

## **Consumption and Morality: Principles and Behavioral Framework in Islamic Economics**

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**Abstract.** Consumption in Islamic economics is viewed as a positive action that would contribute to human wellbeing. Islam sees consumption as having a moral agenda and noble goals rather than viewing it as a mere wants-fulfillment enterprise in a personal self-pleasure agenda. The goal of consumption in an Islamic framework is not to gain personal wants satisfaction *per se*, as such effort would be a waste of time and meaningless. The goal instead, is to direct the consumption in achieving the individual and social wellbeing (*maṣlahah*) and the higher purpose of achieving God's pleasure. With that perspective, the Qur'ān and Sunnah have laid down the guiding principles in consumption that would form the framework for consumption behavior in an Islamic economic perspective. The Islamic economic agents are expected to adopt the Islamic morality principles in their actual consumption. The orientation of the paper is normative in nature with the aim of conceptualizing the principles and behavioral framework of moral consumption in an Islamic perspective and elaborating the goals and guiding principles of consumption in an Islamic economic framework.

**Keywords:** consumption, morality, behavior, goals, guiding principles.

**JEL Classification:** A13, D01, D11.

**KAUJIE Classification:** H21, H22, H54.

## 1. Introduction

Consumption in Islamic economics is viewed as a noble activity that would contribute wellbeing to mankind. In many places in the Qur'ān, Allah invites mankind to enjoy His bounties and sustenance as a reflection of His blessings. However, consumption is not viewed as a mere wants-fulfilment enterprise for a personal self-pleasure agenda. Instead, it is pursued for a higher objective of achieving wellbeing and God's pleasure. Therefore, the issue of consumption in an Islamic economic framework is enlarged to include morality and social dimension with spiritual orientation.

Islam has delineated principles and framework to be pursued to achieve that objective in consumption. A consumer, in an Islamic economic framework, is expected to be equipped with the criteria of God's consciousness (*taqwá*) whereby a consumer would follow the guidelines of consuming what are allowed (*ḥalāl*) and good (*tayyib*), and avoid what are prohibited (*ḥarām*) and bad (*rijs*); consuming in a balance and just limit between the two extremes of over-consumption in the form of wasteful consumption (*tabdhīr*) and excessive consumption (*isrāf*) or under-consumption in the form of stinginess or miserliness consumption (*bukhl*); and consuming for the good purposes in the spirit of obedience to Allah. Those criteria become the moral framework of consumption in an Islamic economic analysis to study the actual consumption action. Furthermore, based on the principles and guidelines in the Qur'ān and Sunnah on the norms of consumption in Islam, a framework to categorize consumer behavior in accordance with value-commitment will be constructed.

This paper aims to discuss the morality framework of consumption in Islamic economics by highlighting the concept of consumption in Islamic economics in terms of the basic problem and the objectives of consumption as well as some guiding principles that would set a moral compass of consumption in Islamic economics. Based on those principles, consumer behavior in an Islamic economic framework will be discussed in the last section.

## 2. The Problem of Consumption

In economics, consumption is one of its basic problems. It emerges in the question: 'what to produce?' which also means: 'what to be consumed?' The answer to the question will be based on the expected wants of consumers. It is assumed that human wants are unlimited and have practically no end. Production activities will be continuously done to satisfy those unlimited and multi-varieties of human wants.

Consumption is defined as the act of satisfying one's wants. In an economic capitalist framework, attaining self-satisfaction is one of its ultimate objectives. Hence, it is not a surprise, if consumption is considered as the ultimate end of the economic process. The whole point of production is directed to satisfy the wishes of the consumer. As Adam Smith puts it, 'consumption is the end of all production'. Producers make goods in order to satisfy the consumption wants of the people (Rutherford, 2007, p. 30).

Consumption is done with the purpose of attaining satisfaction. Satisfaction in every consumption becomes the primary goal of a consumer. Utility is a term used to denote the benefit received from consumption which can be an objective benefit in the sense of usefulness, or a subjective satisfaction (Rutherford, 2007, p. 215).

Bentham in his *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789) set out the principle of utility as a standard to approve or disapprove of every action. His notion of utility is an objective way intrinsically inherent as a property of any object which produces benefits, pleasures and happiness or prevents the opposite. Gradually, utility came to be regarded as a subjective matter, of giving satisfaction irrespective of the nature of the good itself as an experience felt by an individual (Rutherford, 2007, p. 216).

In this perspective, consumption is done with the aim of maximizing this utility as a satisfaction gained by an individual in fulfilling his wants. Satisfaction has been conceptualized as a product-related judgment that follows a purchase act or a series of consumption experiences which is inexhaustible (Heitmann et al., 2007, p. 234).

