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Visual Communication Patterns of Islamic Merchandise in the Construction of Tolerance Among Gen Z

Mariyatul Qiptiyah[1] , Nurul Azizah[2]
[1,2]Ibrahimy University, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Digital communication patterns and smart branding have positioned Islamic products as key agents in promoting religious moderation in the digital era**.** Therefore, Islamic products are not merely commodities, but effective bottom-up communication platforms for promoting tolerance amidst the diversity of Generation Z. This study uses a qualitative approach with Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis to examine the denotative and connotative meanings in a sample of popular Islamic product designs on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. Furthermore, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with Gen Z participants from diverse religious backgrounds to explore their perceptions, acceptance, and interpretation processes of visual messages. The research findings indicate that Islamic products that successfully promote tolerance tend to adopt universal aesthetics (minimalist design, modern typography) while minimizing exclusive religious symbols. The visual communication patterns embedded in Islamic products play a crucial role in planting the seeds of tolerance among Gen Z. Their success lies in their ability to package Islamic values in an inclusive and stylish manner, transforming them from purely religious objects into symbols of peaceful and open identity. This shows that fashion and popular culture serve as effective platforms for communicating religious moderation.

Corresponding Author:
Mariyatul Qiptiyah
Email: Mariyatulkiptiyah473@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

According to Shimp, [1]communication is the process of conveying thoughts and understanding between individuals, or between organizations. Meanwhile, according to a simple definition by Belch & Belch (1993) in Harjanto, [2]communication can be described as a 'channel of information' or the exchange of ideas or the process of establishing a common ground or unity of thought between sender and receiver. We communicate every day, even every time we communicate. Of course, communication also has a purpose and function.

According to Lasswell in Harjanto, [3]the function of communication is 1) environmental observation; 2) correlation of groups in society when responding to the environment; 3) cultural transmission, which is a social heritage and from one generation to the next. In addition to having goals and functions, communication also has components so that communication can take place well. According to Lasswell in Wiryanto, and Hermawan, the components of communication are: 1) communication environment; 2) communicator/sender and communicant/receiver; 3) message/media; 4) feedback; 5) *interference;* 6) communication effects; 7) ethics and freedom of choice [4].

According to Hermawan (2012: 10-12), there are four main goals or motives of communication, namely: A.) Finding, one of the main goals of communication is personal discovery . *B.* Relating, communication allows humans to establish relationships with other humans. C. Convincing, communication can convince and change human attitudes and behavior from the communication environment. D.) Playing.[5]

In today's era, communication will be more unique by using visual merchandising, because visual merchandising is a marketing communication tool that is useful for conveying a brand's product image message to potential customers and is able to position their brand with brands from other products. Visual Merchandising is a basic element in creating a shopping atmosphere in a store, because the appearance of the store starting from the sight, sound, touch, taste, and aroma are components that are largely able to produce the form of presentation of merchandise in the store. [6]Visual branding is built on

[1] Shimp Terence A, "Advertising Promotion and Additional Aspects of Integrated Marketing."
[2] Harjanto Rudy, “Principles of Advertising.”
[3] Harjanto Rudy.
[4] Hermawan Agus, “Marketing Communication.”
[5] Herman Agus.
[6] Diva Chaerunnisa Djufri, Nurabdiansyah, and Sukarman, “Visual Merchandising Design for Sustainable Goods Stores.”

identity characteristics, which aim to differentiate, introduce, and enhance the image of its products to the audience.[7]

This research exists because the majority of existing research on Islamic *merchandise* tends to discuss the following aspects, (1) In Tri Ariprabowo's research with the title Implementation of Visual Merchandising as a Promotional Media at Matahari Department Store Royal Plaza Surabaya Fashion Retail, (2 In Allysa Farra's research entitled Improving Branding & Identity of Untirta Community Science Through Visual Merchandise Design and (3) Visual Merchandising Design of Sustainable Goods Store from Diva Chaerunnisa.

However, there is a significant gap that has not been filled. Not many studies have specifically examined how the visual communication patterns inherent in Islamic *merchandise* play a role in constructing broader social values, such as tolerance and inclusivity, especially in the eyes of Generation Z. Amidst the challenges of polarization and the urgent need for unity in society, the potential of visual *merchandise* to become a medium that communicates the message of Islam as *rahmatan lil alamin* (spreading compassion for the universe) is still neglected.

