

Visualizing Islamic Identity: A Content Analysis of Logo Design Practices in Pakistan's Banking and Higher Education Sectors

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Abstract

Visual Communication is a strong tool to represent the corporate identity. Logo design is the second important thing in branding. Religion Islam encourages us to mark identity to our belongings, individuals, and goods. In this account Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) set the examples in his life. Pakistan is the second-largest Islamic country and Islamic history leaves an impression on the branding strategies. This research paper will discuss the logo design of Pakistan. Further will study the strategy of companies in the selection of symbols, icons, typography for the emblem, and wordmark of the logo. To analyze the data Content Analysis methodology has been used for this paper, in which logos of the educational sector and banking sector has been selected. Data was collected from secondary sources like official websites and prior research. The study indicates that how Islamic roots of all Islamic countries are connected and

follow the Islamic symbols, icons, scripts, and colors to communicate with the consumers.

Key Words: Islamic Influences, Islamic Scripts, Branding, Logo Design, Pakistan

Introduction:

Visual communication is a strong tool to communicate with the masses in a limited time. Visual Communication is an effective tool to communicate in a better way. Human minds respond to the visual vocabulary in a more positive way rather than the text or verbal vocabulary. According to Pant 2015, consciously or unconsciously human minds can remember an image sixty thousand times faster than the text.¹ In the daily life routine, someone can experience visual communication in various fields, for example, while driving on a road in any area, direction signs and signboards which provide the information regarding the area name or other rules fall in the category of visual communication. While visiting the different countries, we use a map to reach a certain place and a map based on the symbols, icons, and pictograms which are another form of visual communication. However, there are various forms of visual communication like maps, presentations, pictograms, charts, advertising, animation, illustration, photography, logo, and etcetera.

Logo design is a major component in graphic design and visual communication. A logo is the core aspect of a branding campaign. Moreover, a logo can be explained as the graphical representation of a product, business, and company. Who activates the memory which is associated with the targeted brand. Tom Peters explained why a visual representation of company identity in logo form is important:

“Humans think visually. A picture is worth a million words. And great brands have readily identifiable icons – just ask Nike or Apple or Shell – strong simple images that connect with customers,”²

Logos are an important component of a diverse range of indirect or direct visual communication vehicles extending from advertising, promotional material, packaging to business cards, uniforms, and letterheads.³ Logos

represent the identity of a business, company, product, and any organization in visual form.

In the history of mankind identity always have been a basic element to communicate existence. Identity describes the qualities, abilities, and characters of an individual and a group too. Identity identification is an equally vital necessity for culture and society. "A common identity among humans coupled with existing local identities are the key to the longevity of our civilization."⁴

This paper aims to present the analysis of educational and banking sectors, which adopted the Islamic verses as the calligraphies and elements in their brand element and identity (logo).

Literature Review:

Identity is the basis of any social construction in society. In the contemporary world, identity has a twofold notion, which is social and personal. It is not needed for these notions to accompany each other, they can be analyzed individually and as grouped too.⁵ Identity has two types, national or cultural identity, and social identity. "Social identification characterizes the extent to which the cluster has been unified into the sense of self, meanwhile, self is qualified as an essential part of the in-group."⁶ However, Tomlinson explained the national and cultural identity as "the product of thoughtful cultural construction and preservation via both the supervisory and socializing institutions of the nation: in certain, the education system, the law, and the media."⁷ Each individual has this knowledge that their existence is important in a culture and nation despite that they are not living in the same culture, but they value and honor their own culture as one nation. This understanding benefits them to express or portray their-selves in front of the world as one nation but in a better way. According to psychologists, having these positive attitudes and a set of identity feelings explained the self-concept which is called national or cultural identity.⁸ "You have got to find your voice."⁹

A logo is the visual identity of any brand and it's considered as the second basic brand element, which helps to differentiate the identification of any brand, product, and company.¹⁰ There are five different types of logos, for

example, a). Symbol/Icon, b). Word Mark, c). Letter Mark, d). Combination Mark, e). Emblem.¹¹ Companies adopt different styles to mark their identities with logo design. Mostly use abstract symbols or icons to represent the company. Colours have different impacts on consumers. Colours characteristics are to mesmerize the consumer's mind. Companies use colours according to strategy, according to which, colour makes the product, logo, and package more attractive, enjoyable, and distinguish among the other brands.¹² Every colour has a different impact on the consumer, for example, red colour increase the craving or appetite and can bring up the blood pressure.¹³ In the contrast, blue colour and white colour believed to be calm and cool colours.

