

## Predatory Pricing on TikTok Shop and the Sustainability of Local Businesses in Indonesia: An Islamic Economic Analysis

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### Abstract

This study examines the impact of predatory pricing on TikTok Shop and its consequences for the sustainability of local businesses in Indonesia from an Islamic economic perspective. As Indonesia's digital economy rapidly expands, the integration of e-commerce within social media platforms, such as TikTok Shop, has transformed market dynamics. This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews with local business owners and a comprehensive document review of scholarly articles and official reports. The study investigates how TikTok Shop's aggressive price undercutting disrupts fair competition and threatens the viability of small businesses. Findings indicate that predatory pricing practices significantly disadvantage smaller enterprises, reducing competition and increasing the risk of business closures. Such practices contradict Islamic economic principles, which emphasize fairness, ethical conduct, and social justice in market transactions. The study underscores the critical role of government regulation in ensuring ethical market practices and enforcing fair competition laws. By highlighting the detrimental effects of predatory pricing in social media commerce, this research advocates for stricter regulatory frameworks, aligned with Islamic economic principles, to safeguard local businesses and promote a just and sustainable economic environment. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and industry stakeholders, contributing to the broader discourse on ethical business practices in the digital economy.

### Keywords:

Predator Pricing, Local

Business, Business

Sustainability

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## 1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technologies, particularly the integration of e-commerce within social media platforms, has fundamentally reshaped global and national economies. Indonesia, with its large population and fast-growing digital economy (Kemp, 2023; Puspita et al., 2020), provides a compelling case for examining the profound effects of this transformation on traditional businesses. Platforms like TikTok Shop, which seamlessly merge social media engagement with e-commerce transactions (Matamaya, 2022), exemplify this shift. Their ease of access, extensive reach, and innovative marketing strategies offer unprecedented opportunities for businesses of all sizes. However, these platforms also pose significant challenges to traditional business models, particularly in terms of competition and market sustainability. This issue is especially critical in developing economies like Indonesia, where local businesses often lack the financial and operational capacity to compete with multinational corporations. Given the potential for both positive and negative outcomes, this digital disruption necessitates a critical examination of its economic and ethical implications. The data presented in Figure 1 further underscores the urgency of this research, illustrating the extensive penetration of social media and the risks associated with its evolving role in commerce.

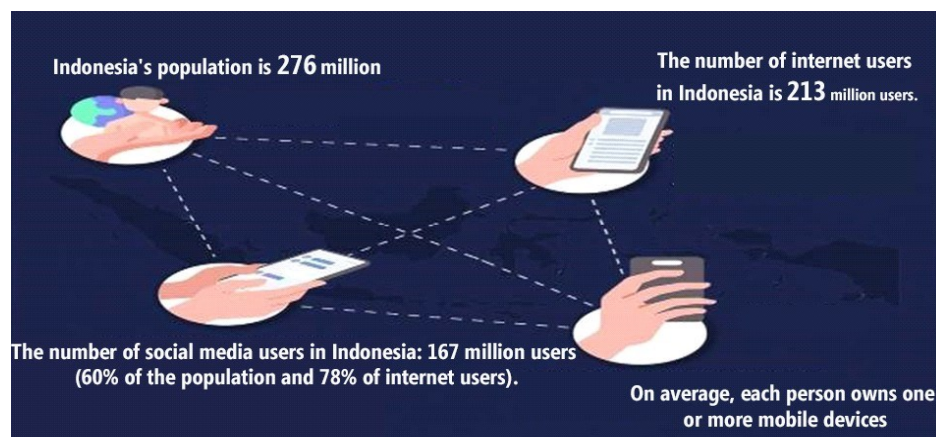


Figure 1. Indonesia's 2023 Socio-Demographic Landscape in Internet and Social Media Use

Source: (Datareportal, 2023)

This research explores the intersection of Islamic business ethics and contemporary market practices, focusing on predatory pricing—where firms set prices below cost to eliminate competition (Ubochioma, 2021). This issue is particularly contentious within social media-based commerce, where transparency and regulatory oversight remain challenging. The difficulty in distinguishing between aggressive but legitimate competitive pricing and genuinely anti-competitive practices further complicates the matter. While extensive literature examines predatory pricing from conventional economic and legal perspectives (Nurcahyawan et al., 2020; Marwah, 2022; Zaid et al., 2022), a comprehensive analysis within the framework of Islamic economics remains relatively underexplored. The Islamic concept of *ighraq*, which prohibits exploitative business practices that harm consumers and

competitors (Faishol et al., 2022), offers a crucial ethical perspective for addressing this contemporary challenge. This study fills a critical gap by examining predatory pricing in Indonesia's evolving digital economy through the lens of Islamic economic principles, providing an alternative framework for understanding market fairness and sustainability.

