A STUDY OF COMPREHENSION IN ISLAMIC VISUAL COMMUNICATION CONCEPT AMONG GRAPHIC DESIGN STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies the comprehension level of Graphic Design students in Universiti Teknologi MARA in Islamic Visual Communication. The samples selected for this study are from Graphic Design students from UiTM Perak, Melaka and Shah Alam. The research objectives of this paper are to identify the perception of respondents on Islamic Visual Communication, to determine the level of understanding of respondents on Islamic Visual Communication and lastly to recommend suggestions on how to improve respondents' understanding and knowledge. This study yields results that indicate majority of the respondents have positive perception on Islamic Visual Communication in term of its importance and contributions to society. This study also reveals that majority of respondents agrees that whilst Islamic Visual Communication influences their ethical conducts, the lack of references and structured syllabus contributes to respondents' limited exposure to Islamic Visual Communication.

Keywords: Visual communication, Islamic art, graphic, perception, understanding

INTRODUCTION

Visual Communication is often seen from the Islamic point of view as a topic that needs to be debated from time to time due to the difference of opinions amongst the practitioners. This happens because of the inseparable nature of Visual Communication itself with the socio-culture of Malaysian society. Bad perceptions are still thrown at the practitioners, even though there are guidelines and formal regulations in Malaysia which need to be adhered to in order to avoid controversies, especially with regard to religious sensitivities. Professional and semi-professional courses offered by public and private universities should be able to act as centres in introducing a safe and acceptable Visual Communication to the society as a whole. By doing so, both public and private universities should be able to contribute in studying Visual Communication in comprehensive manner.

However, the exposure to Visual Communication from the Islamic point of view is still scarce amongst students and the general public. Furthermore, studies on Islamic Visual Communication concept amongst Graphic Design Students as well as students' perception about Visual Communication from Islamic point-of-view are still limited. It is important to study and evaluate early perceptions on inquiries related to certain assumptions such as level

of understanding on Islamic Visual Communication. This allows any misconceptions and misunderstanding amongst students to be refined and the solutions to be discovered. Therefore, a study of awareness, including early opinions and perceptions about Visual Communication, should be conducted. This study can be used as reference for general public in enhancing teaching and learning process in visual communication art program.

The significance of this study is to enable the researchers to determine the level of understanding in Islamic Visual Communication amongst Graphic Design Students in UiTM Puncak Alam, UiTM Melaka and UiTM Perak. So the result of the study can be utilised in designing and strengthening Visual Communication courses and thus, enable teaching methods to follow Islamic route in a more effective and practical manner. In addition the result of the study should improve the quality of Graphic Design graduates in term of presenting Visual Communication designs that are in line with the Islamic values.

There are three objectives of this study, which are to identify the perception of Graphic Design Students on Islamic Visual Communication, to determine the level of understanding of Graphic Design Students on Islamic Visual Communication and lastly, to offer suggestions in improving Graphic Design Students' understanding and knowledge on Islamic Visual Communication offered by Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Art

Gazalba (1977) in "Pandangan Islam Tentang Kesenian *(Islamic View on Art)*" explains that art is part of the culture that is created by certain groups of people because they have the innate love to art that is pleasing to their five senses. Within the soul, feeling and desire of a human being, there is a need for something beautiful and art is part of the beauty itself. Art is abstract in nature; it can be heard, seen and felt by human soul that sometimes cannot be articulated in words or languages due to its subjective nature. According to Al-Farabi, art is explained as creation in the form of exquisiteness whereas in Al-Ghazali states that art is related to humans' feelings that suit the nature of human being (Ahmad, 2014). Secularism, which is practiced by Western culture, considers art to have no connection with religion. However, art is still considered as something ideal and related to moral.

Art can be divided into two purposes: 1) art for art and 2) art for society. Art for art can be defined as art for the sole purpose of creating art, where artists are free to interpret and express arts for any kind of purposes, whether it contains good or bad elements. On the other hand, art for society is expressed in the way that it can be appreciated by society and it can be utilised for common, political and moral purposes.

