
Qur'anic Aesthetic Theory: A Roadmap for Entrepreneurs

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ABSTRACT

Aesthetics, now, is not just a matter of enjoyment by Nature or art but its implication is gradually expanding. Now it has permeated every sphere of human life. From architecture to serving the food, in each thing aesthetics is taken care. The main reason for this is that man is naturally inclined towards aesthetics. The success of a business depends on the attraction of its customers, which can be greatly enhanced using aesthetics in business. Using aesthetics principles and associated dynamics in manufacturing the products not only gives them considerable value but also makes them more special for consumers by fascinating their aesthetic taste. The Quran guides its followers towards balanced aesthetic principles. By adopting these principles in the making of products, any entrepreneur or industrialist can attract customers to products even can build his good reputation in the market by producing quality products. This article will help entrepreneurs and industrialists to start as well as improve and expand their business in a good way. It may help governments to boost their revenue by increasing business activities and make the state economically prosper and emergent.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Aesthetic Taste, Aesthetics & Business, Quran & Business, Customer Attraction, Publicity

Introduction:

To start a new business is very easy and simple but it is very difficult to expand it widely and make your valuable place in the market. There are many factors that must be considered in achieving this destination. Some of these factors are related to finance, market demand and

management, etc. Having resolved all mentioned issues, the business stands out through its products. The real issue in entrepreneurship is how to attract consumers to your products? Some businessmen try to get the attention of consumers through excessive publicity on which they must spend a huge portion of their capital and obviously publicity expenditures also must be paid by the consumer as the cost of the product increases. Rising prices can lead to consumers' inattention. It is as if publicity sometimes has the opposite effect, that is, inattention instead of attracting the user. Moreover, publicity is also beneficial when the appearance and manifestation of the product is impressive. Here, it becomes clear the intensive involvement of aesthetics in business. Therefore, every entrepreneur should not ignore aesthetics. Beauty doesn't need advertisement. The visual appeal of products captivates the attention of consumer and has a good effect on his purchasing behavior.

Literature Review

The scope of aesthetics is expanding; new horizons and new angles are being introduced. A wide range of literature has been created on aesthetics and its various aspects. The role of aesthetics in business has also been the subject of research. John Dobson's article "Aesthetics as a Foundation for Business Activity, 2007"¹ is valuable in this regard. In this article he examines the role of aesthetics in business. "The Effect of Visual Product Aesthetics on consumers' Price Sensitivity, 2015"² by Yigit Mumcu & Halil Semih Kimzan, is another valuable research article which highlights the impact of aesthetics on consumers' price sensitivity.

Pauline Brown's "Aesthetic Intelligence, 2019"³ is also an excellent and groundbreaking book on the subject. In this book, she explains the role of a businessman's aesthetic consciousness in business. She teaches businessmen how to connect their own senses to create products and services that pleasure their customers and build businesses to hit the highest point. This book is based on a course that she designed and taught at Harvard Business School.

All mentioned authors acknowledge the role and involvement of aesthetics in the business but do not identify the values that lead to aesthetics in products. This scientific gap is the basic research question for present study. In this research paper, it is tried to identify the basic aesthetic values and principles for any product keeping in view the Qur'anic verses.

Visual Aesthetic of Products -Consumers Psychology Coupling

It is very important for every entrepreneur who wants to build his business on a solid foundation to know the psychology of consumer and to

know what questions the customer has in his mind when he comes to a shop for the item he intends to buy. Consumer usually has four types of questions in his mind deciding to purchase an item:

Is it beautiful?

Will this item serve its purpose well?

Will this item be durable and long lasting?

If the answer to these three questions is "yes", then the consumer mentally decides to buy it. It is a great achievement for a businessman to mentally persuade the consumer to buy his product. The next question is about its price.

Has this item affordable price?

It means that the decision to buy an item starts after determining the visual beauty of the item. This proves the importance of aesthetics in business. It is not a surprising thing because attraction to beautiful object is an instinct in human being. One of the differences between mankind and other living beings is that man does many things in his day-to-day running of life just to satisfy this instinct. The huge wonders of the world, cultural development, Luxuries of life even the delicious recipes of cooking are the concrete evidence of this claim. Visual aesthetic of product has a great impact on consumer behavior related to judgment of liking or disliking and price sensitivity etc.