Therefore, this research is crucial and urgent. Focusing on Generation Z as the primary visual consumer, this study aims to explore and analyze the visual communication patterns of Islamic *merchandise* that explicitly and implicitly contribute to building awareness and understanding of tolerance.

RESEARCH METHOD

Method , or method, is a procedure or step-by-step process for acquiring scientific knowledge. Therefore, a research method is a systematic way to organize scientific knowledge. Conducting field observations as needed is crucial in qualitative research [8]. This research itself directly trains and hones design and client collaboration skills, creating significant recruitment opportunities in the professional world.[9]

The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is research whose findings are not based on statistical figures. This research is

[7] Almahendra, H., "Visual Branding Craft Center West Sumatra."
[8] Sugiyono, “Qualitative Research Methods for Research that is: Exploratory, Interpretive, Interactive, Constructive.”
[9] Ardani, NA, “Designing Communication Design in the Form of an Instagram Campaign.”

constructive because the data collected is in the form of text or documentation, not numbers [10].

In this study, the author will use Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis method to analyze the meaning of visual messages. This study uses the Constructivism Paradigm as its main philosophical framework. The choice of this paradigm is based on the fundamental assumption that reality is not a single objective entity, but rather something that is socially constructed through individual interactions, experiences, and interpretations.

1. Ontological Assumptions (The Nature of Reality)

In the context of this research, the reality regarding the "meaning of tolerance" emitted by Islamic *merchandise is* Relative and Plural, namely There is no one *fixed* or truly objective meaning of tolerance from visual *merchandise* . Each member of Generation Z, based on their religious, social, and cultural background, will construct a different understanding of tolerance, Socially Constructed, namely the visual meaning is not attached to the object (*merchandise*) itself, but emerges through a process of negotiation and interpretation among Gen Z.

2. Epistemological Assumptions (Nature of Knowledge)

Knowledge in the constructivism paradigm is obtained through in-depth interaction and interpretation, so that the Interactive Relationship of Researchers cannot be separated from the object being studied. Understanding the "Gen Z construction" of tolerance can only be achieved through dialogue and direct engagement with participants (through FGD) and through contextual analysis of visual symbols (Semiotics). The goal is to achieve verstehen (in-depth understanding) of *how* Generation Z creates and interprets visual communication patterns of Islamic *merchandise* and *how* these interpretations shape their views on tolerance.

3. Methodological Assumptions (Research Approach)

To fulfill the principles of constructivism, this study adopted a qualitative methodology, where the Researcher's Qualitative Approach used flexible and process-oriented methods, namely Semiotic Analysis to describe the potential of visual meaning and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to explore the subject's meaning construction in depth. Data were collected to reflect a diversity of perspectives (e.g., involving Muslim

[10] Moleong Lexy J., "Qualitative Research Methods."

and non-Muslim Gen Z participants). Triangulation of visual data (semiotics) and perceptual data (FGD) was used to enrich and confirm the complex construction of meaning , rather than seeking a single truth. Thus, the Constructivism Paradigm allows this study not only to describe visual patterns, but more importantly, to explain the cognitive and social processes in which these visual patterns are transformed into social meaning (tolerance) by Generation Z.

Specifically, the unit of analysis in this study is merchandise found on social media TikTok and Instagram, which is part of a visual communication message to reveal the meaning of symbols that will foster tolerance among Generation Z. The design form on this merchandise will bring out different characters and identities.[11]

Data were collected through two main techniques, namely Semiotic Analysis for visual data, and FGD for interpretation/perception data. Semiotic Analysis (Visual Primary Data) The aim is to analyze signs, signifiers, and signifieds on Islamic *merchandise* to reveal explicit and implicit messages (denotation and connotation), especially those related to tolerance. This study used a total of 6 (six) *merchandise samples.* selected using purposive sampling . The main criteria were products that had strong Islamic *visual branding* and explicitly or implicitly claimed to promote modern/friendly/inclusive Islamic values.

The samples are divided into three categories: (1) Functional Accessories 2 products: Includes one tumbler design and one tote bag design with modern calligraphy and/or iconography. (2) Apparel 2 products: Includes one t-shirt design and one hoodie with text messages/visual symbols related to religious and social values. (3) Prayer Equipment 2 products: Includes two travel prayer mat/mukena designs with unconventional motifs or color patterns.

The samples were selected from three different local Islamic brands popular among Gen Z through social media platforms. The selection was based on (1) the popularity/level of product engagement on social media, and (2) the diversity of visual elements (text, icons, colors) that could potentially trigger interpretations. The analysis was conducted using Roland Barthes's Semiotics model (Denotation, Connotation, Myth).

