

## VISUAL DA'WAH APPROACH: STUDY OF DESIGN PRINCIPLES THROUGH VISUAL TREND IN SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK)

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**Abstract:** Previous study on visual in da'wah consist of; comics, magazines, novels, TV series (Cinetron) and shadow puppet (Wayang Kulit). The approach denoted as engaging and alternate medium in delivering da'wah. Today, social media i.e Facebook has becoming an open arena and a target platform in the effort to vary the medium. The used of visual are seen as relatively inventive and an influential way that are continuously substantial.

This article is looking into more than 300 visual da'wah posted in designated Facebook pages in a duration of three months. Visual da'wah are analyze through gestalt visual perception ; and identified through systematic coding and validated as a measuring factor of aesthetics in visuals. The analysis on aesthetics features of visual perception law ; The Law of Similarity, The Law of Direction (or 'the law of continuity or 'good continuation', The Law of Closure, Figure and Ground, The Law of Inclusiveness, The Law of Symmetry and The Law of Prägnanzstufen suggesting a significant and influence of the law that is vital to establish in delivery specific da'wah content that match with the application of the law.

This study suggested that Gestalt application fundamentally aid to highlight on da'wah text that can ensure clarity aspect in aesthetics visual da'wah approach However, the application of gestalt law are presume not to be study independently. Other substantial finding about this study are da'wah experiences that outlines constructive response that relate to muslim's belief that may contribute to future da'wah approach through other social media application.

**Keyword:** Visual, Aesthetic, Da'wah, Islam, Facebook,

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## Introduction

In 2012, Remindme facebook page has been set-up as personal mission. Following a trend of several other Facebook pages that consist of only da'wah message in visual form. Astonishingly to date, the *likes* had increased and snowballing up to 10 577 audiences, despite of fewer amount of posting and highly depends on organic viral ( not boosting post by paying to Facebook advert). Although the number of likes recorded is insignificant to compare with numerous visual da'wah facebook pages that reach up to millions *likes* but this accountably rich source of 'naturally occurring' data that intrigue queries. The feedback about the graphic was overwhelming that fuel the author to drive this exploratory study further.

## Literature Review

*Da'wah* known as a strategies to spread and to propagate the faith of Islam. Today *Daes* (preacher) has been adopting various platform and among the favourite medium are the new media. Considerable amount of journals has been published with a growing body of literature that investigated on social media. These was documented in Carvalo, 2014 ; on the use of Facebook as case study to engage online jihad for women, Faradila 2014; on the positive relation among student in *da'wah* through Facebook and Mustafa.Z, Ghani, Zumrah, in 2013; on Muslim's sharing Islamic information.

In general, Facebook remain the desired channel. Facebook community *da'wah* pages has become a hit (before the payable sponsored ad policy) and visual art sharing on *da'wah* messages has becoming popular with thousand and millions likes on the pages. Although it has not been documented, these initial observations suggesting a trend.

Recent study in Indonesia on young preachers of Pesantren As'adiyah had use social media to post information, announcements, photos and videos as part of the social engagement (Halim, W. 2018) Relatively similar like a number of study in the area tools and technology in Islam; innovative tool for *da'wah* (Noordin, 2015) , Information Technology on Islamic Behaviour (Hosseini, 2014) , Islamic values for ICT development (Saidin, 2012) and E-*da'wah* (Agus, 2006) . These findings mostly suggest on the importance the technology and multimedia tools in spreading *da'wah*. The study has been descriptive but significantly hi-light on Islamic software's and web applications.

The author strongly believe that the focus should be more than just the application of the tools itself with an argument that it takes more than just advance tools or social media used but the content of *da'wah* and how it's been delivered. Supported by YADIM ( Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia ) and PERKAMA ( Persatuan Kaunseling Malaysia) which indicate, in practicing Da'wah Islamiah da'wah must be given to the target with a very good method, using a good media and with very clear explanations. Thus, it is a mistake when giving something that is honoured, beautiful and sacred to the target in a form that are disgusting that can lost their greatness ( Rizuan,2004).

