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Ramadan For Sale: A Semiotic Analysis of Ramadan Fashion Bazaar Promotion on Social Media

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Abstract: This study explores how the promotion of Muslim fashion bazaars during Ramadan serves as a medium for reproducing consumerist ideology on social media. The object of this research is the promotional content of Glamlocal Wonderful Ramadan 2025, published on Instagram and TikTok. The study aims to understand how capitalism appropriates religious symbols to construct new meanings of the Ramadan celebration. The method employed is digital text analysis using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, focusing on the construction of meaning through signs (signifier and signified) at both denotative and connotative levels, as well as the formation of myths within specific social and cultural contexts. The analyzed promotional content was posted by the @glamlocal.id account and features consumerist narratives encouraging consumption during Ramadan. The findings reveal that religious narratives in these promotional contents have been recontextualized into consumerist imagery that emphasizes material gratification and symbolic identity. This phenomenon risks shifting the meaning of Ramadan from a period of spiritual reflection into a legitimized consumption ritual marked by religious symbols. These findings highlight the dominance of sign logic in modern consumer society and underline the urgent need for critical awareness of the manipulation of religious symbols by capitalist forces.

Keyword: Ramadan, Consumerism, Social Media, Religious Symbols, Semiotics.

INTRODUCTION

The month of Ramadan is a sacred and holy month for most Muslims (Mujtaba, 2016). During Ramadan, Muslim communities are required to adhere to several commands, such as fasting for a full month from sunrise to sunset, increasing worship, performing more good deeds, and avoiding bad deeds (Schielke, 2009). However, in recent decades, Ramadan has undergone a significant shift in meaning, particularly in the context of modern society. As explained by Odabasi and Argan (2009) in their research, the month of Ramadan and religious narratives are often exploited by industries to promote related products, such as food, hotels, shopping centers, special Ramadan calendars, and even Ramadan-themed festivals. Some brands even spend up to half of their advertising budget solely during Ramadan (Fattah, 2005). The absorption of religious symbols into the industrial realm also results in a homogenized, aligned, and standardized image of Islam presented in various products, based on the needs of

the dominant group (Hesmondhalgh, 2019). This aligns with Horkheimer and Adorno's (2002) view on the culture industry, which standardizes cultural products to homogenize public taste and opinion, thereby reducing production costs.

Data shows that during Ramadan and leading up to Eid al-Fitr, Indonesian consumption patterns experience a significant increase. A Glance report (2025) indicates that in 2025, over 50% of Indonesian consumers plan to increase their spending budget during Ramadan. The most popular product categories during this period include clothing and accessories, with 66% of online consumers and 61% of offline consumers choosing them. Additionally, products such as household appliances (38%), beauty products (34%), and gadgets (34%) are also top choices for online consumers. Industries and markets are not naive enough to ignore this condition. They respond to the surge in consumerism by increasing advertising and promotional practices to shape public desire for their products (Sandikci & Omeraki, 2007).

One phenomenon of consumerism during Ramadan is the emergence of a Muslim fashion bazaar called Glamlocal Wonderful Ramadan 2025. Glamlocal Wonderful Ramadan 2025 is an annual bazaar organized by a private company named GlamLocal in collaboration with several sponsor companies to hold a Muslim fashion and halal lifestyle bazaar. This year, GlamLocal was held at three locations: City Hall PIM 3 from March 5 to March 9, 2025, Exhibition Hall Grand Indonesia from March 12 to March 16, 2025, and Grand Metropolitan Mall Bekasi from March 19 to March 23, 2025 (Febriani, 2025). This event, became a hot topic of discussion among the public due to the high enthusiasm of visitors to shop for various Muslim products. Indeed, several social media posts from visitors showed queues to the bazaar location snaking up to three floors of the shopping center. Glamlocal was held for 15 days and successfully attracted visitors through discounts, products, and promotional advertisements on its Instagram and TikTok accounts, @glamlocal.id, which have a total following of over one hundred thousand accounts. This event, featuring around 130 Muslim fashion and halal lifestyle brands, differs from other bazaar organizers because, in addition to attracting great enthusiasm from offline visitors, it is also popular on social media and dominates netizens' discussions about shopping activities during Ramadan.