This philosophy has its root in the doctrine that human wants are unlimited and resources to solve it are scarce (Robbins, 1945, p. 16). If one's want is satisfied, another would arise, and if that is satisfied, still another one would emerge, and thus the individual would struggle through all his life to satisfy an endless chain of wants. Wants and their satisfaction becomes the pivot in the economic struggle of man. This struggle is perceived by economics philosophers as the economic problem that is considered as the subject matter of economics. As a discipline, economics would study the means to satisfy the unlimited wants, assisting individuals in making choice/decisions within the framework of limited resources and multiplicity of wants so that satisfaction could be attained and maximized.

This basic problem of consumption (satisfying unlimited human wants) as in conventional economics philosophy is criticized by Chapra (2008 and 2009, p. 2) as something which is meaningless for human wellbeing. This is because the act of consumption has been viewed as a self-interested act with materialist values rather than a moral (spiritual and cultural) agenda. In the absence of moral values or moral direction, the individual's pursuit of wants satisfaction (in material senses) is viewed as the ultimate goal of happiness.

Therefore, in conventional economics, there are no constraints to pursue any goal that is perceived by the individual to contribute to self-satisfaction. The only relevant constraint in this matter was income. Nevertheless, this constraint also was weakened by the conventional financial system where banks act as loan pushers and constantly promote living beyond means by both the public and the private sectors (Chapra, 2008 and 2009, p. 9).

In an Islamic economics perspective, the facts of the intrinsic nature of a human being whereby his wants are always multiplied are taken into account. It is acknowledged then, that no amount of consumption would satisfy individual wants. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said:

Narrated Abdullah bin Zubair, the Prophet (pbuh) said: if Adam's son had a valley full of gold, he would ask for the second, and if he were given the second, he would ask for the third; for nothing fills his mouth except dust (of the grave) and Allah forgives him who repents to Him (al-Bukhārī, 1422H, 8:93, ḥadīth no. 6438)

However, Islamic economics does not consider 'wants-satisfaction' as the basic problem in economics for two reasons: wants-satisfaction is not certain in term of goals and hence such effort is not only timeless but also meaningless. An individual, being attached too much with this goal in which he never satisfies, would make him pursuing a subjective agenda and bring him into a chronic psychological problem instead of attaining real happiness. At the macro level, such an action also would lead to negative effects in society.

Islamic economics emphasizes there must be something meaningful to be considered as a basic problem of consumption. This is only possible if we have 'higher objectives' that would direct our consumption orientation by pursuing moral, social and spiritual objectives.

Consumption, in an Islamic economic framework, is not as simple as individual wants-fulfilment or utility-maximization. It is more than that. Consumption in an Islamic perspective is having spiritual, ethical and social dimension instead of a mere personal satisfaction agenda. This spiritual, ethical and social agenda becomes an integral problem of consumption in Islamic economics that would make consumption as a valuable action. Consumption, will therefore, be studied in Islamic economics by taking those dimensions into account and comprehensively studying it in the analysis of consumer behavior.

In a spiritual orientation, consumption is guided by spiritual ends of having God's consciousness (*taqwá*) by abiding the rules of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*, with the feeling of thankfulness, patience, contentment and other positive values that would promote the dignity and refinement of the individual self.

Consumption is also a social and ethical enterprise. In a social and ethical orientation, an Islamic consumer would ensure the full commitment to the ethical principle and at the same time ensure the higher-order social preferences augment and expand in the activities consumption (Choudhury, 1986, p. 236).

In this framework, human wants are categorized based on their attachment to Islamic values and implications to individuals or society's wellbeing into *ḥalāl* (allowable/legitimate wants) and *ḥarām* (prohibited wants); ethically good and bad based on the

benefit and harm of an action to oneself, society and environment; and spiritually praised or condemned based on the attachment in having God's consciousness while satisfying wants (Qur'an, 5:88).

The basic problem of consumption in Islamic economics, therefore, would be how those dimensions could be attained in consumption action. It is believed that their fulfillment would lead to attaining wellbeing for the individual himself, as well as the society at large. In addition to that, it is also considered one of the basic problems of consumption in Islamic economics, whereby the consumption should be directed to the higher purpose of attaining God's pleasure.

In other words, the action of consumption is having multiple dimensions. Consumption is an individual action of attaining self-benefit through the fulfillment of needs. Consumption is also a social action whereby the fulfillment of needs is done by augmenting the social preferences, avoiding social cost and willingness to cooperate and share for social benefits. Consumption is also a spiritual action whereby an individual is having God's consciousness (*taqwá*) by adhering to the principles as laid down in the Qur'an and Sunnah, with the feeling of thankfulness and contentment and aims at achieving His pleasure.

### 3. The Goals of Consumption

Having that perspective, it is clear that the goal of consumption in an Islamic framework would be not to gain personal wants-satisfaction or self-pleasure *per se* as such effort would be timeless and meaningless. Satisfying wants is a temporary and relative experience. An Islamic consumer should look beyond that. It is mentioned in the Qur'an:

Wealth and children are an ornament of the life of the world. But the good deeds which endure are better in thy Lord's sight for reward, and better in respect of hope (Qur'an, 18:46)

An Islamic consumer would direct the consumption activities to achieve the *maṣlahah* (individual and social wellbeing) and the higher purpose of achieving God's pleasure.

