



Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts

The Attributes of *Asmaa' al-Husnaa* as a Conceptual Model of Islamic Furniture Design Assessment

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Masters

PhD

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The Attributes of *Asmaa' al-Husnaa* as a Conceptual Model of Islamic
Furniture Design Assessment

Jazmin Binti Mohamad Jaafar

A thesis submitted

In fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

(Industrial Design)

Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK
2018

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In the name of ALLAH, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Praise be to GOD, Lord of the universe, the Most Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgment, You alone we worship, You alone we ask for help, Guide us in the right path, the path of those You blessed, not of those who have deserved wrath nor of those who have gone astray.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discuss on the development of a conceptual model for Islamic furniture design assessment through the application of the *Asmaa' al-Husnaa* attributes. The main goal of the study is to identify Islamic furniture assessment design criteria for Good Design. The challenge of Muslim furniture designers lies in identifying the correct assessment criteria for Good Design from an Islamic perspective. This descriptive type of research uses the mixed method to collect verifiable data in the Klang Valley. The occasional chair is selected as sample for this research. The identified Muslim perceptions constitute the medium of communication between designers and consumers through various research activities. This research primarily involves observation, open-ended interview, brainstorming, and protocol study for the qualitative method. In addition, questionnaires with designers and furniture consumers complement the quantitative methods. In the validation segment of the new model through protocol study a group of practicing designers is involved. According to the preliminary finding, 44 attributes of the *Asmaa' al-Husnaa* are suited to guide furniture designers. The concluding chapter discusses applying the *Asmaa' al-Husnaa* attributes and furniture design assessment criteria from the Islamic perspective based on the new conceptual model and as points at future research directions.

Keywords: *Asmaa' al-Husnaa*, furniture design, Islamic concept, Islamic perspective, good design, good furniture design, occasional chair, and *Tawheed*.

Sifat-sifat Asmaa' al-Husnaa sebagai Model Konseptual untuk Penilaian Reka Bentuk Perabot Islam

ABSTRAK

Tesis ini melaporkan perkembangan model konseptual untuk penilaian reka bentuk perabot Islam melalui penerapan sifat-sifat Asmaa 'al-Husnaa. Matlamat utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti kriteria reka bentuk penilaian perabot Islam untuk Reka Bentuk Sejagat. Cabaran pereka perabot Muslim terletak pada mengenalpasti kriteria penilaian yang betul untuk Reka Bentuk Baik dari perspektif Islam. Penyelidikan jenis deskriptif ini menggunakan kaedah campuran untuk mengumpul data yang dapat diverifikasi di Lembah Klang. 'Occasional Chair' dipilih sebagai sampel untuk penyelidikan ini. Persepsi Muslim yang dikenal pasti merupakan medium komunikasi antara pereka dan pengguna melalui pelbagai aktiviti penyelidikan. Kajian ini melibatkan pemerhatian, temubual, sumbangsaran, dan kajian protokol untuk kaedah kualitatif. Di samping itu, soal selidik dengan pereka dan pengguna perabot melengkapkan kaedah kuantitatif. Sekumpulan pereka terlibat di dalam segmen validasi model baru melalui kajian protokol. Penemuan awal mendapati, 44 sifat-sifat Asmaa 'al-Husnaa adalah sesuai untuk membimbing pereka perabot. Kesimpulan, kajian ini membincangkan penggunaan sifat-sifat Asmaa 'al-Husnaa dan kriteria penilaian reka bentuk dari perspektif Islam berdasarkan model konseptual baru dan sebagai petunjuk arah penyelidikan masa depan.

