

BEYOND TRANSACTION: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR MARKETING MANAGEMENT THROUGH THE ETHICAL LENS OF TASAWWUF

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary marketing management, often predicated on the stimulation of limitless consumer desire, presents a fundamental tension with the principles of Tasawwuf (Sufism), an Islamic spiritual discipline aimed at the purification of the self and the cultivation of virtue. This paper addresses a significant gap in the literature by developing a novel conceptual framework that integrates the ethical-spiritual tenets of Tasawwuf into the core strategic and tactical domains of marketing. Employing a qualitative systematic literature review, this study first synthesizes the foundational concepts of modern marketing management and the key socio-economic virtues of Tasawwuf. The subsequent analysis reveals a profound ontological conflict between the marketing paradigm's definition of the human as a 'consumer' and Tasawwuf's conception of the human as a servant of God ('abd) and steward (khalifah). Building on this, the paper proposes a reconstructed marketing mix (7Ps) where each element is re-envisioned through guiding Sufi principles. 'Product' is reconceptualized as a trust (Amanah) demanding excellence (Ihsan); 'Price' is governed by justice ('Adl); 'Promotion' is guided by truthfulness (Sidq); and 'People' are viewed as a community of service (Khidmah). The framework posits that the cultivation of spiritual consciousness (ruhaniyah) within the organization is the mediating factor that enables the authentic application of these principles. This study contributes a new, holistic paradigm for marketing that shifts the objective from transactional value-exchange to the facilitation of holistic human well-being (falah), offering a robust, ethically grounded alternative to conventional models that is relevant not only within Islamic contexts but also to the global discourse on purpose-driven and sustainable business.

Keywords: Marketing Management, Tasawwuf, Sufism, Islamic Business Ethics, Consumer Behavior, Ihsan, Spiritual Marketing, Ethical Consumption

INTRODUCTION

The discipline of marketing management has evolved into a sophisticated and pervasive force in modern society. At its core, it is a strategic process through which organizations create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for a wide array of stakeholders, including customers, partners, and society at large (Kotler, P., & Armstrong, 2018). The foundational logic of this paradigm begins with the identification of fundamental human needs, which are then shaped into specific wants and subsequently translated into demands backed by purchasing power (Kotler, P., & Armstrong, 2018; Ossisto., 2023). To meet these demands, marketers deploy a tactical toolkit known as the marketing mix, traditionally comprising the '4Ps'—Product, Price, Place, and Promotion—which has since expanded to include People, Process, and Physical Evidence, often referred to as the '7Ps' (Booms, B. H., & Bitner, 1981; Braffton, 2023). This framework, while effective in driving economic activity, is built upon a philosophical architecture that implicitly defines the human person primarily as a consumer. The ultimate goal, as one perspective suggests, is to understand this consumer so profoundly that the product or service "sells itself," making selling superfluous (Quizlet. (n.d.), 2025).

However, the very success of this paradigm has given rise to significant ethical and societal discontents. The relentless focus on stimulating wants and creating demand has fueled a culture of consumerism, an ideology that equates personal happiness and self-worth with the acquisition of material possessions (Belk, 1984; Zuhri, S., & Anwar, 2023). This has led to the emergence of what some scholars term a "false consumer-self," where identity is constructed and expressed through consumption choices, detaching

individuals from more profound sources of meaning (Raza, 2021). The societal consequences include environmental degradation driven by overconsumption, the perpetuation of economic inequalities, and a pervasive sense of spiritual emptiness (Belk, 1984; Raza, 2021). The global financial crisis of 2008 served as a stark reminder of the potential for systemic failure when business practices become unmoored from ethical foundations, catalyzing a renewed and urgent call for integrating ethics and social responsibility into the core of business strategy (Singh, 2014). This has created an intellectual and practical space for exploring alternative paradigms that can guide business toward more sustainable and humane ends.

The central problem this paper addresses is the profound disconnect between the philosophical underpinnings of conventional marketing and the ethical-spiritual worldview of Tasawwuf. While there is a growing body of literature on "Islamic marketing" and "Islamic business ethics," much of this work remains at a general level, often focusing on compliance with religious law (Shari'ah) without delving into the deeper, transformative potential of its spiritual traditions. The specific research gap is the absence of a comprehensive conceptual framework that systematically integrates the core ethical principles of Tasawwuf into the strategic and tactical domains of marketing management. The literature lacks a rigorous scholarly attempt to move beyond broad ethical exhortations to a detailed reconstruction of marketing theory and practice through the specific lens of the Sufi tradition.