The wellbeing (*maṣlahah*) is defined as benefits to be realized for human wellbeing. Its dimension is very comprehensive to include individual and social

dimension, specific and general dimension (*maṣlahah khaṣṣah* and *maṣlahah 'āmmah*) and this world and the hereafter dimension.

The pleasure of Allah is the higher purpose of human action. Human being is His vicegerent on earth who should always be responsible to God in managing the earth, utilizing the resources and consuming His sustenance endowed to human beings. All should be done with God's consciousness (*taqwá*). It is *taqwá* that puts weight in consumption done by an Islamic man as such action would be rewarded by Allah and deserves His pleasure.

At the same time, the Qur'an praises those who have taken their desires for Allah (long term perspective) instead of pursuing self-pleasure (short term objective). The Qur'an says:

Have you seen him who takes his own lust (vain desires) as his god, and Allah knowing (him as such), left him astray, and sealed his hearing and his heart, and put a cover on his sight. Who then will guide him after Allah? Will you not then remember? (Qur'an, 45:23)

Consumption in an Islamic framework is always a moral and ethical enterprise with social and spiritual orientation. Consumption in this regard is pursued by abiding Sharī'ah rules, regulation and values in consumption such as what is allowed or prohibited, ethical imperatives of good and bad, of having moderation, not being excessive or miserliness, and with social concern of sharing and caring for others and environmental protection (Khan, 1984, p. 3).

The social consumption, in the form of charity or social contribution to society, should also be the aim of the consumer in an Islamic framework (Qur'an, 63:10). In this perspective, Metwally (1997, p. 946) observes:

The objective function of a Muslim consumer differs from that of other consumers. A Muslim consumer does not achieve satisfaction from mere consumption of outputs and the holding of capital goods. His (her) economic behaviour pivots around the achievement of God's satisfaction.

Having this perspective, micro consumption goal will be very much in line with the macroeconomic objectives. This is because consumption will be figured out

in terms of the optimal attainment of central social objectives, such as full employment, price stabilization, economic growth and socio-economic development goals (such as income distribution, alleviation of poverty, environmental protection, spiritual attainment, etc. (Choudhury, 1986, p. 237).

This is possible since consumption is no longer viewed as an action with self-pleasure agenda, but with a higher agenda of having social benefits and spiritual attainment. Siddiqi (2005, pp. 25-26) in this regard argues:

In the Islamic perspective there is a need for introducing the assumption that, side by side with their keen desire to meet their own needs, consumers do care for others in the society. They are especially concerned about those whose basic needs are not being fulfilled. They are also concerned about the interests of the society as a whole e.g., about the environment, conservation of scarce resources, level of employment, balance of payments, capital formation, etc., subject to availability of relevant information. These concerns may influence their choice of goods and services, their quantities, as also their response to changes in prices. In certain cases factors other than price may predominate in the choice as in case of essential goods in short supply, imported items of consumption in case the society appeals for economizing on imports, goods and services whose consumption is being discouraged or encouraged because of environmental considerations, etc.

#### 4. Islamic Moral Principles of Consumption

The principle of consumption in Islamic economics is developed based on the guidelines in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Those guiding principles will be the moral framework for consumption and hence consumer behavior could be something meaningful and purposeful. The earlier writer, such as Kahf (1978), Khan (1984), Mannan (1986), Metwally (1997), Naqvi (1997), Zaman (1997), Siddiqi (2005) and Hasan (2005) have discussed the normative framework of consumer behavior in Islamic economics. They have come up with proposed values to characterize Islamic consumer behavior. The following are the principles of consumption in an Islamic moral framework:

#### A. Principle of Permissibility

Consumption activities are not only viewed as recognition of human natural tendency, but also an ontological connection between the Creator and His creations. Therefore, Allah Almighty invites human beings to enjoy what He has provided on earth and the universe for human wellbeing. Such invitation means a strong relationship of human being (the created) with God (the Creator) through what He has endowed, and hence, consumed by human being. The Qur'ān says:

Eat from what Allah has provided you as good and lawful, and fear Allah in whom you believe (Qur'ān, 5:88)

There is a general principle of permissibility in the act of consumption whereby, in general, all things are consumable (legally) and human beings can consume (freely) anything they like unless there is clear evidence from the texts that Sharī'ah prohibits such actions or those things to be consumed.

The boundaries are set not to restrict mankind, but to ensure benefits are preserved and harms are avoided in consumption. What is permitted is actually to preserve the human wellbeing and what is prohibited is because of the avoidance of harms or negative effects inflicted in consumption (Qur'ān, 5:3).

