



## ISLAM AND THE PROHIBITION OF AL-GAISH (DECEPTION) IN BUSINESS: THE ETHICAL MARKETING PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

*Islam considers business to be an acceptable and a dignified activity which should always be done honestly with the fear of Allah. Islam strongly encourages lawful business undertakings but it abhors cheating, dishonesty and economic exploitation in business and other social dealings. The paper examines the issue of business ethics from the Islamic point of view so as to enable readers to appreciate the concept and principles of Islamic business ethics. It is a conceptual paper that is descriptive in nature. The study reviews the theory of marketing ethics with emphasis on Islamic theology and the values of ethical marketing practice with a view to providing a concrete conceptual discourse on business ethics in Islam. The study concludes that the root of all ethical principles and practice in business and other fields of human endeavors can be traced to Islam and its teachings. Therefore, the prohibition of Al-Gaish (deception) in business by Islam clearly discourages swindlers and tricksters from engaging in business activities. To this end, Muslims and non-Muslims alike are expected to conduct their affairs with piety, respect, honesty and faithfulness.*

**Key Words:** *Islam, Ethics, Business Ethics, Deception, Marketing Ethics*

### 1. Introduction

Islam strongly encourages lawful business undertakings because it directly and significantly improves the standard of living of people. However, Islam abhors cheating, dishonesty and economic exploitation in business and other social dealings because it is a religion which regulates, facilitates and directs life in all its ramifications. Islamic laws are as relevant in our commercial and political activities as in our domestic life and social interactions. Thus, a true Islamic society is built based upon honesty, justice, fairness, fraternity and fear of Allah. That is the reason why the Holy Prophet Muhammad (May peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) emphasized these positive qualities in all our business and interpersonal interactions. Muslims are enjoined to show piety and fear of Allah in all their undertakings as transactions that are motivated by lust for money, exploitation and greedy accumulation of wealth are unlawful and detested in Islam.

Therefore, Islam vehemently condemns any act of commercial dishonesty, deceit and racketeering. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessing of Allah be upon him), while reprimanding dishonest traders and businesses, said: “*Whosoever deceives us is not one of us*” (Sunan Ibn Majah



2224, Chap. 36). This is a strong warning against cheating and deception, for whoever is not among the people of Prophet Muhammad then he/she is finished in the hereafter. Thus, Muslims are required to acquire adequate knowledge and thorough understanding of the rules of business transactions in Islam as a necessary prerequisite for adopting trade or business as a profession. It is morally wrong to use manipulative, exploitative, and corrupting methods of persuasion and motivation (Rawat, Bhatia, Hegde, Bhat and Tewari, 2015).

From the above submission, it is evidently clear that Islamic teaching is the precursor of most ethical concepts and practices in business and societal interactions. In other words, we can trace the genesis of any model and theory of business ethics to the teaching of Islam. However, most of the modern literatures and discussions on business ethics often ignore the contribution of Islam in this context. Therefore, discussion in this paper is geared towards filling this gap by examining the stand of Islam on honesty and the prohibition of *al-gaish* (deception) in business and commerce from the ethical marketing perspective. This is with a view to identifying the significant and pioneering role of Islamic teachings towards the development of business ethics thinking and practice.

## 2. Basic Concepts and Theory

### 2.1 Concepts of Ethics and Marketing Ethics

The word ethics is derived from the Greek word *ethos*— meaning “character” (Weiss, 2014) and is also known as moral philosophy, which is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct (Fieser, 2009). Ethics involves understanding the differences between right and wrong thinking and actions, and using principled decision making to choose actions that do not hurt others.

Several scholars have approached ethics from different perspectives. Invariably, ethics can be seen from both individual and organizational contexts. The former sees ethics as all about personal moral values which are key elements to ethical decisions in marketing. Moral characteristics such as honesty, fairness, responsibility, magnanimity and being considerate are assumed to be values that influence personal conduct and complex marketing decisions. While, ethics from an organizational perspective deals with establishing organizational values, codes, and training employees in order to provide consistent and shared approaches to making ethical decisions (Ferrell and Ferrell, 2005). However, Kotler (1997) views this subject from a different perspective based on sustainable interests of consumers and society, termed as “societal marketing concept”. This concept holds that marketers should not seek for profit at the expense of the consumer and the society. Rather, they should be socially responsible in their operations.

