), in which entrepreneurs utilize the social and cultural potential of their locality to generate economic value.

Kopi Jali employs storytelling marketing to instill regional pride into its brand image. By highlighting the narrative of "Lamongan's signature coffee," the owner fosters emotional attachment with consumers, strengthens brand authenticity, and builds customer loyalty. Conceptually, this aligns with strategic brand management principles (Keller, 2013), which emphasize the importance of brand equity rooted in emotional and cultural values.

### **Digital Innovation and Vocational Learning**

The rise of digitalization has created new opportunities for MSMEs to expand markets and enhance operational efficiency. For Kopi Jali, the adoption of e-commerce platforms (e.g., Shopee) and social media promotions is not merely a marketing strategy, but also a medium for collaborative learning with vocational students involved in content management, packaging design, and digital promotion. This pattern confirms the emergence of a vocational-based innovation ecosystem, where universities, entrepreneurs, and communities collaborate within a sustainable entrepreneurship framework.

From the perspective of open innovation theory (Chesbrough, 2003), partnerships between MSMEs and educational institutions represent open collaboration, facilitating the exchange of ideas and skills across sectors. Locally, this integration also strengthens students' digital literacy while accelerating the digital transformation of MSMEs toward modern marketing practices.

In other words, Kopi Jali serves as a practical example of productive vocational learning with social impact. The synergy between academia and local business constitutes knowledge transfer in line with the triple helix model (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000), where collaboration among academia, industry, and society drives regional innovation.

### **Islamic Business Ethics and the Spirit of Blessing**

Spiritual values and Islamic business ethics play a crucial role in the sustainability of Kopi Jali. Principles of honesty, patience, and blessing not only serve as moral guidelines but also as differentiation strategies that foster customer trust and positive reputation. In the Islamic entrepreneurship literature, these principles align with the Islamic entrepreneurship framework (Ali & Al-Owaidan, 2008; Beekun & Badawi, 2005), which positions *ihsan* (excellence), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *barakah* (blessing) as core pillars in business operations.

Kopi Jali consistently implements these values by maintaining the authenticity of its coffee blends, avoiding synthetic additives, and establishing fair relationships with customers and distributors. This approach demonstrates that Islamic ethics can function as a strategic intangible asset; an intangible resource that generates value and sustainable competitive advantage.

From a sustainability management perspective, the principles of dedicated effort (*ikhtiar*) and honesty also serve as the foundation for sustainable entrepreneurship (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011), emphasizing a balance between profit, social value, and moral responsibility. These values reinforce business resilience in the face of market uncertainties and post-pandemic economic dynamics.

### **Synergy of Innovation, Technology, and Spirituality: A Sustainable Management Approach**

The findings reveal that MSME competitiveness in the digital era is determined not only by the speed of technological adaptation but also by the strength of the values underpinning innovation strategies. Kopi Jali successfully integrates technological capability with spiritual capability, forming a distinctive Indonesian model of sustainable innovation that blends technology, tradition, and ethics.

Within the framework of strategic management for sustainability (Hart & Dowell, 2011), this approach can be conceptualized as value-driven innovation; innovation driven by values rather than mere economic efficiency. This perspective suggests that MSME success in the digital era should be measured not only by sales growth but also by the ability to create shared value between business, education, and society (Galloway & Brown, 2002).

Kopi Jali exemplifies an MSME that balances the three key dimensions of sustainable development: economic (product competitiveness), social (vocational empowerment), and spiritual (Islamic business ethics). These dimensions mutually reinforce one another, creating business resilience that does not solely rely on external factors. Therefore, this discussion underscores that the Kopi Jali innovation model is not only relevant for MSME development in non-commodity regions but also contributes theoretically to the advancement of the vocational-based Islamic innovation paradigm as a novel approach in entrepreneurship and sustainable strategic management studies.

### **4. Conclusion**

This study confirms that the innovation practices of Kopi Jali Lamongan SMEs are not merely product differentiation strategies but represent strategic adaptations to resource constraints and dynamic business environments. By leveraging unique resources, such as Lamongan's distinctive coffee brewing skills, the ethical reputation of the owner, and Islamic values that underpin business practices, Kopi Jali demonstrates a practical application of the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory in the context of local SMEs (Barney, 1991).

Collaboration with vocational students and the utilization of digital technologies through e-commerce and social media platforms have fostered a vocational-based innovation ecosystem, aligned with the principles of Open Innovation and the Triple Helix Model. This synergy strengthens Kopi Jali's position as an adaptive, learning-oriented, and sustainable enterprise.

The values of honesty, patience, and blessing serve as the foundation of Islamic business ethics, enhancing consumer trust and business resilience. Accordingly, the Kopi Jali model embodies a form of Value-Driven Sustainable Innovation (innovation driven by spiritual values, vocational learning, and the strategic use of digital technologies) as a basis for sustainable competitive advantage (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011; Hasbullah et al., 2022) in the context of Indonesian SMEs.

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