Visual Arts

Visual arts cover the aspect of artwork that connects fine art discipline with design, which consists of communication field, design technology field and environmental design field. Zulkifli (2007) states that according to Preble, Preble & Frank (1999), as one of the many forms of communication, visual arts converse different meanings that come from thoughts,

feelings and observations. Hornby (1974) defines art as a creation or expression of something that is considered as beautiful, especially in the form of visual, whereas Kemp (1964) states that Hauser thinks that art is communication.

Visual Art Classification

Visual art can be classified into two types of work, which are artwork and design work. Artwork is the production of fine art in the form of 2D and 3D. Most of the artworks are produced using media and conventional techniques such as tools and basic media and they rely less on technological aids. Examples of artworks are drawings, paintings, printed arts and sculptures.

Design work, on the other hand, is the production of arts in the form of 2D and 3D that uses more new methods and new media with the aid of technology. Examples of design work are graphic and multimedia (visual communication), technological designs for the likes of industrial design (automobiles, fine metal, textiles and more) and environmental design such as interior designs and landscape designs.

Visual Communication Art

Visual communication is a process of delivering certain messages from one group of people to another group of people using media that are considered to be appropriate to the messages and it can be seen through human's senses. According to Ardiansyah (2015), visual communication art is a branch of knowledge that captures the concept of creative communication, using techniques and media to deliver messages and purposes in visual and audio manners by manipulating graphic design elements in the form of pictures, typography, colours and layout designs until the message and objectives are received by the target audience. Sutanto (2005) states that visual communication language has the potential to deliver intended messages.

Visual communication art is categorised into three basic components, which are:

1)   Identification medium

It is much easier to recognise any kind of products and services if they have recognisable identity. Identification process can give the audience a picture of the offered product or service's quality. For example, users are able to identify certain product or service based on its logo or tagline that represents the product. Therefore, this delivery of message of quality will be more convenient not only for the suppliers but also for the consumers.

2)   Information and instruction medium

The purpose of visual communication art is to show the connection between one item to another such as direction, position and scale. For example maps, diagrams, signboard

symbols and direction signage. This information enables the audience to understand visually if it is shown to the accurate target audience, applied at suitable time and place and presented in a comprehensible form logically and consistently. Taking examples of universal public symbols such as symbols of public toilet, public telephone, bus stop and dining area, these symbols are informative in nature as well as capable of delivering message clearly. This further emphasizes the importance of visual communication art in daily activities.

3) Promotional and advertising medium

Another purpose of visual communication art is to deliver message as promotional and advertising purposes. Its functions are to grab the attention of the audience as well as to make the message susceptible to the audience. The application of appropriate visuals, texts and designs will ease the reception of certain products and services amongst the audience. The combination of persuasive and attractive visual and language will promote the sale of products and services.

Elements in Visual Communication Art

The essential elements that serve as the backbone to visual communication art will enable a more effective visual message delivery. These elements consist of typography, symbol, illustration and photography. The application of these elements can be used together or exclusively. It is imperative for a visual communication art student to know and understand these elements so that the final work produced is able to adapt the transition process and the information exchange from human to the system and its surrounding. Therefore, the application of these elements allows the communication process to happen.

1) Typography design

Typography is a design of choosing and arranging letters so that they are easy to read and effective. Sudiana (2001) states that typography has broad a meaning that covers page pattern and every printed item. Specifically speaking, typography focuses on the process of choosing letters and activities related to typesetting, excluding illustration and activities that do not involve typesetting. Accurate typography application will add to the feeling of style to the communication process that goes hand in hand with the delivery of meaning. In other words, typography is used as an element to translate words to visual form.

2) Symbol design

History of symbol goes back 30,000 years ago when it was practiced by pre-historic humans, who made markings on stones and drew pictures on the cave walls at Altamira, Spain (Cenadi, 2004). The role of symbol expands together with the evolution of modern technology. Universal symbols such as public toilet, public telephone, bus stop and many more are very effective as visual communication media to deliver messages that go across the boundaries of languages and cultures. There are also complex visual communication mediums, which are known as logos that share the same purpose as symbols. Logo represents the identity of a product or service that is marketed to the

audience. A good logo must have the characteristics of uniqueness, memorable and understandable to the audience so that the process of visual communication can achieve its purpose (Cenadi, 2004).