Being Muslims, it is our moral duty to follow the Islamic path and that path has been provided to us in the form of Hadith and the Holy Quran. Both of these, Hadith and the Holy Quran give evidence and affirm that the religion Islam allows to mark the identity for identification among the other goods, products, or companies. As the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) set the examples in his whole life for the Muslims and he has marked or named the things which belong to him.¹⁴ Moreover, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) changed the name or associate an identity to a person, animals, and things as well.¹⁵ Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) gave the titles or individual identities based on the qualities someone has, for example, Camel: Qaswa, Sword: Dhulfiqar, and he also gave the title to the Khalid bin Walid as 'Saifullah'(sword of Allah) for his extraordinary armed services.¹⁶ Branding or giving the identity to our belongings always generates a positive and healthy competition atmosphere and Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) encourages branding to self-belongings. Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) used the stamp of *Nabuwwat* to enclose the letters.¹⁷ Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) marks his identity in the form of a stamp and he uses the ring to mark the stamp. After he departs from the face of the earth, the Caliph of Islam and Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) follow the same tradition and continue to mark the identity as *Nabuwwat* stamp.¹⁸ According to the previous discussion, Islam has never been against branding, but it also has some limitations, restrictions and also guides the account of

developing branding or logo design. For example, a). Islam has forbidden the use of pictures, sketches of any living thing like an animal, human, or any other living creature,¹⁹ b). statues of any living creature,²⁰ c). Using females in any form of an image like sketches, pictures, images, and statues are forbidden.²¹

The practice of giving the individual identity to one thing has been in practice in the history of Islam. Saudi Arabia is the first largest Islamic country, and the image of the date palm and twin swords are the symbol of their national identity.²² Moreover, Saudi Arabia has the icon of sword and Kalimat aṭ-Ṭayyibah written on the national flag as their identity. Just like that Pakistan is the second largest Islamic country in the world and has a crescent and star as the icon on the national flag of Pakistan.²³ In this research paper, researchers will discuss that how companies and organizations are keeping their Islamic culture alive by adopting their logo design in the reflection of Islamic elements.

Methodology

According to a report published in 2012, the State Bank of Pakistan is operating 46 banks that embrace the seven foreign banks and 39 local banks, local banks further contain four specialized banks, five Islamic banks, five public sectors, eight microfinancing banks, and 17 private banks.²⁴ According to the ranking of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan in 2021, there are 177 Pakistani higher-educational institutions are working.²⁵ In this research paper, Islamic banks and the Islamic universities' logos will be discussed and analyzed. For the study data was collected with the help of secondary sources like official websites, promotional material, and from published prior research. To analyze data has been collected based on the institution name, logo design, colour scheme, and emblem. Since the Content Analysis technique is considered the fruitful method which provides the electronic, verbal, and print data both quantitatively and qualitatively.²⁶ The Content Analysis technique is used for the analysis as it is the most convenient and common technique which is in practice for branding.²⁷

Study

This research paper will discuss the main elements of a brand which are logo design; symbols and icons, fonts/calligraphy, and colours. These are the basic elements which been used in the development of one logo design. Five local Islamic banks logos and five national Islamic universities logos have been taken for this research paper.

Discussion

Five local Islamic Banks: including main banks or extensions (Table 1). Taqwa Islamic Banking, The Bank of Punjab, 2). Muslim Commercial Islamic Bank Limited, 3). Bank Islami, 4). Faysal Bank, Islami, 5). Dubai Islamic Bank. Five local universities from the 2021 ranking list of Higher Education Commission Pakistan, 1). Agha Khan University, 2). Bahhauddin Zakrariya University, 3). Bahria University, 4). Allama Iqbal Open University, and 5). Al-Jamia Islamia University (Table 2) has been selected for this research paper.

