

## Developing Entrepreneurial Creativity through Creative Thinking Skills: Qualitative Study on Halal Industry SMEs in Pesantren

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### ABSTRACT

*The halal industry in Indonesia is experiencing significant growth, with an increasing number of business actors involved, including within the pesantren environment. Pesantren have great potential to develop entrepreneurship through creative thinking skills. However, there are challenges in optimizing entrepreneurial creativity among santri. This study aims to explore the influence of creative thinking skills in developing entrepreneurial creativity in halal industry SMEs based in Bobos Cirebon Islamic boarding schools. This research provides novelty by examining the relationship between creative thinking skills and entrepreneurship development in pesantren within the context of the halal industry. The method used is qualitative research with a case study approach, involving in-depth interviews with SME managers and students involved in the halal industry. The results show that creative thinking skills play a crucial role in driving product innovation, solving business problems, and creating new opportunities within halal industry SMEs. Additionally, social support factors and entrepreneurship training in pesantren also strengthen entrepreneurial creativity. In conclusion, the ability to think creatively can be key to developing entrepreneurial creativity in pesantren and increasing the competitiveness of SMEs in the halal industry sector. The social implication of this study is the importance of integrating creativity and entrepreneurship training into the pesantren curriculum to produce creative entrepreneurs who can contribute to the development of the halal industry.*

*Keywords: Entrepreneurial Creativity, Creative Thinking Skills, Pesantren, SMEs, Halal Industry.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The halal industry in Indonesia, encompassing various sectors such as food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and tourism, is witnessing significant growth. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in 2023, the halal economy contributed about 10% to the national GDP and is expected to continue expanding rapidly. This growth is aligned with the rising awareness among global Muslim consumers towards products that meet halal standards. This trend not only benefits large industrial sectors but also presents vast opportunities for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to grow, including pesantren-based SMEs. Pesantren holds considerable potential to develop entrepreneurship through creative thinking skills. However, despite these opportunities, many pesantren have not fully harnessed creativity and innovation in their business management, which remains a major issue in the development of entrepreneurship within pesantren.<sup>1</sup>

Creative entrepreneurship is a rapidly growing concept in the field of entrepreneurship studies, emphasizing innovation and the ability to create new value through creative ideas.<sup>2</sup> In this context, creativity goes beyond the creation of new products, extending to innovative business practices that can distinguish a business from others. Indriani & Setiawan (2021) argue that the application of this theory in pesantren, as religiously oriented educational institutions, requires a sensitive approach to the existing culture and beliefs. However, while many studies focus on creative entrepreneurship in SMEs, few have examined its application in pesantren, particularly regarding the halal industry. Most prior studies have emphasized entrepreneurship among youth outside pesantren, overlooking the significant potential of these educational institutions. This gap in the literature indicates the need for more research on the application of entrepreneurial creativity within pesantren.

Juridically, the development of the halal industry in Indonesia is regulated by various laws, both national and international. Law No. 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance requires that all products circulating in Indonesia meet halal standards, which provides an opportunity for SMEs to contribute to the halal industry, as long as they comply with halal certification procedures regulated by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). Additionally, the government offers various programs and incentives to encourage pesantren-based SMEs to develop halal businesses that meet global market standards. Nugroho & Utami (2023) argue that despite these supportive policies, the implementation of creativity-based entrepreneurship in pesantren is often hindered by a lack of access to entrepreneurship training and supportive resources.<sup>3</sup>

A global phenomenon shows the rapid growth of halal product consumption. The Global Islamic Economy Report 2023 states that the global halal industry is worth around USD 4.9 trillion, with Indonesia, having one of the largest Muslim populations, being a major player in this sector.<sup>4</sup> Halal products from pesantren-based SMEs have a unique advantage due to their authentic religious values, which are trusted by consumers. Nationally, Indonesian pesantren have long been recognized as institutions that not only provide religious education but also teach life skills through practical training. However, many pesantren have yet to fully maximize the entrepreneurial potential of their students, especially in creating innovative products that cater to the demands of the modern market. This is reflected in the limited number of pesantren-based SMEs in the halal industry, despite the vast market potential.