This gap is not merely academic; it has significant practical implications. The dominant marketing model, by framing the human person as a bundle of insatiable wants, contributes to a cycle of materialism and dissatisfaction. A marketing paradigm informed by Tasawwuf, however, would begin from a completely different starting point. The fundamental divergence is not just about adding ethical rules (e.g., truth in advertising) but is ontological—it concerns the very definition of the human person and the purpose of economic activity. Conventional marketing theory implicitly posits the individual as a consumer, whose identity is realized through purchasing power and consumption (Kotler, P., & Armstrong, 2018; Ossisto., 2023). This framework actively cultivates a "consumer-self" that seeks fulfillment in material goods (Raza, 2021). In stark contrast, Tasawwuf begins with the premise that the human being is an 'abd (a servant of God) and a khalifah (a steward upon the earth), whose ultimate purpose is spiritual purification and proximity to the Divine (Chittick, 2014; Fakhry, 2004). The entire ethical project of Tasawwuf is aimed at liberating the self (nafs) from attachment to the very worldly desires that marketing often seeks to inflame (Sarhank, 2025; Zuhri, S., & Anwar, 2023). Therefore, a simple "ethical marketing" overlay is insufficient. A truly Sufi-centric framework requires a radical reconceptualization of the "customer"—from a target of consumption to a fellow being on a spiritual journey. This shifts the core objective of marketing from "fulfilling wants" to "facilitating holistic well-being" (falah). The primary objective of this paper, therefore, is to develop this novel conceptual framework. It aims to deconstruct the core components of marketing management and reconstruct them upon the ethical foundations of Tasawwuf, achieved through a systematic review and synthesis of the relevant literature from both fields.

This paper seeks to make a significant and original contribution to the fields of marketing theory, business ethics, and Islamic studies. By proposing a comprehensive Sufi-centric marketing framework, it offers a new paradigm that is ethically robust, spiritually grounded, and holistically oriented toward human and societal flourishing. It moves the discourse beyond legalistic compliance to a focus on inner transformation as the basis for ethical business practice. The paper is structured according to the IMRAD (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion) format. Following this introduction, the Methodology section details the systematic literature review process. The Results section presents a thematic synthesis of the core concepts of both marketing management and Tasawwuf. The Discussion, which forms the analytical core of the paper, integrates these findings to construct the proposed conceptual framework, re-envisioning the marketing mix through

Sufi virtues. Finally, the Conclusion summarizes the paper's contributions, discusses its implications, and outlines avenues for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tasawwuf as an Ethical Wellspring

In the search for such alternatives, the rich ethical tradition of Tasawwuf, or Sufism, offers a profound and comprehensive wellspring. Often misunderstood in the modern era as a purely esoteric or world-negating form of asceticism, classical Tasawwuf is, in fact, a sophisticated and practical discipline for the "purification of the heart" (tazkiyah al-nafs) and the cultivation of virtuous character (Chittick, 2014; Fakhry, 2004). It is the internal dimension of Islam, focused on transforming the inner self to achieve a state of nearness to God (Chittick, 2014). The ultimate purpose of this spiritual journey is not to retreat from the world, but to engage with it in the most ethically refined and spiritually conscious manner possible, seeking the pleasure of God in all actions (Mahadi, M. H., Kamarzaman, M. H., Kamaruzaman, M. A. S., & Jalil, 2023).

This orientation directly challenges the common misperception of Sufism as being inherently detached from or hostile to worldly affairs such as commerce and business (Sulaeman, 2022). On the contrary, scholars like Al-Ghazali integrated Sufi ethics directly into their economic thought, arguing that business activities must be aligned with moral principles and oriented towards an ultimate, otherworldly purpose to be truly meaningful (Maulidizen, 2019). A true Sufi, in this "progressive" view, is one who works and earns a living, but whose wealth is used proportionally to empower others and serve the community, not merely for personal aggrandizement (Sulaeman, 2022). Thus, Tasawwuf provides a robust ethical framework grounded in a transcendent worldview, offering a set of guiding principles for conducting socio-economic life with integrity, justice, and compassion.

METHODS

To construct a novel theoretical framework at the intersection of two distinct. Disciplines marketing management and Islamic spirituality a qualitative, systematic literature review (SLR) was selected as the most appropriate methodology. This approach is superior to a traditional narrative review for its rigor, transparency, and replicability. An SLR is particularly well-suited for synthesizing fragmented knowledge from disparate fields, systematically identifying conceptual gaps in the existing research, and providing a solid evidence base upon which to build new theory (Creswell, n.d.; Mahadi, M. H., Kamarzaman, M. H., Kamaruzaman, M. A. S., & Jalil, 2023). The qualitative nature of the review allows for an in-depth, interpretive analysis of the core concepts, philosophies, and ethical principles within both domains, which is essential for the task of conceptual integration.

A comprehensive search protocol was developed to ensure a thorough and unbiased retrieval of relevant scholarly literature. The search was conducted across several major academic databases known for their extensive coverage of social sciences, business, and humanities, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The viability of this search is confirmed by the presence of existing peer-reviewed articles on related topics within these databases, indicating a foundation of scholarly discourse upon which to build (Karakas, F., Sarigollu, E., & Kavas, 2015; Machouche, S., & Bensaid, 2008). The search strategy employed a combination of keywords and Boolean operators to capture the breadth of relevant literature. Search strings were constructed around two primary conceptual clusters: Marketing Management Concepts: ("marketing management" OR "marketing mix" OR "consumer behavior" OR "branding" OR "customer relationship management"). Tasawwuf and Islamic Ethics Concepts: AND ("Tasawwuf" OR "Sufism" OR "Islamic mysticism" OR "Islamic business ethics" OR "spiritual marketing" OR "Al-Ghazali") Variations of these terms were used to ensure comprehensive coverage. The search was limited to publications in English to maintain consistency in the analysis. The

reference lists of key articles and seminal books identified in the initial search were also manually scanned (a process known as "snowballing") to locate additional relevant sources that may have been missed by the database search.