Kata kunci: *Asmaa' al-Husnaa, konsep Islam, reka bentuk perabot, reka bentuk sejagat, reka bentuk perabot yang baik, 'Occasional Chair' dan Tawhid.*

TABLE OF CONTENT

	Page
DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
<i>ABSTRAK</i>	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLE	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Research Background	1
1.2 Problem Statement	4
1.3 Research Objectives	8
1.4 Research Questions	9
1.5 Significance of Study	9
1.6 Scope of Research	12
1.7 Limitations	13
1.8 Conceptual Framework (CF)	14
1.9 Chapter Summary	22
CHAPTER 2: CURRENT PRACTICE OF FURNITURE DESIGN	23
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Furniture design: Introduction	24
2.3 Furniture design: an overview in Malaysia	28
2.4 Development of Malaysian Furniture Industries	32

2.5 Good Design	34
2.5.1 Good Design awards	37
2.5.2 Comparing the Good Design Assessment Criteria in international practice	42
2.6 Furniture Design from an Islamic perspective	44
2.6.1 Islamic Furniture Design	47
2.6.2 ‘Failed’ furniture design from an Islamic Perspective	52
2.7 Chapter Summary	56

CHAPTER 3: APPLYING *ASMAA’ AL-HUSNA* ATTRIBUTES IN GOOD

DESIGN	57
3.1 Introduction	57
3.2 The Muslim Worldview	58
3.3 Perceiving design knowledge from an Islamic perspective	60
3.3.1 What are <i>Asmaa’ al-Husnaa</i> ?	62
3.3.2 The <i>Asmaa’ al-Husnaa</i> Museum	64
3.4 An applying the <i>Asmaa’ al-Husnaa</i> attributes in Good Design	66
3.4.1 Manners	72
3.4.2 Moderation	73
3.4.3 Personality	75
3.4.4 Skill	76
3.4.5 Harmony	78
3.4.6 Balance	79
3.4.7 Emotion	80
3.4.8 Unity	81
3.4.9 Manageable Form	83

3.4.10 Quality	84
3.4.11 Functionality	85
3.4.12 Ergonomics	86
3.4.13 Safety	87
3.4.14 Purity	88
3.4.15 Technology	90
3.4.16 Universality	91
3.4.17 Durability	92
3.4.18 Enviroment	93
3.5 Chapter Summary	94
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY	100
4.1 Introduction	100
4.2 Research Framework	100
4.2.1 Phase One : Preliminary study	102
4.2.2 Phase Two: Research plan and methods	104
4.2.3 Phase Three: Questionnaires analysis	108
4.2.4 Phase Four: Validation and findings	108
4.3 Research Approach	110
4.3.1 Observation	110
4.3.2 Interview	117
4.3.3 Brainstorming	119
4.3.4 Protocol Study	121
4.3.5 Questionnaire	125
4.4 Chapter Summary	133

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS	136
5.1 Introduction	136
5.2 Analysis of Interview	136
5.2.1 Data Analysis of Interview	137
5.2.2 Findings of Interview	140
5.2.3 Summary of Interview	141
5.3 Data Analysis of Brainstorming	141
5.3.1 Data analysis of brainstorming: Identifying the important keywords used in furniture design practice	142
5.3.2 Data analysis of brainstorming: Identifying the suitable <i>Asmaa'</i> <i>al-Husnaa</i> attributes	145
5.3.3 Data analysis of brainstorming: Identifying the design criteria based on the <i>Asmaa' al-Husnaa</i> attributes	149
5.3.4 Summary of Brainstorming Activities	151
5.4 Data Analysis of Questionnaire	153
5.5 Data Analysis of Questionnaire 1: Analyzing the perceptions by keywords ratings	153
5.5.1 Section A: Demographics	154
5.5.2 Section B: Analyzing the perceptions by keywords ratings	155
5.5.3 Descriptive analysis	160
5.5.4 Cronbach's Alpha	161
5.5.5 Analysis of Questionnaire 1: Identifying the keywords ratings for Good Furniture Design from Islamic perspective	162