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<sup>1</sup> Setiawan, D. (2022). Entrepreneurship Development in Pesantren. *Journal of Islamic Economics*, 12(2), 45-56.

<sup>2</sup> Amabile, T. M. (1996). *Creativity in context: An update to the social psychology of creativity*. Westview Press.

<sup>3</sup> Karim, A., Faiz, A., Nur'Aini, N., & Rahman, F. Y. (2022). The policy of organisation, the spirit of Islamic progressivism, and its association with social welfare educators. *Tatar Pasundan: Journal of Religious Education and Training*, 16(1), 69-75.

<sup>4</sup> DinarStandard. (2023). *Global Islamic Economy Report*. DinarStandard Publications.

For instance, Pesantren Bobos Cirebon has started developing SMEs based on halal products. The pesantren produces halal-certified snacks and processed foods, but it still faces significant challenges regarding product innovation and business management. Nugroho & Utami (2023) argue that the early research showed that despite the desire to grow, limitations in creative thinking skills are among the factors hindering the development of pesantren-based SMEs in the halal industry sector.<sup>5</sup> This issue forms the basis of the current study, which aims to explore how creative thinking can drive entrepreneurial creativity in pesantren-based SMEs.

An indication of the challenges faced by Pesantren Bobos and other pesantren is the lack of knowledge and skills in creative thinking, which leads to low levels of innovation in products and marketing strategies. The root cause of this problem can be traced back to the absence of entrepreneurship training that integrates creativity within the pesantren curriculum, as well as limited resources for market research and product development.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the traditional mindset that prioritizes religious knowledge over practical skills often inhibits the emergence of creative ideas in business management. Therefore, this study focuses on exploring how the application of creative thinking skills can serve as a solution to address these challenges.

This research proposes a solution in the form of creativity-based entrepreneurship training within pesantren, with a more practical and applicable approach. This training not only teaches business principles to students but also provides space for developing creative ideas that can be applied to SMEs, particularly in the context of the halal industry. Through this approach, pesantren can produce entrepreneurs who rely not only on traditional products but also on innovations that can compete in the global market. Several studies have shown that creative entrepreneurship positively impacts the growth of SMEs, both in terms of product innovation and business problem-solving.<sup>7</sup>

While research on creativity in pesantren is limited, studies on the importance of entrepreneurship development within pesantren have been conducted.<sup>8</sup> This study, however, emphasizes the direct relationship between creative thinking skills and the development of halal SMEs in pesantren, which is underexplored in the existing literature. Therefore, this study offers novelty by investigating this relationship, and it provides practical contributions by suggesting concrete solutions in the form of creativity-based entrepreneurship training to enhance the competitiveness of pesantren-based SMEs in the halal industry.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aims to identify how creative thinking skills can foster entrepreneurial creativity in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) within the halal industry sector at the Bobos Cirebon Islamic Boarding School. To gain a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon, a qualitative research approach with a case study design was employed as the primary methodology. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the

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<sup>5</sup> Karim, A., & Afnan, D. (2020). Kiai interpersonal managerial: Henry Mintzberg perspective. *Journal of Leadership in Organizations*, 2(2), 75-90. <https://doi.org/10.22146/jlo.56290>

<sup>6</sup> Karim, A., Hamamah, F., Sukardi, D., & Jalaludin. (2024). Kiai leadership, juvenile delinquency, and pesantren-based rehabilitation: A Henry Mintzberg perspective. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Educational Management Research*, 9(1), 67-74. <https://doi.org/10.21742/ajemr.2024.9.1.05>

<sup>7</sup> Hughes, M., & Morgan, R. E. (2016). Creativity and Innovation in Small Business. *International Small Business Journal*, 34(2), 119-134.