By and large, ethics is regarded as the study and philosophy of human conduct which emphasizes on the determination of what is right and/or wrong. For marketers, ethics in a company refers to the rules (standards, principles, policies) governing the conduct of organizational members and the consequences of marketing decisions. Ethics is defined as an inquiry into the nature and grounds of morality; which means moral judgments, standards, and rules of conduct (Tsalikis and Fritsch, 1989). Murphy, Laczniak, Bowie and Klein (2005) define ethical marketing as, practices that emphasize transparent, trustworthy, and responsible personal and organizational marketing policies and actions that exhibit integrity as well as fairness to consumers and other stakeholders.



On its part, marketing ethics can be defined as the area of applied ethics which deals with the moral principles behind the operation and regulation of Marketing (Rajan, 2016). Ethical issues in marketing are borrowed from various fields such as sociology, psychology and religious theology. For this reason, Islam, as a global religion, plays a pivotal role in shaping the ethical business practice for humanity. Marketing ethics examines systematically marketing and marketing morality, related to 4Ps (product, price, place and promotion) issues such as fake products, exploitative pricing, deceptive advertising or bribery, discrimination in distribution and black marketing (Parilti, Demirgüneş and Özsaçmac, 2015). Ethics are embodied in marketing practices in terms of social marketing (Vassilikopoulou, Siomkos and Rouvaki, 2008). Social marketing calls for achieving balance among business profit, consumer needs and wants and concerns of the society. Kotler and Zaltman (1971) were the first to advocate the embodiment of social and moral dimensions in marketing science. The goal of social marketing is the well-being of society (Vassilikopoulou, et al. 2008). A company that adopts ethical and socially responsible marketing strategy stands to gain the respect and trust of the customers they serve. According to Rajan (2016), there are six marketing ethics where the marketers are supposed to follow namely honesty, responsibility, fairness, respect, transparency and citizenship – that is satisfying all legal, economic, philanthropic and societal responsibilities to all stakeholders.

## 2.2 Definition of Deception (*Al-Gaish*)

Mahon (2007) as cited in Mahon (2015, p.44) asserts that “to deceive is to intentionally cause another person to have or continue to have a false belief that is known or truly believed to be false by bringing about evidence on the basis of which the person has or continue to have the false belief”. It is an intentional action aimed at taking advantage of other people’s ignorance or innocence in order to cheat. Today, many people engage in some form of deception or another in all areas of their lives and it happens in the marketplaces of the Muslims.

Although deception or cheating may come in different forms and styles, the common one is the act of concealing faults in goods or other ways such as deceiving people about the quality of a product, or its components, quantity, weight, essential features or source. For example, some fruit-sellers put a lot of leaves or papers in the bottom of the basket of fruit, and then they put the best fruit at the top. In this manner they deceive the purchaser and cheat him by making him think that the basket is full from top to bottom, and that all the fruit is of the same quality as that which he sees on the top. Still, some goldsmiths mix gold with copper and the like, then they sell it as if it were a pure gold, and even worse than that is when they do not mention the faults of the product until after the sale has been made and the money paid, then the buyer will find it out later. Therefore, if business is conducted strictly in accordance with the Islamic principles of commerce, there can be absolutely no scope for any kind of commercial dishonesty or cheating varying from the simplest and most glaring type of business fraud to the most cunning and subtle type of profiteering which is often masked under a semblance of honesty.

## 2.3 Business Ethics and Values in Islam

Bashir (2016) opines that a Muslim who is involved in business activity must be aware of two basic tenets in Islam. This includes believing and obeying the commands of Allah, the creator, Who owns and controls all his creations on this earth; and that people’s actions are accountable to Allah Who knows and rewards even the smallest good deed on earth. In essence, Muslims are



required to conduct their business affairs with the fear of Allah knowing fully sure that they will be accountable for their deeds in the hereafter.