It's a reality that everyone purchases only that thing which he likes; no one purchases anything which one dislikes. The relation between purchasing and choice is very deep and natural. In the Arabic Language, as well as in the Holy Quran, the word purchasing is used as a metaphor for choice⁴. Everyone knows choice has a lot to do with visual aesthetic. What fascinates the eyes pleases the heart. What pleases the heart; one tries to obtain it on any cost. First sight is very important in love as well as in shopping because both have to do with choice.

When a customer comes to a shop, he first pays attention to the outward design of the items placed in the rack. Appearance and shape affect him, and he focuses his attention on the object. He then turns his attention to the material of the object. The durability and excellence of the material cannot immediately determine, so the decision to purchase is largely based on the appearance of the item. If the Item is very durable but not in good shape, then it is natural for the customer not to pay attention to it. It is a totally different matter that some customers have their own aesthetic taste, and they are impressed by it even then. When the customer is impressed by the appearance and design of a product and decides to buy it, he is attracted to the price. In such a case, even if the price of the item is slightly higher than similar products having normal shape and does not match its purchasing

power, it is still more inclined to buy it and ultimately, he decides to buy it. This means if the design and visual appearance of a product is impressive and powerful, consumers will attract to it and will decide to buy it without any hesitation. Moreover, this will have a positive effect on the customer's price sensitivity also⁵. This attitude of the customer is in the best interest of the entrepreneurs so that they may earn huge profits and not only strengthen their companies but also expand their business too.

The problem is that usually it is said that there is no specific formula by which aesthetics can be created in products. This may be true to some extent, but the fact is that the holy Qur'an guides mankind in every way even, on aesthetics. The Qur'anic concept of aesthetics is likely a roadmap for the entrepreneurs who want to increase the number of their customers in a much better way through less publicity.

Quran and Aesthetics

According to Qur'an, the scope of beauty is very wide. The durability of any product and its excellent working efficiency to fulfill its purpose made for⁶ is not a different thing from its beauty. The Qur'an associate's beauty to creativity and considers it to be the basic principle of the creative process.

الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ⁷

Who made well whatever He created.⁸

The style of expression in this verse is general as well as categorical in describing the "Beauty" as a basic rule and principal of creativity. It also emphasizes on intentional beautification of the creatures eliminating any chances of accidental activity. It seems where there is creation there is beauty. This is why each of the components of the universe is a physical indicator of beauty and aesthetics. So, it requires beauty in every action of human being from the social needs to the religious worships. Speaking is a human act; Allah almighty says about it:

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا⁹

Say to people what is good.¹⁰

Clothing is a social need of man. It protects his body from heat, cold and extreme weather, but the Qur'an describes this benefit of clothing as well as declares it the source of beauty¹¹. These are just a few examples to illustrate how the Qur'an combines the fulfillment of every human action and social need to beauty. The entrepreneur provides social needs to people in exchange for earning profit so he should not ignore aesthetics in making of products.

The Qur'an not only speaks of beauty but also of the values that create beauty in anything. Let us now study these aesthetic values described by the holy Quran in detail.

Quran and Aesthetic values

The Quran – a divine book revealed on His beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) describes the whole creative process and covers all the elements of “Aesthetics Values” in an easily understandable practical style, as: Taq’deer (To create things by such Planning which gives them aesthetic value), Taswiyah and Tadeel.

1. Taq’deer / Planning

Taq’deer means to think about the purpose, shape and content of an object and to make an accurate estimate¹² so that after its creation there is no deficiency in its external requirements and its internal structure. This means that good planning is essential before making a product. Without a good planning, a product cannot be impressive and effective in any way. In Surah Furqan, Allah relates creative activity to “Taq’deer”:

خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَرَهُ تَقْدِيرًا¹³ .

Who has created everything and designed it in a perfect measure.¹⁴

In Arabic language the word Taq’deer is used for Estimate and well planning¹⁵ Allama Zamakhshri elaborates the meanings of “Taq’deer”:

It means that Allah created things in such a way that its internal structure and external requirements are compatible¹⁶.

