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Islamic Branding Strategy Through Audience's Reception

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Abstract. Islamic Branding is an approach to branding with Sharia Principles. Over time, Islamic Branding has become one of the strategies used in product marketing. The aims of this research to analyze the related topic towards audience reception and identifying the position of meaning for the Islamic Branding Strategy in Advertising Sahaja Products. This research used a qualitative research approach with the reception analysis method. The method highlights Stuart Hall's two concepts of encoding and decoding. The subjects of this research were seven members of the Islamic organization Nasyiatul 'Aisyiyah. The data were analyzed using two orders of signification by Roland Barthes (encoding) and in-depth interviews (decoding). The results of this research indicated the reception caused by the audiences, in understanding the meaning of the message can vary depending on the intensity of product use. The experience that has been felt and knowledge possessed. Thus, not all audiences can receive the message in full.

1. Introduction

Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world [1]. The number of Muslims in the country makes businesses with religious backgrounds grow rapidly and makes the seller utilize product and service providers to increase their business opportunities [2]. Husna concludes that from her research everything labeled with sharia is now increasingly adored and has become a trend among the public [3]. It has also been explained in Katadata that the total consumption of Indonesian halal goods and services in 2020 is around US$ 301.8 billion which is expected to continue to grow to reach US$ 330.5 billion in 2025 [4].

Specifically, Gajjar states that several factors that influence consumer behavior are social, cultural, psychological, and personal factors [5]. This personal factor that places religion and religiosity is also a factor that influences consumer behavior. Agarwala et al. also explained religion affects consumers and society directly and indirectly [6]. In addition, many consumers make the brand used as a manifestation of themselves. In other words, consumers use the brand

as a medium to show their identity to others [7]. Therefore, the product that carries the Islamic branding strategy is claimed to be the right choice for Muslim consumers.

One of the products that carry the Islamic Branding strategy is the "Sahaja" household product range, a halal-certified household product launched by Unilever. In principle, Sahaja prioritizes Islamic values in advertising its products. Most researchers in the brand management field agree that brands are designed to add value to the product and give it a personality that must be perceived positively by customers to have a unique added value [8]. Through these advertisements, researchers want to explore more deeply the acceptance of Islamic Branding messages in advertisements for Sahaja products.

The researchers chose the Sahaja products because the product is an item from a multinational company that generally contains western elements in terms of advertising and concept naming. However, Sahaja products have chosen the branding with Islamic image. Moreover, Sahaja is a series of household products that has a level of importance. It is a crucial product that will always be purchased over time either weekly or monthly asides from the other nine essentials in Indonesia. It is undeniable that Muslim consumers in Indonesia are the prime target market for Islamic products, including household products.

Based on the researcher's findings, previous studies on Islamic Branding tend to discuss the influence of Muslim consumer religiosity on Islamic Branding products [9]. The emotional attachment between consumers and Islamic Branding-based products [10], also related to factors that influence the purchase of Islamic products [11]. In this study, researchers focused on audience acceptance of the Islamic Branding strategy in advertising Sahaja's products.

There are 4 types of Islamic Branding described by Alserhan [12], namely: a) True Islamic brands; these brands fulfill all three descriptions of Islamic branding; Halal brands, produced in Islamic countries and targeting Islamic consumers. The word "True" used here does not mean the other categories of Islamic branding are wrong. For example, most of the brands originating from Islamic countries are halal, simply because they are meant for Muslim consumers in the place of origin. b) Traditional Islamic brands are originated from Islamic countries and targeting Muslim consumers. As explained above, this is assumed to be halal. Before the globalization of the Islamic market, it was considered that all available brands were halal. c) Inbound Islamic brands are halal brands that target Muslim consumers but come from non-Islamic countries. Most of them got Islamization, which is, converted to become halal brands. d) Islamic Outbound brands, a halal brand originating from Islamic countries but should not target Muslim consumers.

Based on these several types of Islamic Branding, Sahaja's products are in the position of Inbound Islamic brands. This is because the target consumers of Sahaja are Muslims, but they are not produced by Muslim countries. So, the purpose of this study to analyze the related topic towards audience reception and identifying the position of meaning for the Islamic Branding Strategy in Advertising Sahaja Products.

2. Research Methods

2.1 Methods and Participants

This research applied a semiotic research qualitative approach with the reception analysis method that highlights the two concepts of encoding and decoding from Stuart Hall. Reception analysis is an in-depth study of the actual process by which discourse in the media is assimilated into the discourse and cultural practices of the audience [13]. This research focused on Islamic messages conveyed through Nawaitu Sahaja advertisements.

The subjects of this research are members of the Islamic organization Nasyiatul 'Aisyiyah who are actively involved in various Islamic and marketing activities so that they are considered

to have various perspectives and experiences, and are rich in information. There are seven members who participated in this study to be interviewed. These seven participants were selected based on their experience in viewing advertisements for Sahaja's products. They can explain the message received from the advertisement of Sahaja's products and be able to provide an opinion about Islamic Branding in the advertisement.

2.2 Research Procedures and Analysis Data

The data were analyzed using two orders of signification by Roland Barthes (encoding) and in-depth interviews (decoding). Barthes develops semiotics into 2 levels of signification, namely denotation and connotation [14]. The word connotation comes from the Latin connotare, "to mean" and refers to cultural signs that are separate/different from words (and other forms of communication). Words involve symbols, historical and emotional ones. The first step, the researcher finds the preferred reading of advertisement to comprehend the content of the reading material easily. After finding the preferred reading of the advertisement, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with seven informants to get the audience's meaning of the Islamic message (decoding). Next, the researchers selected and analyzed the data. The last stage is grouping the analysis results into three groups, namely: Dominant Hegemonic Position, Negotiated Position, and Oppositional Position [15].