Despite the substantial body of research on predatory pricing, much of the literature lacks engagement with the specific challenges posed by social commerce in emerging economies (Adam, 2023; AP & Sulisty, 2023; Fitri & Lesmana, 2021; Jayani et al., 2022). Existing analyses primarily employ conventional economic and legal frameworks, often overlooking the ethical and social dimensions that alternative economic systems, such as Islamic economics, offer. This necessitates a deeper exploration of predatory pricing's impact not only on market competition but also on the livelihoods of local businesses and the communities they support. Indonesia's ongoing efforts to regulate e-commerce (Mardhotillah, 2023) highlight the urgent need for a more comprehensive regulatory approach that integrates both economic and ethical considerations. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the interplay between predatory pricing, digital market dynamics, and Islamic economic principles.

The research employs a theoretical framework rooted in Islamic economics, specifically the *maqasid al-sharia* (Faishol et al., 2022), which provides a holistic approach to assessing economic activity. This framework emphasizes justice, fairness, and the preservation of societal well-being, offering a perspective that extends beyond conventional economic models that prioritize profit maximization. The *maqasid al-sharia*, which safeguards five fundamental aspects of human life—religion, life, intellect, progeny, and property—serves as a robust ethical lens for evaluating the socio-economic consequences of predatory pricing. By applying these principles, this study presents an alternative, ethically grounded understanding of market dynamics in the digital economy. The emphasis on justice and fairness within the *maqasid al-sharia* framework establishes a strong ethical foundation for assessing the sustainability and broader impact of predatory pricing practices.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of TikTok Shop's pricing strategies on the sustainability of local businesses in Indonesia. Specifically, the research addresses the following key questions: (1) To what extent does TikTok Shop engage in predatory pricing practices? (2) How do these practices affect the profitability, market share, and long-term viability of local Indonesian businesses? (3) To what extent do TikTok Shop's pricing strategies align with the core principles of Islamic economics? (4) What policy measures should be implemented to regulate predatory pricing within Indonesia's rapidly evolving digital economy? By exploring these interrelated questions, this study aims to provide valuable insights for policymakers, business owners, and consumers. The findings will contribute significantly to academic literature by offering a nuanced, ethically informed analysis of a pressing issue in the digital economy.

We hypothesize that TikTok Shop's pricing strategies, characterized by significant price undercutting, have a detrimental impact on the sustainability of local Indonesian businesses. This hypothesis is based on reports of local businesses struggling to compete with the platform's low prices and the potential for such practices to drive smaller competitors out of the market. To rigorously assess this hypothesis, the study employs both qualitative data from interviews with local businesses and quantitative data from relevant market analyses. The research evaluates the extent of these effects on key indicators of business sustainability, including profitability, market share, and long-term survival. Furthermore, it examines whether TikTok Shop's pricing practices uphold the principles of Islamic

economics, such as fairness, justice, and the avoidance of harm. Supporting evidence is drawn from existing literature on Islamic economics alongside empirical findings.

The findings of this study contribute to the field of Islamic business and economics through a critical analysis of predatory pricing within the context of the rapidly evolving digital economy. The study's insights will be particularly valuable for policymakers in developing more effective regulations to safeguard local businesses and promote fair competition. Additionally, it will offer practical guidance for business owners navigating an increasingly competitive digital marketplace, emphasizing ethical business practices that align with Islamic economic principles. The study's implications also extend to consumers by raising awareness of predatory pricing's impact on local businesses and the importance of supporting fair and ethical market practices. Ultimately, the research will inform future studies and contribute to a broader understanding of sustainable business practices in the evolving global digital economy.

## 2. Methods

The issue of predatory pricing, particularly in online commerce, has become a global concern in recent decades. This practice often involves setting prices below cost to attract customers from competitors and eliminate market competition. The consequences can be highly detrimental to local business ecosystems and innovation, as smaller enterprises may struggle to survive or expand. This study examines predatory pricing on TikTok Shop and its impact on local businesses through the lens of Islamic economics.