It is very important to keep the external requirements and the internal structure compatible because if there is no compatibility, the purpose of creation will be lost. That’s why Allah said Hazrat Dawood A.S to make armor for protection in battlefield by planning its shape which would help in achieving its purpose and make it easier to move fast in battlefield as well. Allah SWT said:

أَنْ أَعْمَلَ سَابِغَاتٍ وَقَدِّرَ فِي السَّرْدِ

(Saying to him,) make coats of armour and maintain balance in combining rings¹⁷

Allama Qutub Shaheed allaborates it:

Allah SWT inspired Dawood A.S to make soft, wavy, interlocking chips that can be easily formed and moved by the movement of the body, and he commanded the intersection of these flakes to be narrowed so that they would not pass through the spears.¹⁸

On the very principle, only that market product can sustain its existence which meets the compatibility in its internal structure and external

requirements. Such compatibility is achieved by Taqdeer i.e good planning for setting aesthetic values i.e “Taswiyah & Ta’deel”.

2- Tas’wiyah / Suitable Design

The Quranic term “Tas’wiyah” means designing of an object in a shape which is helpful in achieving the purposes for which it was made. So Tas’wiyah is related to the appearance of any object i.e its colour, size, volume and symmetric components which should be compatible to its purpose. A thing with good appearance and efficient purposefulness is acceptable. Missing any or both gadgets diminish its worth in the space and subsequent extinction. In Surah Al-Aala, Allah says:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى¹⁹ .

Who created everything, then made it well²⁰

3- Ta’deel / Appropriateness of Material

Similarly, Ta’deel is another Quranic term once used in the context of the Aesthetic values of creatures. It refers to proportion, moderation and similarity in the organs of the object. Therefore, Ta’deel is related to the arrangement and proportion of the internal elements of the object. This proportion and similarity also help the shape of any object to achieve its purpose. It also includes the material from which the product up of. Therefore, in the preparation of the product, the high-quality material which is appropriate in achieving the purpose will lead to the Ta’deel in the product. In another verse, Allah describes both the “Aesthetic Values” and the whole creative process in very short and concise words using concepts of “Taswiyyah & Ta’deel”:

الَّذِي خَلَقَكَ فَسَوَّاكَ فَعَدَلَكَ ، فِي أَيِّ صُورَةٍ مَا شَاءَ رَكَّبَكَ²¹ .

Who created you, then perfected you, then brought you in due proportion.²²

It reveals that Taswiyya & Ta’deel are the basic elements or values in creative activity. The sentence “فِي أَيِّ صُورَةٍ مَا شَاءَ رَكَّبَكَ” requires that a good planning should be made to create perfect harmony and synthesis. The word “مَا شَاءَ” refers to a mental activity before creative activity.

It would be helpful to illustrate the meaning of “Taswiyyah & Ta’deel” with an example. The purpose of the sword is to cut, then keeping this purpose in mind, the shape of the sword will be made, it will be sharpened, and its edge will be kept on the outside. It is all about Taswiya. The fulfilment of purpose made for, can’t be achieved by only shape. The material used in making of sword is related to Ta’deel. Suppose for a moment that the material used in making of a sword, is plastic or wood instead of high-quality steel, will the sword fulfil its purpose made for? This clearly proves that it is not enough for any product to be beautiful in

appearance, but it is also important that its visual beauty and its internal material should be such that it fulfils its purpose in a better way.

In the case of perfect harmony between Taswiyyah and Ta'deel, the object will be outwardly beautiful and inwardly strong, sturdy, and will be better performing its functions. This perfect harmony is owed to good thinking, imagination and planning. Therefore, the more beautiful imagination and planning of the artist the more beautiful his creation will be.

Aesthetic Qualities of Beautiful Object

Quran guides that the excellent combination of these two aesthetic values will automatically create many other attributes and qualities in the product which will attract the consumers. These qualities are balance, durability, flawlessness etc.

1- Al-Meezan / Balance

Creating perfect unity by combining the components of an object is called balance, proportion, and homogeneity²³. In Surah Al- Hijr, Allah SWT says:

وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْزُونٍ²⁴۔

We have caused to grow in it everything well-balanced.²⁵

Allama Zamakhshari elaborating the meaning of Balance says:

وزن بميزان الحكمة وقدر بمقدار يقتضيه لا يصلح فيه زيادة ولا نقصان²⁶

He added the ingredients in everything in as much quantity as its essence required neither more nor less.