3)   Illustration design

According to Cenadi (2004), illustration can be defined as a picture that is produced manually where illustration is one of the art fields that specialises in the application of picture that is not produced from camera or any other photography techniques. Illustration is the main component in visual communication art in the late 1970s to early 1980s.

4)   Photography design

Hasnuddin Abu Samah (2012) said that, in the early era of photography introduction, visual artists thought that photographic artworks were unacceptable as part of visual artworks because they were produced using camera and not from the expertise of the photographers. This argument was further supported then due to the fact that the function of a photograph was merely for recording events. Around 20th century, Alfred Stieglitz, an editor of *Camera Notes*, *Camera Club of New York Journal,* who was also a photographer for *Pictorialism*, fought to make photography as part of visual artwork. The *Pictorialism* photographers manipulate the photograph to make it look as if it is a painting. However, the opponents of *Pictorialism* photographers believe that *Pictorialism* style does not fully utilise the photography and does not take full advantage of photographic media. As a result of these opposing views, *Group f/64* was created to fight the idea 'straight photography' that has become the base of photography art that is practiced widely to this day. In visual communication art, there are two main areas that require photography to act as a communication medium, which are publishing and advertising. This is different from illustration as photography creates a more effective visual representative as it is more realistic than illustration.

Art According to Al-Quran

Islam encourages love towards arts and beauty as long as it does not contradict the religion itself. Islamic art has developed in parallel with the order of Allah S.W.T that constantly requires human beings to appreciate the beauty of His creations. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has stated,

> *"Allah S.W.T is beautiful and He loves beauty"* (Sahih Muslim, no. 911)

History has marked the glory of Islamic civilisation which was once the centre of multiple branches of art to the point when it contributed to the development of past human civilisation. The effects can be seen until today where the development of art in Islamic civilisation made the Islamic art unique from any other civilisations. The structure of Islamic art has to be whole in nature and it touches basic human instinct that is to satisfy the need for security, peace and happiness in life (*Al-Salamah*). Islamic art insists on the adherent of the principle of *Al-amar bil Ma'ruf wa An-nahy 'an Munkar*, which means the encouragement of good deeds

and the prevention of bad deeds. Subsequently, it can lead to the societal development and unity, improvement of etiquette and piety to Allah S.W.T.

Islamic Ruling on Art

The essence of art according to Islam covers the relationship between human and Allah S.W.T through the act of prayers (*hablun min Allah)* and the relationship between humans through culture (*hablun min al-Nas*). In culture, art is required. Even more so, art is part of the culture itself.

In general, Islamic ruling on art is categorised into five major regulations are:-

1)   *Fardh* (Compulsory)
       If art is needed by Muslim society and without it, it can lead to more harm such as preaching human beings to follow the tenet of Islam.

2)   *Mandoob* (Recommended)
       If art is needed with the purpose to unify and to encourage the society as a whole such as *salawat* to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)

3)   Mubah (Permitted but morally indifferent)
       Any kind of art that does not have any valid evidence that prohibits its practices.

4)   *Makrooh* (Discouraged or Abominable)
       If the art has the element of impracticality or idleness without any apparent usefulness to society.

5)   *Haram* (Forbidden or Prohibited)
       If art has the following entertainment characteristics:
       i)   It encourages time-wasting as it leads to the acts of polytheism as well as influencing people to do bad deeds (*mungkar*).
       ii)   It causes people to be unable to differentiate between the right and wrong.
       iii)   It is taken together with forbidden (*haram)* acts such as alcohol, gambling, drugs or any other illicit activities.
       iv)   It contains any association with humanoid statues.
       v)   Arts that promotes immoral activities
       vi)   Arts that encourages behaviour perversion and harm.

METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on the level of understanding amongst Graphic Design Students on Islamic Visual Communication. The sample of the study is Graphic Design students from UiTM Puncak Alam, UiTM Melaka and UiTM Perak, where all three campuses offer Graphic Design courses related to Visual Communication. The questionnaires have been distributed to 272 respondents. The sample of the study includes diploma-level students in UiTM Perak and

UiTM Melaka as well as bachelor-level students in all three campuses. Respondents are chosen using disproportionate random sampling method. The sample consists of 272 respondents from Diploma of Graphic Design students from UiTM Melaka and UiTM Perak as well as respondents from Bachelor of Graphic Design students from UiTM Melaka, UiTM Perak and UiTM Puncak Alam.