[11] Choirunnisa, A and Hidayatulloh, MS, "Designing Corporate Identity as a Promotional Media for the Nusa Sejahtera Cooperative."

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) (Primary Data Perception) The goal is to deeply explore the interpretation, acceptance, and construction process of the meaning of tolerance by Generation Z towards the visual communication patterns that have been analyzed. Participants were selected using purposive sampling and quota sampling techniques to ensure diversity of interpretations according to the constructivist paradigm. Number of Participants: 10 Generation Z. Age Range: 13 to 28 years (the main phase of social identity formation and consumption). Consisting of 5 Muslims and 5 non-Muslims (Christian/Catholic/Hindu) to obtain a broad spectrum of interpretations of Islamic visual merchandise, especially regarding the issue of tolerance.

FGD Implementation Location and Format, Conducted online through a video conference platform to facilitate participation from various regions and maintain time efficiency, Each FGD session lasts for 90 to 120 minutes, Question Guide, The FGD guide is structured based on initial findings from Semiotic Analysis. The questions focus on: (a) Recognition of messages in Islamic merchandise visuals; (b) Interpretation of the meaning of tolerance emitted; (c) Comparison of visual acceptance between religious groups; and (d) The influence of these visuals on their social behavior.

Data analysis was conducted sequentially and integratedly using Triangulation Method. (1) Semiotic Data Analysis The results of the semiotic analysis (denotation, connotation, myth) of 6 merchandise samples will produce a map of Islamic visual communication patterns that include elements of signifier (visual) and signified (potential meaning). These findings are then used as the basis (input) for compiling FGD question guides. (2) FGD transcription data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis Techniques. The steps include: (a) Verbatim data transcription; (b) Data coding to identify units of meaning; (c) Grouping codes into sub-themes; and (d) Formulating Main Themes regarding Generation Z's interpretation of tolerance in Islamic merchandise, (3) Integration was conducted through Triangulation Method at the interpretation stage, Findings from Semiotic Analysis (meaning hypothesized by researchers from visuals) will be compared with findings from FGD (meaning constructed by Gen Z participants). Triangulation is used to test the extent to which the visual communication patterns embedded by producers are accepted and interpreted as messages of tolerance by the audience (Gen Z). Differences or similarities in interpretation will be at the core of the discussion of meaning construction in this study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Social media is a form of digital technology development that utilizes the internet to facilitate communication between individuals and large groups, without being limited by distance or location. This has attracted a lot of interest, with almost everyone having and using social media. With its various advantages, social media allows people to showcase portfolios, interact socially, and even promote products or services. Social media can be categorized as online media because it requires an internet connection to use. On this platform, interaction is not only through writing, but also through visuals and videos. Therefore, many people use social media for various purposes. The convenience offered by social media as a means of communication encourages many people to promote themselves on it, which requires them to have creative ideas for promoting using social media.[12]

This process of desacralizing visuals (making them part of consumer culture) allows Generation Z to interact without the burden of prejudice, which in turn fosters practical tolerance in everyday life. Visual designs must be able to communicate culturally to convey their message and meaning.[13]

Merchandise is more effective because it is more durable, not affected by distance, and easily recognized because it only contains brand identity. Generally, merchandise design is unique and attractive so that many audiences use it and as a walking advertisement that benefits companies [14]that combine theories about visual design theory and brand equity research [15]Visual Elements, Dominant Identifying and describing key elements (signifiers) on tumblers etc., such as, Slogans/Keywords Islamic phrases that appear most often. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, to analyze the meaning of visual messages, Denotative, Connotative, Mythical Meanings. Visual Merchandise has been observed primarily for its impact on customer satisfaction, purchase intention, buyer behavior, and revisit intention.[16]

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[12] Kusuma Putra, GLA, & YASA, GPPA, "Comics as a Means of Promotional Communication on Social Media."
[13] Yudhanto, SH, Risdiant, F., and Artanto, AT, "Cultural and Communication Approaches in the Design of Visual Communication Design Works."
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[15] Heitman, M. et al., "Leveraging Brand Equity for Effective Visual Product Design."
[16] Tri Ariprabowo et al., "Implementation of Visual Merchandising as a Promotional Media at Matahari Department Store Royal Plaza Surabaya Fashion Retail."