Every beautiful thing has a balance of components in it. An imbalance of ingredients makes the object look dull.

2- Itqa'an / Durability

Itqa'an or durability is also an essential quality of a beautiful object according to Quran. Allah says in Surah Al- Namal:

صُنِعَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْقَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ²⁷

Creature of Allah who has strengthened everything.

Whenever an object is made with care of Quranic aesthetic values, it will automatically build inwardly strong, sturdy, and durable and will not suffer any kind of distortion or breakdown during performing its duty. This is the basic quality which enables a product to face criticism. Therefore, when Allah said that He has characterized everything with strength, at the same time He also presents His creation for criticism. I made you look at it critically and you will not see any distortion in my creations.

Since Itqa'an is the sunnah of Allah, the Prophet PBUH would like to one has an undeniable proof of his technical maturity and industrial expertise in doing something. Our Prophet PBUH didn't like to allow mistakes to remain in doing something.

رَجِمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ عَمِلَ عَمَلًا فَأَثَقَنَهُ²⁸

Allah has mercy on the one who does a work,
then make it durable.

Itqa'an means that in a product, negative qualities must not exist. In simple words, Itqa'an means the creation of any figure been free from all kinds of defects. These defects not only cause distortion and disturbance in the existence of an object but also create discord in the nature of the observer. The Quran also points out that there are some flaws and defects in the product due to the lack of perfect combination of Taswiyya and Ta'deel.

3- Flawlessness

The Quran mention two major flaws which destroy beauty of anything. One of them is related to the material from which it is made. It is very clear if there is a defect in material, then obviously there will be defects in the product made by it. It is called Fa'toor. Fa'toor means a defect that affect product's color²⁹ and visual appearance as well as its quality. The other one is related to customers and observers' point of view. It is called Tafa'wut. Tafa'wut means a defect that the viewer points out and the creator or manufacturer is unaware of this defect. When an observer or customer sees it, he says that it would have been better if it had been like this. For complete beauty, it is necessary to be free from all kinds of defects.

In short, products made on Qur'anic aesthetic principles will not only have an impressive design, but that design will positively impact their performance, and those things will be durable also. Excellent and impressive design, better performance and durability are the qualities that positively affect the attitude of the customers permanently. Companies can improve their reputation and trust in the market through durability of their products. Just because of impressive design any entrepreneur can't make a valuable place for a long time. It is product's durability by which customers trust can be gained. In the case of future purchases, the consumer chooses it again and again. Because of his good experience, he will rate it and will suggest it to others.

Conclusion

According to Qur'an, the compass of beauty spreads far and wide. Quran associates the beauty to creative activity. Thus, every human action falls within its sphere if the aesthetic values described in the Qur'an are

considered. These aesthetic values are related to the texture of the object, its appearance and content.

Using Qur'anic aesthetics principles and values in manufacturing the products gives perfection, compatibility among outer and inner components and makes them them balanced in constituents, practical symmetric, reasonable in size/volume/color, durable, easy to handle and maintain. The products having all these qualities not only have the best working efficiency but also fascinate the consumer's aesthetic taste. Such Quality products will affect the attitude of the consumer due to its beauty and sustainability. Thus, the number of consumers not only increases but also by producing quality products, any entrepreneur or industrialist may succeed in improving a good reputation in market.

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- 3- Pauline Brown, *Aesthetic Intelligence*, HarperCollins Publishers, 2019
- 4- *Al-Baqarah* 2: 16
- 5- *The Effect of Visual Product Aesthetics on consumers' Price Sensitivity*, Pg 528
- 6- In *Physics* II 3 and *Metaphysics* V 2, Aristotle offers his general account of the four causes. This account is general in the sense that it applies to everything that requires an explanation, including artistic production and human action. The material cause: "that out of which", e.g., the bronze of a statue.
- The formal cause: "the form", "the account of what-it-is-to-be", e.g., the shape of a statue.
 - The efficient cause: "the primary source of the change or rest", e.g., the artisan, the art of bronze-casting the statue, the man who gives advice, the father of the child.
 - The final cause: "the end, that for the sake of which a thing is done", e.g., health is the end of walking, losing weight, purging, drugs, and surgical tools.
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