Primary data is collected through questionnaires that are distributed in random manner. Secondary data is collected from the sources of reference books, websites, articles, journals and magazines. A set of questionnaire is used as a main tool to measure respondent's understanding on Islamic visual communication. The details of the questionnaire can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Classification of Section in Questionnaire

Section	Descriptive
Section A	Consists of six main questions regarding demographic profile of respondents. The items are gender, age, religion, course program, semester and campus.
Section B	Consists of six main questions that require respondent to state their perception towards Islamic visual communication. 1) Islamic View on Visual Communication Art 2) Implication of Islamic Visual Communication Art 3) Islam in Visual Communication Art 4) Importance of Islamic Visual Communication Art 5) Factors Affecting the Choice of Visual Communication Program by Respondents 6) Satisfaction Level of Respondent on Visual Communication Program offered by UiTM
Section C	Consists of questions regarding the level of understanding students to Islamic visual communication. This question uses 'Likert Scale" to determine whether the respondent strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree and strongly disagree with the statement given

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Study (Section A)

Based on the result in Table 2, the male represents 34.9% of total respondents and female represents 65.1%. 71.3% of the respondents' age ranges from 19 years old to 21 years old, followed by age range of 22 to 23 years old (23.2%), 24 to 26 years old (3.7%) and respondents who aged more than 26 years old (1.8%). For religion demographic factor, 99.3% of total respondents are Islam and the minority consist of Christian and others. This is concurrent with the fact that the sample taken is from UiTM, a university that caters exclusively to aborigines of Malaysia. 77.2% of total respondents are still in diploma level whereas 22.8% respondents are from bachelor level. Breaking down into semesters, the analysis shows that 1.5% from first semester, 0.4% from second semester, 18.4% from third semester, 33.8% from fourth semester, 29.8% from fifth semester, 15.8% from sixth semester and lastly, 0.4% from seventh semester.

Table 2: Frequency Analysis of Demographic Study

		N	%	Cum%
Gender	Male	95	34.9	34.9
	Female	177	65.1	100.0
	Total	272	100.0	
Age	19 – 21 years old	194	71.3	71.3
	22 – 23 years old	63	23.2	94.5
	24 – 26 years old	10	3.7	98.2
	> 26 years old	5	1.8	100.0
	Total	272	100.0	
Religion	Islam	270	99.3	99.3
	Christian	1	0.4	99.7
	Others	1	0.4	100.0
	Total	272	100.0	
Program	Diploma-level	210	77.2	77.2
	Bachelor-level	62	22.8	100.0
	Total	272	100.0	
Semester	Semester 1	4	1.5	1.5
	Semester 2	1	0.4	1.9
	Semester 3	50	18.4	20.3
	Semester 4	92	33.8	54.1
	Semester 5	81	29.8	83.9
	Semester 6	43	15.8	99.6
	Semester 7	1	0.4	100.0
	Total	272	100.0	

Analysis of **Respondents' Pe***rception towards Islamic Visual Communication Art (Section B)*

To analyse Section B, the questionnaire is separated into six items as stated in Table 1. The result of the study can be seen in Table 3: Frequency Analysis of Respondents' Perception towards Islamic Visual Communication.

First item is to study the respondents' opinion whether Islam allows visual communication art in daily activities. The result shows that 98.9 respondents answer yes, indicating that majority of the respondents agree that Islam does not restrict visual communication art in daily life. Next item is to study respondents' opinion on the implication of visual communication art. Table 3 shows that 95.2% of respondents disagree visual communication art will lead to immorality, whereas 4.8% respondents choose yes.