Examining how the social media platforms TikTok and Instagram reinforce this pattern of visual communication, both platforms, especially Instagram, are highly visual-based, making these aesthetic merchandise highly viral and shareable. Social media allows Generation Z to form identity communities where they can express Islamic values without feeling isolated. Sharing Tumbler content on social media by *influencers* or peers serves as social validation of this moderate and tolerant image of Islam, strengthening its acceptance.

The Emergence *of Symbol Decoding* Respondents showed interest in symbols normalized through *merchandise* , such as simple Arabic script, geometric shapes, or *modest clothing* packaged in a trendy way. They began to understand these symbols as cultural and aesthetic elements, rather than simply religious dogma . Key findings suggest that Islamic Visual Merchandise presented in an apolitical and aesthetic manner contributes to the construction of informal tolerance. When inherently Islamic products such as unique tumbler merchandise become part of the general market trend, their presence in public spaces becomes normalized. Generation Z reported that when they see friends or public figures consuming *trendy Islamic merchandise* , this sparks positive curiosity and reduces social distance. These products become *a meeting point* that transcends the boundaries of religious identity.

The findings of this study reinforce the theory that visual communication serves as an effective bridge in intercultural dialogue. Islamic visual merchandise, particularly targeting Generation Z, has shifted from *prescriptive communication* (teaching religious rules) to *descriptive communication* (offering lifestyle and aesthetics). This shift is crucial for Generation Z, who are known to value authenticity, inclusivity, and *visual appeal* . The use of *modern, minimalist, and fashionable aesthetics* in the visual merchandising of Islamic products successfully deconstructs old stereotypes. In the eyes of Generation Z, *friendly and contemporary visuals* depict an Islam that is flexible and relevant to the times. This aligns with the concept of "Islam Nusantara" or "Moderate Islam," which emphasizes inclusivity. When "Islamic" products are no longer synonymous with "exclusive" or "conservative," space for tolerance and acceptance is increasingly open.

Barthes' Semiotic Analysis on Merchandise Samples on Functional Accessories (2 products) 1 tumbler design and 1 tote bag design (A) Denotation (True Meaning) Portable Drinking Container & Cloth Shopping Bag, The product has basic daily

functions. The design uses modern calligraphy or iconography (e.g., sans-serif font, minimalist lines). (B) Connotation (Cultural Meaning) Integrated and Environmentally Conscious Islam. Modern calligraphy or iconography on everyday items connotes that Islam is an inseparable part of a modern lifestyle , not just a ritual. The use of tumblers and tote bags also connotes awareness of social/environmental issues (anti-plastic), implying an environmentally friendly and responsible Islam. (C) Myth (Dominant Ideology) "Efficient and Cool Urban Muslims." The myth constructed is the image of an unconventional Muslim, namely an individual who is religious but remains dynamic, aesthetic, and in tune with the rhythm of city life . Religion does not limit function, but rather enhances the aesthetic value of functional goods.

Merchandise Samples on (2 Products: T-shirts and Hoodies) (A) Denotation (True Meaning) Universal Casual Wear. The products are t-shirts and hoodies (Western casual wear). The design contains text messages or visual symbols related to religious values (peace, compassion, love) and social values. (B) Connotation (Cultural Meaning): Inclusive and Non-Formal Islam. Casual wear connotes openness, equality, and accessibility. Messages about friendly social and religious values (not in the form of harsh arguments) connote a tolerant, peaceful, and humanity-focused Islam. This is a rejection of the rigid image of Islam. (C) Myth (Dominant Ideology) "Low-Profile and Anti-Exclusive Da'wah." The myth offered is that the message of Islamic goodness can be spread through popular media and everyday fashion, without the need for formal religious attributes. This creates an image of Islam as a universal identity that is accepted in various social spaces, promoting a friendly and inclusive Islam.

Next Merchandise Samples on Prayer Equipment (2 Products: Travel Prayer Rugs/Mukena). (A) Denotation (True Meaning) Compact and Portable Prayer Equipment. Prayer rugs or mukena designed for travel (small size, lightweight material). The motifs or color patterns used are unconventional (e.g., pastel colors, modern geometric motifs, or abstract). (B) Connotation (Cultural Meaning) Flexible and Personal Worship. Travel designs connote that worship can be done anywhere (flexible), reflecting the adaptation of religion to modern mobility. Unconventional motifs connote individuality in worship, moving away from the uniformity of traditional motifs, so that worship feels personal and stylish. (C) Myth (Dominant Ideology) "On-the-Go Spirituality and Self-Branding." The myth being sold is that piety can be expressed

through unique aesthetic choices. Worship is no longer an isolated practice at home/mosque, but part of a charming and practical self-branding while traveling. It shows Islam that is compatible with a contemporary lifestyle of travel and aesthetics.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Results Participants: 10 Generation Z People (Age Range 13-28 years) Composition: 5 Muslims and 5 Non-Muslims (Christians, Catholics, Hindus) Focus: Broad Spectrum Interpretation of 6 Modern Islamic Merchandise Samples.