5.5.6 Findings of Questionnaire 1: Identifying the keywords ratings for Good Design from Islamic perspective	164
5.6 Data Analysis of Questionnaire 2: Analyzing the perception of occasional chair design sample	166
5.6.1 Section A: Demographics	167
5.6.2 Section B: Analyzing the perceptions of the occasional chair design samples	168
5.6.3 Descriptive Analysis	171
5.6.4 Analysis of Questionnaire 2: Analyzing the Muslim perceptions of the occasional chair design samples	172
5.6.5 Findings of Questionnaire 2: Analyzing the perceptions of the occasional chair design samples	177
5.7 Data Analysis of Questionnaire 3: Analyzing the perceptions by subject evaluation	180
5.7.1 Section A: Demographics	181
5.7.2 Section B: Analysing the Muslim perceptions of occasional chair designs by subject evaluation	183
5.7.3 Descriptive analysis	186
5.7.4 Analysis of Questionnaire 3: Analysing the perceptions of occasional chair design by subject evaluation	186
5.7.5 Findings of Questionnaire 3: Analyzing the perceptions of occasional chair design by subject evaluation	191
5.8 Chapter Summary	193

CHAPTER 6: VALIDATION AND DISCUSSION	197
6.1 Introduction	197
6.2 Conceptual Design Criteria (CDC)	197
6.3 Protocol Study	200
6.3.1 Respondent categories	201
6.3.2 Pilot Test	202
6.3.3 Design Activity	202
6.3.4 Analysis of pilot test	204
6.3.5 Analysis of design activity	205
6.4 Discussion of Design Activity	214
6.5 Chapter Summary	216
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION	219
7.1 Introduction	219
7.2 Contribution to the body of knowledge	220
7.2.1 Innovative knowledge for future designers	222
7.2.2 <i>Dzikir</i> (remembrance) as part of Muslim Designer	222
7.2.3 Suggestion for future research	225
7.3 Conclusion	226
REFERENCES	232
APPENDICES	244

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 2.1	Good Design assessment criteria (international) 43
Table 3.1	The list of the 99 <i>Asmaa' al-Husnaa</i> attributes 64
Table 3.2	Matrix list of <i>Asmaa' al-Husnaa</i> in categories 68
Table 3.3	Matrix list of <i>Asmaa' al-Husnaa</i> in categories 95
Table 4.1	Total of respondents in participating the survey activity 105
Table 4.2	Details of chair selection for Questionnaire 2 113
Table 4.3	IKEA chair selection for Questionnaire 3 (“IKEA Malaysia”, n.d.) 117
Table 4.4	Guidelines for interview 118
Table 4.5	Summary of Protocol Study activity 135
Table 5.1	List of keywords from the open-ended interviews 139
Table 5.2	List of interview keywords 141
Table 5.3	List of attributes according to keywords criteria 143
Table 5.4	List of extracted keywords from the brainstorming session 144
Table 5.5	Application of the <i>Asmaa' al-Husnaa</i> for Good Design assessment 149
Table 5.6	List of the <i>Asmaa' al-Husnaa</i> attributes and design criteria 150
Table 5.7	Complete Design Criteria and Divine attributes 152
Table 5.8	Data analysis of respondent categories 155
Table 5.9	Data analysis of keywords ratings 157
Table 5.10	Cronbach's Alpha 162
Table 5.11	Total marks of perception by keywords 163
Table 5.12	Summary of perceptions by keywords 166
Table 5.13	Data analysis of respondent categories 168

Table 5.14	Total means of perception by sample	170
Table 5.15	Total means of perception of 20 chair designs with 18 criteria	174
Table 5.16	Three (3) highest mean of sample's picture	176
Table 5.17	Data analysis of respondent categories	182
Table 5.18	Total mean of Muslim perceptions by subject evaluation	184
Table 5.19	Analysis of five chair designs by 18 criteria	190
Table 5.20	Analysis of most important criteria for Good Design	194
Table 6.1	Statistical result of the questionnaire activity with 18 criteria	198
Table 6.2	Respondent demographics in design activity.	202
Table 6.3	Analysis of the survey session prior to the design activity	205
Table 6.4	The occasional chair designs of the design activity	207
Table 6.5	Comparison of the four practicing designers	208
Table 6.6	Marks of design activity using 51 criteria	209
Table 6.7	Total marks of design activity	213
Table 6.8	Analysis of the <i>Asmaa' al-Husnaa dhikr</i> activity	215
Table 7.1	Conceptual Design Criteria (CDC) based on the <i>Asmaa' al-Husnaa</i>	224
Table 7.2	Suggested conceptual criteria in English and Arabic	226