<sup>8</sup> Setiawan, D. (2022). Entrepreneurship Development in Pesantren. *Journal of Islamic Economics*, 12(2), 45-56. See Karim, A., Mardhotillah, N. F., & Samadi, M. I. (2019). Ethical leadership transforms into ethnic: Exploring new leader's style of Indonesia. *Journal of Leadership in Organisations*, 1(2), 146-157. <https://doi.org/10.22146/jlo.44625>

dynamics within a very specific context,<sup>9</sup> in this case, focusing on SMEs in the pesantren environment, which are characterized by unique business practices based on halal and sustainability principles.

The object of this research is the SMEs operating within the halal industry at the Bobos Cirebon Islamic Boarding School. The study specifically examines how the creative thinking skills of these SMEs contribute to the development of entrepreneurial creativity. SMEs in the halal industry face distinct challenges, as they must adhere to Islamic religious principles while also meeting the demands of a growing market.<sup>10</sup> Thus, understanding how these businesses innovate and create sustainable opportunities is crucial for overcoming such challenges.

This research employs a qualitative methodology with a case study approach to explore the phenomena within the specific context of the halal industry SMEs at the Bobos Cirebon Islamic Boarding School. A qualitative approach enables the researcher to gain deep insights into the processes, experiences, and perceptions of individuals involved in business activities within the pesantren environment (Patton, 2015). Case studies were selected for their ability to provide a thorough understanding of the internal dynamics of the pesantren and the challenges and opportunities faced by SMEs in the halal industry.

The data for this study are derived from two primary sources: (1) Primary Data: In-depth interviews were conducted with SME entrepreneurs, pesantren managers, and students involved in entrepreneurial activities. These interviews provide valuable insights into the perspectives and practices of individuals directly engaged in SME operations and demonstrate how creative thinking is applied in the business context.<sup>11</sup> (2) Secondary Data: This includes business activity reports, data on halal products produced, and administrative records available at the pesantren. Additionally, relevant literature on entrepreneurship development, the halal industry, and entrepreneurial creativity was reviewed to enrich the research context.

To gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena, the research involves a range of respondents, including SME entrepreneurs, pesantren managers, and students actively participating in halal businesses. The following section outlines the respondents involved in the study.

**Table 1. Respondent Characteristics**

<b>Respondent Category</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Description</b>
SME Entrepreneurs	5 people	Entrepreneurs who run SMEs based on the halal industry in the Bobos Cirebon pesantren. They have relevant experience in managing businesses and halal product innovation.
Pesantren Manager	2 people	Managers who are directly involved in the development of entrepreneurship in pesantren. They have a strategic role in supporting the implementation of SME activities.

<sup>9</sup> Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

<sup>10</sup> Suryani, T. (2016). Halal industry: Opportunities and challenges for SMEs in Indonesia. *Journal of Economics and Entrepreneurship*, 5(1), 45-60.

<sup>11</sup> Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Santri Engaged in SMEs      7 people      Santris are actively involved in entrepreneurial activities in pesantren, both as labour and managers. They also play an important role in the implementation of halal businesses in pesantren.

The selection of respondents was based on the criteria of their direct involvement in entrepreneurial activities based on the halal industry in pesantren. This is in accordance with the principle of purposive sampling which is often used in qualitative research to obtain relevant and in-depth data from the right sources.<sup>12</sup>

To obtain the necessary data, several data collection techniques were used, including: (1) In-depth Interview: This technique was used to elicit information directly from respondents about their experiences in running SMEs and applying creativity in entrepreneurship. This interview is semi-structured, which means that the researcher has prepared a list of questions, but still leaves room for respondents to provide more open and in-depth answers.<sup>13</sup> (2) Participatory Observation: In this observation, the researcher is involved in the daily activities that take place in SMEs as well as the interaction between entrepreneurs and students. Observation allows researchers to obtain contextual data that is not always reflected in interviews or documentation (Spradley, 1980). In addition, observation also provides a direct picture of the entrepreneurial practices that occur in pesantren. (3) Documentation: Analysis of documents related to halal SME activities in pesantren, including reports on business activities, lists of halal products, and regulations related to entrepreneurship in pesantren. This documentation is useful to complement the data obtained through interviews and observations, and provide a clearer picture of the dynamics of halal businesses in pesantren.