A recent descriptive study about aesthetic term in Arabic that is "Al-Jamaal" means "beauty" was done (Man, S. I. C., Mansor, M., Zakariya, K., & Zen, I., 2016) where numerous literature shows that "Al-Jamaal" is an aesthetic vocabulary to represent the Divine Beauty of God (Nasr, 1990 ; Hassan, 1992; Wijdan, 2006 ) hence , In this study, the terms aesthetics are define as contested term but nonetheless embodies a multitude concept of beauty.

How does beauty or aesthetics relate towards visual da'wah? In the following sections, I will discuss further on the aesthetic feature or known as design principles base on Gestalt theory. Generally it explain how we organize individual graphic elements into groups. Thus it can be used to explain the way humans perceive and recognise patterns. Perhaps to provide evidence of the relationship between aesthetics visual and the perception of usability trend across selected Facebook pages.

Significantly, the study of design principles in visual da'wah will shows collectives attributes for the design culture artefacts. Besides the role in da'wah possibly serves design artefacts materialize ideas and concepts and propose a sharing reality (Boujut & Blanco, 2003; Mer et al., 1995; Vinck, 2009) where this could transform the way we learn about religion where visual da'wah could be the integral part. Eg ; mobile apps (dakwah in mobile, visual books of dua, visual book of how-to etc)

### **Research Scope**

This paper is focusing on a delivery of da'wah through visual art where the primary concern are the aesthetics aspects. The term aesthetics are used in different disciplines are define with philosophical entities that are varies and some are overlapping. A generally accepted definition of aesthetics is a study of beauty. However, there is no agreed definition on what constitutes aesthetics academically.

The aesthetic aspect of visual da'wah in this study are limit to visual perceptual law of Gestalt Design principles. Our approach is inspired by the work of these eminent researchers Wertheimer, that are later adopt by numerous study about colour, contrast and gestalt theories of perception ( O'conor 2010) ; colour similarity can make banner advertising effective (Chiu, Y. P. 2017) and recent study of Gestalt visual Laws of Perception Use in Billboard (Ettehadmohkam, 2018).

The study will discuss on six gestalt application in visual da'wah. The identified perceptual law was adopted by similar study mentioned above. There are law of; continuity, proximity, similarity, symmetry, figure and ground, closure and Prägnanzstufen. Further insight on each gestalt principle are discuss in the following sections.

### **Theoretical Dimension**

The amount of information that the mind can track is limited. When it comes to visual, the mind seeks to simplify it by using the grouping known as Gestalt Principles of Perception. (Wertheimer, M. 1938). These principles were developed in the early 20th century, they continue to be an essential framework in creating aesthetic artwork.

In the design of visual and text signs and poster design that consist of da'wah in Facebook pages, there are miscellaneous examples of Gestalt's perceptual laws that the artist consciously or unconsciously apply to the creation of their work. It is almost certain if were to solely judges base on cognitive psychologists study on the cognitive process of art that , the application of of this design principles will produces positive and self-rewarding responses (Leder, H., Belke, B., Oeberst, A., & Augustin, D;, 2004). However, the reader should bear in mind that this study limits to visual perception, that is ; what the audience see . The responses or reactions towards the da'wah visual are the least interest in this exploration.

This paper will analyse visual da'wah artwork base on the theoretical framework proposed by Ettehadmohkam, S., Nazeri, A., Sobhanifard, Y., & Faramarzi, S. (2018). View table 1.

