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Digital Manipulation: Portraying the word *Haram* of smoking (Cigarette & e-Cigarette)

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Abstract

This paper explores the effectiveness of implementing image manipulation techniques and its capability to legitimize and portray the word *Haram* of smoking cigarettes and e-cigarettes, which was started in *fatwa* 1995 and 2015, through creative photography. It shows how creativity can be entrenched by adding the manipulation technique in photography and bringing different perspectives and directions to the viewers. The paper will define the ethics of implementing the manipulation technique in photography and study its requirements and impacts. It could help contrive anti-smoking advertisements that stated that smoking is *Haram* among Muslims.

Keywords: Digital Manipulation, *Fatwa Haram* of Smoking, Cigarette, e-Cigarette

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1.0 Introduction

Photography endeavor attraction. It can be a suitable proof while delivering stories and communicating even faster than words, "one picture is worth a thousand words" as quoted by Frederick R. Barnard in 1927. The development of photography has thoroughly grown, and the advancement of technologies over the years has sparingly caused a significant progression in the field of digital image manipulation. With the rapid evolution of mobile cameras and social media platforms, now everyone can be a photographer. The advancement of editing software and mobile applications in which original photographs can be photomontage with vectors, 3D files, or any objects results in a creative photograph that looks incredible or even more fascinating beyond what manual photography can do.

A similar process emerged in the Anti-Smoking advertisement when the manipulation techniques were used to enlarge its capability in transmitting and conveying information and advice among smokers about the destructive consequences of smoking. Most anti-smoking photographs that apply the manipulation technique look more desirable and appropriate. "These photographs are rich in information, strong in their visual impact on perception and memory and effective in conveying emotional appeals and instilling messages with affective auras that help build brand identities" (Hartmunt, S. C. 2009). Driven by the danger of smoking, various advertisements in diverse formats and mediums have been created to educate smokers and non-smokers on the danger of smoking. As an example, the Nicotine Addiction Campaign by K-72 (RSEQ / De Facto) published in 2016 refers to figure 1. (a) & (b), which uses image manipulation techniques to portray the cigarette as a snake twining the smoker's neck.

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Smoking prohibition among Muslims has been issued since 1995. On 21st December 2015, the *Muzakarah* of the *Fatwa* Committee of the National Council of Islamic Affairs decided that smoking e-cigarettes or vapor are prohibited (*Haram*). Many Islamic scholars believe smoking is unlawful and *Haram* due to its harmful effect on the body and mind (Dr. Zulkifli, M. A. B. 2010). For Muslims, the word *Haram* was understood as a strict prohibition and a violation of its tantamount to sin and deserves punishment. A genuine Muslim will always abstain from doing anything unlawful and *Haram*. However, in Malaysia, the use of the word "*Haram*" is very limited in anti-smoking advertisements, and even when they do, they are not using suitable images to support and portray the *fatwa*. There is no sense of attraction that can make people stop and get a lesson when they look at the campaign. Most of the images are used to show that smoking is bad for life and health, and the *fatwa* can only be found usually on the posters and warning signage at certain places and areas in written form and information. It proves that the *fatwa* issued is not widely disseminated, and its exposure is limited to be known. This will only make the *fatwa* appear as a hoax conversation, and serious discussion among smokers will never happen.



(a) (b)
Fig 1(a) & (b) Example of Digital Manipulation Photograph
(Source: RSEQ/De Facto Nicotine Addiction campaign, 2016)

2.0 Understanding Digital Manipulation

2.1 Visual Persuasion

Photography images in the anti-smoking campaigns were created as an intermediary between sender and receiver (spectators). It was a communication tool or an application of linguistic objects other than natural language. It has a relationship called "language" that connects messages and stands as communication between parties.

Photography is categorized as an iconic sign which plays a significant role as a tool of communication and language that brings messages from one place to another. In other words, it plays the role of information carrier and source. Photography acts as a visual language that uses signs to produce and communicate meaning. Photography can speak to all people no matter what language they speak. "One picture is worth a thousand words" as quoted by Frederick R. Barnard in 1927.

Signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects (Danial, C. 2006) where the main purpose is to communicate about something and bring out a symbolic meaning. "Pictures can recreate the kinds of visual information that our eyes and brains make use of when we look at the real world" (Paul, M. 1996). With the help of symbolic signs, a good photograph is measured when it can attract people's attention and make them feel something unusual. It takes the level of creativity far beyond the norm and reaches another state of mind. Usually, anti-smoking campaigns utilize symbolic signs because it helps to convey specific ideas that have some sort of deeper meaning and intentionally evoke emotions. It is a part of visualizing and portraying the unseen.

2.2 Overview Digital Manipulation

Image retouching and manipulation technique is not new and has long existed since the advent of the first cameras. But, the old image retouching process is different. It is more complicated, requires much time, and is very expensive (Bonnie, M. 1995/1996). The photographer conducted the image retouching and manipulation process in the darkroom studio manually before the emergence of the digital era where the image retouching and manipulation process was being done using editing software such as Adobe Photoshop which first released in 1990.