#### B. Principle of Responsibility

The principle of responsibility means to have consciousness in consumption. This consciousness embarks from the very principle that wealth belongs to Allah and should be consumed in accordance with Sharī'ah guidelines. A consumer in an Islamic framework is expected to be responsible before God for whatever consumption he has done.

Nevertheless, human being has been created in such a way that he tends to love wealth and to have more wealth in his life. In other words, there would be a tendency for human being to pursue consumption in a wrong way and also for undesired self-pleasure by transgressing the limit of what is permitted and ignoring ethical and social objectives of considering other needs and public interest (Qur'ān, 3:14 and 89:20).

The Qur'ān, therefore, reminds us that all the things are essentially a test for human being to be directed to the higher objective as desired by Shari'ah rather than to be preoccupied with self-pleasure (Qur'ān, 3:186). Human being is advised not to be preoccupied too much with the fulfillment of desires, as they are just comforts to the life of this world (Qur'ān, 3:14) or the adornment of the life of this world (Qur'ān, 18:46). Too much attached to wants satisfaction would create tendencies to love the wealth that might cause human being to deviate tremendously away from the Right Path and hence, human being might do unnecessary or prohibitive actions that would make him to be thrown in Hell. The Qur'ān says:

Allah intends to turn graciously towards you, while those who follow desires want you to deviate (from the right path), a huge deviation (Qur'ān, 4:27)

A responsible consumption would be directed in the good cause (the cause of Allah), instead of a wrong way as whispered by Satan (the cause of Satan) by consuming things which are sinful, prohibited or something which are lewdness (Qur'ān, 2:268).

Furthermore, responsible consumption also means to have consciousness that Allah's sustenance should not be idle or wasted or prevented from the circulation and hence prevents its benefits from society. Excessive and wasteful consumption leads to inefficiency in distribution since many resources are not utilized in their proper place and the society is not able to utilize them. Likewise, Consumerism – excessive attention to materialistic desires – breeds egoism that ultimately brings more frustration and futility than the bliss of fulfillment (Hasan, 2005, p. 42).

### C. Principle of Balance

Islam encourages a 'balanced consumption'. This balance in consumption is actually a mini-equilibrium at the micro-cosmos reflecting a greater balance of macro-cosmos of the world and universe creation. The Qur'ān reminds us that Allah has created the universe and the earth in a state of equilibrium, which itself is composed of innumerable equilibriums (Qur'ān, 55:1-9).

The permission to enjoy and utilize resources for our food, clothing and others should be done in a balanced way and not disturbing the equilibrium by transgressing the limits. Human being is expected to

properly manage the consumption in a moderate, just and balance way. Over-consumption in the form of wasting, excessive, and extravagance is not allowed. Likewise, under-consumption by having too stingy and miserly consumption are not favored.

And those, who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor niggardly, but hold a medium (way) between those (extremes) (Qur'ān, 25:67)

Islam promotes a golden mean between ascetic denial and ostentatious consumption by setting the upper limits (wasteful and excessive consumption) and lower limits (miserliness) of individual consumption. The followings are the type of consumptions that are considered as transgressing the balance.

#### ***Tabdhīr* (wasteful consumption)**

*Tabdhīr* or wasteful consumption is prohibited in Islam. The Qur'ān says:

And give the relative his right, and [also] the poor and the traveler, and do not spend wastefully. Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils, and ever has Satan been to his Lord ungrateful (Qur'ān, 17:26-27)

The word *tabdhīr* means to consume something not in a right manner or purpose. This action refers to two meanings: (1) *unnecessary-consumption* which is consuming items which are not needed or are unnecessary merely to fulfill whims or desires; (2) *unlawful-consumption* or consumption of prohibited things, such as wine, gambling, ostentatious display, etc.; and (3) *inappropriate-consumption* or consumption which is not in its designated place and hence becomes wasteful such as, a student instead of spending his limited income in the pursuit of knowledge (either for tuition fee, buying books and equipment, or for travelling to meet teachers), he spends it on unnecessary leisure items like movies or concerts (See *Mawsu'ah al-Fiqhiyyah al-Kuwaitiyyah*, vol. 4, p. 177 and al-Shawkani in his *tafsīr Fath al-Qadir*, vol. 3, p. 263).

*Tabdhīr* is connoted as not only a meaningless consumption but sinful. It is also a kind of wasteful consumption because wealth, if it is spent in the right way (such as for social benefits), can give rewards as a return. But, since it is spent in wrongful ways, it becomes meaningless and brings nothing except adding more sins. That is why in the Qur'ān, the word *tabdhīr* is followed by the word brethren of Satan as such action is whispered by Satan and his way.