Islam and consumerism are, in essence, two concepts with contrasting characteristics (Gökarkısel & McLarney, 2010; Wong, 2007). On one hand, Islamic teachings encourage followers to avoid hedonism or the pursuit of mere worldly pleasure (Godazgar, 2007), while on the other hand, consumerism, which emerged in the early 20th century, introduced itself as a new culture that bases human life on consumption satisfaction and hedonism (Croteau & Hoynes, 2019). This consumerist culture, which appeared simultaneously with the proliferation of advertisements in mass media, seemed to offer solutions to human life's problems and provide individuals with access to the modern world through consumption practices. They offer hope and fantasy through symbols and objects packaged as commodities (Xavier, 2016). The significant influence of objects on human life eventually limits the meaning of individual existence and identity by the presence of goods (Gauthier et al., 2013). Individuals ultimately become trapped in dependence on goods or products that they may not actually need. This condition is referred to by Baudrillard (2020) as objectification. Baudrillard (1999) states that humans actually have the ability to follow or not follow the will of objects based on the logic of signs. However, unfortunately, the false consciousness already formed by capitalist interests makes those who do not follow the logic of signs lose their existence from the social world. This condition aligns with Baudrillard's (1998) view that the consumption of signs is a way out for modern society to achieve three things: prestige, social status, and power.

Baudrillard argued, Marx's view of value in a commodity is insufficient to describe how commodities are transacted in modern society. Baudrillard attempts to show that commodities are now valued not based on use value or exchange value, but based on the symbolic value attached to them. Baudrillard (1975) once stated that the use of symbols (signifiers) on certain commodities is a manifestation of the logic of signs in capitalism, which detaches the meaning

of the symbol from the reality of the object it refers to (referent). This condition makes a commodity seem to possess a mystical power that can define an object beyond itself, also known as commodity fetishism. In his book (1998), Baudrillard views consumers as active individuals who define their bodies through consumption practices. However, Baudrillard also shows that consumption practices in modern society are not processes aimed at fulfilling needs, but rather focus on the consumption of symbolic meaning from product brands to place themselves in their desired social strata.

This research observes that the event capitalizes on the Ramadan momentum to increase the symbolic value of its products. As Baudrillard (1998) argues, consumption activities of commodities cannot be solely viewed at the level of utility or functional value, but must also consider the relationship of meaning between the commodity and the symbols attached to it. Using the theoretical framework of consumer society formulated by Baudrillard (1998), this research aims to uncover how culture industry utilizes the momentum of Ramadan as an arena for the internalization of consumerist ideology among Indonesian Muslim communities through promotional texts and content on social media. This paper will analyze media texts to answer the question of how capitalism shapes and reproduces religious symbols of Ramadan to align with consumerist ideology through promotional content for the Glamlocal Wonderful Ramadan 2025 Muslim fashion bazaar on social media.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a critical paradigm. The data collection method involves semiotic analysis of digital media texts used to examine promotional content on social media uploaded by the Glamlocal Wonderful Ramadan 2025 bazaar organizer on their Instagram and TikTok accounts (@glamlocal.id). The content specifically chosen refers to content containing narratives encouraging shopping. This criterion was selected so that the data could reveal how consumerist ideology is disseminated and packaged through religious symbols. The online data collection process was conducted retrospectively, covering all posts published by the @glamlocal.id Instagram and TikTok accounts from February 12, 2025, to March 29, 2025. The researcher analyzed these social media posts using Roland Barthes' (1972) semiotic approach, which focuses on identifying signs (signifier) and meanings (signified) at denotative and connotative levels. This approach allows the researcher to uncover the formation of myths regarding consumption culture targeting contemporary urban Muslim communities in Indonesia during Ramadan. The findings are then presented descriptively to be linked with the results of a literature review of secondary data on Jean Baudrillard's (1998) theory of consumer society. Baudrillard's consumerism theory was chosen because it can explain the existence of symbolic value, hyperreality, and consumer society in the context of modern society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The promotional content for the Glamlocal Wonderful Ramadan 2025 bazaar on social media is clear evidence of the widespread amplification of consumerism during the Ramadan celebration. The event organizers utilize digital channels such as Instagram and TikTok to promote their products. On one hand, the bustling discussion surrounding the Glamlocal Wonderful Ramadan 2025 bazaar on social media demonstrates the effectiveness of the organizers' marketing strategy. On the other hand, it also reveals the high influence of consumerism on social media users when faced with promotional allure. They use persuasive language that attempts to justify shopping traditions and consumerism, making them appear as rituals that must be performed during Ramadan. Examples include linking product advertisements with terms like *“untuk self-reward”*, *“Berburu baju lebaran karena THR sudah cair”*, *“lebih baik menyesal beli daripada menyesal tidak beli”*, *“Lebaran sebentar lagi tapi belum dapat baju? Ya ke Glamlocal lah!”* and other persuasive phrases. In this section, the