In producing remarkably creative photos, digital manipulation becomes the most magnificent technique to strengthen and enhance creativity to the mind-blowing level. Jerry Uelsmann, one of the renowned photographers best known for his image retouching and

manipulation techniques said “I realized that the darkroom was a visual research lab where the creative process could continue” (Paul, B., 2013).

Photo retouching in the darkroom was applied to correct the defects and enhance photos. The primary purpose of editing in early photography began with simple intentions like burning, dodging, or cropping, then soon gave way to other heavier and more complicated editing techniques like adding new elements to a photograph, removing, and inserting details, or changing the image looks and perspective (Sutton, R. E. 1993). The conventional ways of image retouching and manipulation are still being practiced today by only a few numbers of photographers as the processes were very difficult to learn and perform. It also required specific skills and expensive equipment to develop the films and photos. Today, the image retouching and manipulation process can be done a lot easier and faster using various editing platforms. According to Thomas, J. L. (2021), there are currently 23 top software and mobile applications on the market, such as Snapseed, VSCO, Photoshop Express and Photoshop Lightroom CC.

2.3 Ethics in Digital Manipulation

There are many concerns and questions about the ethics of digital image manipulation. Ethics is a reasonable concern in the photo editing process. The purpose of manipulation could be wrong if the editing means to bring lies and evasion about the message in the photographs. The photos of events such as war, news, or court evidence should not be manipulated because reality and originality matter most in these fields. We often see photos such as food & beverages, cosmetics, fashion, and even medicine in magazines and social media being digitally manipulated to look appealing to attract more buyers and reach out to the public. This retouching is sometimes unrealistic but needed to enhance aesthetics. There is nothing wrong with being aesthetical if the manipulation didn't bring the wrong message on purpose.

Table 1. Digital manipulation that should not be allowed in these photography genres

No.	Genre
1.	Documentary, News, and Reportage
2.	Portrait and Fashion Photography
3.	Nature Photography
4.	Travel Photography
5.	Drone Photography

(Source: Nasim Mansurov, *The Importance of Ethics in Photography*, 2019)

These are the genres in photography that should be authentic, genuine and free from manipulation techniques. Inaccessible war zones, for example, people will believe in what they see and get an immediate response, and of course, the level of trust will be very high. As in portrait and fashion photography, only minimum retouching is allowed, while digital manipulation such as adding make-up or lipstick on a plain face or altering the model's physique like changing the model's size from fat to thin is not allowed. Nature photography should not be unrealistic, while travel and drone photography should not be manipulated by adding nonexistent objects to make them look great and perfect (Nasim, M. 2019). As in commercial photography, it can manipulate and alter photographs to strengthen the image and accurately convey the message to the viewers (David, P. 2010). They are not lying; the purpose is not just to make the photo look fabulous and mind-blowing.

2.4 Illustrating the word HARAM

Pictures influence people in a most impressive connection (Zachariah, B. P. 2009). An example of an anti-smoking advertisement in figure 2. (a), (b) & (c). The manipulated smoke created from smoking cigarette and were shaped into the weapon that is usually used to commit suicide and looks ready to harm the smoker. This is a result of integrating both photography and digital manipulation in effectively delivering a message.



Fig. 1. (a), (b) & (c) Example of Abroad Anti-Smoking Advertisement (Smoking Kill)
 (Source: <https://kellyashcraft.com/smoking-is-suicide>)

Pictures lessen intricacy and convey different communicative purposes and objectives than words. To sufficiently empower the word *Haram* among smokers, using creative photography is the proper method to complete the goal. The word smoking is *Haram* was highlighted on a bigger scale in the anti-smoking advertisements in figure 3. (a), (b) & (c), which were published by the Ministry of Health and the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM). The advertisement needs to be supported by caption as an explanation of why it is said to be *Haram*. It is a combination of text and photography. According to Hartmunt S. C. (2009), pictures cannot tell a story unless, in a sequence, something language is quite good at, but then it can be concluded with our interpretation.

The picture of the mosque in figure 3. only stands as a symbol to represent Islam. However, there is no solid and creative photography image applied to support why smoking is said to be *Haram* in Islam ; only words become a primary notifier. There were four types of pictures inserted on the poster: a flower, a couple boys praying, a happy family, and a mosque. All advertisements in figure 3. have been supported with the hadith and translation of the verses from the Quran, which explain why smoking is *Haram* in Islam. However, the photographs used in the advertisement are unattractive, dull, and in the old notch.

If the word *Haram* in anti-smoking and vaping advertisements in figure 3. were illustrated in photographic form, it could be more appealing and attract the smoker's intention. A strong image can impact awareness and thoughts, and it outplays language (Hartmunt, S. C. 2009).