This qualitative research employs data collection methods that include interviews and document analysis (Berg, 2021). Interviews were conducted with local business owners in multiple sessions to ensure data richness. Formal interviews were scheduled in advance, while informal interviews were conducted in naturally occurring settings when opportunities arose. Additionally, this study incorporates a review of previously published sources, including academic articles, books, and other relevant documents, to support and corroborate research findings. Mendeley reference management software is utilized to organize and manage the collected literature. The theoretical framework is developed based on prior research and relevant theories to establish a solid foundation for analysis (Liamputtong, 2011). A comprehensive literature review is conducted to identify pertinent theories and empirical studies, employing qualitative data analysis techniques to extract key themes. Ethical considerations, including academic integrity, transparency, and confidentiality, are rigorously upheld (Chariri, 2009). Potential limitations of this study include constraints related to literature availability and the qualitative nature of the research.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, this study employs peer review and data triangulation. Peer review involves evaluation by experts in the field to identify potential weaknesses, errors, or biases in the research (Blanchflower, 2018). Triangulation, on the other hand, involves cross-verifying findings using multiple data sources. This study specifically employs theoretical triangulation, where different theoretical perspectives are applied to interpret the same data. By comparing and contrasting results across various sources and approaches, this method strengthens the validity of the conclusions, ensuring that findings reflect genuine patterns rather than incidental or biased interpretations. When applied systematically, these methods enhance the study's credibility and reliability.

Data analysis follows a three-stage process: data reduction, data display, and data verification (Ciesielska & Jemielniak, 2017). Data reduction involves summarizing, selecting, and refining raw data into a more structured and manageable format. The second stage, data display, presents findings in matrices, graphs, diagrams, or narrative formats, enabling

clearer identification of patterns and relationships. The final stage, data verification, involves cross-referencing data sources to confirm interpretations and ensure consistency with empirical evidence (Rasjidi, 2017). The validity of the data is ensured through two key approaches (Syahza & Riau, 2021). First, the study establishes validity by comparing acquired knowledge, values, and practices through systematic data synchronization and relational analysis. Second, validity is further assessed by classifying information into distinct categories, facilitating comparative analysis and verification. By incorporating both objective and subjective data, this study ensures a rigorous and comprehensive approach to establishing research credibility and accuracy.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Predatory pricing is a strategic practice in which a company deliberately sets product or service prices below cost to drive competitors out of the market or deter new entrants. The primary objective is to establish a monopoly or dominant market position, enabling the company to raise prices and reduce competition over time (Puisto & Alavi, 2016). While predatory pricing may initially benefit firms employing this strategy, it is widely regarded as an anti-competitive and illegal practice in many jurisdictions, as it disrupts market equilibrium and undermines fair business competition.

#### Predatory Pricing on TikTok Shop

TikTok Shop, an integrated e-commerce platform within the TikTok application, was introduced in Indonesia in 2021. Unlike Instagram Shop or Facebook Shop, TikTok Shop enables users to complete transactions within the app, eliminating the need to visit external websites. This feature, combined with the platform's interactive nature, has significantly contributed to its rapid growth in Indonesia's digital marketplace (See Figure 2).

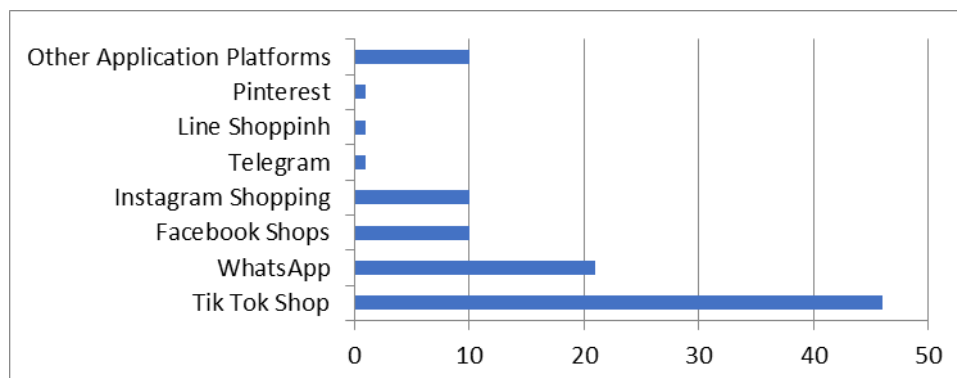


Figure 2. Social Media Platforms Used by Respondents for Shopping (July–August 2022) in Percentage

Source: (Datareportal, 2023)

Figure 2 illustrates that TikTok Shop has the highest level of popularity and usage among the platforms surveyed, whereas "Other Application Platforms" recorded the lowest engagement. One key factor behind TikTok Shop's dominance is its ability to leverage user-generated content, where creators provide engaging and informative product reviews. This strategy enhances the shopping experience, making it more appealing to consumers. Concerns over predatory pricing on TikTok Shop have been raised by Indonesian policymakers. Deputy Minister of Trade Jerry Sambuaga highlighted the issue, stating:

"It's clear [that this is predatory pricing]. You can see that imported goods, when

following standard procedures, cost around Rp1 million, while those bypassing the procedures are only Rp100,000. Isn't that predatory pricing?" (Catriana & Djumena, 2023).