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 1.1	Concept of Good Design from the Islamic perspective	3
Figure 1.2	Design concept from an Islamic perspective	8
Figure 1.3	Limitation of participants in this research	14
Figure 1.4	Conceptual Framework (CF) used in this research	16
Figure 2.1	Wassily Chair by Marcel Breuer in 1925-1926	28
Figure 2.2	Design Process Model by the Design Council United Kingdom in 2007 (Marzuki, 2011)	35
Figure 2.3	Minbar in Badia Palace, Marrakesh (Curatola, 2011)	48
Figure 2.4	Qur'an rest (Curatola, 2011)	49
Figure 2.5	X-frame furniture (Boyce, 2014)	50
Figure 2.6	A pair of mother-of-pearl inlaid chairs signed Habib Ibrahim, Egypt	50
Figure 2.7	The understanding of Islamic furniture design	51
Figure 2.8	Jake Cress, Oops (Norman, 2004)	53
Figure 2.9	Ball chair designed by Eero Aamio (Albus et al., 2013)	53
Figure 2.10	The furniture shaped like female bodies (Sharp, 2008)	54
Figure 2.11	Comparison of Good Design perspectives	56
Figure 3.1	Simple illustration of the analogous relationship between texts and products (Crilly, 2005)	61
Figure 3.2	Front gate of the <i>Asmaa' al-Husnaa</i> Museum	65
Figure 3.3	The researcher with a poster of Surah al-An'aam 59	66
Figure 3.4	Exhibit of the <i>Asmaa' al-Husnaa</i> Museum (Nurul Laila, 2014)	66
Figure 4.1	Research flow chart of study	101

Figure 4.2	Design activity flow	124
Figure 4.3	Snapshot of the design activity	125
Figure 4.4	Occasional chair samples for Questionnaire 2	130
Figure 4.5	IKEA chair design samples for Questionnaire 3 (“IKEA Malaysia”, n.d.)	133
Figure 4.6	Summary of brainstorming activity	134
Figure 5.1	Summary of the <i>Asmaa’ al-Husnaa</i> in five categories	146
Figure 5.2	The analysis data of keyword ratings	164
Figure 5.3	Data analysis of perception by keywords	164
Figure 5.4	The graph of Muslim perceptions by occasional chair design sample	175
Figure 5.5	The benchmark of 20 chair designs	177
Figure 5.6	Cluster groups for Questionnaire 2	179
Figure 5.7	Summary of Questionnaire 2	180
Figure 5.8	Muslim perception of occasional chair design by subject evaluation	187
Figure 5.9	Cluster grouping of Questionnaire 3	192
Figure 5.10	Summary of Questionnaire 3	193
Figure 5.11	Most important criteria for Good Design	195
Figure 5.12	Muslim perception of occasional chair	196
Figure 6.1	The categorized cluster groups of the CDC	199
Figure 6.2	Conceptual Design Criteria (CDC)	200
Figure 6.3	Pre-test of design activity	206
Figure 6.4	Post-test of design activity	206
Figure 6.5	Analysis of the post-test design activity	211
Figure 6.6	The total marks of the post-test session design activity	214
Figure 6.7	Findings of validation procedure	217

Figure 6.8	Findings of the validation procedure (complete model)	218
Figure 7.1	Role of Muslim designers	230