Fig. 2. (a), (b) & (c) Examples of previous and current Anti-Smoking and Vaping Advertisements in Malaysia (Smoking Cigarette & e-Cigarette is *Haram*)

(Source: (a) <https://www.infosihat.gov.my/index.php/multimedia/poster/item/merokok-adalah-haram>
 (b) <https://www.infosihat.gov.my/component/zoo/item/tak-nak-merokok-9.html>
 (c) <https://pin.it/5y8ucuM>)

3.0 Methodology

Table 2. Research Design Framework

Research Instrument				
(1) Questionnaire	(2) Semi-Structured		(3) Non-Participant	
Preliminary Questionnaire	Interview		Observation (Comparison & Analysis)	
(1.1) Public	(2.1) JAKIM	(2.2) Ministry of Health	(2.3) Professional Photographers	(3.1) Billboard, Newspaper, Magazine, cigarette package, poster, and warning signage
(4) Extract analysis				
(5) Conclusion & Recommendations				

There were three significant instruments in conducting this research: [1] Questionnaires, [2] Semi-Structured, and [3] Non-Participant. The questionnaire was conducted to retrieve initial reactions from the public regarding the issue. Meanwhile, under a semi-structured 582

instrument, data will be gathered through interviews from The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), The Ministry of Health, and photography enthusiasts. Lastly, the Non-Participant is the process of observation which includes comparison & analysis of billboards, newspaper, magazines and posters of smoking advertisements. Cigarette package and warning signage were also included for comparison & analysis. Finally, conclusions & recommendations are being constructed.

4.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

According to the report on smoking status among Malaysian adults, approximately 4,991,458 aged 15 years and above were smokers in Malaysia (National Health and Morbidity Survey, 2015). 43.0% of men and 1.4% of women smoked stick cigarettes, hand-rolled, and modern smokeless cigarettes (vape). During the study, 21,352 individuals (Malaysian adults) were successfully interviewed, and several data were obtained, including the study of anti-smoking places where the health information was noticed by them.

Based on table 3 below, 69.6% had noticed anti-cigarette information in newspapers or magazines and 76.4% on television. In contrast, the respondents noticed the most successful warning information on cigarette packages, which is 86.0%. The pictorial health warnings on the cigarette packages were first implemented in January 2009, when 40% of the warning information was required on the front and 60% of the back of cigarette packages (Tobacco Labeling Resource Center 2013). The size requirements increased from 40% to 50% of the front in January 2014 when the second set of health warnings were introduced. The consistency of exposing harmful consequences of smoking cigarettes using scary images of health conditions on cigarette packages made a positive result when there is an attempt to quit smoking among smokers. 86% of respondents had noticed the warning labels on cigarette packages. However, only 59.5% tried to quit smoking or considered quitting (health and morbidity survey 2015).

Table 3. Noticing Anti-Cigarette Smoking Information in Newspapers, Magazine, Television, and Cigarette Package

	Percentage Overall	Places
1.	69.6%	Newspaper or Magazines
2.	76.3%	Television
3.	86.0%	Cigarette Package

(Source: <https://www.moh.gov.my/moh/resources/NHMS2015-VolumeV.pdf>)

The proposed warning styles on the cigarette package have never changed since it was introduced in 2009 (Tobacco Labeling Resource Center, 2013). The primary purpose is to scare smokers and non-smokers with creepy images of what could happen if they're smoking (smoking can cause premature birth, lung cancer, mouth cancer, lounge cancer, miscarriage) and a few more. Imagine the display of a cigarette package loaded with full text and complete information about the *fatwa* of smoking cigarettes without proper and creative images?

Television, digital newspapers, or magazines are suitable mediums for spreading the *fatwa* of *Haram* of smoking both cigarettes and e-cigarettes to the public. They provide more visual information than cigarette packages but are barely noticed because people don't see it or are exposed to the information daily. Nobody seemed interested in reading unpopular information and monotonous advice, whether it was in written forms with unattractive photography. Thus, without a great attraction, any further attempt to deliver the *fatwa* of *Haram* of smoking information would be futile too.



Fig. 3. Advertising media containing warning information (*Fatwa*)

Through random observation on billboards, newspapers, magazines, cigarette boxes, posters, and warning signages to see where the *fatwa* of smoking cigarettes was located in figure 4 above, only two advertising media were found that contained the *fatwa* of the *haram* of smoking cigarette and e-cigarette. They are on posters [3] and warning signage [2], where these are among the least prominent places to

pose such important information. Similarly, no creative images and digital manipulation techniques are used to portray the *fatwa* and strengthen the word *haram* of smoking.

Photography is a visual communication tool and an excellent medium for conveying stories that words could not describe equally. Photos communicate faster than words and are good at evoking feelings, and help people communicate what they find essential when mood and emotion are felt. It exists between illusion, fantasy, and reality. Photography can inspire, intrigue, and speak to emotions effectively. It can stimulate positive changes in humanity and emphasize the potential to make this world better. Photography is one approach that thrills and excites the photographer itself to communicate and share to the world their thoughts and feelings. Manipulation techniques are capable of transmitting and conveying information. Creativity can be sharpened by enhancing manipulation techniques in photography to bring different perspectives and directions. Today, digital manipulation has become the most magnificent technique for strengthening and improving creativity.

Fatwa is a serious matter because it involves religion and laws. Conveying the *fatwa* message accurately to society is a duty that needs to be taken seriously by the ruling government. The anti-smoking and vaping advertisement can be improved by injecting appropriate elements of digital manipulation to empower the word *Haram* of smoking both cigarette and e-cigarette.

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