researcher will analyze three main pieces of content uploaded by the @glamlocal.id account on social media. The details of these three contents are as follows:

Table 1. Details information about selected online content

	Content 1	Content 2	Content 3
Screenshot			
Date	18 Maret 2025	14 Maret 2025	22 Maret 2025
Platform	TikTok	TikTok	Instagram
Caption	<i>Alhamdulillah, THR sudah di tangan! Saatnya berburu baju Lebaran</i> #glamlocal #bazarramadan #grandmetropolitanbekasi #bekasi	<i>Gapapa banget yaa Glamers kalo kamu mau ngamanin baju lebaran dari sekarang 😊✨</i> #glamlocal #bajulebaran #bazarramadan	<i>It's my anxiety! 😞 Siapa yang lagi anxiety mikirin baju lebaran?? Udah menghitung hari mendekati hari raya, gausah bingung! GLAMLOCAL Wonderful Ramadan cuma sampai besok!! Yuk MinGlam tunggu sekarang di Grand Metropolitan Mall Bekasi 🙌👉👉✨</i> #glamlocal #ramadan #BanggaInLocal
Views	9.765	10.100	17.400
Likes	39	39	122
Comments	12	6	8

Source: Research data

Through Barthes (1972) semiotic analysis, the researcher found that these promotional contents systematically construct meaning about Ramadan as an ideal moment for consumption practices. At the denotative level, the first content displays four young women with cheerful and clear enthusiasm, posing in a modern shopping mall, accompanied by the text “pov siap berburu baju lebaran karena thr sudah cair” and a shimmering dollar sign. Literally, this visual represents readiness to shop, driven by financial availability. The second content, despite showing the condition of “THR belum cair”, still features a woman with a large shopping bag labeled “GLAMLOCAL” and the text “POV THR belum cair, tp udah ngeborong baju lebaran” with the caption "Gapapa banget yaa Glamers". Meanwhile, the third content dramatically depicts a woman with the text "Anxiety lebaran sebentar lagi, tapi belum dapat baju" and an anxious expression.

At the connotative level, these signs work synergistically to form a powerful myth about consumption. The use of "POV" in all three contents implicitly creates an impression of authenticity and highly relevant personal experience, as if these are reflections of the audience's feelings and situations. The phrases “berburu baju Lebaran” and “ngeborong” connotatively transform the act of shopping from mere functional fulfillment into an exciting, joyful, and satisfying adventure. Furthermore, the direct association between “THR sudah cair” and “berburu baju Lebaran” implicitly naturalizes and even celebrates large spending as an integral part of religious holiday traditions. The second content reinforces this by normalizing impulsive shopping behavior, indicating that the desire for consumption during Ramadan is so strong that

it transcends financial considerations. These texts also form a myth that satisfaction and success during Ramadan can only be achieved through consumption practices, masking its original spiritual meaning while internalizing consumerist ideology.