The main instrument in this study was a semi-structured interview sheet, which consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit information on various aspects of entrepreneurship and creativity. The following is an example of the interview indicator sheet used in this study:

**Table 2. Research Instrument Indicators**

Intended Aspect	Interview Indicator	Key Question
Creative Thinking Ability	Ability to find new solutions, innovative thinking	"How do you find solutions to the challenges in your SME?"
Entrepreneurial Experience	Experience in managing halal industry-based SMEs	"Tell us about your experience in managing halal SMEs in pesantren."
Pesantren Influence	The role of pesantren in entrepreneurship development	"What is the role of pesantren in supporting entrepreneurship development here?"
Decision Making Process	Decision-making process in managing SMEs	"How do you make decisions regarding product development or marketing strategies?"

<sup>12</sup> Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications. Purnomo, H., Mahpudin, Ramadhan, C. S., Rachmat, I. F., & Karim, A. (2024). *Principal Leadership And*

<sup>13</sup> Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Challenges and Opportunities	Challenges and opportunities in the halal industry	"What are the challenges you face in running a halal SME and how do you overcome them?"
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This instrument aims to explore respondents' understanding of how their creative thinking skills are applied in the business world and how pesantren can support the development of halal-based entrepreneurship.

The data analysis process in this study used thematic analysis which aimed to identify the main themes that emerged from the data collected. The steps in thematic data analysis include:<sup>14</sup>

Transcription: Interviews and observations were transcribed to facilitate the analysis process. (1) Coding: The collected data were coded, i.e. grouping pieces of data into relevant thematic categories. (2) Theme Organisation: The codes that have been grouped will be organised into main themes that reflect important aspects of the research. (3) Interpretation: Once the themes were organised, the researcher interpreted them to understand the meaning behind the data and explain how creative thinking skills relate to entrepreneurship development.

To ensure data validity and credibility, triangulation techniques were used in this study, both source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation involves comparing data obtained from various sources, namely SME entrepreneurs, pesantren managers, and santri who are directly involved in SMEs.<sup>15</sup> In addition, member checking was conducted by requesting feedback from respondents to verify the findings obtained.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Creative Thinking Skills Can Encourage the Development of Entrepreneurial Creativity in Halal Industrial SMEs in Pesantren

In-depth interviews were conducted with SME entrepreneurs, pesantren managers, and students involved in entrepreneurial activities. The interview questions focused on their experiences and perceptions regarding the application of creative thinking skills in developing entrepreneurial creativity in the halal industry. From the interviews with SME entrepreneurs, it was found that they use creative thinking skills to overcome the challenges of a very dynamic market. One of the entrepreneurs, A (50 years old), explained:

*"We continue to look for innovations, for example in terms of packaging and product variants. Islamic boarding schools have enormous resources in the form of students who are trained to work. We utilise that to increase productivity in a more creative way. Whenever there is a problem, we try to look at it from various perspectives."*

According to the pesantren manager, B (45 years old), the pesantren facilitates the development of entrepreneurial creativity by providing training that leads to the development of entrepreneurial skills.

*"We provide space for students and entrepreneurs to experiment. We realise that to develop a competitive halal business, they must have the ability to think creatively. Therefore, we encourage them to think outside the box."*

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<sup>14</sup> Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

<sup>15</sup> Flick, U. (2018). *An introduction to qualitative research* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Santris who are directly involved in SMEs, such as C (22 years old), stated that creativity is very important in developing a business.

