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THE 13TH INTERNATIONAL INNOVATION, INVENTION & DESIGN COMPETITION 2024

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

e-BOOK

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5 STEPS ON RECOGNIZING ALCOHOLIC CANS

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the confusion faced by Muslim consumers in Malaysia when differentiating between alcoholic and non-alcoholic canned beverages due to similar design elements, despite alcohol being illegal for Muslims. Instances of mixed placement of these beverages on store shelves have been reported, leading to consumer confusion. The study aims to identify the confusing design elements and develop a new visual sign to help consumers accurately identify alcoholic beverages. Utilizing a mixed-method approach, qualitative data were gathered through questionnaire surveys conducted during the pilot-test, pre-test, and post-test stages, while quantitative data were obtained from literature review, in-depth interviews, direct observation, and visual analysis. Data were analyzed and integrated using triangulation. The findings revealed five key design elements contributing to the confusion: pattern, color, brand, images, and typography. This research proposes a new visual indicator to improve recognition and prevent accidental consumption of alcoholic beverages by Muslim consumers.

Keywords: Alcoholic Cans, Packaging Design, Muslim, Consumer, Visual Analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

In a Muslim-majority country like Malaysia, the packaging visual design is crucial to attracting consumers to buy the products. However, it poses a significant issue when it leads to confusion between alcoholic and non-alcoholic canned beverages, impacting the sensitivities of Muslim buyers. An article from November 15, 2013, highlighted instances where store employees mistakenly shelved fruit-flavored canned drinks alongside alcoholic ones, leading to confusion (Sinar Harian, 2013). According to this report, several customers were drawn to beer beverages because their packaging resembled lemon water. In another instance, a student was caught trying to bring canned alcoholic drinks to school, with teachers expressing frustration over the misleading packaging. A follow-up article titled "*Reka grafik tin minuman keras kelirukan pembeli*" further detailed how the graphic designs of alcoholic cans often mimic those of regular non-alcoholic drinks, confusing Muslim consumers (Sinar Harian, 2013).

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) reported that over 15 types of alcoholic drinks on the market resemble soft drinks, exacerbating public confusion (Harian Metro, 2010). According to CAP president SM Mohamed Idris, manufacturers use appealing colors and designs that particularly entice children and teenagers, potentially leading to accidental consumption and addiction. A similar issue occurred in 1997 when Alcopops, a lemonade soda alcoholic drink, was sold in Malaysia with colorful, cartoonish packaging that was easy for teenagers to remember (Ardiah et al. 2009). In 2021, the alcoholic beverage brand "TIMAH" was reported to be causing confusion and discomfort

among Muslim consumers due to its design and name. This issue was considered critical and discussed in the Dewan Negara session, where the government took it seriously and requested that the brand name be changed.

The primary problem is the difficulty Muslim consumers face in distinguishing between alcoholic and non-alcoholic canned beverages due to similar packaging designs. This confusion not only affects consumer choices but also has social and cultural implications, particularly for Muslim buyers who need to avoid alcohol for religious reasons. The study aims to identify the design elements causing this confusion and propose a visual indicator to help consumers accurately recognize alcoholic beverages.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research employed mixed methods to analyze data and achieve its objectives, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative approaches from diverse data sources. Initially, a pilot study using a quantitative questionnaire survey identified the research focus and problems. Subsequently, the researcher reviewed local and international literature to gain broader insights, followed by in-depth interviews with expert designers and government officials to validate the data. Observation and visual analysis identified confusing visual elements on canned beverage packaging, examining single or collections of images, including text and word analysis (Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001). Images of beer cans were categorized and analyzed to detail each visual element on the principal display panel (PDP), comparing specific images with pilot test results to assess confusion elements. The collected data were analyzed, leading to a pre-test survey on new design reactions, with subsequent post-test analysis following design improvements. The research findings were derived from the post-test analysis, utilizing triangulation of data and findings for comprehensive results.

3. FINDINGS

The research identified five key elements that confuse recognizing beer cans: pattern, color, brand, image, and typography as shown in Figure 1. Quantitative data from respondents highlighted these elements, which were then analyzed through visual analysis to determine similarities that could help consumers identify beer cans accurately. The qualitative results revealed that circular patterns are the most confusing on the principal display panels (PDP) of cans. In terms of color, green was found to be the most commonly confusing color on beer cans, followed by black and white or silver. The study also provided a list of the top ten beer brands available in the local market to aid consumer awareness. Image analysis indicated that barley, coats of arms, and animals are the images most frequently found on beer cans, contributing to the confusion. Lastly, the typography analysis showed that serif, decorative, and bold fonts were the most commonly confusing typographical elements. These findings suggest specific visual cues that consumers can use to better distinguish alcoholic cans from non-alcoholic beverages.



Figure 1 5 Steps in Recognizing Alcoholic Cans

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research highlights the issue of confusion among Muslim consumers in Malaysia regarding alcoholic and non-alcoholic canned beverages due to similar design elements. Through mixed methods, five key elements contributing to this confusion were identified: pattern, color, brand, image, and typography. Circular patterns, green, black, and white or silver colors, specific beer brand names, images of barley, coats of arms, animals, and serif, decorative, and bold fonts were found to be the primary sources of confusion. These findings emphasize the need for distinct packaging designs to prevent accidental consumption and suggest practical measures for manufacturers and policymakers to ensure consumer awareness and respect religious requirements.

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