To ensure the quality and relevance of the literature included in the review, a clear set of inclusion and exclusion criteria was established and rigorously applied during the screening process. Inclusion Criteria: 1) Publication Type: Peer-reviewed journal articles, seminal scholarly books, and high-quality, peer-reviewed conference proceedings; 2) Language: Publications written in English; 3) Content Focus: Sources were included if they explicitly discussed one or more of the following: (a) foundational concepts, strategies, or tools of marketing management (e.g., the 7Ps, STP); (b) core principles, ethics, or goals of Tasawwuf (e.g., tazkiyah, ihsan, taqwa); (c) the direct application or conceptual integration of Sufi, Islamic spiritual, or Islamic ethical principles to business, economics, leadership, or consumer behavior.

Exclusion Criteria: 1) Lack of Scholarly Rigor: Editorials, opinion pieces, non-peer-reviewed articles, and literature that was purely devotional or hagiographic in nature without accompanying academic analysis; 2) Irrelevant Focus: Articles that mentioned the keywords peripherally without substantive discussion relevant to the research question; 3) Language: All non-English sources were excluded; 4) Duplicate Publications: Where multiple versions of the same study existed, only the most complete and recent version (typically the journal article) was retained.

The analysis of the selected literature was conducted using a thematic synthesis approach. This structured method involves a multi-stage process designed to systematically identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the data. The process unfolded as follows: Familiarization: The full text of all included articles was read and re-read to gain a deep and holistic understanding of the content. Initial notes and ideas were recorded. Initial Coding: The literature was systematically coded line-by-line. Codes were assigned to segments of text that described key concepts, principles, relationships, or arguments relevant to the research question (e.g., "price as profit maximization," "taqwa as accountability," "consumerism as identity"). Theme Development: The initial codes were collated, and patterns were identified. Similar or related codes were clustered together to form potential descriptive themes (e.g., "Tactical Tools of Marketing," "Core Sufi Virtues," "Critique of Materialism"). Review and Refinement: The descriptive themes were reviewed against the original data to ensure they accurately represented the literature. This stage involved refining, merging, or splitting themes to create a coherent and logical thematic structure. The relationship between themes was also mapped to develop higher-order, analytical themes. Defining and Naming Themes: Each final theme was clearly defined, and a concise, descriptive name was assigned. This process resulted in the thematic structure presented in the "Results" section of this paper, which organizes the synthesized findings into two primary discourses: the architecture of modern marketing and the ethical compendium of Tasawwuf. This systematic synthesis provides the conceptual foundation for the development of the new framework in the "Discussion" section.

RESULTS

Thematic Synthesis of the Core Discourses

The systematic literature review yielded a rich body of knowledge that can be synthesized into two principal thematic areas. The first delineates the foundational architecture of modern marketing management, outlining its core concepts, strategic frameworks, and philosophical orientations. The second distills the ethical compendium of Tasawwuf, identifying its ultimate purpose and the core operational virtues relevant to socio-economic conduct. These two syntheses establish the distinct conceptual worlds that the subsequent discussion will seek to integrate.

The literature presents marketing management as a comprehensive and structured discipline aimed at creating and managing profitable customer relationships. Its architecture is built upon a set of core concepts, strategic frameworks, and an evolving philosophical orientation toward the marketplace. The conceptual bedrock of marketing revolves around understanding and responding to human needs, wants, and demands (Ossisto., 2023; Young Urban Project. (n.d.), 2025). Needs are defined as states of felt deprivation and are basic human requirements for survival, such as food, shelter, and safety. These are not created by marketers but are inherent to the human condition (Young Urban Project. (n.d.), 2025). Wants are the specific forms that human needs take as they are shaped by culture and individual personality. For example, a person needs food but may want a specific type of cuisine. Demands are wants that are backed by purchasing power; consumers demand products and services that offer the most value and satisfaction for their money (Kotler, P., & Armstrong, 2018; Ossisto., 2023).

The satisfaction of these demands occurs through market exchange processes, which involve obtaining a desired object from someone by offering something in return, typically money (Young Urban Project. (n.d.), 2025). A transaction is the unit of measurement for marketing, representing a completed trade of values between two parties (Young Urban Project. (n.d.), 2025). Modern marketing, however, has moved beyond a purely transactional focus to emphasize relationship marketing, which aims to build strong, long-term, and mutually beneficial relationships with customers and other key stakeholders (Quizlet. (n.d.), 2025).

The Marketing Mix (The 7Ps)

The tactical implementation of marketing strategy is managed through a set of controllable variables known as the marketing mix. Originally conceptualized as the '4Ps' in the 1950s (McCarthy, 1960), this framework has been expanded to the '7Ps' to better encompass the complexities of modern service-based economies (Booms, B. H., & Bitner, 1981; Brafton, 2023). Product: This refers to the goods or services the company offers to the target market. It encompasses aspects like quality, design, features, branding, and packaging, all designed to satisfy a customer need or want (Brafton, 2023; Investopedia., 2025). Price: This is the amount of money customers must pay to obtain the product. Pricing strategy is a critical decision and involves analyzing competitor pricing, production costs, and, crucially, the consumer's perception of value and willingness to pay (Brafton, 2023; Investopedia., 2025). Place: This includes the company's activities that make the product available to target consumers. It involves decisions about distribution channels, logistics, inventory management, and locations, whether physical or digital (Investopedia., 2025; Ossisto., 2023). Promotion: This refers to the activities that communicate the merits of the product and persuade target customers to buy it. It includes a wide range of channels such as advertising, public relations, social media marketing, and email marketing (Brafton, 2023; Investopedia., 2025).

