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CONTEMPORARY PROMOTIONAL COMPETITIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON SOCIETY FROM AN ISLAMIC AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to clarify the Islamic ruling and the legal implications concerning the money, prizes, and discounts obtained through modern promotional competitions conducted via contemporary communication platforms. It further seeks to explore their positive and negative effects on society considering the principles, objectives, and purposes of Islamic Sharia, while providing effective and practical solutions. Methodology: The study adopts an inductive, analytical, and deductive approach by tracing and classifying the relevant scholarly materials related to the subject matter. It systematically analyzes various forms of prizes and rewards in the modern era, examines their Sharia rulings, and assesses their social consequences, thereby integrating jurisprudential and sociological perspectives. The research concludes that conditional prizes are permissible within the boundaries and rulings established by Islamic law. However, participation in modern promotional competitions becomes impermissible when the cost is increased beyond the normal price, when participation is contingent upon purchase, or when the content involves moral or societal corruption. The study underscores the necessity for scholars to engage in further examination of competitions and rewards based on technological advancements, such as those involving artificial intelligence. It also recommends designing competitions that inspire youth to think creatively, innovate, and excel, given their positive influence on individual and societal development, as well as their role in promoting ethical and constructive competition.

KEYWORDS: Contemporary Competitions; Social Media Platforms ; Islamic Jurisprudence.

1. INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all worlds, and may peace and blessings be upon the Messenger sent as a mercy to mankind, our Prophet Muhammad, and upon his family and companions.

Islam, being the divine religion chosen by Allah Almighty for all humanity, has guided mankind toward what ensures the welfare of their worldly and spiritual lives. Its teachings are in complete harmony with human nature and guarantee happiness and righteousness wherever they are applied. Consequently, Islam is a comprehensive and timeless religion, suitable for every age and place, capable of addressing all emerging circumstances and continuous developments. Its legislation is perfect in its unchanging fundamentals while flexible in its subsidiary rulings, allowing it to respond to new issues through its universal principles and foundational rules. Hence, no new phenomenon arises except that Islam provides guidance and judgment derived either directly from the sacred texts or through juristic reasoning based on them.

In the present era, rapid scientific and technological advancements have transformed all aspects of life. Every day, individuals encounter new realities that did not exist before, leading them to question whether to accept or reject these changes. Among the outcomes of this scientific revolution is the proliferation of modern promotional competitions, which have diversified and spread widely across various domains of life. Unfortunately, this expansion has also resulted in forms of unlawful financial gain, such as manipulative or deceptive commercial competitions.

The significance of these jurisprudential issues lies in their direct impact on people's daily lives. Thus, there is an urgent need to clarify the Islamic rulings concerning modern promotional competitions, given their growing prevalence and the increasing involvement of individuals in participating and investing in them. These competitions now occupy a major part of people's social and economic activities to an unprecedented extent.

1.1. Study Problem

The research problem arises from the emergence of new types of competitions that differ in form and nature from those discussed by classical jurists, as they have become widespread and accessible to all segments of society. Therefore, it is essential to clarify Islam's position regarding these competitions and examine their social effects. Based on this, the main research question can be formulated as follows:

What are contemporary promotional competitions, and what is their impact on society from an Islamic and social perspective?

This main question leads to the following sub-questions:

1. What is meant by Promotional Competitions, and what is their legitimacy in Islamic law?
2. What is the Islamic ruling on Promotional Competitions, and what are their legal conditions and restrictions?
3. What are the modern applications of these competitions, and what are their impacts on society?

1.2. Study Objectives

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To define promotional competitions and clarify their legitimacy according to Islamic jurisprudence.
2. To explain the Islamic ruling regarding promotional competitions and outline their legal conditions and restrictions.
3. To present contemporary examples of promotional competitions and discuss their legal rulings and effects on society.

1.3. Significance of Study

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of a contemporary issue that affects the daily lives of Muslims. By addressing modern questions relevant to both the public and researchers, the study aims to provide practical benefit and legal clarity. It also seeks to guide both those organizing such competitions and those participating in them, clarifying their rulings and social impacts at both the individual and collective levels.