**Table 1: Proposition in Gestalt theory.**

The Law of Similarity	Objects which share similar properties are assumed to have association with one another. These similar properties may be, for example, visual properties such as shape or color (Ibid).
The Law of Direction (or 'the law of continuity or 'good continuation')	When a line (or objects arranged in a way that indicates a line) is perceived, which appears to have one or more branches, the branch which follows the direction
The Law of Closure	Objects that are close together are perceived as being part of a whole, to the extent that gaps between them may be imagined to be 'closed', forming complete shapes or borders. Wertheimer notes that in many cases this is not the dominant factor – Others may predominate (Ibid. 78 and Bruno: "Closure", 2007: 295)
Figure and Ground	Perceptual grouping ,recognizing objects through vision. Reading an image is based on the contradiction between the figure and ground. Figure is the most recognizable and ground is seen second. Like Yin and Yang (Rezazadeh 2008:36). Or the most famous form is. "In Rubin's pot, the positive and negative parts of figure are replaced with each other, and it depends on the pot or the two profiles that are facing each other. In general, it uses the illusion that can be shown in many ways in order to create unity, emphasis and attract attention of the audience (Dandis, 1992: 62)
The Law of Inclusiveness	In a visual structure, the smaller gestalts are covered by larger gestalts. It means larger shape covers smaller shape and will be perceived earlier. This law implies that a visual structure in general may consist of several small gestalts, which are subsets of the larger gestalt (Wertheimer, 1938c: 81)
The Law of Symmetry	Under the law of symmetry, the mind understands objects symmetrically and forms them around a central point. Perceptually, we tend to divide things into symmetric parts. Therefore, when two symmetric elements are not interconnected, they connect each other to create a coherent design (Dandis, 1992: 64)
The Law of Prägnanzstufen	The simplest arrangement of elements is likely to be perceived first: When presented with a series of complex elements, we are likely to perceive them as being parts of a simpler whole <sup>22</sup> (where 'simple' arrangements are those "having fewer rather than more elements, having symmetrical rather than asymmetrical compositions, and generally observing the other "Gestalt principles of perception') (Kofka quoted from Hergenahan, 2003: 290)

Source: Ettehadmohkam, S., Nazeri, A., Sobhanifard, Y., & Faramarzi, S. (2018)

The systematic manifestation originate by Ehren Fels, and Wertheimer (Wertheimer 1938c: 72) where the main proposition in Gestalt theory is that "general motifs dominate over their

constituent elements and there are; laws of similarity, proximity, continuity, integrity or closure, figure-ground relations, symmetry and inclusiveness (Dandis, 1992: 60).

This study was drawn into the theoretical adoption by Ettehadmohkam base on the comprehensive analysis study of billboard in Tehran where they had successfully apply and group perception’s laws through design principles. Secondly, as for the visual design element, analysis attempt will be grounded towards text & images only.

### Methodology

Hundreds or maybe thousands of visuals that are uploaded to the internet every minute or hour through various social networking and photo sharing platforms. (Aditya Khosla, 2014) Through keyword search of; *Da’wah, Dakwah, Islam, Hadith, Quran*, there are numerous Facebook pages that utilize visual representation in delivery da’wah. The study will look into selected Facebook pages. The selections of the Facebook pages was purposive that are directed by three intended criteria; dae’s (individual or body of organization), highest *likes* and aesthetics content.

In traditional communication theory states that a minority of users, called influential, excel in persuading others (Rogers 1962). This theory predicts that by targeting these influential in the network, one may achieve a large-scale chain-reaction of influence driven. The key factors determining influence are; the interpersonal relationship among ordinary users and; the readiness of a society to adopt an innovation (Watts and Dodds 2007; Domingos and Richardson 2001). This modern view of influence lead to the most shared, highest number likes, organically appeared in user’s times line etc.

### Results

Three Facebook pages was identified popular base on million’s likes & highest fan growth recorded via socialbaker’s. View Figure 1 . However, to have a dynamic perspective and non bias approach in this study, author has decided to choose the most popular dae’s pages that is DrZakir Naik and The Daily Reminder -TDR , other da’wah facebook pages that does not associate with particular individual and is a non-profit organization.

Figure 1

Page name	Number of Fans
 <b>Dr Zakir Naik</b> f / zakirnaik	15 694 819
 <b>Dr. Bilal Philips</b> f / DrBilalPhilips	5 631 215
 <b>Nouman Ali Khan</b> f / noumanbayyinah	1 987 538

Source: Facebook Statistic, Social Bakers (2017).

