

## Unveiling Hidden Meanings: A Semiotic Exploration of Central Java's Islamic University Logos Through Peirce's Lens

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### Abstract

In the modern era, logo perception has become crucial as logos serve as visual representations of an institution's identity and values. This research emphasizes the critical role of logo symbolism in shaping the identity and communication strategies of State Islamic Universities (UIN) in Central Java, Indonesia. Despite its significance, there is a notable research gap in the semiotic analysis of these logos, particularly concerning the integration of Islamic identity with local cultural heritage. This study aims to decode the implicit meanings in the logos of UINs in Central Java, examining how these symbols reflect both the universities' Islamic values and their modern, inclusive identities. Employing a qualitative descriptive methodology with semiotic analysis based on Charles Peirce's semiotics theory and also Cerrato's color theory, data were collected through documentation techniques from online repositories. The analysis covered logos from UIN Walisongo, UIN Raden Mas Said, UIN Salatiga, UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri, and UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid. Findings reveal that each logo carries layered symbolic meanings, incorporating symbols that reflect Islamic values while harmonizing with local culture. Elements such as *gunungan*, flowers, and color schemes (green, white, yellow, orange, gold, and black) are prevalent, symbolizing a commitment to preserving cultural values and advancing progressive Islamic education. This study highlights the importance of understanding logo symbolism for reinforcing institutional identity and enhancing public perception, offering insights that could strengthen the global competitiveness and appeal of UINs.

**Keywords:** semiotic analysis; symbol; meaning; Islamic university logos, Charles Peirce

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### INTRODUCTION

Every brand is unique and leaves a distinct impression. In today's globalized era, logo perception has become a crucial aspect of visual communication. Even major brands are now showcasing their unique visual identities (Avram, 2019). A logo not only serves as a graphic representation of an institution's identity but also reflects the values and goals it aims to convey (Shao & Ngai, 2023). In the context of education, particularly in higher education institutions, a logo plays a strategic role in shaping the institution's image and identity. In the context of education, particularly in higher education institutions, a logo plays a strategic role in shaping the institution's image and identity. This importance is heightened by the fact that a well-crafted logo can effectively communicate the unique values and vision of an institution, differentiating it from its peers in a competitive landscape.

Previously, Islamic higher education in Indonesia struggled with a concerning reputation, often viewed as outdated and out of sync with modern advancements (Rusman, 2020). This outdated perception was mirrored in their old logos, which failed to project a sense of competitiveness, educational value, and modernity. As highlighted by Pulungan & Dalimunthe (2023) and Nurhidaya et al. (2022), this perception is exacerbated by the fact that the competition between Islamic and general education has roots in the colonial era. Despite their role in pioneering knowledge, Islamic higher education institutions have been undervalued, with their competitive edge falling behind general universities. Even according to the author's experience, people over the age of 55 living in rural areas still have a perception that IAIN as merely a place for studying religion. This gap has only widened as private and state universities continue to improve their standards and facilities.

Recent transformations from State Islamic Institutes (IAIN) to State Islamic Universities (UIN) are transforming old perceptions in a remarkable way. UINs are now at the cutting edge of modernization, skillfully blending general sciences with Islamic studies. Abrori & Nurkholis as cited in Afrial (2022), they highlight that Islamic higher education in Indonesia has journeyed through three pivotal stages: starting with Islamic boarding schools, evolving through 20th-century thought renewal, and finally integrating into the national education system. This evolution isn't merely a superficial update but a strategic overhaul aimed at boosting their relevance and appeal in today's educational landscape. These changes reflect a dedicated effort to refresh their image, demonstrating that Islamic education is not only contemporary but also capable of making significant strides across various fields beyond traditional religious roles. By embracing a dynamic and inclusive approach, UINs are breaking away from outdated views and establishing themselves as innovative, competitive forces in higher education.

In Central Java, this transformative journey began UIN Walisongo in Semarang in 2014. Subsequently, the transition extended to other UINs: UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri in Purwokerto, UIN Raden Mas Said in Surakarta, UIN Salatiga in Salatiga, and UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid in Pekalongan. This shift represents a significant move towards modernizing Islamic higher education, reflecting a broader initiative to update the institutions' image and symbols—including logos—to better align with contemporary demands and enhance their relevance. Along with the significant transformation from State Islamic Institutes (IAIN) to State Islamic Universities (UIN), these institutions have not only undergone changes in their curriculum and academic structure but also in their visual elements such as logos.

A university logo is more than just a graphic design—it's a powerful symbol that encapsulates the essence of an institution, reflecting its mission, values, and academic spirit. According to Wahdaniah et al. (2020) and Llorente-Barroso et al. (2021), logos serve as visual communication, plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions logos. It functions as key visual communication tools, representing a university's identity and guiding how it is perceived by students, faculty, and the public (Leelayudthyothin, 2022). In today's dynamic environment, the impact of visual identity is stronger than ever. Updating a logo is more than just giving it a new look; it's about aligning with the institution's evolving vision and mission in a way that resonates with today's audience.

This transformation logo design is far from just a passing trend; it's a dynamic reflection of how human communication has advanced. Logos, as symbols, act as a refined language that translates complex and abstract ideas into powerful, visually striking messages. Take the Apple logo, for instance. As highlighted by Aulia et al. (2023) and Tejasree (2023), the simplicity of the Apple logo embodies elegance, innovation, and prestige, demonstrating how minimal design can convey profound semiotic meanings.