*"We learnt to not only follow the established ways, but also look for new ways to market our halal products. One of the ideas I proposed was to make products with halal labelling more attractive so that they can be accepted by a wider market."*

During participatory observation, the researcher recorded the various activities that took place in the SMEs and the interactions between the entrepreneurs and the students. Some important findings from this observation include: (1) Product Innovation Process: SME entrepreneurs in Bobos Cirebon Islamic boarding schools actively develop product variants that are more creative and in accordance with market trends. For example, they develop food products based on local raw materials that have halal certification, and introduce environmentally friendly packaging. (2) Collaboration between Santris and Entrepreneurs: Santri actively contribute new ideas, especially in terms of marketing and product design. This shows the utilisation of the creative potential of the santris in supporting business activities.

The documentation collected included entrepreneurship activity reports that contained information on the halal products marketed, as well as a list of entrepreneurship training activities organised by the pesantren. The training teaches practical skills in business management, marketing strategies, and product innovation, all of which lead to the development of entrepreneurial creativity.

**Table 3. Results of Thematic Analysis of Comprehension**

Theme	Description
Product Innovation	SME entrepreneurs in Bobos Cirebon Islamic boarding schools develop innovative halal products, both by creating new products and improving the quality of existing products.
Resource Management	Santri are empowered to play an active role in the production and marketing of halal products, applying creativity in business innovation.
Creative Marketing	Marketing halal products is done in a creative way, such as the use of social media and product designs and packaging that attract consumers' attention.
Learning and Development	Pesantren provides training and workshops to hone the creative thinking skills of entrepreneurs and santri in managing halal businesses.

The data obtained through interviews, observations and documentation, as set out in table 3, were then analysed using thematic analysis. Some of the main themes that emerged from the data were: (1) Product Innovation: SME entrepreneurs in Bobos Cirebon boarding school showed the ability to think creatively by developing halal products that are innovative and in accordance with market needs. This innovation includes the development of new products as well as improving the quality of existing products. (2) Resource Management: Creative thinking skills are also applied in human resource management. Santri are empowered to actively participate in the production and marketing process of halal products, so that they are directly involved in the innovations made. (3) Creative Marketing: Marketing of halal products is carried out in more creative ways, such as the use of social media to promote products. In addition, product design and packaging are also considered to attract a wider range of consumers. (4) Learning and Development: Pesantren provides various trainings and workshops to improve the ability to think creatively among entrepreneurs and santri. This training aims to hone their entrepreneurial skills to be better able to innovate in managing halal businesses. Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, it can be concluded that the ability to think creatively plays an important role in the development of entrepreneurial creativity in SMEs engaged in the halal industry in Bobos Cirebon Islamic boarding school. SME entrepreneurs in this pesantren not only rely on managerial skills, but also creativity in facing increasingly competitive market challenges. Their creative thinking skills are applied in various aspects, ranging from product innovation, resource management, to more creative marketing strategies. In addition, the role of pesantren in providing entrepreneurship training and providing space for students to innovate greatly supports the development of this creativity. With the right training and a supportive environment, students can develop creative thinking skills that will be useful in managing halal SMEs.

This study shows that the ability to think creatively is a key factor in encouraging the development of entrepreneurial creativity in the halal industry SMEs in Bobos Cirebon Islamic boarding school. This creativity is seen in product innovation, effective resource management, and attractive marketing. Pesantren play an important role in providing entrepreneurship training and supporting entrepreneurs and santri to develop new ideas that can compete in the market.

Therefore, it is important to continue to encourage the development of creativity through more intensive training and empowerment.

### ***Discussion of Data on the Ability to Think Creatively Plays a Role in Encouraging Entrepreneurial Creativity***

SME entrepreneurs in Bobos Cirebon Islamic boarding schools are developing more innovative halal products to meet the needs of a growing market. They do not only focus on existing products, but also continue to innovate products to attract wider consumer interest. This is in accordance with the view of Amabile (1996) which states that creativity in entrepreneurship requires the ability to generate new ideas that are original and useful. The innovations made by these entrepreneurs are also seen from their ability to create new product variants and improve the quality of existing products. For example, the entrepreneurs in this study created new variants of halal food products that are more in line with the preferences of younger consumers, as well as introducing more attractive packaging.