1.4. Methodology

The research adopts the inductive, analytical, and deductive methodologies, by gathering relevant fiqh sources and references, reviewing the opinions of contemporary scholars, analyzing their evidence, and discussing differing views. The aim is to identify the strongest position supported by evidence while also highlighting the societal impact of Promotional Competitions.

2. PREVIOUS STUDIES

This issue is considered among the contemporary matters (*al-masā'il al-mustajaddah*), and this study comes as a continuation of previous scholarly efforts. The most notable related studies include:

First Study

Al-Kandari (2024) examined contemporary competition prizes conducted on social media platforms and their jurisprudential rulings [30]. The study addressed challenges in live TikTok competitions, mobile company contests, the “Aura” points system, and reward-based gaming apps. This aligns with our research by discussing the Islamic rulings of competitions on TikTok and similar platforms.

Second Study

Al-Harbi (2024) investigated jurisprudential conditions for the validity of offering rewards in competitions and presented contemporary applications [9]. His findings correspond with our study in highlighting Islamic criteria for modern competitions broadcast via television, radio, and digital platforms.

Third Study

Hawsawi (2022) explored Qur’anic competitions and their educational and social impact [36]. This study relates to ours in examining both the jurisprudential rulings and societal effects of Qur’anic competitions.

3. STUDY CONTRIBUTION

This study differs from previous research by introducing Promotional Competitions, clarifying their Islamic legitimacy, defining their types and social impact, explaining their legal rulings, and outlining the regulations governing such competitions.

It also examines rulings of competitions conducted through mobile apps, communication technologies, and social media platforms, as well as product-based raffle draws.

Furthermore, it highlights positive and negative societal impacts and proposes guidelines for proper use to avoid falling into prohibited practices.

Section One: The Nature, Ruling, and Regulations of Promotional Competitions

Subsection One: The Definition and Nature of Promotional Competitions

2.1. Linguistic Definition

The term *musābaqah* (competition) derives from *sabq*, meaning precedence or taking the lead. Ibn Faris defined it as “to advance or be ahead in motion” [27].

As for *al-sabaq* (with a different vowelization), it refers to “the amount placed among competitors,” i.e., the prize or monetary reward [35].

Al-Khattābī described it as “that which is granted to the winner for excellence or achievement” [10].

2.2. Technical Definition

Jurists differed in wording but agreed that *musābaqah* refers to rivalry and precedence.

The Ḥanafī scholars defined it as racing with horses, camels, or similar animals [29].

The Islamic Fiqh Academy defined it broadly as a competitive act between two or more individuals, whether with or without a prize [32].

Thus, the technical definition aligns with the linguistic meaning.

2.3. Definition of Promotional Competitions

Promotional Competitions are defined as competitions organized by service providers or sellers to attract buyers and promote goods [33].

These competitions are used by companies and commercial stores to encourage participation by offering monetary or in-kind prizes.

They have emerged due to expanding production, increased market competition, and the need for innovative marketing tools.

This aligns with al-Ruqab’s explanation of marketing strategies in competitive markets [17].

It should be noted that promotional competitions involve rivalry and precedence, whereas incentive gifts do not fall under this category since they depend solely on fulfilling a condition without competing [33].

2.4. Legitimacy of Competitions

Competitions are permissible when they involve beneficial activities and do not lead to harm. The evidence includes:

1. Qur’anic Evidence

Allah says:

“They said, ‘O our father, indeed we went racing (*nastabiqu*) one another’” (Yūsuf 12:17).

Al-Ālūsī explains that *nastabiqu* refers to competing in running, archery, watering, herding, and other activities practiced by previous nations [1].

2. From the Sunnah:

The Prophet ﷺ had a she-camel named *al-‘Aḍbā’* that was never beaten in a race until a Bedouin outran it, and this saddened the Muslims. The Prophet ﷺ said: “It is Allah’s right that nothing is raised in this world except that He lowers it.” (Al-Bukhārī, [2]).

Ibn Ḥajar comments on this hadith, stating: “It indicates the permissibility of competition” ([7]).