Theme 1: The Limits of Aesthetic Acceptance and Functionality

Gen Z participants showed a strong preference for functionality and minimalist aesthetics, but there is a limit to tolerance for design modernization in ritual objects. Function over Symbols (Functional Accessories), Participants highly appreciated Tumblers and Tote Bags for their practicality. Modern calligraphy and iconography on these accessories (although Islamic) are seen by non-Muslims as aesthetic and non-intrusive "Cultural Art Elements." The main focus is on quality and style, not religious exclusivity.

Quote: "I like this tumbler because it's minimalist and stylish. The Arabic writing is just an ornament, it's cool. It doesn't bother me." (Participant Gede Agus, Non-Muslim, 21 years old)

Resistance to Sacred Codes (Worship Equipment): There was significant resistance to travel prayer mats/mukenas with unconventional motifs or color schemes. More religious Muslim participants felt that overly abstract patterns "distracted from the focus of worship" and undermined sacred values.

Quote: "Travel prayer robes are really practical. But if the patterns are weird like this, they don't feel right for prayer. It's safer to wear a plain color." (Participant Yulis Setia Ningrum, Muslim, 22 years old)

Theme 2: Design as a Medium of Tolerance and Inclusivity

Interpretations of merchandise messages were assessed based on their level of universality and potential for creating social barriers. Subtle Messages Are Favored: T-Shirts and Hoodies that use text messages/visual symbols related to universal values (e.g.,

honesty, optimism, solidarity) are well-received across the spectrum of participants. Messages that do not explicitly refer to religious rituals are seen as “Inclusive” and easily associated with Gen Z’s humanitarian values. Explicit Messages Trigger Doubt, Products with very explicit and exclusive religious messages (especially on Clothing) make Non-Muslim Participants hesitate to wear them, not because of rejection, but because of concerns about social misunderstanding.

Quote: "If the T-shirt has general motivational writing, I'm willing to wear it. But if it's too specific to one religion, I'm afraid people will think I'm a know-it-all or trying to preach. So it's better to avoid it." (Participant Mayang Alina, Non-Muslim, 18 years old)

Theme 3: Gen Z Identity Construction through Consumption

Merchandise is used as a tool for forming and expressing a balanced identity between religion/culture and modern lifestyle. Fashionable Identity: Muslim participants use merchandise (especially hoodies and T-shirts) as a way to display their religious identity in a "relevant and up-to-date" way, dispelling the conservative stigma often associated with traditional religious merchandise.

Quote: "I need merchandise that shows that I'm Muslim, but also that I'm a stylish young person. I don't want anything like those old t-shirts, which look stiff." (Participant Muflihatus Sholihah Muslim, 19 years old)

Quote: "The thing is, it's a different era now, especially for us as Gen Z, we don't just show ourselves as Muslims but more as stylish young people." (Participant Syarifah Muslim, 20 years old)

The Role of Symbols as Ornaments: For most Non-Muslim Participants, artistically used Islamic symbols serve as Attractive Cultural Ornaments, not as representations of threatening ideologies. This underscores Gen Z's flexibility in adopting different cultural elements in their daily consumption. Thus, the FGD results indicate that the effectiveness of modern Islamic merchandise among Gen Z is determined by the balance between modern aesthetics and functional/social sensibilities. Successful products prioritize practical functions and use inclusive visual codes, allowing Non-Muslim Participants to see them as cultural art, while Muslim Participants can use them

as modern and fashionable expressions of identity. Gaps arise when visual modernization interferes with ritual functions or creates explicit social boundaries.

Triangulation Analysis Method: Integration of Barthes' Semiotics and FGD Results

This analysis integrates the Sent Message (Barthes' Semiotic Analysis, focusing on Connotation and Myth) and the Received Message (FGD results from 10 Gen Z participants) to evaluate the effectiveness of visual communication in six merchandise samples. Integration is carried out by classifying data relationships into convergence, divergence, and complementarity.