People: This element recognizes the critical role that all human actors play in the marketing process, especially in service delivery. The attitude and skills of employees directly impact the customer's experience and perception of the brand (Brafton, 2023). Process: This refers to the procedures, mechanisms, and flow of activities by which the service is delivered. An efficient and customer-friendly process is essential for ensuring satisfaction and can be a key competitive advantage (Brafton, 2023). Physical Evidence: This is the environment in which the service is delivered and where the firm and customer interact, as well as any tangible components that facilitate performance or communication of the service. This can include everything from a retail store's design to a company's website (Brafton, 2023). Strategic Frameworks. To effectively deploy the marketing mix, organizations utilize strategic frameworks to navigate the market. The most prominent of these is Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning (STP) (Kotler, P., & Armstrong, 2018; Ossisto., 2023). Segmentation involves dividing a broad market into distinct subsets of consumers who have common needs, characteristics, or behaviors. Targeting is the

process of evaluating each market segment's attractiveness and selecting one or more segments to enter. Positioning consists of arranging for a product to occupy a clear, distinctive, and desirable place relative to competing products in the minds of target consumers. This is achieved through crafting a unique value proposition and communicating it effectively (Ossisto., 2023).

Philosophical Orientations

The literature reveals an evolution in the guiding philosophies of marketing. The Production Concept holds that consumers will favor products that are widely available and inexpensive, leading companies to focus on production and distribution efficiency. The Product Concept assumes consumers favor products that offer the most in quality, performance, and innovative features. The Selling Concept posits that consumers will not buy enough of the firm's products unless it undertakes a large-scale selling and promotion effort, often with little regard for long-term customer satisfaction. A significant shift occurred with the advent of the Marketing Concept, which holds that achieving organizational goals depends on knowing the needs and wants of target markets and delivering the desired satisfactions more effectively and efficiently than competitors. More recently, the Societal Marketing Concept has emerged, which extends the marketing concept by questioning whether the pure satisfaction of immediate consumer wants is always in the best long-term interests of consumers and society. It calls for marketers to balance three considerations: company profits, consumer wants, and society's interests (Quizlet. (n.d.), 2025). The synthesis of literature on Tasawwuf reveals a coherent and deeply rooted ethical system for guiding human action, including economic and business activities. This system is not merely a list of rules but an integrated framework aimed at the comprehensive transformation of the human person.

The Foundational Goal: Tazkiyah and Proximity to God

The ultimate aim (maqasid) of Tasawwuf is the purification of the inner self (tazkiyah al-nafs) and the attainment of proximity to God (Al-Yaqoubi, 2013; Chittick, 2014). It is an inward journey to cleanse the heart of blameworthy traits such as arrogance, greed, and insincerity, and to adorn it with praiseworthy virtues (Fakhry, 2004). This foundational goal provides the ultimate "why" behind all ethical conduct. Actions are not deemed ethical simply because they conform to an external code, but because they are manifestations of a purified inner state and are performed with the intention of seeking God's pleasure (Chittick, 2014; Mahadi, M. H., Kamarzaman, M. H., Kamaruzaman, M. A. S., & Jalil, 2023). This reorients the purpose of all worldly activities, including business, from mere material gain to a means of spiritual development and service.

Core Operational Virtues

From this foundational goal emanate a set of interconnected operational virtues that form a complete spiritual ecosystem for ethical conduct. The literature highlights several principles that are particularly relevant to the marketplace. Taqwa (God-Consciousness): This is arguably the root of all Islamic ethics. Taqwa is the state of being constantly aware of God's presence, knowledge, and ultimate accountability (Fatma, 2018). In a business context, this consciousness acts as an internal moral compass, fostering a profound sense of responsibility for one's actions and their consequences. It is the belief that every transaction, every promise, and every product is witnessed by God, which compels the individual to act with integrity even when external supervision is absent (Fatma, 2018; Maulidizen, 2019). Ikhlas (Sincerity): Closely linked to taqwa, ikhlas is the purification of one's intention (niyyah). It means performing an action solely for the sake of God, free from ulterior motives such as the desire for public praise (riya'), reputation, or purely selfish gain (Al-Bā'ūniyah, 2013; Mahadi, M. H., Kamarzaman, M. H., Kamaruzaman, M. A. S., & Jalil, 2023). In marketing, this principle challenges the very notion of creating a brand "image" that may be disconnected from the company's reality. It demands that all communications and actions be a sincere reflection of the organization's true values and purpose (Mahadi, M. H., Kamarzaman, M. H., Kamaruzaman, M. A. S., & Jalil, 2023).