This collection is divided into 4 categories; Quran, Hadith And Others (Advices, Doa, Etc). The results of this content analysis are analysed in Excel 2013 and SPSS 23 software . In Figure 2,

The Law of similarity are obviously seen in the use of same color font (white and light yellow) instead of miscellaneous mixtures of font color for the text. We can observe that the same type of font is been use all the way with only variation of size and effect. This Law allow coder or audience to focus straight on da'wah message. Same law applied in Figure 3-5 where the visual utilized two main color and its been apply through the text and match with the background tone. At this point the law of similarity easily gave us a distinction on how and artwork can be identified by just applying this principle and yet to achieve as aesthetic. The absence of this would possibly create visual noise, da'wah content might get lost in the delivery. Referring to ( Guber ,2015) that highlight principles of Similarity are the most solid and defined principles of Gestalt psychology.

**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**



Source :Dr Zakir Naik Facebook Page ( 2017).

**Figure 4**

**Figure 5**



Source :Dr Zakir Naik Facebook Page ( 2017).

Figure 6



Figure 7



Source :The Daily Reminder Facebook Page ( 2017).

Figure 8



Figure 9



Source :The Daily Reminder Facebook Page ( 2017).

The Law of Direction or known ‘the law of continuity or ‘good continuation’ describe about When a line (or objects arranged in a way that indicates a line) is perceived, which appears to have one or more branches, the branch which follows the direction. The most fascinating discovery about this application of this law in visual da’wah ,is the ability to highlight on a specific content or picture.Designer whom design this deliberately want the ‘power’ of alquran to be point out the most. In figure 4 and . this law are recognize through the position of the text “haj” on kaabah giving a direct connection of the text and the photo, although it could be argue that the content are emphasizing on umrah rather than haj in figure 4 but this explain that this law introduce movement , hence incorrect movement may lead to unfitting where da’wah could be misunderstood.

As for Law of Figure and Ground, noticeable application of this law are in most visual da’wah facebook pages, observes picture of Dr Zakir Naik and Da’wah text as Figure while different color background to distinctly distinguish of the applied Ground, see figure all figure . Similar application of this gestalt law in The daily Reminder facebook pages we can identify the Figure as da’wah text , and Ground as different background color applied.. The absences of this law indirectly resulted absence of depth in between message that need to be deliver and decorative element. It is important to understand that this law carried weight in crafting visual da’wah, primarily the application should focus on the da’wah text as the Figure for instant deliverable and the rest ; pictures, background remain as Ground or secondary. Law f closure can be observe in figure 6; connecting human head vector with da’wah text. This among the law that are least to be applied as, due to minimum influence.

Law of inclusiveness are significant in visual da’wah particularly when there several design element involve .View figure 2 and 3 on how we easily identified bigger design element first : both da’wah text are identified first before the picture. Law of symmetry in Figure 9, where both picture and da’wah text are in same size. The application formed balance and resulted to clarity. This perceptual law would aid best on da’wah message that deal with plenty of information. Next is the application of The Law of Prägnanzstufen in Figure 2,3 and 4; simple arrangement of da’wah text that aid on instant engagement. This da’wah visual has been shared

for 19k that denoted among the highest shared to compared with the rest of visual da'wah collected.

Next, In this section each Gestalt's laws of perception is analysed in the image and text of each visual to determine how these laws are applied in design, and the number of each law in the image and text used. View Table 2, using the analyses done on each visual and counting the laws in images and texts of all 240 , the percentage of Gestalt's laws in visual da'wah was calculated.