### ***Isrāf* (excessive consumption)**

*Isrāf* means excessive consumption or consumption beyond the sufficient level of what is needed. It is prohibited in the Qur'ān:

O children of Adam, wear your beautiful apparel at every place of worship, and eat and drink but be not excessive; indeed, He does not like the excessiveness (Qur'ān, 7:31)

If *tabdhīr* is wasteful consumption in not what is needed, *isrāf* is an excessive consumption beyond the quantity of what is needed. In other words, it is a willful over-consumption when the actual purpose may be served by lesser spending or use (al-Mawardi, vol.2, p.218). It is, in al-Qushairy's terminology (vol.1, p.508), "to go beyond the limit" or "to go above the moderate level". In other words, *isrāf* is to consume more than what is necessary or has passed the moderate or balance level limit (al-Mawsu'ah al-Fiqhiyyah al-Kuwaitiyyah, vol.4, p.176).

In this regard, the meaning of *isrāf* could be more understood in the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (pbuh) narrated by Ibn 'amr whereby:

The Prophet (pbuh) saw Sa'ad in ablution. He then said: What is this excessiveness? Sa'ad then replied: Is there excessiveness in ablution? He said: Yes, indeed, even if you are on the bank of a flowing river (Ibn Mājah, 2009, 1:272, ḥadīth no. 425)

It is very clear that both wasteful and excessive consumption could lead to inefficiency of resources utilization and also to the unequal distribution since the resources are being wasted instead of channeling them to the persons who are in need.

### ***Bukhl* (miserliness consumption)**

Another unfavorable consumption is described in the Qur'ān as miserliness-consumption. The Qur'ān mentions:

Who are stingy and enjoin upon [other] people stinginess and conceal what Allah has given them of His bounty - and We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment (Qur'ān, 4:37)

*Bukhl* (stinginess) is a reverse of *tabdhīr*. *Bukhl* refers to the unwillingness to spend wealth in what is needed. The meaning of *bukhl* refers to three things (al-Shawkani, vol. 1, p. 538):

- a) Miserable-consumption whereby an individual abstains from consuming things which are needed for his life or his family and hence make his life miserable.
- b) Selfish-consumption whereby an individual's objective in consumption is a narrow one: self-pleasure, lack of a bigger goal or public benefit and unwilling to share with others (Qur'ān, 3:180).
- c) Ungrateful-consumption whereby consumption is done without spiritual consciousness, unthankful to Allah and doing consumption not in the way of Allah (Qur'ān, 89:17-20).

### **D. Principle of Priority**

Having priority in consumption is also encouraged in Islam. Consumption should be done with a purpose of attaining benefits and preventing harms which could only be achieved if a consumer fully follows and commits to the guidelines established by Sharī'ah. Consumption that would bring us to that objective should be prioritized. Likewise, consumption that would ensure the balance and moderate position should also be prioritized over consumption that would lead us to transgression.

In this regard, the Qur'ān has revealed several types of consumption that should be put as a priority by a consumer in an Islamic economic framework.

- a) Individual and family's need over social consumption (Qur'ān, 2:215 and 219)<sup>(1)</sup>.
- b) Consumption in the right cause and for good purposes over consumption in the wrong way. This would include all types of consumption for one's needs and family and social consumption in the form of charity or social philanthropy activities for the good causes in society such as for education, health, infrastructure, public goods and others.
- c) Consumption in accordance with the hierarchy of needs as has been elaborated in the concept of *maqāṣid* al-Sharī'ah (objectives of Sharī'ah) into essentials (*darūriyyāt*), complementaries

(1) The Qur'ān uses the word *al-'afw* to denote something extra in wealth above one's needs and his family and after spending the obligatory spending (such as *zakāh* and others). *Infāq* to society is only required if an individual already fulfills his own needs as well as the needs of his family (see al-Maraghi, vol. 2, p. 146).

(*hājīyyāt*) and embellishments (*taḥsīniyyāt*). Consumption in the *darūriyyāt* is preferred to the *hājīyyāt* and the *hājīyyāt* is preferred to the *taḥsīniyyāt* respectively.

- ***Darūriyyāt* consumption** is essential consumption of basic needs to maintain the survival and integrity of individuals for their religious and worldly affairs. The absence of *darūriyyāt* consumption would lead to life destruction, chaos and collapse of normal order in individuals' lives and/or society (Kamali, 2008, p. 4).
- ***Hājīyyāt* consumption** is complementary consumption that would facilitate individuals' lives into a better quality of life, removing severity and hardship in their life. The absence of *hājīyyāt* consumption would lead to inconvenience or hardship in life.
- ***Taḥsīniyyāt* consumption** is embellishment consumption that would further improve the quality of life into perfection. Such consumption is promoted without any violation of good moral standards or an excessive or extravagant lifestyle (al-Shatibi, *al-Muwafaqat*, vol. 2, p. 22).

### 5. Islamic Consumer Behavior

Having those principles in consumption, consumer behavior in an Islamic framework should be different from that in the conventional framework. In the conventional concept, a consumer is conceived to behave 'rationally'. Rationality is the quality of economic behavior based on judgment of reason. A rational consumer is expected to be deliberative and not merely instinctive by having the ability to understand and process data relevant to the choice between alternatives. Rationality is also conceived as a tool to consider, think and choose the appropriate means and achieve the desired ends (Rutherford, 2007, p. 175).