Generally, Islamic laws regarding business and industry are developed for the success and welfare of the society. For this reason, distorting the truth intentionally in order to mislead others contradicts the values of honesty, which requires an attitude of sincerity, straightforwardness, and fairness that leaves no room for cheating, lying, trickery, or deceit (Mufti, 2015). There are many texts from the Quran and the Sunnah conveying the information that cheating, whether the target be Muslims or non-Muslims, is forbidden. The character of a truthful businessman or woman in Islam is more important because he/she is the biggest source of success and welfare of the society. It is reported that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) said: "A businessman who is truthful and trustworthy, in the Day of Judgment will be in the company of Prophets, Veracious and Martyr (*Sahih-ul-Bukhari*, 1981). Islam motivates businessmen to not only focus on the worldly benefits but to also keep in mind the reward in the hereafter in carrying out such affairs (Madni, 2013).

Similarly, Islam frowns at any kind of deceptive dealings. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) said: "The buyers and sellers are free till they do not separate and if they have acted with honesty, and have explained the defects of commodities, then Allah will bless them with prosperity. And if both of them tried to deal dishonestly and tried to hide the defects then it is likely that they may get some profit, but the prosperity will vanish from their trade" (*Sahih Muslim Book 10, No. 3661, Chap. 11*). In another related Hadith as cited by Rashid (2022, p.16), the Holy Prophet said "It is not lawful for a Muslim to sell such a commodity that has a defect, except that the defect is shown to the buyer." This clearly shows that deception in trading is strongly prohibited in Islam. Thus any techniques to manipulate and hide facts and information to customers are unethical and can even boomerang to affect the integrity of the person or company.

In addition, the Holy Qur'an has stressed the importance of fairness in business: "And, O my people, give full measure and weight justly, and defraud not men of their things, and act not corruptly in the land making mischief. What remains with Allah is better for you, if you are believers" (*Surah Al Hud 11: 85-86*). This goes to show that cheating in commercial transactions in terms of weight and measure is unfair and punishable in the hereafter. It is pertinent to note here that the act of putting sand in grains in order to increase the weight, adulteration of products and black marketing are all part of cheating. Thus Islam forbids cheating and deception in all its ramifications whether Muslims or non-Muslims are involved.

Moreover, Islam requires that Muslims act in a way that will ensure socio-economic justice at all times (El-Ajou, 2010). Throughout the Holy Qur'an, there are several verses echoing this thinking: "And give full measure when you measure, and weigh with a balance that is straight" (*Surah Al Isra'I 17:35*). Indeed, Islam discourages all sorts of prejudices, oppression and discrimination (El-Ajou, 2010). Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) in his last sermon declared that "the best earnings are from a blessed sale and the product of a man's own hands." In fact, while Islam encourages individual initiative, drive, efficiency, and enterprising attitudes along with a right to make profits and own private properties; it condemns greed, unscrupulousness,



dishonesty and disregard for the rights and needs of others. An excessive accumulation of wealth should not be the ultimate objective for a Muslim (El-Ajou, 2010).

Therefore, it is evident from the above citations that the ideology of Islam is, in fact, the root and precursor of all business ethics theories and models. Muslims are enjoined to do business and trade with the fear of Allah in mind; be just and fair to their fellow brothers and sisters as they wish to do for themselves. Accordingly, Islam encourages transparent management and relations that aim to promote fairness and respect among trading partners.

#### **2.4 Prohibition of Deception in Qur'an and Sunnah**

There are many verses and texts from the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Hadith of the Prophet, PBUH) that show that cheating, whether targeted to Muslims or non-Muslims, is strongly forbidden. In the Holy Qur'an, the Almighty Allah has condemned cheating and the people who do it, and has warned them of bad consequences. Indeed, a true Islamic society is based upon honesty, justice and fraternity, and is absolutely intolerant of dishonesty in all its various forms. That is the reason why truthfulness and honesty in business are much emphasized by the Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him). Thus, it will not be an over statement if it is stated that absolute honesty in business and commerce is really an Islamic concept. Islam condemns every kind of injustice and exploitation in human relations; it admonishes its followers to conduct business in a sublime spirit of justice tempered with human kindness. The Holy Qur'an has stressed the importance of fairness in business and the injunctions contained in some relevant Qur'anic verses close the door of all dishonest and unjust transactions. This may further be understood from the following verses of the Holy Quran:

*Woe to those who give less [than due]; Who, when they take a measure from people, take in full; But if they give by measure or by weight to them, they cause loss; Do they not think that they will be resurrected; For a tremendous Day; The Day when mankind will stand before the Lord of the worlds? (Surah AL-Mudhaffifin 83: 1-6).*

Almighty Allah strongly condemned those who manipulate measures. A terrible punishment awaits the doer of this grievous sin, according to the above verses. This is a severe warning to those who cheat (by giving less) in weights and measures. Therefore, if those who cheat are punished, what more of those who steal, embezzle and withhold from the people the things that are their due?

In another verse of the holy Qur'an, it was revealed that when Prophet Shu'aib (A.S) was preaching to his people, he said

*"O my people! Serve Allah, you have no God other than He, and do not give short measure and weight. Surely I see you in prosperity and surely I fear for you the punishment of an all-encompassing day. And O my people! Give full measure and weight fairly, and defraud not men their things, and do not act corruptly in the land, making mischief." (Surah Hud 11: 84-85).*

People have been ordered not only to refrain from defrauding each other, but they must also not cheat and deceive their fellow human beings while fulfilling their obligations towards Allah and the Holy Prophets. This is based on the fact that Allah (S.w.T.) bestows man with unlimited favours. He listens to his entreaties and fulfills his wishes in keeping with his well being. So it is





incumbent upon man to be faithful in fulfilling his duties towards Allah (S.w.T.) by being thankful to Allah (S.w.T.) for His blessings and obeying His commands by carrying out all his obligations. Similarly, Allah (S.w.T) says “*give orphans their wealth when they reach maturity, and do not exchange your worthless possessions for their valuables, nor cheat them by mixing their wealth with your own. For this would indeed be a great sin*”, (An-Nisa 4 verse 2).

The above verse clearly admonishes people not to cheat because cheating and deception are despicable actions that are frowned at by the Almighty Allah and good people in the society. Distorting the truth in order to mislead others contradicts the values of honesty, which requires an attitude of sincerity and fairness as against cheating, trickery, or deceit.

Furthermore, in Surah al-Hadid, Allah (S.w.T.), the Almighty says:

*“Certainly We sent Our apostles with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the balance that men may conduct themselves with equity.” (Surah al-Hadid 57:25).*

By the word ‘balance’, Allah (S.w.T.) means justice and Allah (S.w.T.) has appointed a ‘balance’ for everything. The belief of servants and the truth and falsehood are also tested on this basis. The good and bad morals and qualities are also evaluated on the scales of justice. If people conform to justice in their speech, actions, belief and deeds they will be able to establish true justice in this world.

With regards to the Sunnah of the holy Prophet, it was reported from Anas bin Malik that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) forbade selling fruits until they have changed the color, and selling grapes until they have turned black, and selling grains until they have hardened (Sunan Ibn Majah, Hadith No. 2218 Chap. 14). In another Hadith narrated by Simak bin Harb who narrated that "I heard Malik Abu Safwan bin 'Umairah, say: 'I bought a pair of trousers from the Messenger of Allah (SAW) before the Hijrah, and he weighed it for me and allowed more.'" (Sunan Ibn Majah, Hadith No. 2221, Chap. 14). This clearly shows that the Holy Prophet Muhammad teaches people on how to make good measures in practice by weighing it with balance and adding more weight in favour of the buyer. So the buyer invariably bought more with less money, thereby getting value for money.

In addition, according to a hadith narrated by Abu Huraira, the Prophet passed by a pile of food in the market. He put his hand inside it and felt dampness, although the surface was dry. He said "O the owner of the food, what is this'? The man said, 'It was damaged by rain, O Messenger of God.' He said, 'why did you not put the rain-damaged food on top so that people could see it! Whoever cheats us is not one of us.'" (Sahih Muslim, Book 1 Hadith 102, Chap. 43).