The third item asks the respondents opinion on Islamic visual communication art. In this part, the questionnaire categorises the opinion into four categories. From Table 3, it is shown that 64% agrees that visual communication art acts as a required media in daily life and the remaining 36% disagrees. It also shows that 65.8% of respondents think that Islam

allows visual communication art and 34.2% thinks otherwise. This result concurs with the next category, where 94.5% of respondent disagree with the statement that Islam prohibits visual communication art in total. For the last category, 69.9% of respondents agrees that there are rules and ethical standards that need to be adhered to in Islamic visual communication art.

When respondents were asked about the importance of visual communication art in Islam, majority (61%) agrees with the statement visual communication art represents as a form of religious acts (*ibadah*) followed by 72.1% respondents who agree that visual communication art is in line with humans' needs. Lastly 74.3% of the respondents agrees that visual communication art is one of the branches of knowledge in Islam. Perhaps the most interesting finding is the opinion that visual communication art is one of the elements in art that is needed by humans. As seen in Table 3, 50.4% of the respondent agrees that visual communication art is a part of art that can contribute to society well-being whereas 49.6% disagrees.

Fifth and sixth item are to study the respondents' perception towards visual communication art program offered by UiTM. The purpose of fifth item is to identify the factor that affects the art program chosen by the respondents. Based on Table 3, 216 respondents (79.4%) state that they choose the art program because of their interest in the program itself, whereas 9.2% of the respondents states that the choice is made based on parental encouragement. 8.5% of respondents admit that the art program is not what they wanted but they still accepted it because it was offered by UiTM.

A small handful of respondents (1.8%) states that they have to choose the art program because of surrounding factors and 1.1% states that they choose the art program due to peer factor. In relation to that, 68% of respondents agree that they are satisfied with the art program offered by UiTM, 29% of respondents indicates that they are unsure whereas 2.9% of respondents states that they are completely dissatisfied with the program that they have enrolled in.

Table 3: Frequency Analysis Respondents' Perception towards Islamic Visual Communication Art

		N	%
Islamic View on Visual Communication Art *(Do you agree that Islam allows visual communication art in daily life?)*	Yes	269	98.9
	No	3	1.1
	Total	272	100.0
Implication of Islamic Visual Communication Art *(In general, will visual communication art lead to immorality?)*	Yes	13	4.8
	No	259	95.2
	Total	272	100.0
Islam in Visual Communication Art *(What is your opinion on visual communication art in Islam?)*	Visual communication art acts as a required media in daily life		
	Yes	174	64
	No	98	36
	Total	272	100.0

	Visual communication art is allowed in Islam		
	Yes	179	65.8
	No	93	34.2
	Total	**272**	**100.0**
	Visual communication art is totally prohibited in Islam.		
	Yes	15	5.5
	No	257	94.5
	Total	**272**	**100.0**
	There are rules and ethical standards that need to be adhered in Islamic visual communication art		
	Yes	190	69.9
	No	82	30.1
	Total	**272**	**100.0**
	As a form of religious acts (*ibadah*)		
	Yes	166	61
	No	106	39
	Total	**272**	**100**
	As one of the branches of knowledge in Islam		
	Yes	202	74.3
Importance of Islamic Visual Communication Art	No	70	25.7
	Total	**272**	**100.0**
(In your opinion, what is the importance of Islamic Visual Communication Art?)	An art that is suitable to humans' needs		
	Yes	196	72.1
	No	76	27.9
	Total	**272**	**100.0**
	Art that contributes to society well-being		
	Yes	137	50.4
	No	135	49.6
	Total	**272**	**100.0**
	Interest factor	216	79.4
Factors Affecting the Choice of Visual Communication Program by Respondents	Parental encouragement	25	9.2
	Surrounding factor	5	1.8
	Peer factor	3	1.1
(I choose visual communication art program because...)	Offer received without application	23	8.5
	Total	**272**	**100.0**
Satisfaction Level of Respondent on	Completely dissatisfied	8	2.9

Visual Communication Program offered by UiTM	Very satisfied	185	68
(Overall, are you satisfied with visual communication art program offered by UiTM?)	Unsure	79	29
	Total	272	100.0

Analysis of the Level of Understanding Amongst Respondent to Islamic Visual Communication Art (Section C)

Table 4 shows the level of understanding amongst respondents to Islamic visual communication art. Understanding Islamic visual communication art can be gauged by observing how students apply knowledge of art that they have learned as well as able to explain eloquently to others.