3. Consensus (Ijmā’):

Scholars, such as Ibn Qudāmah ([26]) and al-Qurṭubī (as cited in al-Shawkānī, [34]), reported

consensus on the permissibility of competitions involving horses, camels, archery, and running due to their benefits in physical and martial training.

4. PURPOSES OF PROMOTIONAL COMPETITIONS

1. Promoting goods and services: People are more likely to purchase a product that includes or promises a prize, which activates sales and increases profits (Shubayr, [22]).
2. Attracting consumers to stores: By advertising these prizes, businesses can draw consumers into their stores (Al-Suwaydān, [21]).
3. Introducing new products: Competitions may serve as a means of publicizing new goods (Al-Muṣliḥ, [23]).
4. Enhancing store reputation: By conducting competitions and distributing prizes, the store gains public recognition (Al-Suwaydān, [21]).

The forms of Promotional Competitions have evolved over time—from paper tickets and mail to modern technologies such as TV, radio, and social media.

Subsection Two: The Islamic Ruling on Promotional Competitions

Promotional competitions are contemporary issues not explicitly discussed by classical jurists. Scholars of modern times have differed regarding their permissibility. Generally, they fall into two categories:

Type One: Competitions requiring participants to perform a task

(as stated by al-Muṣliḥ, [23]):

1. Without purchase requirement:
2. Participation is free → Permissible (Shubayr, [22]).
3. With purchase requirement:

Participation depends on buying a product/service.

If the price is increased:

→ Prohibited, because it becomes maysir (gambling)

(Permanent Committee, [19]).

If the price is not increased, scholars are divided:

First View: Prohibition

Held by Ibn Bāz (via al-Juraysī, [6]), Ibn Jibrīn ([5]), the Permanent Committee ([19]), and al-Rumaiḥ ([18]).

Reasoning includes:

- Gambling suspicion: entry tied to payment ([18])
- Inducing unnecessary purchases ([19])
- Harm to other sellers ([5])

These evidences are contestable.

The claim of maysir is unfounded, since the prize is given by the organizer, not jointly funded. Instead of prohibition, setting regulations is more appropriate. Shubayr argues for regulated permissibility ([22]).

Purchasing a needed product with the added hope of winning is permissible (Abdul Rahim, [16]).

Concerns about market harm fall under the authority of the ruler to regulate (Ibn ‘Uthaymīn, [25]).

Second View: Permissibility

Supported by Ibn ‘Uthaymīn ([25]), Bilḥājī ([3]), Abdul Rahim ([16]), and Shubayr ([22]).

Their reasoning includes:

- Payment is in exchange for a lawful product regardless of winning ([31]).
- No participant contributes to the prize (Shubayr, [22]).

Al-Zarqā allowed minor prizes and discouraged major ones, though Bilḥājī rejected this distinction ([3]).

Preferred Opinion (Al-Tarjīḥ):

Such competitions are permissible when price is not raised and intention is to buy a needed product.

If price is inflated → prohibited by consensus.

Type Two: Competitions without participant activity (prize draws)

Two cases:

1. Open to all, no payment → Permissible.
2. Conditional on purchase/payment → requires scrutiny.

Some consider these gifts, but since they involve rivalry, they resemble competitions.

If no purchase is required → permissible, as no gambling or injustice exists, and the prize is a unilateral donation (Al-Muṣliḥ, [23]).

In Summary:

Promotional Competitions—both types—are permissible if no purchase requirement exists.

If purchase is required without price increase, and the buyer needs the product, participation is permissible.

If price is raised → prohibited by scholarly consensus.

Subsection Three: Legal Conditions and Regulations

First Branch: Content-Related Regulations

1. Competition must not contradict Islamic creed (Al-Khuli, [11]).
2. Must be transparent; rules and prizes clarified (Zaher, [37]).
3. Equal treatment of participants (Pronaya, [39]).
4. Must not promote prohibited acts (Al-Ramli,

[20]; Fiqh Academy, [32]).

5. Must avoid gambling; no entry fees or price inflation ([32]).
6. Must not promote hate, deception, or fabricated news (Pronaya, [39]).