Amanah (Trustworthiness): This principle frames all of one's possessions, abilities, and responsibilities as a sacred trust (amanah) from God. From this perspective, a business is not merely private property to be exploited for maximum profit, but a trust to be managed responsibly for the benefit of all stakeholders—employees, customers, society, and the environment (Mahadi, M. H., Kamarzaman, M. H., Kamaruzaman, M. A. S., & Jalil, 2023). Products are a trust offered to customers, a position of leadership is a trust, and the natural resources used in production are a trust. This fosters a deep sense of stewardship and accountability. **'Adl (Justice):** 'Adl refers to the principle of justice, equity, fairness, and maintaining balance in all dealings (Mahadi, M. H., Kamarzaman, M. H., Kamaruzaman, M. A. S., & Jalil, 2023). In the marketplace, it demands fair pricing, just wages, equitable contracts, and the avoidance of any form of exploitation or deception. It requires that transactions be based on mutual consent and full transparency, ensuring that no party is taken advantage of. **Sidq (Truthfulness):** A fundamental virtue in Tasawwuf, sidq is the unwavering commitment to truthfulness in both speech and action (Fakhry, 2004). It is the opposite of hypocrisy and deception. In a marketing context, this translates directly to a prohibition on false or misleading advertising, exaggerated claims, and any form of communication designed to manipulate or deceive the customer (Chittick, 2014). **Ihsan (Excellence):** Ihsan represents the pinnacle of ethical and spiritual refinement. It is defined in a famous Prophetic tradition as "to worship God as if you see Him, and if you cannot see Him, then you know that He sees you." In a work context, Ihsan means striving for excellence and perfection in everything one does, driven by the awareness that the work is being observed by God (Sarhank, 2025; Wahab, S. R. A., & Ismail, 2017). It links the quality of a product or service directly to the spiritual state of its producer. It is not merely about achieving a technical standard of quality but about imbuing one's work with beauty, care, and the highest level of proficiency (itqan) as an act of devotion (ProductiveMuslim, 2016; Wahab, S. R. A., & Ismail, 2017).

The interconnectedness of these virtues is crucial. One cannot simply "implement" Ihsan in product development as a standalone quality metric. Rather, Ihsan is the natural and beautiful outcome of a work process that is rooted in Taqwa (the awareness of being watched by God), driven by Ikhlas (the sincere intention to please Him), and governed by Amanah (the sense of responsibility for the trust one has been given). This systemic, inside-out nature is what gives the Sufi ethical framework its transformative power.

The Critique of Materialism: Zuhud and Qana'ah

Tasawwuf offers a direct and powerful critique of the consumerist ethos through the concepts of zuhud and qana'ah. Zuhud does not mean poverty or the complete renunciation of the world, but rather asceticism in the sense of detachment of the heart from dependency on worldly things (Sulaeman, 2022; Zuhri, S., & Anwar, 2023). It is the internal freedom from being possessed by one's possessions. Qana'ah is the virtue of contentment and gratitude, the state of being satisfied and feeling sufficient with what one has been given by God (Rahmawati, D., 2022; Zuhri, S., & Anwar, 2023). Together, these principles act as a spiritual antidote to the artificially induced dissatisfaction and endless desire that fuel modern consumerism. They encourage a lifestyle of sufficiency and simplicity, where consumption is based on genuine need rather than social pressure or the pursuit of status (Rahmawati, D., 2022; Raza, 2021). This provides a strong ethical basis for promoting sustainable consumption and challenging the paradigm of limitless economic growth.

Discussion: Toward Ihsan in the Marketplace – A Sufi-Centric Marketing Framework. The preceding synthesis reveals two distinct worldviews: a marketing paradigm largely oriented toward stimulating and satisfying material wants within a transactional framework, and a Sufi paradigm focused on the inner purification of the self and the orientation of all actions toward a transcendent purpose. The chasm between them is not merely a matter of differing ethical codes but stems from a fundamental, ontological disagreement about the nature and purpose of the human being. Bridging this chasm requires more than appending a set of ethical rules to existing marketing practices; it

demands a radical reconstruction of the discipline's core tenets. This section develops a conceptual framework for such a reconstruction, beginning with an ontological shift and then systematically re-envisioning the marketing mix through the lens of core Sufi virtues.

The Ontological Shift: From Consumer to 'Abd (Servant) and Khalifah (Steward)

The foundational step in developing a Sufi-centric marketing model is to reject the reductionist and spiritually impoverished definition of the human person as a "consumer." The logic of consumerism reduces individuals to a set of appetites and defines their value and identity through their capacity to purchase and possess (Raza, 2021). This model is inherently unsatisfying, as material wants are, by their nature, limitless. A Sufi-centric framework begins by replacing this model with a spiritually richer and more holistic understanding of the human being, drawn from the core of Islamic theology. It proposes viewing every stakeholder—customer, employee, manager, supplier, and community member—through two complementary lenses: As an 'Abd (Servant of God): This perspective recognizes that every human being has a higher purpose that transcends material consumption. Their ultimate goal is spiritual growth and proximity to the Divine (Chittick, 2014; Fakhry, 2004). This reframes the purpose of a business and its products. Instead of seeing customers as targets whose desires must be stimulated for profit, the business sees them as fellow servants of God on a journey. The role of the business, then, is not to exploit their weaknesses or desires but to serve them in a way that aids, rather than hinders, their ultimate purpose. As a Khalifah (Steward of God on Earth): This concept posits that humanity has been entrusted with the responsibility of stewardship over the earth and its resources (Maulidizen, 2019). This imbues economic activity with a profound sense of responsibility. A business is not an autonomous entity with a right to unlimited exploitation of resources but a vehicle through which individuals exercise their stewardship. This immediately introduces principles of environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and long-term thinking into the core of the business mission. This ontological shift from "consumer" to "abd and khalifah" is transformative. It changes the fundamental question of marketing from "How can we sell more?" to "How can we best serve God's creation and fulfill our stewardship?" This reorients the entire purpose of the enterprise from profit maximization to a mission of service (khidmah) and the actualization of holistic human and societal well-being (falah).