Based on Table 4, majority of the respondents agree (59.1% strongly agree and 34.6% agree) with the statement that Islam consists wide spectrum of art. For second item, even though majority agrees (14% strongly agree and 41.9% agree), it is a cause for concern to note that 106 respondents (39%) are unsure whether their reading material is in accordance with Islam.

The next item studies the respondents' opinion on whether visual communication art in Malaysia is heavily influenced by Western identity. The study finds that almost 42% of respondents (12.5% strongly disagree and 30.1% disagree) think that visual communication in Malaysia is not influenced by Western identity. Next, the fourth item shows that as many as 139 respondent strongly disagree and 95 respondents disagree with the statement that visual communication art does not bring any benefit according to Islam, where as a small number of respondents (5.1% strong agree and 20.2% agree) think visual communication art does not bring any benefit.

Fifth item indicates that as much as 22.1% of respondents strongly agree and 51.8% of respondent agree that they have tried their very best to infuse ethical conducts and rules in visual communication art according to Islamic boundaries. Meanwhile, 22.4% of respondents are unsure whether they have practiced ethical conducts and rules in visual communication art. The next item indicates that 14.7% of respondents strongly agree and 37.5% of respondents agree that bad perceptions exist for Muslim visual communication art practitioners who do not comply with Islamic ethical conducts and rules.

Table 4 also shows that 25.4% of respondents strongly agree and 36% of respondents agree that there are insufficiency in reading material and references about Islamic visual communication art. This, subsequently, leads to lack of understanding of the importance of Islamic visual communication art amongst students. This concurs with the next item where most respondents agree (41.5% strongly agree and 48.2% agree) that the source of reference on Islamic visual communication art is only limited to lecturers' talks.

In addition to that, majority of the respondents strongly agree (57%) and agree (37.5%) that the current syllabus structure on Islamic visual communication art, offered by UiTM, rarely touches on the topic of ethics and acceptable designs according to Islamic

boundary. Because of this, the next item finds that most of the respondents are unsure (54.4%) whether they can explain the Islamic visual communication art to other people. This suggests that without proper teaching and learning structure on Islamic visual communication art, the students have low level of understanding on what Islamic visual communication art is all about.

Table 4: Analysis of the Level of Understanding Amongst Respondent to Islamic Visual Communication Art

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Unsure		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Islam consists of a wide spectrum of art	161	59.1	94	34.6	15	5.5	1	0.4	1	0.4
I have read a lot of reading material on Islamic visual communication art.	38	14	114	41.9	106	39	11	4.0	3	1.1
Visual communication art in Malaysia is influenced by Western idenity	14	5.1	55	20.2	87	32	82	30.1	34	12.5
Visual communication art does not bring any benefits according to Islam	10	3.7	13	4.8	15	5.5	95	34.9	139	51.1
I have tried my very best to infuse Islamic ethical conducts and rules in visual communication art	60	22.1	141	51.8	61	22.4	3	1.1	7	2.6
Negative perceptions exist for Muslim visual communication art practitioners who do not comply and adhere Islamic ethical conducts and rules	40	14.7	102	37.5	71	26.1	41	15.1	18	6.6
There are insufficient reading material and references about Islamic visual communication art	69	25.4	98	36	68	25	25	9.2	12	4.4
Usually, the references on Islamic visual communication art are limited to lecturers' talks	113	41.5	131	48.2	23	8.5	2	0.7	3	1.1
The syllabus structure on visual communication art offered by UiTM rarely touches on the topic of ethic and Islamic rulings	155	57	102	37.5	10	3.7	2	0.7	2	1.1

I can explain the concept of Islamic visual communication art to other people in clear manners	16	5.9	80	29.4	148	54.4	22	8.1	6	2.2

CONCLUSION

Visual communication art is a field that will remain important and keep on developing in line with human civilisation in this era of globalisation. Islam is a religion of reality (*waq'ie*) and it is suitable to the nature of humans at any time, place and situation. Within the soul, feeling and desire of humans, there is a need to love something beautiful and it is known as art. Islam does not prohibit visual communication art as it enables messages to be delivered as long as the art itself does not promote waste of time and immorality. The messages embedded inside artworks can have various impacts on humans' life whether it is done directly or indirectly. The positive side of the artworks can lead to positive values in human's life together: it answers to Islamic objectives of being which call humans towards righteousness.