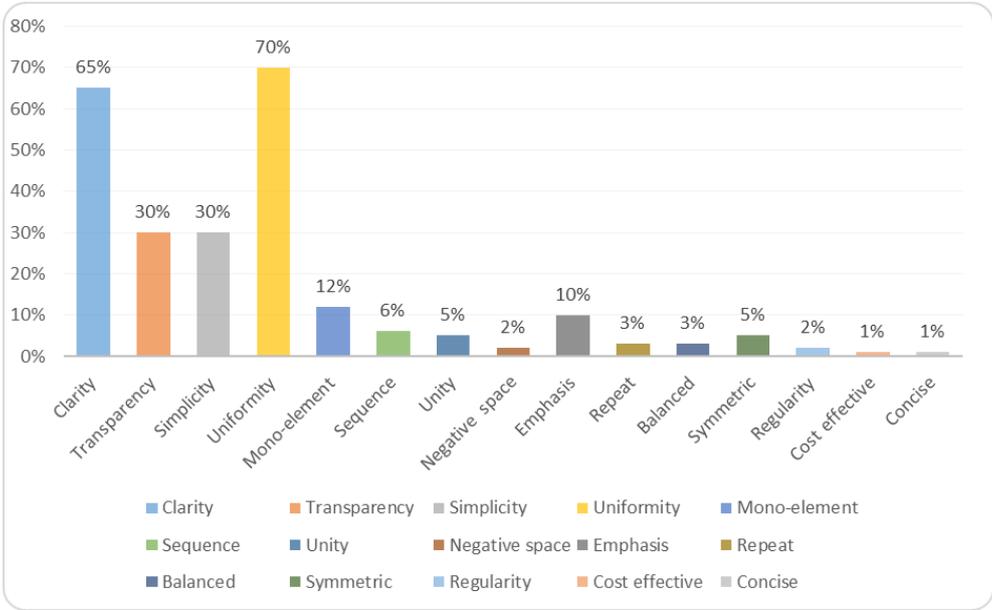
**Table 2: Comparison and Classification of Graphic Design Principles and Gestalt Visual Perception Laws in 240 Visual Da'wah in facebook of Images and Texts based on Their Frequency of Them by the Delphi method.**

Gestalt Perceptual Laws	Visual Da'wah Elements	Design Principles in Images and Texts
Figure-Ground	Texts (5 % )	• Negative space (2%)
		• Unity 5%)
		• Emphasis (10%)
		• Repeat (2%)
	Images (8%)	• Negative space (2%)
		• Unity (3%)
		• Emphasis 20%)
		• Repeat (2%)
Symmetry	Texts (5%)	• Symmetric (5%)
	Images (3%)	• Symmetric (6%)
Closure	Texts (1%)	• Cost effective (1%)
		• Concise (1%)
	Images 7%)	• Cost effective (9%)
		• Concise (8%)
Proximity	Texts (3.5%)	• Balanced (3%)
		• Regularity (2%)
	Images (33 % )	• Balanced (71%)
		• Regularity (75%)
Continuity	Texts (8%)	• Sequence (6%)
		• Repeat (3%)
	Images (37%)	• Sequence (40%)
		• Repeat (2%)
Similarity	Texts (54%)	• Uniformity (70%)
	Images (23%)	• Uniformity (30%)
Inclusiveness	Texts (22%)	• Mono-element (12%)
	Images (2-%)	• Mono-element (15%)
Pragnans law		• Simplicity (30% & 50%)
The quality of all Gestalt laws and design principles		• Clarity (65% & 30%)
		• Transparency (30% & 40%)

Source: Author. (2019)