Re-envisioning the Marketing Mix through Sufi Virtues

With this new ontological foundation in place, it becomes possible to systematically reconstruct the tactical tools of marketing the 7Ps through the guiding principles of Tasawwuf. Each element of the mix is transformed from a value-extraction tool into a value-creation instrument aligned with a higher ethical and spiritual purpose.

Product as Amanah (Trust) and Ihsan (Excellence)

In conventional marketing, product strategy often involves creating artificial differentiation, encouraging rapid replacement through planned obsolescence, and designing products that appeal to fleeting desires. A Sufi-centric approach views the Product as an amanah, a sacred trust offered to the community (Mahadi, M. H., Kamarzaman, M. H., Kamaruzaman, M. A. S., & Jalil, 2023). This perspective fundamentally alters the goals of product development. The guiding principle becomes Ihsan—the pursuit of excellence as an act of devotion (Sarhank, 2025; Wahab, S. R. A., & Ismail, 2017). A product developed with Ihsan is not merely functional; it is crafted with the highest possible quality, designed to be durable, genuinely beneficial (maslahah), and produced through ethical means that honor the trust of stewardship over human and natural resources. This requires a culture of perfection (itqan) and sincere intention (niyyah), where the goal is to create something of lasting value that truly serves human needs, rather than a disposable commodity that fuels a cycle of consumption (Ismail, 2018; Wahab, S. R. A., & Ismail, 2017).

Price as 'Adl (Justice)

Pricing in the dominant paradigm is often a strategic game aimed at maximizing profit margins. Tactics like price discrimination, psychological pricing (e.g., \$9.99 instead of

\$10.00), and dynamic pricing are designed to extract the maximum possible revenue from each customer segment. The principle of 'Adl (Justice) demands a shift from profit maximization to the establishment of a just and fair **Price** (Mahadi et al., 2023). Drawing on the economic ethics of Sufi scholars like Al-Ghazali, a just price is one that is transparent, based on mutual consent, and free from deception (gharar) or the exploitation of a customer's ignorance or desperation (Maulidizen, 2019). reflects the true value of the product and allows the business a reasonable, non-exploitative profit that ensures its sustainability while respecting the financial well-being of the customer.

Place (Distribution) as Community Well-being

Distribution strategy typically focuses on maximizing market penetration, efficiency, and channel control. A Sufi-centric view of **Place** re-evaluates distribution channels based on their impact on community well-being. This involves a commitment to ethical supply chains that ensure fair treatment of all intermediaries, from producers to laborers. It encourages sourcing from and supporting local economies where possible, contributing to the resilience and prosperity of the community. Furthermore, it implies a responsibility to ensure equitable access to essential goods and services, rather than focusing solely on the most profitable markets, thereby fulfilling the role of the business as a servant to the wider community.

Promotion as Sidq (Truthfulness) and Da'wah (Invitation)

Modern Promotion is often characterized by persuasive, and sometimes manipulative, communication designed to create artificial needs and trigger impulsive buying behavior. The Sufi virtue of Sidq (Truthfulness) provides a direct corrective (Chittick, 2014; Fakhry, 2004). All promotional activities—from advertising to social media content—must be based on honesty, clarity, and integrity. Claims must be verifiable, and information must be presented in a way that educates and empowers the customer to make a wise choice, not in a way that confuses or deceives them (Maulidizen, 2019; Raza, 2021). Beyond mere honesty, promotion can be elevated to a form of da'wah. This should not be understood in a narrow, proselytizing sense, but as a noble "invitation" to a better way of living. The company's marketing can become a platform for showcasing its commitment to ethical values, sustainability, excellence, and community service, thereby inviting customers to participate in a shared vision of a more just and beautiful world.

People as a Community of Khidmah (Service)

The 'People' element in the marketing mix is transformed from a focus on human resource management and customer service scripts to the cultivation of a genuine community of khidmah (service). This aligns with frameworks like the Sufi Corporate Leadership Model (SCLM), which emphasizes inner transformation, self-awareness, and a commitment to a higher purpose among leaders and employees (Sarhank, 2025). Employees are not cogs in a machine but valued partners in a shared mission. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) ceases to be a technological tool for maximizing customer lifetime value and becomes an ethical and spiritual practice of building genuine, long-term relationships based on empathy, mutual respect, and sincere care (Kurniawati, 2017).

Process as a Reflection of Niyyah (Intention)

Every **Process** in the value chain, from initial market research to after-sales support, must be imbued with and reflect a pure and sincere niyyah (intention) to serve (Fatma, 2018; Maulidizen, 2019). The conventional focus on optimizing processes solely for speed and cost-efficiency is balanced with ethical considerations. For example, market research must be conducted ethically, respecting privacy and not manipulating data. The sales process must be consultative and helpful, not high-pressure. The after-sales process must be generous and fair. The ethical purity of the means is considered as important as the desirability of the end.