The promotion of Muslim fashion has transformed clothing commodities into markers of moral quality, ideal lifestyle, and even one's piety status. This condition creates the illusion that by purchasing products at the Ramadan bazaar, individuals automatically express or enhance their piety. This phenomenon creates the myth that piety is something that can be bought or displayed through consumption, rather than through deep spiritual and moral practices (Kurenlahti & Salonen, 2018). In reality, for a Muslim, Ramadan should be a month of contemplation to consider all the meaning and wisdom of their life journey, also known as *Vita Contemplativa* (Han, 2023). Ramadan ideally should be a moment of self-liberation from the entanglement of hurriedness in capitalist society, which always pushes individuals towards achievements characteristic of modern society, known as *Vita Activa* (Zaluski, 2019). This liberation process can lead individuals out of burnout (Han, 2015) and help them rediscover awareness of their true individual existence (Heidegger, 1996).

The formation of consumerist narratives through advertising is indeed often done by capitalists to entice consumers and convince them that consumption is the best solution for insatiable human desires (Xavier, 2016). The use of narratives, slogans, visuals, and religious imagery in building the shopping experience can be termed the commodification of piety. This phenomenon of commodification of piety through halal and syar'i (Islamic law-compliant) lifestyles, which affects urban Muslim communities, is characterized by the rampant tendency of commodity producers to attach specific religious slogans to their products, such as "halal product" or "syar'i product" (Crow, 2015). In reality, the term "halal" is an Arabic word that refers to rules regarding food considered permissible for a Muslim to consume, namely, other than pork, carrion, blood, and alcohol (Srikasem et al., 2024). However, the word "halal" has now become a symbolic value commodified by capitalists to increase the selling value of their products in the eyes of Muslim groups (Makiah et al., 2022).

During Eid al-Fitr, when Indonesian society gathers with relatives and family, individuals often face a situation that compels them to display their pious identity in front of society. Therefore, it is not surprising that the period leading up to Eid al-Fitr is often utilized by producers to attach religious symbolic values to their merchandise. For instance, gamis, abaya, tunik, pashmina, or kaftan dresses. In fact, during Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr, these clothing models sell much better than on other days. However, in terms of use value, material quality, or the basic capital used to produce these garments, there is no difference between Ramadan and outside Ramadan. Efforts to increase and manipulate the demand for these products naturally benefit only one party: the capitalists (Crow, 2015).

This phenomenon can be analyzed using Baudrillard's (1998) views on the logic of signs in commodities. In consumer society, Muslim fashion products have become symbols of prestige and piety for a Muslim (Gökarıksel & Secor, 2010). These products are often sold with syar'i slogans, halal legitimacy, and religious markers to make them appear to have additional value. In the logic of signs, Muslim clothing is no longer related to a specific function or need but is bought because of the prestige, social status, and power behind the symbols it contains. Consumers ultimately follow this logic to fulfill their desire to fill the absence of "piety" in their lives.

When linked to Baudrillard's (1994) view on hyperreality, the phenomenon of consumerism in the Islamic world also causes the symbolization of Islam in various commodities to become far more real than Islamic values themselves. Promotion with a religious approach in the context of this research risks reducing religion to a commercial cultural product. The middle-class Muslim group, which is the majority in Indonesia, is forced to submit to commodities that are made to seem consistent with the unique characteristics of each individual's needs. In reality, they are merely following the uniform consumption standards of

dominant society, negating their individual uniqueness. The personal value of an individual, once absolute, is now forced to be re-formed using the consumption of symbols, or what Baudrillard (1998) calls synthetic individuality.

Not only in clothing commodities, the same phenomenon occurs with food commodities often associated with religious symbols in various Ramadan bazaars, namely dates. The commodification in consumer society, which prioritizes symbolic value over use value, has made dates a false need (Cutts, 2019). This fruit, which grows in the Middle East, is almost never absent from bazaars or festivals that claim to be for the month of Ramadan to legitimize their organization. Dates seem to be a commodity that must be owned if someone wants to achieve piety within themselves. For example, by associating certain types of dates with the Prophet's preferences, enabling the product to be sold at a higher price. Unfortunately, consumers still buy them to fulfill the desire for piety, which Baudrillard (1998) calls *fantasmagoria*. This kind of symbolic logic attached to products or goods always succeeds in blinding consumers to the bitter reality hidden behind the production process of a commodity.