The ability to think creatively is also seen in the way SME entrepreneurs in Bobos Cirebon Islamic boarding schools manage their human resources, namely by empowering students involved in the production and marketing process. Amabile (1996) in his theory of creativity argues that empowering individuals to think creatively can improve performance and productivity in organisations.<sup>16</sup> In this case, santri are given the opportunity to play an active role in designing marketing strategies and product designs. This resource management not only utilises technical skills but also encourages creativity to generate new ideas that can improve product quality and competitiveness.

In the marketing aspect, SME entrepreneurs in Bobos Cirebon pesantren use social media as a means to promote their halal products. This is one example of how creative thinking skills are applied

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<sup>16</sup> Amabile, T. M. (1996). *Creativity in context: An update to the social psychology of creativity*. Westview Press.



in digital marketing. Social media, which is now the main communication platform among young consumers, is utilised by entrepreneurs to create creative marketing campaigns and attract the attention of potential customers. Kotler & Keller (2016) argued that creative marketing is one of the effective strategies in creating customer relationships and increasing product sales. In addition, more attractive product and packaging designs are also a concern to attract a wider market, create more appeal for consumers, and improve the image of halal products.<sup>17</sup>

Pesantren Bobos Cirebon provides training and workshops that aim to improve creative thinking skills among entrepreneurs and santri. The entrepreneurship training programme held by the pesantren aims to hone their skills in entrepreneurship, managing businesses, and increasing the ability to innovate in the halal industry. According to Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) in their theory of knowledge management, the learning process in organisations (including pesantren) is very important to encourage innovation and creativity.<sup>18</sup> Through this training programme, entrepreneurs and santri are given the knowledge and skills to think more creatively and implement new ideas in the management of their halal SMEs.

The results of this study are in accordance with Amabile's theory (1996) which states that creativity in entrepreneurship is the result of interactions between individuals who have technical skills, knowledge, and a supportive environment. In this case, the ability to think creatively is an important element that encourages SME entrepreneurs in Bobos Cirebon boarding schools to face market challenges more innovatively and competitively. In addition, this creativity is also influenced by environmental factors, such as support from pesantren that provide entrepreneurship training and access to resources that can improve creative thinking skills.

### **Solutions that Can Be Provided to Increase Pesantren-Based Entrepreneurial Creativity in the Context of the Halal Industry**

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation collected, several solutions were found that can improve pesantren-based entrepreneurial creativity in the halal industry. The following data is summarised in a table to provide a clearer picture of the problems and solutions that can be applied.

**Table 4. The Recapitulation of Solutions**

<b>Problems Faced</b>	<b>Possible Solutions</b>	<b>Solution Description</b>
Lack of Knowledge about Digital Technology	Digital Marketing Training	Provide training on social media and e-commerce for expanding market reach and boosting digital sales of halal products.
Limitations of Product Innovation	Product Innovation through Collaboration with Santri	Encourage santri to design new or improved halal products based on market demand.
Lack of Managerial Skills in SME Management	Managerial and Leadership Training	Offer managerial skills training to SME entrepreneurs and santri.
Problems Faced	Possible Solutions	Solution Description

<sup>17</sup> Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing management* (15th ed.). Pearson.

<sup>18</sup> Nonaka, I., & Takeuchi, H. (1995). *The knowledge-creating company: How Japanese companies create the dynamics of innovation*. Oxford University Press.

Limited Access to Business Capital	Providing Financing Facilities for Halal SMEs	Collaborate with Islamic financial institutions for capital access.
Lack of Practical Learning on Halal Business	Halal Entrepreneurship Curriculum Development	Develop a halal entrepreneurship curriculum in pesantren, including case studies and global market insights.
Inadequate Infrastructure for SME Development	Improved Infrastructure and Production Facilities	Improve production facilities
Lack of Collaboration with Industry and Government	Building Partnerships with Halal Industry and Government	Establish partnerships with the halal industry and government for better market access and support.