The lesson to be learnt here is that deceit and deception are repugnant behaviours in Islam as Muslim society is based on purity of feeling, love, sincerity towards every Muslim, and fulfillment of promises to every member of society. According to some Islamic scholars, it means that he is not one who has followed our guidance and acted upon our knowledge, our deeds, and our good methodology, thereby warning the cheater to know that cheating is a very serious matter and its consequences are very serious (islamweb.net, 2022).



## 2.5 Theory of Marketing Ethics

Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (AMA, 2013). From this definition, it can be inferred that Islamic marketing is all about applying the Islamic doctrines and principles in the institutions, and processes of sensing, serving and satisfying customers, clients, partners, and society at large. Whereas marketing ethics is the systematic study of how moral standards are applied to marketing decisions, behaviors and institutions' (Laczniak and Murphy, 1993). Many scholars view marketing ethics as a subfield within business ethics and business ethics is also considered to be an 'applied' area similar to legal or medical ethics. The theoretical foundation is often viewed as coming primarily from moral philosophy and other disciplines associated with ethics such as law, psychology and theology (Murphy, 2015).

Caroll (1993) opines that ethical and moral issues in business can be discussed from five levels namely; individual, organizational, association, societal and international. In all these levels, however, what is needed is strong moral uprightness. For this reason, meta-ethics, normative ethics and descriptive ethics constitute a key framework for understanding ethical theories (Rawat, et. al., 2015). Meta-ethics considers where one's ethical principles come from. For example, do our parents, family, religious institutions influence and shape our ethical beliefs? In the context of this paper, the answer is that yes, our ethical beliefs are shaped by Islamic doctrine. Normative ethics deals with the formulation of ethical codes of behavior and moral models of evaluative decision making. It prescribes moral principles that define the good, the right, duty, obligation, law, and justice (Dumitru, 2019). The various Qur'anic verses and Hadith stated earlier are examples of normative ethics. Descriptive ethics on the other hand simply involves describing how people behave and what sorts of moral standards they claim to follow. Descriptive ethics incorporates research from the fields of anthropology, psychology, sociology and history as part of the process of understanding what people do or have believed about moral norms (Cline, 2018).

Some empirical studies and books produced on marketing ethics contribute to the body of knowledge in this area. Fernando (2009) asserts that corporate practices cannot bypass the fundamental demands of ethical behaviour; that administration and policies of governance have to be more transparent and publicly accountable, and that businesses must be sensitive to the community and environment within which they are established. Sushma (2005) in her study found that the advertisements of plain *pan masala* seen on Indian television are a surrogate for the tobacco products bearing the same name. Surrogate advertising is the act of duplicating the brand image of one product extensively to promote another product of the same brand (Rawat *et al*, 2015). Marketers apply this form of advertising to promote unwholesome products like liquor and cigarettes using other wholesome brands. The main aim here is to deceive the gullible consumers. In a nutshell, advertising ethics calls for, at the very minimum, a respect for the ideals of advertising which are; truth, honesty, decency and legality as well as for advertisements to show respect for cultural values and prepared with a high sense of social responsibility (Nzeribe, 2012).

In the same vein, Santos and Laczniak (2010) postulates a detailed normative model for ethically marketing to economically challenged consumer segments which they called 'the Integrative Justice Model (IJM) for Marketing to the Poor'. The ethical imperatives of the IJM stemmed from moral philosophy theories, corporate social responsibility frameworks, and religious doctrine. The



fundamental elements of the IJM approach include authentic engagement with poor consumers, representation of their interests, co-creation of service and value, investment in future consumption, and long-term profit orientation (Santos & Laczniak, 2009).

Consequently, marketing ethics discourse in general seeks to address the principles and standards that define acceptable conduct in the market place. And certainly in Islam, what is good or bad has been clearly stated as halal (allowed) or haram (prohibited). Thus a careful look at the Islamic principles pertaining to business transactions will reveal the fact that the Holy Prophet (may peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) based business dealings strictly on truth and justice. Islamic teachings have strongly disapproved all transactions which involve any kind of injustice or hardship to the buyer or the seller. Islam, which condemns every kind of injustice and exploitation in human relations, requires its followers to conduct business with true spirit of justice tempered with human kindness.