Second Branch: Participant-Related Regulations

1. Participants must avoid unlawful content ([32]).
2. Intention must be sincere; purchase should not be solely for entering (Al-Bukhari, [2]).
3. Maintain ethics of disagreement; avoid offensive behavior.
4. Uphold honesty; avoid cheating (Dhamija, [38]).
5. Participation must not cause time waste or addiction (Al-Humaid, [8]).

Section Two: Contemporary Social Applications

This section examines real-life competition forms.

Subsection One: Competitions via Modern Technologies

This includes competitions via phone calls, TV channels, and online platforms.

First Form: Call/SMS-Based Competitions

Companies encourage multiple attempts with cash or product prizes.

Qur'an recitation contests via phone also exist, offering rewards such as Umrah trips.

Ruling:

- If the call or message cost remains at the standard rate set by the telecommunications provider, participation is permissible, provided the competition meets the previously mentioned conditions and serves a beneficial purpose ([17]).
- However, if the cost exceeds the normal rate—which is often the case—the competition becomes strictly prohibited, even if the content is beneficial, as it falls under maysir (gambling), where one either gains or loses ([17]).
- If the content promotes immorality—such as questions about entertainment, celebrities, or trivial matters—participation is absolutely forbidden regardless of cost, since it involves spreading corruption, wasting time, and undermining Islamic values ([14]).

This view is supported by scholars such as Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Dr. Nasr Farid Wasil, and the Islamic Research Academy of Al-Azhar, who ruled that such competitions instill a spirit of gambling and dependency among participants without providing genuine benefit ([17], [30]).

Therefore, participation is permissible only if conducted at standard rates and for educational or

religious purposes, avoiding misleading or excessively complex questions.

It should be noted that the condition for lawful competition mirrors the general principle of intended benefit in purchase-based contests: here, the competition must be educational, cultural, or religious, rather than frivolous entertainment. Allah knows best ([8]).

Second Form: Competitions through Social Media Platforms

These include contests on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. Some require answering questions or inviting friends. These contests are widespread due to minimal cost.

If the competition involves effort or skill—like answering a question or performing a creative task—it is permissible if it adheres to Sharia rules and does not involve deceit ([22]).

If the competition merely asks users to comment or share without tasks or payments, it is also permissible. These are considered promotional strategies, not gambling, since participation involves no financial risk; the prize is a unilateral gift (hiba) ([23]).

Third Form: Competitions by Online Marketplaces

E-commerce platforms (such as Shein) allow customers to purchase items and sometimes enter prize draws.

Shein Application:

Shein markets clothing and home goods ([36]).

The app offers coupons or gifts upon purchasing products of a certain value. Participants may enter a draw for a prize.

Ruling:

- If the discount or reward does not affect the real price, and the buyer's intention is purchasing rather than winning, it is permissible.
- If the price is inflated or the buyer purchases only to win, it becomes impermissible (maysir).
- If participation is open and free with no purchase, it is permissible.

This aligns with the Jordanian Fatwa Council ([28]) and the International Islamic Fiqh Academy ([32]), which state that prizes must not be financed by participants and no deception may occur.

Subsection Two: Competitions Conducted through Product-Based Prize Draws

Prize draws have expanded electronically. Several forms exist:

First Form: Buying a coupon only to join the draw → Unanimously prohibited, as it is gambling

([14], [32]).

Second Form: Buying a product and receiving a coupon

(Belhajji, [3]):

1. If the buyer intends only the product and the price is not increased → Permissible.
2. If the buyer purchases only for the prize or the price is increased → Impermissible, because it becomes gambling.

Third Form: Buying a product and receiving coupons exchangeable for known gifts

Scholars differ, but this is closer to a gift if no extra payment or price increase occurs.

Regarding the Draw Mechanism

Scholars differed, but the correct view is that the draw (قرعة) is permissible.

The evidence is the hadith:

“When the Prophet ﷺ intended to travel, he would draw lots among his wives; whoever’s name was drawn would accompany him.” (Bukhari, [34])

Ibn Hajar stated this indicates permissibility ([7]).

Modern scholars including Mustafa al-Zarqa and Yusuf al-Qaradawi agree ([15]).