Choice and decision is made within the framework of scarcity (as conditioned by scarce resources and unlimited wants) and self-interest (in pursuit of self-satisfaction). A rational individual would take the decision on something based on his interest that would maximize his utility. The individual is a utility maximizer who will choose a combination of goods and services which will extract the most utility for self from a given income (Rutherford, 2007, p. 176).

The above guiding principles show that in an Islamic economic framework, consumer behavior is interpreted differently whereby rationality is discussed with spiritual, moral and social considerations. Islam has laid down guiding principles, spells out values and disvalues; what is desirable and what is reprehensible from a moral, spiritual and social perspective in consumption. Rationality is defined with those values and principles.

Islamic economic approach to consumer behavior analysis is both realistic and idealistic in nature. It is idealistic in the sense that its analysis of consumer behavior will be based on the doctrine and values of Islam regarding the appropriate behavior in consumption. Those values which are derived from the Qur'ān and Sunnah set Islamic ethical principles, guidance and direction in consumption action. This would include what to be consumed, how to consume and objective in consumption.

Nevertheless, those ideals – values and goals – are not something which cannot be achieved or realized. In fact, they are applicable, very humanly, realistic, and their actualization would ensure the realization of wellbeing in human life. Therefore, Islamic economics is also realistic in the sense that it propagates values in consumption which are rooted in human nature and hence are suitable with human interest. It takes into consideration the nature and tendencies of human beings in totality.

If in conventional economics, the individual is assumed to act based on self-interest and his wants are reduced to material wants (biological and physical wants) *per se*, Islamic economics recognizes that consumer behavior is very complex as human nature and tendencies are also complex. As a consumer, the individual has both 'positive and negative tendencies' which implicate that his behavior would be motivated by either self-interest or other interests for his own satisfaction or other benefits. Positive behavior is a kind of action that is in accordance with Islamic values and principles and negative behavior is *vice versa*, an action which is not in line with Islamic values and principles.

Likewise, in the domain of choice, Islamic economics, according to Naqvi (1997, p. 9), does not agree with an unrestricted choice because all the individual preferences do not carry equal 'weight' in



the Islamic moral perspective, as they do in the Benthamite utilitarian world. In this regard, some of the choices should be assigned zero weight (if they are prohibited or against ethical values). Decision making should be done in the context of pursuing the human being's wellbeing, support his nature and existence, and guide him to a perfect nature as a human being.

In the Qur'ānic framework these two tendencies in human behavior are explicitly described as those who are following the Sharī'ah (i.e., Islamic values and teachings) or merely their desires (Qur'ān, 45:18 and 23:7).

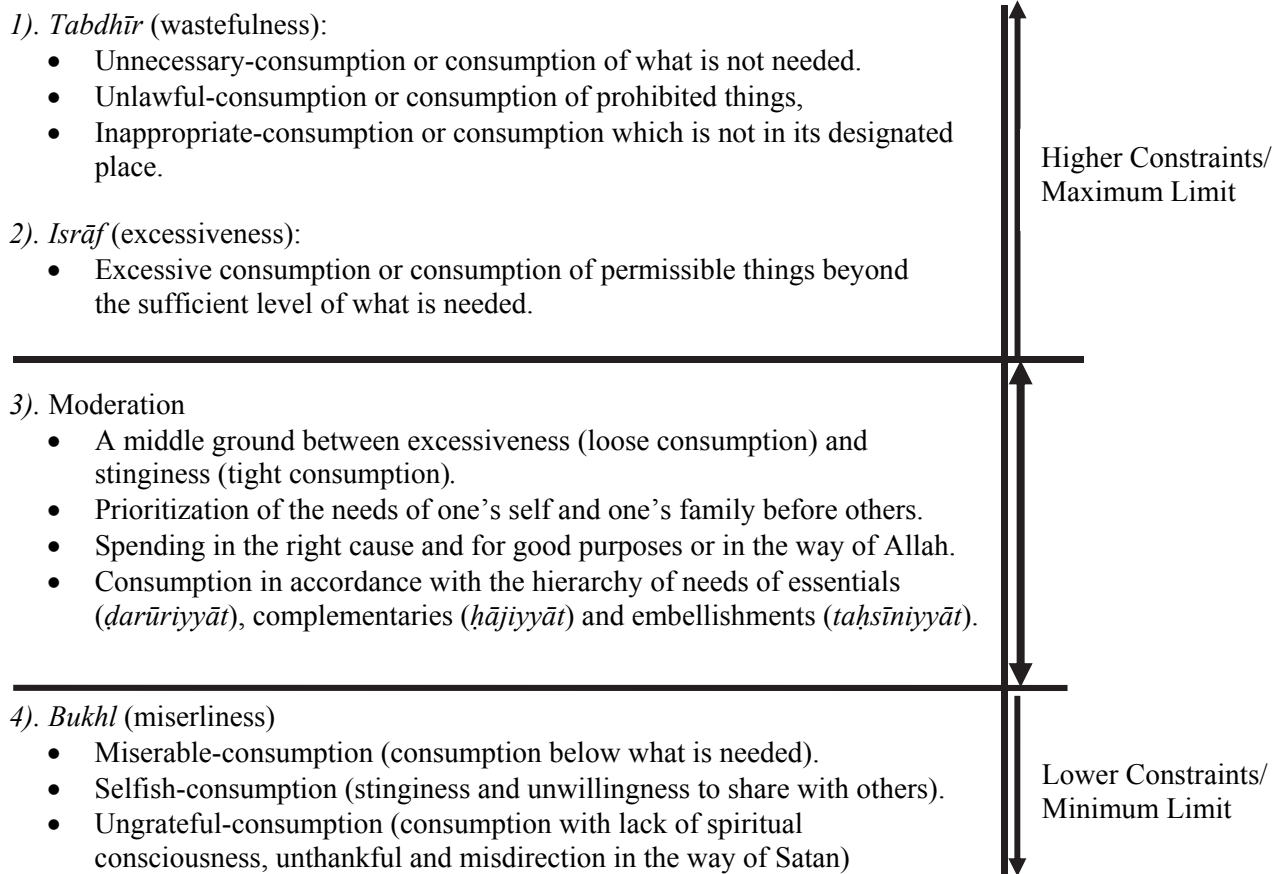
Furthermore, in the context of consumption, the Qur'ān also recognizes the tendency of human being to go into various types of behavior, namely over-consumption (consumption above the upper limit), just-consumption (between the two extremes of upper and lower limit) and under-consumption (consumption below the lower limit). Islam prefers a wise consumer who is able to balance and moderate by having a just and balance consumption (Qur'ān, 79:37-41).