The primary goal of predatory pricing is to eliminate competition, which has profound implications for the market landscape and its stakeholders. First, by systematically undercutting competitors, TikTok Shop disrupts both online and offline businesses, significantly diminishing fair competition. The platform's aggressive pricing strategy has led to a substantial shift in consumer preference, further marginalizing smaller enterprises. Second, the potential for market dominance or monopolization increases as TikTok Shop captures a disproportionately large market share compared to other social commerce platforms. This concentration of power allows the platform to exert greater control over pricing and supply chains, ultimately disadvantaging consumers and limiting business diversity. Third, predatory pricing has severe economic repercussions, particularly for local businesses reliant on traditional retail models. With its vast financial resources and extensive global reach, TikTok Shop is able to offer products at significantly lower prices, making it difficult for local businesses to compete. Consequently, many local enterprises face declining market share and economic instability. This imbalance creates an unfair competitive environment, as TikTok Shop often sells products identical to those offered by local businesses, threatening their long-term sustainability in the market.

### **Sustainability of Local Businesses**

Local businesses operate within and generate income for their communities, typically owned and managed by individuals or groups from the local area. Their primary focus is to cater to local market demands and preferences. These businesses encompass a wide range of enterprises, including food stalls, craft shops, coffee houses, and small-scale manufacturing firms. Local businesses offer several advantages, such as job creation, which helps reduce unemployment by prioritizing the recruitment of family members and community residents. Additionally, they contribute to economic diversification by introducing a variety of products and services that fulfill immediate consumer needs with minimal dependency on external markets. Furthermore, they foster entrepreneurship within the community and generate regional revenue through taxation, thereby supporting overall local economic growth.

The significance of local businesses extends beyond their immediate communities, positively impacting both the national and global economy. By creating employment opportunities, they contribute to reducing unemployment rates while simultaneously strengthening economic resilience. Moreover, local businesses play a pivotal role in preserving and promoting local culture and products in international markets, enhancing the country's global competitiveness. As stated by Nuruddin, a local entrepreneur in the T-shirt industry, the presence of thriving local businesses fosters sustainable economic development by reinforcing regional economic structures and encouraging innovation within local industries.

Thus, local businesses play an essential role in strengthening the economy at both local and global levels. Their positive impact extends to communities locally and internationally, as these businesses frequently promote indigenous products and cultural elements to the international market. This promotion enhances the country's image and competitiveness on the global stage. Therefore, supporting and developing local businesses represents a strategic approach to achieving sustainable economic prosperity. TikTok Shop employs predatory pricing strategies, offering products at artificially low prices to eliminate

competitors from the market. This practice proves detrimental to local businesses that cannot match these unsustainable price points and subsequently face closure, as exemplified by Ahmad Musfiq, a batik seller who has documented this impact. Furthermore, TikTok Shop and similar e-commerce platforms can significantly reduce consumer traffic to traditional physical retailers, as consumer preferences increasingly shift toward online shopping options.

### **Predatory Pricing from an Islamic Economic Perspective**

The Islamic economic perspective on predatory pricing varies depending on scholars' interpretations and analytical approaches. However, in principle, business practices that cause harm to others are prohibited. First, Islam strictly forbids monopolies and price manipulation (Latief & Novalia, 2023). This prohibition encompasses predatory pricing, which aims to establish market dominance by eliminating competitors. The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of fairness in economic transactions and explicitly condemns fraud and exploitation. TikTok Shop exemplifies a platform that engages in predatory pricing, as its significantly low pricing strategy is demonstrably intended to drive competitors out of the market. Second, Islamic economic principles advocate for fair and healthy competition. A competitive market fosters innovation, enhances product quality, and provides consumers with better choices. However, predatory pricing disrupts this equilibrium by suppressing competition and undermining competitors' ability to sustain their businesses, which constitutes a violation of Islamic ethical principles.