Reason:

Draws are not gambling, because the participant does not risk losing money. Gambling only occurs when:

- the purchase is made solely for the draw, or
- the seller increases prices to fund prizes ([15]).

Subsection Three: The Positive and Negative Effects of Modern Promotional Competitions on Society

First: Positive Effects

1. Such competitions encourage e-commerce by promoting online shopping, motivating both participants and non-participants to engage in digital marketing—especially when linked to attractive prizes—thereby increasing reliance on and frequent use of these platforms in everyday life ([4]).
2. They serve as an effective marketing tool, enabling companies to use social networks to promote a product or service at lower costs, thereby increasing profits while minimizing expenses.
3. Competitions motivate participants to create new content to attract attention and win, which can help enhance their creative skills ([39]).
4. They foster social interaction and engagement among individuals, as participants comment and like posts to compete for prizes. This also

encourages collaboration among participants to achieve competition goals, contributing to a dynamic and interactive digital environment ([40]).

5. Promotional competitions help reduce overstocked inventory by offering discounts or organizing promotional events, enabling customers to purchase goods at lower prices ([4]).

Second: Negative Effects

1. They contribute to a culture of excessive consumption and desire for goods beyond family financial capacity due to exposure to advertising, increasing unnecessary purchase impulses. This can negatively affect participants’ mental states, as the desire to win at any cost may dominate their behavior ([27], [40]).
2. Competitions linked to products may undermine consumer trust in e-commerce, as buyers may suspect lower product quality. Price inflation or promotional tactics may result in substandard items or discrepancies between displayed and delivered products ([11]).
3. Such competitions can negatively impact the environment due to excessive waste, unsustainable production practices, and labor concerns. For example, SHEIN has faced criticism regarding these issues, creating uncertainty among customers about the ethical and environmental implications of their purchases ([41]).
4. They may weaken values of contentment and simplicity, leading to increased dissatisfaction, anxiety, and in some cases, unethical behavior among participants in pursuit of prizes.

5. CONCLUSION

By the grace and favor of Allah, this study reached the following conclusions:

1. The concept of competition among jurists involves notions of superiority and precedence. Promotional competitions (al-masābiq al-targhibiyyah) are contests organized by sellers and service providers to attract buyers to specific markets, shops, or to promote certain goods and services, ultimately stimulating sales.
2. Promotional competitions are of two types: those requiring participants to perform a specific task, and those that do not require any particular effort from participants.
3. The prevailing view permits promotional

competitions provided they adhere to Sharia regulations, including fulfilling a legitimate purpose, avoiding maysir (gambling), and using drawing (qur'ah) as a lawful method to determine the winner.

4. Participation in promotional competitions is subject to regulations concerning both content and participants. Key requirements include complete clarity regarding all competition details—rules, timeframe, prize type and amount, initiation and conclusion procedures—to prevent disputes, and ensuring that winning is possible and accessible to participants.
5. Promotional competitions are permissible if conducted in accordance with Sharia, without requiring any financial contribution from participants, whether they involve effort or not.
6. Competitions conducted via modern communication, e-commerce platforms, or

social media are permissible provided prices remain unchanged (reflecting real costs) and the competition serves a cultural or religious purpose.

7. Prize draws on goods are not considered gambling. They are permissible provided the buyer's objective is to acquire the product itself, not merely to participate in the draw, and provided the merchant does not inflate the price.
8. Among the most significant positive impacts of competitions on society are encouragement of e-commerce, effective promotion, and enhancement of social interaction and engagement among individuals.
9. Among the most notable negative impacts are the promotion of excessive consumerism beyond family financial capacity, erosion of contentment and simplicity, and increased dissatisfaction and anxiety among individuals.

Author Contributions:

Afnan Yousef Ibrahim Tawalbeh contributed to the conceptualization of the study, development of the theoretical framework, literature review, data interpretation, and drafting of the original manuscript.

Maryam Ahmed Ghaleb Al-Khatib contributed to the methodology design, data analysis support, critical revision of the manuscript for intellectual content, and final editing.

Reem Mohammad Theeb Alawneh contributed to the translation of the manuscript, literature review support, drafting selected sections, as well as formatting and proofreading.

All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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