Convergence (Validation of Design Myths)

Convergence is found in designs that successfully align visually constructed Myths with the interpretations of Gen Z audiences. In Functional Accessories (Tote Bag): The Myth of the “Efficient and Cool Urban Muslim” is validated. FGD participants (both Muslim and Non-Muslim) appreciate the Tote Bag as a stylish “Functional Art Element.” The Integrated Islamic connotation is implicitly accepted; the audience’s focus on basic functions and aesthetics makes Islamic symbols considered an added value of urban design, not an exclusive boundary.

On Clothing (Hoodies and T-Shirts): The myth of "Low-Profile and Anti-Exclusive Da'wah" was successfully debunked. Muslim participants used these garments as a means to express a fashionable, positive identity, while non-Muslims saw them as inclusive items that focus on universal human values. The designs proved effective in promoting Islam as a relevant and open identity.

Divergence (Communication Gap Myth)

Divergence occurs when the design Myth conflicts with the audience's functional needs or sacred codes, creating a communication failure. In Prayer Equipment (Prayer Mats/Mukena Travel): Attempts to build the Myth of "On-the-Go Spirituality and Self-Branding" faced resistance. Although the Denotation of Compact Prayer Equipment was accepted, the Connotation of Individuality represented by unconventional color patterns was rejected. Some Muslim Participants felt the pattern "Reduced the Sense of Reverence or Sacredness," indicating a rigid tolerance limit when the design clashed with the core

ritual function. The Self-Branding Myth could not overcome the traditional codes of sacred objects.

In Functional Accessories (Tumblers): The myth of the "Efficient and Cool Urban Muslim" is hampered. Modern calligraphy, which should represent Aesthetic Peace (Connotation), is instead deemed "Difficult to Read" by FGD Participants. This gap indicates that aesthetic modernization that is too far from practical Denotation (readability) can hinder the effectiveness of message communication.

Complementarity (Enriching Contextual Insights)

Complementarity is used to explain why audience responses occur, complementing the structural analysis of Semiotics with the sociological context of the FGD, particularly on the issue of tolerance.

Clothing (T-Shirts & Hoodies): Semiotics demonstrates a Tolerant Code. Complementarity from the FGD revealed Psychosocial Constraints. Non-Muslim participants expressed social hesitation about wearing overly explicit religious messages, suggesting that while the design allows for tolerance, it is limited by the perceived social risks to the audience.

Prayer Equipment (Travel Prayer Robes): Semiotics demonstrates the Flexibility code. Complementarity from FGDs indicates that Functional Priority (Denotation: compact and portable) is far more dominant than Connotation (personal aesthetics) in adoption. Utility value is the primary determinant.

Functional Accessories (Tumbler & Tote Bag): Semiotics explains the potential for connotation. FGD complementarities confirmed that the primary reasons for adoption were aesthetics and functionality that fit lifestyle. Religious/environmental messages added value, reinforcing choices already based on lifestyle.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the effectiveness of Visual Communication in modern Islamic merchandise for Gen Z is largely determined by the harmony between design Aesthetics and product function. The message of Tolerance is most effectively conveyed subtly (Convergence) through functional merchandise (Tote Bags, Clothing) that builds the Myth of "Low-Profile Da'wah" and is accepted as an inclusive cultural art. Divergence

(communication failure) occurs when visual modernization disrupts the Core Ritual Function (Worship Equipment) or Practical Denotation (readability), indicating the existence of rigid symbolic tolerance limits on sacred objects.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretical: These findings enrich the Semiotics of Visual Communication by showing that design Myths are constrained by the Sacred Code and Psychosocial Risks of Gen Z audiences. Connotative messages are superior to Denotative in promoting Tolerance in the context of popular culture.

Practical: For designers, priority should be given to functionality and minimalist aesthetics to support inclusive digital competence. For preachers/educators, this emphasizes the need for a humanistic supervision approach and low-profile da'wah through informal media relevant to the Gen Z lifestyle.

It is recommended that future research conduct quantitative testing (surveys/experiments) to measure the actual impact of merchandise on Gen Z's tolerance behavior. Considering the trend of Gen Z's Digital Competence, future research can explore the potential of Virtual Merchandising, for example skins or items in online games or metaverses. This analysis will test whether Islamic Aesthetics and Tolerance messages can be maintained or even enhanced in virtual spaces, comparing the effectiveness of Self-Branding Myths on physical and digital objects.

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