### **3. Methodology**

Qualitative research design has been used in the paper through selective content analysis. Thus the paper is essentially literature based. Qualitative research involves the use of a variety of empirical materials including field observations and texts analysis (Ambert *et al.*, 1995), not requiring necessarily prior hypotheses (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003). Moreover, concepts are very much important in qualitative research approach rather than development of measures (Bryman, 2008; Robson, 2011). Contents of some relevant texts in the Holy Qur'an, Hadiths, other books, journals, periodicals and online sources were reviewed, analyzed and discussed with a view to draw useful conclusions to see how all forms of cheating and deceit are prohibited by Islam in the Holy Scriptures even before development of modern business ethics theories.

## **4. Critical Marketing and Ethical Issues in Business**

### **4.1 Ethical Issues in Marketing and Business**

Critics of marketing often point to false or misleading advertisements, extravagant pressure on consumers, and pricing tactics that deviate from morality and honesty limits (Nantel and Weeks, 1996). Malliaris (2001) summarized the basic points of criticism against marketing as polluting the natural environment, deceiving consumers into buying products that they might not really need and using personal selling to compel the consumer to make buying decisions under pressure. (Vassilikopoulou, Siomkosand Rouvaki, 2008).

In addition, Attas (1999) argues that an advertisement will be deemed misleading or deceptive only if it is reasonable to expect that persons exposed to it, or those targeted by it, would come to hold false beliefs as a result of exposure to it. It might be thought that the consumer mislead by an advertisement will be tempted to buy the advertised product and in that way either getting less than he thought he would or paying more than he should. Apart from deceptive advertising, use of nudity, sex appeal and bait advertising are all considered unethical in contemporary business especially in Muslim countries. This is because Islam does not tolerate any act of indiscipline as it is clearly mentioned in the Holy Qur'an "*Give just measures and cause no loss. And weigh with scales true and upright and withhold not things justly due to men*" (Surah Al-Shu'ara 26:181). Thus, honesty is the key to all business practices in Islamic business ethics. It has been narrated that one day a Bedouin Arab asked the Messenger of Allah, may peace and blessing of Allah be





upon him, when would the dooms day take place? The Prophet answered: “*When honesty is lost, then wait for the doomsday*” (Bari & Abbas, 2011).

It should be noted that because of unethical advertising practices, many countries have enacted laws and establish agencies to regulate the advertising practice. In Nigeria, the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) was established by the Advertising Practitioners Registration Act Cap A7 of 2004 to promote responsible and ethical advertising practice. The Council insists on pre-exposure clearance of all advertisements which helps APCON to check all forms of abuses such as misleading statements, spurious testimonials, visual and verbal exaggerations, misleading offers, suggestion or pictures offensive to public decency (APCON, 2018).

In the same vein, Uusitalo and Oksanen (2004) argues that fairness with pricing is an important consideration among the consumers in ethical purchasing. Other ethical issues connected to pricing consist of misleading price reduction, price fixing, predatory pricing and price discrimination. Some of the methods related to pricing include deceptive pricing and wrongful use of the word; “free”(Parilti, 2015). For example, the usual meaning of “free” means that it is devoid of any cost or obligation. But, marketers often use the word for something which is merely included in the overall price such as the “buy one, get one free” tactic. Another example in Nigeria is the estimated billing system of the electricity distribution companies, (Discos). This make it possible for Discos to charge consumers exorbitant power bills that they did not even consume. This is a rip-off by these companies which is illegal and unethical.

Another issue is the manipulation of measurement units by traders. This is a common practice despite the fact that it is totally forbidden in Islam. It comes in many forms such as buying with full measure and selling with reduced measure, placing a label on domestically-made products to make it seem that it is imported (Mufti, 2015), filling half a basket of tomato with grasses below and half of it with tomato on top, soaking fresh meat in water to make it fatter an heavier, etc. We need to desperately instill the spirit of fairness and honesty in all business transactions so that we might stir the conscience and be aware that Allaah is watching all that we do, without the need for any human supervisor.