Physical Evidence & Branding as *Ikhlas* (Sincerity)

In an image-saturated world, branding often focuses on crafting a desirable persona that may have little connection to the organization's actual substance. Tasawwuf is deeply critical of this form of hypocrisy (*riya'*)—the creation of a beautiful external image to hide a corrupt or empty reality (Demirli, 2023). The principle of *Ikhlas* (Sincerity) demands that a brand's **Physical Evidence** and identity be an authentic and sincere reflection of its true values and operational reality (Mahadi, M. H., Kamarzaman, M. H., Kamaruzaman, M. A. S., & Jalil, 2023). The brand's logo, the design of its spaces, its packaging, and its overall messaging should not be a mask but a mirror, honestly reflecting the company's commitment to *Ihsan*, '*Adl*, and *Amanah*. An Islamic brand personality, from this perspective, must be fundamentally rooted in trustworthiness and justice, creating a deep congruence between what the brand promises and what it actually delivers (Yusof, J. M., & Jusoh, 2013; Zain, M. Z. M., & Jan, 2019). The following table provides a comparative summary of the conventional marketing mix and the proposed Sufi-centric reconstruction.

The Role of Spiritual Consciousness (*Ruhaniyah*) in Marketing Decisions

A crucial element of this framework is the recognition that its principles cannot be implemented effectively through a top-down, compliance-based approach of rules and regulations alone. A list of ethical guidelines is insufficient to guard against the myriad temptations and pressures of the marketplace. The consistent and authentic application of virtues like '*Adl*, *Amanah*, and *Ihsan* requires a fundamental shift in the consciousness of the decision-makers within the organization.

This is where the concept of *ruhaniyah*, or spiritual consciousness, becomes the mediating factor that brings the framework to life (Mahadi, M. H., Kamarzaman, M. H., Kamaruzaman, M. A. S., & Jalil, 2023). Tasawwuf is not just a body of ethical teachings but a set of practices designed to cultivate this inner state of awareness. Two such practices are central and can be framed as essential managerial tools for maintaining ethical alignment: *Dhikr* (Remembrance of God): In its broadest sense, *dhikr* is the practice of maintaining a constant state of remembrance of God, which fosters the state of *Taqwa*. (God-consciousness)(Al-Bā'ūniyah, 2013; Khan, F. R., & Ul-Haq, 2017). In an organizational context, this translates to embedding the company's higher purpose and core ethical values into the daily rhythm of work. It means constantly reminding oneself and the team of the "why" behind their work—the mission of service and stewardship—so that this purpose informs every decision, from a major strategic choice to a minor customer interaction. *Muhasabah* (Self-Introspection/Accountability): This is the practice of regularly taking account of one's own actions, intentions, and inner states (Zuhri, S., & Anwar, 2023). It is a process of rigorous self-examination to identify shortcomings and areas for improvement. As a managerial practice, *muhasabah* involves creating structures for regular ethical reflection and accountability. This could take the form of ethical audits, team meetings dedicated to discussing the ethical implications of decisions, and fostering a culture where individuals feel safe to question practices that may deviate from the organization's stated values. By cultivating *ruhaniyah* through such practices, an organization moves from merely knowing its ethical principles to embodying them. Decisions are then made not just based on market data and financial projections, but also with reference to an internal moral and spiritual compass, ensuring that the organization remains true to its higher purpose.

The true novelty of this Sufi-centric framework lies not in its potential as a niche strategy for "Islamic markets," but in its promise as a universal paradigm of "post-consumerist" marketing. The core principles it champions Excellence (*Ihsan*), Justice ('*Adl*), Trust (*Amanah*), Truthfulness (*Sidq*), and Service (*Khidmah*) are universal human values that resonate across cultures and traditions. In a global business environment increasingly defined by calls for purpose, sustainability, and authentic corporate responsibility (Sarhank, 2025; Singh, 2014), consumers and employees alike are demanding that companies stand for something more than profit. The Sufi framework provides what many secular models of business ethics lack: a deeply rooted, coherent, and spiritually

motivating *raison d'être* for ethical behavior. While a secular model might justify ethics on pragmatic grounds (e.g., "it enhances brand reputation"), the Sufi model grounds it in a transcendent purpose the fulfillment of one's duty to God and to all of creation. Thus, while its intellectual origins are in Tasawwuf, its practical application is universal, offering a roadmap for any organization seeking to transition from a purely profit-driven, consumerist model to a purpose-driven, service-oriented one.