In Islam, the art can be a part of religious acts if it benefits the society. Its sole purpose should not be just for entertainment, a medium of amusement or even in search for fame. Islam has outlined clear rules and regulations in presenting ethical artworks, suitable with humans' nature. As a Muslim who will be held accountable to each word uttered and each deed done whilst living in this world, it is sensible to assume that the intelligence given by Allah S.W.T dictates an artist to choose art that is in tandem with humans' nature.

Producing good artwork will enable the society to appreciate good moral value that is in line with Islamic laws (*syarak*). For example, producing poster is one of the many media in visual communication art. If the poster is used as a communication medium to increase awareness and to promote love towards Allah S.W.T and His prophet (peace be upon him), then the poster will have a good religious impact. The same goes to the application of *halal* logo on the packaging label; it can give an impression of confidence to the consumers that the product is free from any forbidden ingredient.

The result of this study shows that students' perception and awareness on Islamic visual communication art is very low and limited due to several factors. One of the factors identified is the lack of exposure about Islamic visual communication art concept in the teaching and learning structure. This may be due to the implementation of syllabus in teaching and learning structure is heavily influenced by the Western culture. Even though there are some assimilation between visual communication art with local culture and belief, the presence of Western culture influence is still strongly implemented in teaching and learning system.

Another factor is the lack of production of books, articles, journals, researches and any other educational materials that focus on Islamic visual communication art. It causes students difficulty in finding references and subsequently leads to low perception and limited awareness amongst students as they are heavily depended on this limited reference materials. In addition to that, a majority of syllabus in teaching and learning structure offered by

Department of Graphic Design at Universiti Teknologi MARA does not have any relationship with Islamic arts. Even though the objective of each syllabus is focused on producing good artwork with commercial value, it can still be improved in the area of introducing Islamic ethics and conducts.

It cannot be denied the fact that the writing materials that focus on Islamic visual communication art are very limited as compared to the availability of references on Western art. The outcome of this study's analysis proves that there is lack of exposure to visual communication art concept that offers arguments from an Islamic perspective. This is further supported from the analysis that shows the limitation of the needed Islamic references. Nowadays' references concentrate more on discussion of art in general. But if one looks deeper, Islam has already offered clear rules and regulation that can be used as functional guidelines for students. Therefore, relevant authorities can take proactive steps by adding more educational writing materials in this area. Academicians are also advised to improve their research in relation to visual communication art that follows the Islamic needs.

In addition to that, relevant authorities should solve the problem of imbalanced curriculum requirement in education. It can begin from primary school up until tertiary level of education, where the Islamic curriculum should not only focus on formal educations such as *Tauhid, Fiqh,* Islamic History and many more. The Islamic knowledge should also be incorporated in art class, where not only theoretical aspects are covered but also the practical knowledge of visual communication art. At university level, the implementation of Islamic visual communication art learning can be further expanded by covering as well artworks that follow Islamic law, artworks that fulfil the ethical requirements of a Muslim and any other aspects that show the beauty of Islam.

In conclusion, if Islamic visual communication art is practiced properly, any controversies can be avoided. National issues such as misuse of *halal* logo on packaging, immoral visual usages, advertisements that offend the religious and racial sensitivities, abuse of photo manipulation techniques and many more that relate to visual communication art may not happen. Even if it does happen, it will be so few that it can be handle.

As a country that declares Islam as its official religion in the Constitution, Malaysia should step forward as a nation that embodies the religion of Islam. Relevant authorities should take the necessary initiatives to organise seminars, related exhibitions or any other programs that can increase not only visual communication art students' awareness but the public about visual communication art that adheres the Islamic rules and conducts. Furthermore, there should be more encouragement on research and learning process on Islamic visual communication art, so that there will more designers and researchers that follow Islamic rules and conducts in presenting visual communication art.

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