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

A piece of furniture is understood as an object produced by designers to fulfill certain human needs in terms of utility and comfort. It can constitute an aesthetic object that reflects the ideals of a specific school of thought, according to artistic and scientific principles. There are many categories of furniture design. According to Hassan and Sufian (2013), furniture is defined as a movable object that supports the human body like a seat, a reclining chair, a desk, an eating table, a bed to lay down and sleep on, an object in which to store goods, and the like. Furniture can be produced using different application materials such as metal, wood, rattan, plastic, concrete, fabric, rubber, and other materials (Hassan & Sufian, 2013). The combination between designs and materials in furniture design produces different perceptions. Good combinations of design and material give a positive perception of furniture, which can be described as elegant, simple, functional, modern, and others based on the consumer perception. According to Bennington (1985) as cited in Ratnasingam (2003), the perception of a piece of furniture is determined by its aesthetic appeal, functionality, and durability. Musdi et al. (2014) asserts that attractiveness of the design can stimulate a positive emotional state or relationship between the consumer and the product. This suggests that also in the case of chair designs, there are values involved that can be identified through the assessment of human perception.

Perception is related to cognitive psychology and visual cognition. According to definition, perception constitutes the cognitive responses towards the visual appearance of the product (Shahriman, 2012). Mullen and Johnson (1990), understand perception as the psychological processing of information received by the senses. The Islamic sense of

perception is related to the Muslims' cognitive responses to visual perception based on the level of individual belief (*imaan*). As the levels of spiritual awareness among the Muslims differ, their enhancement reflects positive perception (Mozzaffar, 2013). However, attractiveness does not constitute part of the Islamic requirement.

The role of a designer is to create, analyze, and develop objects for consumer use. Every year, designers all around the world are creating countless new furniture designs to meet the latest design trends, demands, and production standards. While doing so, they are also applying different design theories. Most design theories and know-how in current furniture design practise is developed in the West. Western designers such as Dieter Ram coined such terms as 'Good Design', another being 'Universal Design'. The term 'Good Design' has been by the International Council of Industrial Design since 1950 and is based on perceptual sense and logic (Sparke, 1986). 'Good Design' is a trademark for products that include all types of furniture designs. Ram's ideas of 'Good Design' are based solely on visual perception, selected theories, and a form of secular logic that excludes any sense of religious or spiritual dimension. If we are to apply 'Good Design' from a distinctively Islamic perspective, the designs have to include both visual perception and religious considerations in terms of certain requirements, values, and belief, for example that of the Oneness of Alah (*tawheed*). Viewed from the Islamic perspective, the soul and spirit of the design should constitute reflections of the Divine. The Divine itself is closely related to Allah, His Oneness and His attributes described in his His Beautiful Names (*Asmaa' al-Husnaa*). The *Asmaa' al-Husnaa* constitutes part of Islamic knowledge and '*aqeedah* under the category 'Oneness of the Names and the Attributes' (*tawheed al-asmaa' wa al-sifaat*) (Spaic, 2012). Most Muslims who have received basic religious instruction are familiar with the *Asmaa' al-Husnaa* and have memorized them. The Divine Names appear

in the Qur'an, the revealed Word of Allah, and thus constitute attributes which Allah contributes to himself and describes Himself to His human slaves. The *Asmaa' al-Husnaa* enlighten the believer's heart (*qalb*) (Baharudin & Mohamad Rizal, 2012) and are internalized through recital and meditation (Mohamad Syamil, 2010). The list of the 99 Names begins with *al-Rahmaan* and ends with *al-Saboor*. Implementing the concept of Divine meaning into design knowledge is to develop the Islamic values in design knowledge through the *Asmaa' al-Husnaa* towards Good Design (refer to Figure 1.1).