Table 1. A Comparative Framework of Conventional vs. Sufi-Centric Marketing Mix

Marketing Element	Mix Conventional Paradigm: Goal & Tactic	Sufi-Centric Paradigm: Guiding Principle & Goal
Product	Maximize features, planned obsolescence, create artificial wants.	Ihsan (Excellence) & Amanah (Trust): Create durable, beneficial, high-quality goods that genuinely serve human needs and are offered as a sacred trust.
Price	Maximize profit margin, price discrimination, psychological pricing.	'Adl (Justice): Set fair, transparent prices reflecting true value and mutual consent, avoiding exploitation (gharar) and injustice.
Promotion	Create hype, persuasive/manipulative	Sidq (Truthfulness): Communicate honestly and
Marketing Mix Element	Conventional Paradigm: Goal & Tactic	Sufi-Centric Paradigm: Guiding Principle & Goal
	advertising, impulse triggers.	clearly, educate the consumer, and build relationships based on integrity.
Place	Maximize market penetration, control exclusive channels.	Community Well-being: Ensure equitable access, support local economies, and maintain ethical and just supply chains.
People	View employees as resources and customers as targets for acquisition/retention.	Khidmah (Service) & Ukhuwwah (Brotherhood): Foster a culture of sincere service and mutual respect among all stakeholders.
Process	Optimize for speed and cost-efficiency, often at human or ethical expense.	Niyyah (Intention): Ensure every step of the process is ethical, transparent, and imbued with the intention to create genuine good.
Physical Evidence	Create a brand image of desirability, status, or luxury, often detached from reality.	Ikhlas (Sincerity): Ensure branding is an authentic and sincere reflection of the company's true ethical substance and values.

Source: Processed Data (2025)

CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to address a critical gap in contemporary business literature by developing a comprehensive conceptual framework for marketing management grounded in the ethical-spiritual tradition of Tasawwuf. The analysis began by highlighting the ontological friction between the conventional marketing paradigm, which reduces the human person to a "consumer," and the Sufi worldview, which envisions the human as a servant ('abd) and steward (khalifah) with a transcendent purpose. Building upon this foundational shift, the paper systematically reconstructed the 7Ps of the marketing mix. Each element was re-envisioned through the lens of core Sufi virtues: Product as a trust (Amanah) demanding excellence (Ihsan); Price as a matter of justice ('Adl); Promotion as an exercise in truthfulness (Sidq); and the entire enterprise as a mission of service (Khidmah). The framework posits that the authentic implementation of these principles is contingent upon the cultivation of spiritual consciousness (ruhaniyah) within the organization's culture, fostered through practices like remembrance (dhikr) and self-accountability (muhasabah). The result is a holistic paradigm that reorients the objective of marketing from profit maximization and want-stimulation to the facilitation of genuine human and societal well-being (falah).

The proposed framework has several significant theoretical implications. First, it directly challenges the foundational axioms of consumerism that underpin much of modern marketing theory. By offering a robust, spiritually grounded alternative, it contributes to the growing field of critical marketing studies, which questions the societal impact of dominant marketing ideologies. Second, it enriches the discourse on business ethics by moving beyond deontological (rule-based) or utilitarian (consequence-based) approaches to a virtue ethics framework rooted in the transformation of the inner character of the economic agent. Third, it advances the field of Islamic economics and finance by providing a detailed, operational model that translates high-level theological and ethical principles into the specific, tactical domain of marketing management, moving the conversation from what is permissible (halal) to what is excellent and spiritually uplifting (tayyib and ihsan).

For business leaders, entrepreneurs, and marketing practitioners, this framework offers a practical and inspiring roadmap for building organizations that are both economically sustainable and ethically sound. It provides a coherent language and a set of guiding principles for creating authentic "purpose-driven" brands that can build deep, lasting trust with all stakeholders. Adopting this model can lead to enhanced employee engagement and morale, as individuals find greater meaning in their work when it is aligned with a higher purpose of service. It can also foster profound customer loyalty, as consumers are increasingly drawn to brands that demonstrate genuine integrity and a commitment to social and environmental responsibility. In essence, the framework provides a blueprint for achieving competitive advantage not through manipulation, but through sincerity, excellence, and justice.

As a conceptual paper based on a systematic literature review, the primary limitation of this study is its theoretical nature. The proposed framework, while rigorously developed from existing literature, has yet to be empirically tested. This limitation, however, opens up several promising avenues for future research that can build upon this foundational work. Empirical Case Studies: In-depth qualitative case studies are needed to explore how businesses, both implicitly and explicitly, are already applying principles similar to those outlined in the framework. Organizations like the Tarekat al-Idrisiyyah in Indonesia, which combines Sufi spiritual practice with diverse business activities, could provide rich empirical data (Sulaeman, 2022). Quantitative Analysis: Future research could develop and validate measurement scales for the key constructs of the Sufi-centric marketing mix (e.g., perceived brand amanah, price 'adl). Quantitative studies could then be conducted to measure the impact of adopting such a framework on key performance indicators, including customer loyalty, brand trust, employee satisfaction, and long-term financial

performance. Cross-Cultural Adaptability: A key proposition of this paper is the potential universality of the framework's core principles. Cross-cultural empirical research is needed to test this proposition. Studies could explore the resonance and adaptability of this Sufi-derived model in diverse non-Muslim cultural and business contexts, examining how concepts like Ihsan and Amanah are interpreted and implemented by organizations seeking a more ethical and purpose-driven approach. Application to Digital Marketing: The digital realm presents unique ethical challenges. Future research should focus on extending this framework to develop specific ethical guidelines for digital marketing, social media engagement, and the use of consumer data, guided by Sufi principles of privacy, truthfulness, and non-harm. In conclusion, by placing the purification of the heart and the service of creation at the center of the marketplace, the ethical lens of Tasawwuf offers a powerful vision for transforming marketing from a driver of materialism into a potent force for individual and collective flourishing.

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