A God-conscious consumer would ensure his consumption in the middle way of moderation and just consumption between excessiveness and stinginess, having prioritization to the need of one's self and one's family before others. His consumption would be in the right cause and for the good purposes or in the way of Allah, and his consumption would also be in accordance with the hierarchy of needs of essentials (*darūriyyāt*), complementaries (*hājjiyyāt*) and embellishments (*taḥsīniyyāt*).

Islam discourages consumers to go to the extreme (to the upper limit) in the form of excessive consumption (*isrāf*) by consuming permissible things beyond the sufficient level of what is needed or wasteful consumption (*tabdhīr*) by consuming what is not needed/unnecessary or consuming prohibited things or things which are undesired by Sharī'ah.

Likewise, to go the lower limit is not favorable as well. It is miserliness consumption by preventing consumption of what is needed for an individual or his family, preventing from sharing consumption with others, or preventing spending in the right cause and for the good purposes or in the way of Allah.

**Figure (1) Qur'ānic Framework in Consumption**



With this categorization of consumer behavior, it is very clear that it will not be reasonable to assume that all individuals would act totally with ethical and social concern, and vice versa, by assuming individuals are only motivated by their self-interest (Naqvi, 1994, p. 58). Consumer behavior varies in accordance with chosen values an individual believes in and adopts in his behavior. Certainly, the analysis of consumer behavior will not be identical<sup>(2)</sup>.

In the Islamic economic analysis of consumer behavior, both the positive and negative type of behavior based on the value categories which can be seen in actual reality will be studied. The analysis of actual

behavior will always be integrated with normative values guidance since the goal is not to describe facts as they are but to enlighten those actual realities with 'what they should be' in an Islamic framework. The values prescribed in the Qur'ān and Sunnah will be used as a benchmark and parameter in analyzing consumer behavior in an Islamic perspective and, if they are applied, could lead to a better practice in the economic system. This would render economic activity as having 'moral qualities' that will orientate its direction and application.

Therefore, for Islamic economics, elaboration of the ideal behavioral rules and norms is not only legitimate but necessary. This is because those behavioral assumptions once clearly, rigorously, and analytically articulated in a way intelligible to economists, would yield empirically testable propositions which, in turn, could lead to policy analysis

(2) It should be noted that the above categorization of consumer behavior, while being derived from the Qur'ānic guidelines, is very much *ijtihādīc* in nature. Differences in interpretation and categorization is therefore possible.

and recommendation on solutions to the problems of modern societies and contribute to knowledge accumulation and scientific progress (Iqbal and Mirakhor, 2007, p. 16).

In this regard, as illustrated by Yousri (2002, p. 31), there are some Sharī'ah guidelines that would form the axioms in studying consumer behavior. Prohibited goods or services must be excluded from the consumer's feasible set of commodities. Some other matters have to be treated on the basis of *ijtihad*. For example, Qur'ān prescribes that Muslim consumers must not be extravagant or misers (Qur'ān, 25:67). Economists' job is to formulate clear economic concepts for both extravagance and niggardliness by *ijtihad*. Once these concepts are clearly specified, they will help in formulating postulates that we have to adhere to when analyzing the behavior of the Muslim consumer.