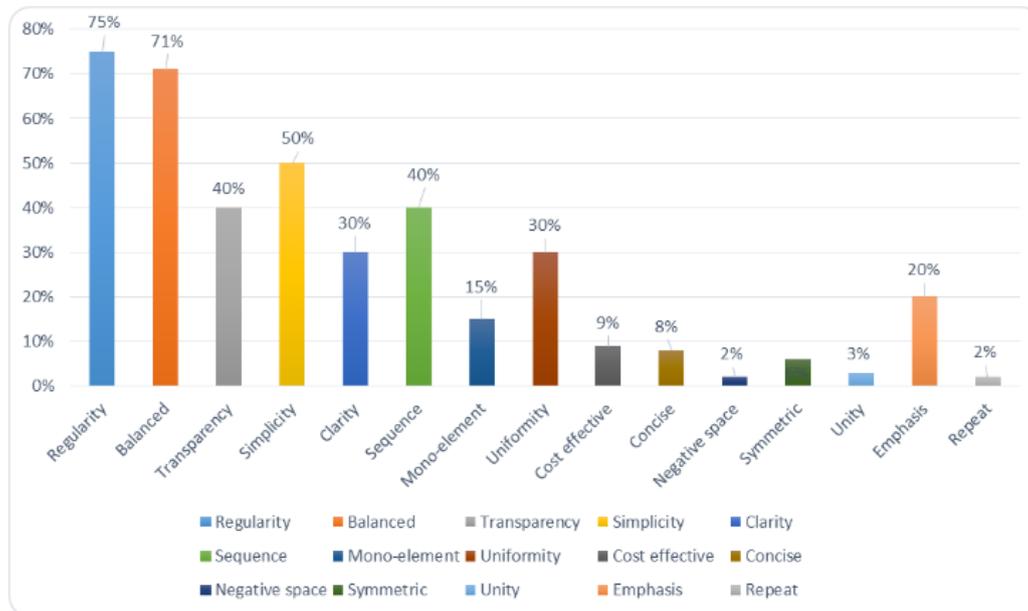
The findings were discussed among subject experts that is a group of academia. Another group of artists were randomly chosen to confirm on the general understanding of design elements in the visual that has been applied. Based on frequencies shown, that extensive use of uniformity is respectively in the visual da'wah texts where The Law of Similarity of Gestalt is applied. These similar properties largely on the amount of text used in da'wah content that require the emphasis on clarity expected. The findings suggest that the dominant expected text of typography element in most of the da'wah visual in Facebook. As categorized in earlier paragraphs on visual da'wah that mostly consist of hadith, advice and Quranic verse hence the amount of information are crammed into one visual to avoid misinformation in delivering the content. Perhaps the trend suggested that skilled visual designers had successfully manipulated the visual perception where it improves viewers' comprehension of da'wah based on the amount of likes of the Facebook pages but design principles are usually not strict rules, but rules of thumb that might even oppose and contradict one another. Skilled visual designers implicitly apply the relevant design principles and balance the trade-offs between them in an interactive process of creating holistic designs that is improving the designs based on the critiques.

**Table 4: Gestalt theory in law applied in Visual Da'wah – Design Element (Text)**



Source: Author. (2019)

**Table 4: Gestalt theory in law applied in Visual Da’wah – Design Element (Images)**



Source: Author. (2019)

### Conclusion

This paper draws conclusions about aspirations of this discipline; for if Gestalt has been deployed largely as a dispassionate theory or methodology within the field of graphic design. This deployment has been at the expense of its original aspirations toward grasping of Muslim’s user in Facebook. Successful application of the law that match with da’wah text would possibly resulted as more affective .For example da’wah message that deal with plenty of information possible best to adopt Law of symmetry , for Quranic or hadith verse that perhaps may require passionate or emotional attachment, a strong design element like picture that emphasize on law of pragnanz and law of inclusiveness as it drives attention .

The paper offers a wider range of conclusions about Gestalt’s contribution to visual da’wah. Ultimately arguing that it promotes an understanding of the visual design principles hierarchy arrangement nonetheless is a complex discipline with diverse philosophical, scientific, and social orientations. Alternatively, future study could look further on use of semiotic in da’wah visual and relatively reduce the amount of text remaining the gestalt principles on images features.

Nonetheless, in this study gestalt offers an instant engagement relations and Muslims Facebook user where its driven by a desire for order and clarity in an object-world full of strains, stresses, disturbances, and ambiguities. Revisiting the writing on visual aesthetic, perhaps artists and designers are advice about the need to generate therapeutic social effects towards the text or images used. This could help Muslim overcome other visual chaos and disorder via the production of appropriate visual forms instead focusing on the technical design production. Since the study limits to the design artefact, further investigation is needed towards Muslim’s whole experiences on the visual since the da’wah is about Muslims, not just forms or spontaneous cognitive functions.

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