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Preffered Reading of Sahaja Products

According to the KBBI, Sahaja means a non-standard form of "only". In addition, Sahaja also has a real, natural, and simple meaning. From these words, Sahaja wants to be recognized as a simple product by Islamic teachings. The researcher found Preferred Reading or the dominant meaning contained in the text as part of the encoding process. The following is the Preferred Reading / Dominant Meaning obtained from the analysis:

Visualization of Harmony

This advertisement tries to describe the value of love in Islam which is built through the visualization of a harmonious family. The figures of a loving father and mother are also depicted in the ad. It can be seen from the scene of a father who becomes an imam in prayer, then a mother who helps her child clean her mukena (typical Indonesian *salat* or pray equipment for Muslim), and when both parents hug their child tightly in the advertisement. It shows that Islam is a religion that teaches compassion for one another.

Peace

In general, this advertisement also tries to show the peace of Islam by choosing the dominant white color and mixed with blue that symbolizes peace and calm. It also teaches about eating etiquette in Islam.

Visualization of Islamic Attributes

Furthermore, this advertisement also teaches to cover the genitals by choosing Muslim clothing, mukena, the use of sarongs, prayer rugs, caps, and various other Islamic attributes.

3.2 Impression used Nawaitu Sahaja

Based on the audience who became informants in this research, Nawaitu Sahaja's advertisement upholds the beauty and values of Islam. In general, the audience's process of interpreting the Islamic branding message contained in the Nawaitu Sahaja advertisement is divided into several points. These points are related to what is perceived by the audience to give meaning to the experiences and knowledge they have had. Some of these points are:

1. Emotional impression of the product. Based on the interview result, some informants felt that there was an emotional impression of the product caused by the advertisement. The target of the product which is communicated through its audiovisual advertisement is able to arouse the emotional side of the audience to choose their product. Some of these things often add to the sense of pride in the audience when using Sahaja products through offering environmentally friendly products described in their advertisements.

2. Impression of product function. Sahaja's products function is not much different from laundry soap in general, but the aroma produced by Sahaja is softer than competitors' products. In addition, the clearer color of the product is also one of the uniqueness and differentiators among other products.

3. Impressions of certain symbolic meanings. The Nawaitu Sahaja advertisement puts forward Islamic values through many symbols. Several Muslim identities such as headscarves, mukena, mosque ornaments, prayer mats, and various other Islamic attributes are displayed to show the Islamic side. In addition, the selection of Sahaja's name and logo in hijaiyah letters (Arabic letters) also succeeded in giving a "simple" impression as the values taught in Islam.

4. Impression of the product value. Sahaja can show its existence as a valuable product. Through Sahaja's advertisement, which also puts forward a program of sharing with poor people's wallets and natural raw materials, the audience also gets more attention. In addition, Sahaja is also self-realization or self-manifestation of the audience as a Muslim who feels more suitable to use Islamic products than not.

5. Impression of Islamic values. Even more deeply, Nawaitu Sahaja advertisements also participate in teaching simple Islamic values. The value in question is to teach not to waste food, intend everything to worship, and maintain cleanliness.

3.3 Discussion

The main research results show that there are the audience in the Dominant Hegemonic Position understands and accepts that PT Unilever Indonesia uses audio-visual advertising as a medium to promote a range of domestic products to help Muslim women as their target market complete their domestic tasks. It is not only to fulfill its function as a household cleaner, but it is also more than that. The advertisement of Sahaja products reminds the audience of the "value" of worship and sincerity built into the advertisement. The audience in this position fully accepts the message in which there are values, beliefs, and attitudes towards the Nawaitu Sahaja advertisement. 4 informants have the same understanding and are in this position. Similar to the results of previous studies which showed that every advertisement has values, beliefs and attitudes that are in accordance with the use of the product, if the advertisement clearly shows the value then the advertisement is said to be successful [16].

The audience in the Negotiated Position understands the Islamic message conveyed in the Nawaitu Sahaja advertisement. In addition, it also changes the meaning of the message according to their respective positions and personal experiences. An informant who is in this position explains that environmentally friendly products are often quite wasteful to use. In addition, he also added that there was a discrepancy in the dialogue in the advertisement that seemed to show that the product alone could increase the child's appetite. The audience in the Oppositional Position completely rejects the message conveyed by Sahaja's advertisement. There is only an informant who is in the Oppositional Position. According to him, products that use religion as a way to sell or promote products are excessive. Moreover, these products are household products that do not need a halal license or Islamic values.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings and the classification of the three positions of audience meaning shawn that dominant hegemonic position is a dominant position of the audience meaning. The audience can see the message conveyed by the Nawaitu Sahaja's advertisement. However, the reception generated in interpreting a product promotion media message in Nawaitu Sahaja Audio Visual Ads also resulted in acceptance on negotiated and opposite positions depending on the intensity of product use, perceived experience, and knowledge possessed by each individual. The emergence of three categories of message meaning by the audience indicates that not all audiences will be affected and receive the message as a whole. Nawaitu Sahaja advertisement as a promotional media that puts forward Islamic values can be accepted by many circles yet also presents contra for some people. For further research, the researchers recommend exploring more deeply related to Islamic values and Islamic branding strategies in a brand. This research could make a heterogeneous contribution to academic studies. In addition, the selection of informants for further research should be more complex and specific to obtain maximum results.

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