### ***Discussion of Data on The Best Solution***

**Digital Marketing Training:** Lack of understanding of digital technology is a challenge for many SME entrepreneurs in pesantren. In an increasingly digitally connected world, SME entrepreneurs need to utilise social media and e-commerce platforms to market their products. By providing digital marketing training, pesantren can help SME entrepreneurs become familiar with more effective and efficient ways of promotion. In line with Kotler & Keller's (2016) research, digital marketing plays an important role in reaching a wider range of consumers and optimising product sales.<sup>19</sup>

**Product Innovation through Collaboration with Santri:** Pesantren have abundant human resources, namely santri, who can be empowered in various aspects of business development. One solution that can be provided is to encourage students to collaborate in designing and creating new products. This innovation can be done by combining creative ideas from students with the knowledge and experience of SME entrepreneurs. Amabile (1996) suggests that collaboration in teams can increase creativity, so that new ideas can emerge more and faster.<sup>20</sup>

**Managerial and Leadership Training:** Human resource and managerial management in halal SMEs is often a major problem for pesantren entrepreneurs. Therefore, a possible solution is managerial training that covers basic skills in financial management, leadership, and business organisation. This will assist SME entrepreneurs in managing their businesses more efficiently and professionally. According to Robinson (2001), good managerial skills are instrumental in managing and developing businesses, including in the context of halal businesses.

**Financing Facility for Halal SMEs:** Limited access to capital is often a major obstacle in developing a business. Islamic boarding schools can work together with Islamic financial institutions to provide access to capital in accordance with sharia principles for halal SME entrepreneurs. Easy and sharia-based access to financing will open up opportunities for SME entrepreneurs to develop their businesses without having to worry about interest or elements of usury. Abdullah & Manaf (2008) revealed that Islamic financing can help SMEs to grow more rapidly, provided that the system is implemented efficiently.

**Development of Halal Entrepreneurship Curriculum:** The development of a halal industry-based entrepreneurship curriculum will provide clear guidance for students and SME entrepreneurs in understanding the challenges and opportunities in the halal industry. The curriculum should

<sup>19</sup> Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing management* (15th ed.). Pearson.

<sup>20</sup> Amabile, T. M. (1996). *Creativity in context: An update to the social psychology of creativity*. Westview Press.

combine the theory and practice of halal entrepreneurship and introduce the global market, where halal products are in high demand. Thus, this curriculum not only provides knowledge but also practical skills that can be directly applied in the business world. Wahyuni (2016) states that the development of a halal industry-based curriculum in educational institutions can help improve the quality of entrepreneurship and creativity in the halal business.

**Improved Infrastructure and Production Facilities:** Inadequate infrastructure can limit the ability of SMEs to operate efficiently and increase productivity. Pesantren can improve production facilities by providing more space and modern production equipment. This will improve product quality and facilitate a faster and more efficient production process. Suryani (2016) explains that good infrastructure is one of the factors that support the success of SMEs in competing in the market.<sup>21</sup>

**Building Partnerships with the Halal Industry and the Government:** Pesantren need to establish partnerships with the halal industry and government to get support in terms of training, marketing, and market access. This partnership will open up opportunities for SME entrepreneurs to expand their market and get guidance in developing products that comply with international halal standards. Sutanto (2015) revealed that partnerships between the education and industry sectors are very important in improving the competitiveness of local products, including halal products.

This research identifies various solutions that can be applied to increase pesantren-based entrepreneurial creativity in the halal industry. These solutions include digital marketing training, product innovation through collaboration with students, managerial training, sharia financing facilitation, halal entrepreneurship curriculum development, infrastructure improvement, and partnerships with industry and government. All of these solutions aim to encourage SME entrepreneurs to develop creativity and innovate in facing global market challenges.