In Islamic economics, an Islamic man (*homo islamicus*) is expected to fully commit to values as prescribed in Islam which serve as guidance in consumption action. Deviance to those values is not expected. Gaps in actual and expected behavior will be studied and analyzed in Islamic economics. In this perspective, an Islamic man is characterized as fully committed to Islamic ethical norms in his consumption behavior. *Taqwā* (having God's consciousness) is the terminology used in the Qur'ān to denote such an individual (Furqani, 2015, p. 74).

A consumer having *taqwā* is the one who has God's consciousness in his consumption behavior. Chapra (2008, p. 7) in this regard argues that *taqwā* attitude would ensure moral consciousness, moral uplift and social solidarity in an individual consumption behavior. This is for two reasons: (1) faith in *taqwā* attitude ensures the unconditional acceptance of values or rules of behavior, and hence (2) moral observation of these rules in practical behavior becomes a moral obligation. The *taqwā* principle of having God's consciousness would ensure this thing to happen in the actual behavior of an Islamic man. Those values which have been internalized in one's attitude would filter the wrongful consumption as we have identified. Likewise, they also would guide individuals to spend wisely and avoid wasteful and

unnecessary consumption. In addition, the state could also play a positive role to support internalizing Islamic values in consumer behavior through appropriate policy prescription.

## 6. Conclusion

Islam sees consumption as a virtue enterprise that would contribute wellbeing in human life. A consumer, in an Islamic framework, is concerned with meeting his needs to improve his wellbeing. These needs would refer to, as has been discussed, sustenance of life (*darūriyyāt*), making it easy and comfortable (*hājjiyyāt*) and also making it attractive and beautiful to live (*taḥsīniyyāt*).

Consumption is, therefore, having a social, moral and spiritual agenda rather than a wants-fulfillment enterprise in a personal self-satisfaction agenda. The goal of consumption in an Islamic framework would be not to gain personal wants satisfaction *per se* as such effort would be timeless and meaningless. The goal, instead, should be to direct the consumption in achieving individual and social wellbeing) and the higher purpose of achieving God's pleasure.

The Qur'ān and Sunnah have laid down the guiding principles in consumption that would be the framework for consumption behavior in an Islamic economic perspective. The Islamic economic agents are expected to adopt the Islamic morality principles in their actual consumption that is just-consumption. A consumer is expected to avoid 'over-consumption' by transgressing the higher constraints or 'under-consumption' in the lower constraints.

The Islamic economic approach to consumer behavior analysis is both realistic and idealistic in nature. It is idealistic in the sense that its analysis on consumer behavior will be based on the principles and values of Islam regarding the appropriate behavior in consumption. It is also realistic in the sense that it propagates values in consumption which are rooted in human nature and hence are suitable with human interest. It takes into consideration the nature and tendencies of human beings in material and spiritual dimensions and hence portrays the whole reality of human self.

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## الاستهلاك والأخلاق: المبادئ والإطار السلوكي في الاقتصاد الإسلامي

### حفص فرقاني

محاضر، كلية الاقتصاد الإسلامي والأعمال، جامعة الرانيري الإسلامية، إندونيسيا

المستخلص. يعتبر الاستهلاك في الاقتصاد الإسلامي عملاً إيجابياً من شأنه أن يساهم في الرفاه الإنساني. ويرى الإسلام أن الاستهلاك له أهداف أخلاقية وغايات نبيلة بدلاً من النظر إليه على أنه مجرد نشاط لتحقيق الرغبات في إطار شخصي للمتعة الذاتية. إنّ الهدف من الاستهلاك في إطار إسلامي ليس مجرد تحقيق رغبات شخصية في حد ذاته، لأن هذا الجهد سيكون فيه مضيعة للوقت ولا فائدة منه، وإنما الهدف هو تحقيق المصلحة الفردية والاجتماعية والمقصد الأسمى المتمثل في إرضاء الله سبحانه وتعالى. من هذا المنطلق وضع القرآن والسنة المبادئ التوجيهية في الاستهلاك التي تشكّل إطاراً للسلوك في هذا المجال من منظور الاقتصاد الإسلامي. ويتوقع من العاملين في مجال الاقتصاد الإسلامي أن يتبنوا مبادئ الأخلاق الإسلامية في استهلاكهم الفعلي. إنّ توجه هذه الورقة معياري في طبيعته ويهدف إلى تصور المبادئ والإطار السلوكي للاستهلاك الأخلاقي من منظور إسلامي وتوضيح أهداف ومبادئ توجيهية للاستهلاك في إطار الاقتصاد الإسلامي.

الكلمات الرئيسية: الاستهلاك، الأخلاق، السلوك، الأهداف، المبادئ التوجيهية.