Table I

Names of Local Islamic Banks with Logo Designs



Table 2

Name of local Universities with Logo Designs





Bahria University
Discovering Knowledge



Main branding elements in one logo design which are a part of Islamic history are stamps, colour scheme, symbol, icon, and text in the form of name or tagline. According to the previous discussion, some elements are forbidden in Islam in the account of branding, for example, statues of any living creature, image or drawing of any female, and any other forbidden items or words which are unethical. All Islamic institutes either banking or educational have been careful in the account of designing their identity to avoid these things to value the Islamic teaching. Most institutes have chosen the multi-languages to write their name in the logo design one English, one Urdu, and one Arabic. All institutes (Table I and 2) tried to choose calligraphic font or script to write the name, verses, and tagline to give a more local touch in the logo design.

The study of (Table I and 2) stipulates the significant perceptions about the elements which choose as symbols or icons in the logo design completely fulfill the requirements of the Islamic belief. Elements, symbols, icons, and themes completely fall under the Islamic category, for example, we can see the Minarets (minar), Domes (Qubba), and Jharoka (arches). Besides this Islamic architectural representation, we also can see the other Islamic elements like the crescent (moon), star, and sun.

In tables I and 2, most of the logo designs are in a circular shape which reflects the impression of the stamp. Stamp style refers to the style of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) who used to mark the letters with the Nabuwat stamp. This is how institutions in the contemporary world are trying to fulfill the shoes of Islamic requirements as being Muslims we are destined to this belief and it's our own culture. However, the calligraphic style is very contemporary and decorative. Colour schemes of the logos of these institutes are completely

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influenced by Islamic and Pakistani culture. Mostly they used shades and tints of blue and green colours. Which are associated with the Islamic culture.

Table 3

Emblem of Logos which have calligraphic scripts



Emblems of logos (Table 3) use calligraphic styles in a modern or traditional manner to write the names of the institutes. Every institute uses a different and unique style and script to write the name which makes them distinguished. These styles are influenced by the other Islamic countries, for example, 1). Kufic, which is originated in Persian calligraphy. 2). Thuluth Script, which was developed in the Abbasid Dynasty.²⁸ Saudi Arabia's flag is designed in Thuluth Script. 3). Nasta'liq script, which was developed and polished in Turkey and Persia during the fifteenth to the sixteenth century.²⁹ 4). Riq'a Script, this script was developed from Thuluth and Naskh and has been used in the Arabic court.³⁰ Contemporary logo design of Pakistani market using the Islamic Arabic calligraphy styles from the other Islamic countries.

Conclusion

In Islamic culture, there are some restrictions on certain things, and it's been noticed that these brands, institutes, and companies value Islamic teaching in the development of logo designing to mark their identities among the rest of

the world. As it is a positive behavior in Islam and encouraged to mark the individual identity to make it identifiable among the rest. By following the Islamic culture brands bring strength and brand equity in their businesses because the consumers always encourage and feel connected towards the core cultural values of certain areas and religion too. To increase this brand trust, companies choose the local language to write the name of the institute and bank, so that the consumer can own the brand on its own. Using the Islamic or cultural core values to manipulate the audience with sentiments and emotions is good and healthy. However, practicing the Islamic Arabic Calligraphic style reflects that all Islamic countries' roots are joint and linked to each other. Although directly using the Holy Quran verses in the logo design may leave a negative impact as the placement of the logo can vary on the different surfaces from visiting cards to letterhead to the billboard. Sometimes it is difficult to handle the paper with respect. And that could be the reason when the audience or consumer might get confused about the brand's decision of using directly the Holy Quran Verses and disagree with it. It is suggested to the brands of any nature either product, business, services-based company, and any good, based company to avoid the Islamic qur'anic verses to avoid the disrespect of Islam.

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