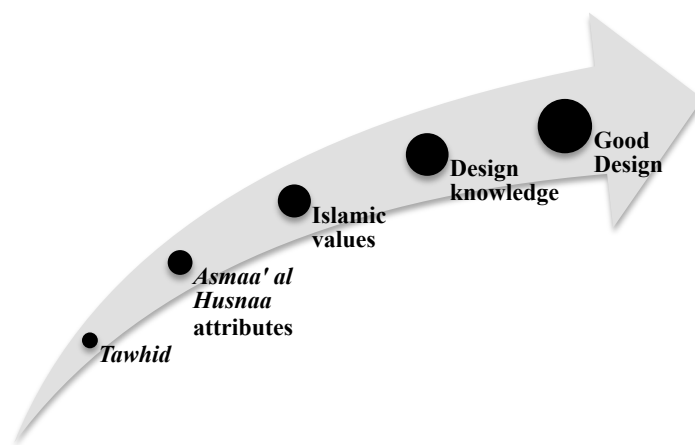


Figure 1.1: Concept of Good Design from the Islamic perspective

This study highlights issues related to the assesment criteria of good furniture design from an Islamic perspective and the application of the *Asmaa' al-Husnaa* as a conceptual guidance for the perception of occasional chair design. The study takes into consideration the Divine Names and attributes and identifies the Islamic values and concepts deemed necessary to be incorporated into the design. Islam constitutes the official religion of Malaysia, which means that Muslims make up the majority of the population (refer to Section 3.2). Designers and individuals involved in the Malaysian furniture industry, specifically in the Klang Valley, seem not to be much concerned with Islamic issues and Islamic perspective surrounding furniture design because they are more focused

on business profits and popular fashion culture. This secular influence is reflected in the business practices, the priorities of the decision makers, and the mentality of the furniture designers themselves. The end users meaning the Malaysian Muslims who purchase furniture, would also benefit from some additional guidance. Practicing Muslims tend to be aware of Islamic norms and principles when it comes to attire, food and livelihood, yet are mostly unaware of the fact that they can also be applied to their furniture. This aspect will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

According to Zulkifli (2015), principles in producing design products reflecting Islamic values are still unexplored. This study aims to raise awareness among Malaysian Muslim and non-Muslim consumers and designers about the Islamic perspective in furniture design. This study also aims to promote Islamic values among non-Muslims through the evaluation of Good Design. The lack of information and the limited number of publications on modern furniture from the Islamic perspective provide an opportunity to explore in depth the Islamic requirements for industrial design and furniture design inspired by the attributes of the *Asmaa' al-Husnaa*.

1.2 Problem Statement

This research attempts to resolve the issue faced by Muslim consumers in buying products that fulfill the Islamic requirements. In terms Islamic requirement of furniture design towards good design, Muslims are required to use *halaal* material, use non-figurative decorations, moderation in design, and sustainability (refer to Chapter 3). The Muslim Consumer Association of Malaysia (MCAM), a non-profit organization dedicated to Muslim consumer issues encourages Muslim consumers to buy products that are *halaal*. Muslim designers and furniture makers in Malaysia are encouraged to play their role in

this respect and contribute to this development by producing quality products for their Muslim end users. The three problem statements that guide this research are stated and explained below.

a) Design guidelines from an Islamic perspective are insufficiently explored

The furniture industry is less of initiative to highly consider with promoting Islamic values and is mainly motivated by profit making. In addition, the guidelines and information available for buying good products for Muslim are limited. According to Zulkifli (2015), the design guidelines from an Islamic perspective have not yet been adequately explored by Muslim designers and researchers. Muslim designers, manufactures and researchers lack the necessary exposure in order for them to be able to identify the design guidelines from an Islamic perspective. However, as Muslim professionals they should strive to obtain the correct information and create such guidelines based on Islamic values and principles.

b) Little awareness of Good Design criteria characteristics from an Islamic perspective.

Based on the issue stated above, the public, especially Muslim furniture designers and manufacturers, lack awareness of Good Design criteria characteristic from an Islamic Perspective (Syukran.com, 2014). In order to remedy this situation, the required Islamic design directions are provided in this research by proposing a new guideline for designers and manufactures towards Good Furniture Design based on Islamic values, requirements and principles. According to Syukran.com (2014), there are three main Good design criteria based on Islamic principles to be considered by industrial designers which are