#### **4.2 Discussions**

From the foregoing submissions, one thing is clear; that one should steer clear of all the various forms of deceit and deception present in today’s society. Cheating is common in business transactions, examinations and even between spouses and loved ones. For instance, placing a label on products made in Nigeria to make it looks like it is imported is a kind of fraud. Some traders in the market popularly known as *kayi-nayi* in hausa, who do not own a single product but deceive unsuspecting buyers to believe that they own the products they are selling by charging exorbitant price which even the real owner may not know. Accountants of a company who declares false profit and people that give wrong advice when their counsel is sought and thus deceive the person who believes he is getting good advice are all dishonest and not trustworthy. The same thing applies to politicians who connive with an electoral body staff to rig the ballot to win elections and cheat the whole nation. Therefore, a Muslim who has true Islamic sensitivities should avoid deceit, cheating, treachery, and lying no matter what benefits or profits such activities might bring to him or her.



Furthermore, Islam does not allow any unethical business dealings that harm people and the society. In Islam, business men/women should know that everyone is accountable to Allah for his/her actions, thus individuals are not all that free to their will, rather, they are bound to do everything including business according to the dictates of Shari'a (Rice,1999). Thus, the core of Islamic business ethics is honesty not merely profit maximization. It is mentioned in the holy Quran that *"Wealth and sons are attractiveness of the life of this world; but the things that endure are good deeds, and they are the best in the sight of Allah, as rewards, and best as the foundation for hopes."* (Surah Al Kahf, 18:46). In a nutshell, Islam requires its followers to do the right things and shun any wrong doing. Quran says, *"You are the best people, evolved for mankind, enjoying what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah"* (Surah Aal Imran 3:116)

In essence, cheating or deceit is a way that leads to hellfire. It is also an indicative of the mean and evil nature of a person. It alienates one from Allah (SWT) and from other people. In one of the hadiths cited above, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) did not consider the person who cheats to be among the Muslims. In fact, it is reported that "Whoever cheats his subjects will not enter Paradise. And this is his punishment in the Hereafter" (Almerja.com, 2022). Ibn Hajar al-Haythami opines that because of the evil actions of cheating being committed by some traders, workers and craftsmen, Allah (SWT) causes the oppressors to gain power over the believers (Muslims) and take their wealth and violate the sanctity of their women (Al-Shahri, 2022). This goes to show that the prohibition of cheating and deceit by Islam clearly predates the modern business ethics theory as the latter only came into being in the United States in the 1970s. Specifically, Norman Bowie dates the birth of business ethics as November 1974, with the first conference in business ethics, which was held at the University of Kansas, and which resulted in the first anthology used in the new courses that started popping up thereafter in business ethics (Bowie, 1986).

Moreover, the Islamic prohibition of deception is not only limited to business dealings but rather it covers all the facets of human life. Therefore, although the managerial practice of cheating spans complex and heterogeneous situations (from deception and trickery to fraud and swindling), most business ethics scholars consider that the very idea of cheating is indefensible on moral grounds, and quickly dismiss it as wrongdoing (Springer.com, 2018)

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

By and large, it can be clearly deduced from the foregoing discussions that the root of all ethical principles and practice in business and other fields of human endeavors can be traced to Islamic teachings. Islam considers business to be an acceptable and a dignified activity which should be done with the fear of Allah always. However, in so doing, one has to steer clear of all the various forms of deceit and deception inherent in today's business dealings. It should be noted that cheating or deception can be found in different human activities. It is common in examinations, business transactions, politics (election rigging), sports (duping) and even between spouses and loved ones. Therefore, the prohibition of *AL-GAISH* (deception) in business transactions by Islam discourages swindlers, double crossers, tricksters, or traitors from engaging in business activities. To this end, Muslims and non-Muslims are expected to conduct their affairs with piety, respect, reciprocity, love and faithfulness.



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