Third, the principle of justice is fundamental in Islamic economics. Unfair pricing strategies that exploit market vulnerabilities or disadvantage small competitors contradict the principles of social justice, which emphasize equitable wealth distribution. Islam promotes economic fairness, ensuring that all market participants, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), have equal opportunities to thrive. Fourth, consumer protection is a critical tenet of Islamic economic thought. Excessive price undercutting, which ultimately harms consumers through reduced product quality, monopolistic price hikes after competitors are eliminated, or limited market choices, contradicts Islamic principles of consumer welfare (Muflih, 2018). Islam mandates the protection of consumer rights and strictly prohibits exploitative business practices.

The Indonesian government has expressed growing concerns about the adverse effects of TikTok Shop's pricing strategies on local SMEs. Its business model threatens the survival of local enterprises and, consequently, the nation's economic sovereignty (Mardhotillah, 2023). In response, the government has officially prohibited the use of social media platforms for e-commerce transactions, as previously practiced by TikTok Shop. This ban is outlined in the revised *Regulation of the Minister of Trade Number 50 of 2020 on Trade Through Electronic Systems*, which has been formally amended under *Government Regulation 31/2023*. These amendments introduce new provisions regarding business licensing, advertising, regulatory oversight, and consumer protection in the e-commerce sector. TikTok Shop is suspected of violating these regulations by offering imported products and major brand items at artificially low prices, effectively outcompeting local businesses. Additionally, it is suspected of engaging in dumping and predatory pricing by exporting goods from China at below-market rates to dominate the Indonesian market. Minister of Trade Zulkifli Hasan emphasized that the newly enacted regulations align with the President's directive to enhance protection for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and domestic businesses (Mardhotillah, 2023).

With the rapid expansion of e-commerce, regulatory adjustments are essential to ensure fair market competition and consumer protection. If a company employs excessively

low pricing based on competitors' price structures, it may claim to offer goods and services at a fair rate. However, a thorough horizontal price comparison is necessary to assess the legitimacy of such claims (Sari & Rudy, 2021). In a perfectly competitive market, price levels are determined by the interaction of supply and demand. However, dominant market players, often referred to as price setters or price leaders, can manipulate pricing to their advantage, particularly in sectors dealing with exclusive goods or services. These business entities often achieve market dominance by employing cost-cutting strategies to maintain the lowest possible production expenses, ultimately reshaping market dynamics to their benefit.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study underscores the government's responsibility in formulating policies that ensure economic activities function smoothly and equitably, particularly in safeguarding the sustainability of local businesses. The government plays a crucial role in fostering an environment conducive to the growth and development of local enterprises. This includes implementing regulatory measures that support local businesses, such as streamlining licensing processes, reducing bureaucratic barriers, and providing tax incentives. Additionally, the government should enhance access to affordable financing through low-interest loans, grants, and microfinance programs, thereby enabling local businesses to remain competitive in the evolving digital economy. Beyond financial support, capacity-building initiatives are essential to equip local business owners with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage their enterprises effectively. Moreover, regulatory frameworks must protect local businesses from predatory pricing practices employed by large corporations. This can be achieved through stringent market surveillance and the enforcement of penalties against rule violations. Furthermore, the promotion of local products—through trade exhibitions, marketing campaigns, and export support—constitutes a vital strategy to strengthen domestic businesses. By implementing these measures, the government can ensure the sustainable development of local enterprises and maintain a balanced and competitive economic environment.

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has transformed the way individuals interact and conduct business, particularly in Indonesia, one of the world's most populous nations. As digital technology continues to advance, social media and e-commerce platforms have significantly reshaped the country's internet landscape. However, the rise of TikTok Shop—a prominent e-commerce platform in Indonesia—has raised serious concerns regarding predatory pricing practices that undermine fair competition and threaten the survival of local businesses. From an Islamic economic perspective, predatory pricing is inherently harmful, as it disrupts market equilibrium and violates principles of fair competition, consumer protection, and social justice. Consequently, government intervention is imperative to regulate such practices, uphold market integrity, and safeguard local businesses from unfair competition. The case of TikTok Shop underscores the urgent need for stricter regulatory oversight to prevent anti-competitive behaviors and establish a fair playing field for all market participants.

This study is limited by its reliance on descriptive analysis based on a restricted dataset. Future research employing a mixed-methods approach is necessary to provide a more comprehensive understanding of online business dynamics and their impact on local enterprises. Further investigation will also help identify both the challenges and opportunities associated with fostering ethical economic practices. Policymakers can use these insights to refine existing regulations and introduce new measures aimed at

maintaining fair competition while supporting the growth of local businesses in the digital economy.

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