This findings aligns with research by Stolz and Usunier (2019) which reveals that religious symbols such as crosses, Yin-Yang, stars and crescent moons, lotus flowers, and the Star of David have now been adopted and commodified in secular products. Additionally, research by Makiah et al. (2022) also shows how halal labels on products like hijabs have been exploited to increase exchange value. The use of halal-labeled products creates the illusion of expressing piety, providing economic benefits for producers, also known as the "Islamic cultural industry" (Kavakci & Kraeplin, 2017). The concept of religion as symbolic value is relevant to this research to provide a conceptual understanding of the commodification of religious symbols in consumer society. Globally, this trend is referred to as "selling the sacred" (Einstein & Taylor, 2024), where religion is positioned alongside other lifestyle commodities and promoted with professional communication strategies.

Several previous studies have also revealed that religion often becomes a market arena and competition for buying and selling in consumer society (Gökarıksel & McLarney, 2010; Gauthier et al., 2011). Examples include Megachurches in the United States that package religious experiences to meet congregational demands, the Kabbalah Center that adopts popular culture to market Jewish teachings, and the Rokpa Dundee organization in Scotland that commodifies Tibetan Buddhist teachings and handicrafts for Western society (Gauthier & Martikainen, 2013). These phenomena are synthesized by Einstein and Taylor (2024) into a concept they call "religio-marketing," which describes the condition when religion has become a commodity marketed like a lifestyle product, including in the digital era. This concept demonstrates how religious symbols are strategically packaged to attract consumer attention.

So, why is the discussion of media and communication so important in this context? Baudrillard (1998) recognizes that the high exposure to media in modern society means that almost all symbols and myths formed by advertisements in the media successfully reshape definitions of social structure, individual identity, social interaction, and even desires and pleasures. Even worse, modern humans now cannot know what they truly need; they often only buy and desire something based on dictates from mass media that constantly try to control "mass culture" (Maschio, 2016). At this point, media infiltrates the individual's mind and construction of reality to teach them symbols to desire. This occurs through language, images, signs, and discourse. This aligns with Baudrillard's (1998) argument that media holds a central position in controlling individuals' social status in society. Indeed, almost all symbols or signs displayed in contemporary electronic media are currently implications of the dominant power of the consumption system. This includes, in the context of this research, religious symbols displayed on social media.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data and analysis presented above, the researcher finds a pattern of shifting meaning towards the month of Ramadan, particularly concerning clothing consumption within the consumer society system. Consumerist ideology during Ramadan operates through the practice of advertising a culture of consumption of commodities packaged in the form of symbols of piety that appear more real than religious values themselves. This change is evident from the proliferation of bazaars during Ramadan, making it a month of consumption influenced by market logic. Ramadan discounts and halal lifestyle products dominating the market during Ramadan demonstrate how religious reality has been re-constructed in consumer society. Additionally, this also shifts the focus of religious celebration from spiritual contemplation to material manifestation, where individual identity and social acceptance are determined solely by consumption.

Nevertheless, the researcher also recognizes limitations when viewing the intertwining of religious values in consumer culture as a strategy of banality in modern society (Pawlett, 2007). On one hand, this condition can indeed be viewed pessimistically, where the concrete value of religion is eroded and desacralized due to consumerist practices that turn everything into a commodity symbol (Xavier, 2016). However, such a view overlooks the concept of economic hybridization occurring between Western and Eastern cultures or between traditional rituals and modern practices. This type of economic hybridization is considered capable of fostering empowerment for local industries from the lower-middle economic class. In the context of the Glamlocal Wonderful Ramadan 2025 bazaar, we can observe this pattern in the involvement of local industries from the middle group in its organization. All the fashion and lifestyle products sold there are domestic brands. As Sandikci and Omeraki (2007) also observed, commercialization during Ramadan is not part of cultural imperialism or a postmodern symptom, but merely an expression of new rituals in contemporary society.

Therefore, future research is expected to broaden the scope of this study to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of consumerism during Ramadan. Future research is hoped not only to focus on digital media text analysis but also to utilize other qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews with consumers or participants of the Ramadan bazaar. This will provide rich primary data regarding their perceptions, motivations, and experiences in interacting with promotional content and consumerism products during the holy month.

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