### **Data Limitations**

Although this study provides a clear picture of how creative thinking ability drives the development of entrepreneurial creativity in halal industry SMEs, there are some limitations in the data collected. These limitations include: (1) This study only involved 5 SME entrepreneurs, 2 pesantren managers, and 7 santri involved in SMEs. This limited number of respondents may affect the generalisation of the research results. More respondents are needed to get a more comprehensive view of the factors that influence entrepreneurial creativity in halal SMEs. (2) Focus on Pesantren Bobos Cirebon: This study was only conducted at Bobos Cirebon Islamic boarding school, so the results of this study may not fully reflect conditions in other Islamic boarding schools or in halal SMEs in other areas. Differences in geographical and socio-economic contexts can affect the way creative thinking is applied in entrepreneurship. (3) Limitations in Qualitative Data Collection: Most of the data in this study were obtained through in-depth interviews and observations, which are subjective in nature. Although validation was done by source triangulation, there is a possibility of bias from the respondents' point of view that might affect the analysis results.

### **Further Research Opportunities**

This research opens up opportunities for further studies that can explore more deeply the role of the social environment and culture of pesantren in encouraging entrepreneurial creativity. Future research can also expand the number of respondents and include other pesantren to see if the same pattern can be found elsewhere. In addition, research can focus on the influence of the use of digital technology in encouraging innovation and marketing of halal products.

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<sup>21</sup> Suryani, T. (2016). Halal industry: Opportunities and challenges for SMEs in Indonesia. *Journal of Economics and Entrepreneurship*, 5(1), 45-60.

## CONCLUSION

### General and Specific Conclusions

Based on the results of research on "Creative Thinking Ability in Encouraging the Development of Entrepreneurial Creativity in Halal Industry SMEs in Pesantren" as well as solutions that can be provided to increase pesantren-based entrepreneurial creativity in the context of the halal industry, it can be concluded that: (1) The ability to think creatively plays a very important role in encouraging the development of entrepreneurial creativity in pesantren, especially in the halal industry sector. Product innovation, resource management, creative marketing, and continuous learning are some aspects that are strongly influenced by creativity. Pesantren has great potential to become a vehicle for entrepreneurship based on halal principles. Through the application of creative thinking skills, SME entrepreneurs in pesantren can develop halal products that are more innovative and in accordance with market demand. In addition, empowering santri in the production and marketing process of halal products can also increase their creativity in entrepreneurship. However, to increase the creativity of pesantren-based entrepreneurship in the halal industry, there are several challenges that need to be overcome, such as lack of knowledge about digital technology, limited infrastructure, limited access to capital, and lack of entrepreneurship training that is more applicable. (2) The solutions proposed to improve entrepreneurial creativity, such as digital marketing training, product innovation through collaboration with santri, managerial and leadership training, access to Islamic financing, and the development of a halal entrepreneurship curriculum can help SME entrepreneurs in pesantren to overcome these challenges and encourage an increase in their productivity and competitiveness in the global market.

### Recommendation

Based on the results of the analysis and the proposed solutions, the following are some recommendations for enhancing pesantren-based entrepreneurial creativity in the context of the halal industry: (1) Empowerment of Santri in Product Innovation: Pesantren should encourage the active involvement of santri in the product innovation process. This can be done by organising creative workshops or halal product design competitions involving santri to create new products or product variants that can meet growing market demands. Collaboration between entrepreneurs and santri in product innovation can enrich creativity and accelerate the product development process. (2) development of Halal Industry-Based Entrepreneurship Curriculum: Pesantren need to design and develop an entrepreneurship curriculum that is more focused on the halal industry, covering aspects such as understanding the global halal market, halal regulations, and sustainable halal business management strategies. This curriculum not only provides theory but also practical exercises that can be directly applied by SME entrepreneurs and santri in the real world. (3) Improving Production Infrastructure: Pesantren must improve infrastructure and production facilities that are more adequate to support the development of halal SMEs. This can include the provision of wider production space, more modern equipment, and efficient logistics systems. Adequate infrastructure will support SME entrepreneurs in improving the quality and quantity of halal products they produce.

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