This is further supported by Biloš et al. (2022), who found that Apple's brand awareness stands impressively at 45.7% in the smartphone category. Just as the Apple logo has become a symbol of high-tech sophistication, UIN's rebranding aims to establish a similar level of recognition and relevance, ensuring that its visual identity continues to resonate powerfully within the modern educational landscape.

In exploring the realm of semiotic signs, it becomes clear that meaning permeates every facet of life. Past studies have analyzed semiotic signs across diverse media, including hotels Andirani & Anandita (2019), newspapers Arafah et al. (2023), electronics Aulia et al. (2023), batik Sari et al. (2023), movie posters Andriani & Anti (2022), government logos Udlilawaty & Hasan (2022), and graffiti Casino (2019). Yet, there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding the semiotic analysis of institutional logos, especially those of religious universities. This study aims to bridge that gap by delving into the semiotic dimensions of the UIN (Universitas Islam Negeri) logo in Central Java. By examining the symbolic elements and underlying meanings of the UIN logo, we seek to provide new insights into how such logos function as semiotic signs within their cultural and educational contexts, enhancing our understanding of their role in shaping institutional identity and public perception.

In this light, a semiotic analysis of university logos becomes increasingly relevant. Visual elements such as shape, color, and typography are more than just aesthetic choices—they carry deep meanings and values. Color, for instance, plays a crucial role in shaping brand personality and influencing public perception, as revealed by (Chandra, Halim, & Yuwanto, 2019). The strategic selection of colors in a logo significantly impacts how the brand is perceived. Thus, analyzing the logos of State Islamic Universities in Central Java from a semiotic perspective can reveal the hidden messages and values conveyed through these visual elements.

Exploring the logos of these institutions through a semiotic lens is not just relevant—it's essential. By dissecting these visual symbols, we can reveal the hidden messages and values they embody, offering a richer understanding of how these universities craft their image in the educational sphere. This study sets out to conduct a thorough semiotic analysis of the logos of State Islamic Universities in Central Java, aiming to uncover the deeper meanings and identities that these symbols project. Our goal is to provide fresh insights into how these institutions use their logos to communicate their core values and aspirations. This leads us to the core objectives of our research, framed around these key questions:

1. What signs are used in the logos of State Islamic Universities in Central Java?
2. What are the meanings of the signs found in the logos of State Islamic Universities in Central Java?
3. Are there any similarities in the meanings of the logos used by State Islamic Universities in Central Java?

## Literature Review

### Semiotic

Semiotics has become a crucial science in unraveling the complexities of communication, offering a unique lens through which we analyze how messages are crafted and understood (Ibrahim & Sulaiman, 2020). Semiotics itself, as defined by Sobur in Rahma & Wirawanda (2024), is the scientific study dedicated to understanding these signs that permeate our daily lives. These signs manifest in various forms, including symbols, gestures, codes, signals, and more, all of which are integral to the way we interpret and interact with the world around us. Far from being just a tool for fictional detectives, semiotics is a robust academic field that delves into one of the most

fundamental aspects of human intelligence: our ability to create and interpret signs, whether they be words, symbols, or images (Danesi, 2007). As noted by Tawakkal et al. (2021), semiotics spans a vast and varied landscape, examining different types of signs across numerous channels and media. This makes it an essential discipline for exploring how we communicate and perceive meaning in our increasingly complex world. Building on this, it's clear that semiotics is not just a broad and diverse field but a vital tool for decoding the rich tapestry of signs that surround us. It explores how different types of signs—whether through text, images, or other media—convey meaning and facilitate communication across various contexts. By delving into semiotics, we gain valuable insights into the intricate systems of signification that shape our understanding of the world.

### Charles Peirce's Theory of Sign

Charles Peirce's theory of signs, also known as semiotics, offers a fascinating lens through which we can understand the dynamic world of communication and meaning-making (Silalahi, 2019). Rather than viewing signs as static symbols with fixed meanings, Peirce presents them as part of a vibrant and evolving process. In his view, signs are involved in a continuous dance of interpretation where they interact with what he calls interpretants—these are the evolving responses and understandings that arise as signs are used and perceived. This interaction is not a one-time event but a perpetual cycle where signs are connected, modified, expanded, and sometimes even challenged by the realities of the world (Keane, 2018). According to Peirce, meaning and truth are not found in isolated symbols but emerge through this lively process of interpretation and engagement with the real world. Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic model of signs simplifies meaning-making into three key components as shown in Figure 1.

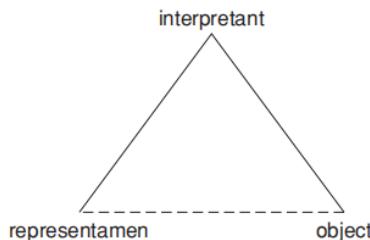


Figure 1. Pierce's concept of sign (1931, as cited on (Chandler, 2007).

Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic model of signs reveals a fascinating interplay between three crucial elements: the Representamen, the Object, and the Interpretant. Each component is intricately connected, making meaning a dynamic, interactive process. The Representamen is the visible form of the sign—like a word, image, or symbol. The Object is what the sign represents or points to, while the Interpretant is the meaning or understanding that emerges from the interaction between the representamen and the object. As Liszka (1996) highlights, these signs never operate in isolation; they are part of a continuous process involving these three interconnected elements. Understanding a sign and its object is only meaningful when we grasp the interpretation that binds them together. This triadic relationship shows how Peirce's model explains the creation of meaning through a seamless integration of form, reference, and interpretation, revealing the depth and complexity behind how we make sense of signs in our world.

This framework provides a structured yet flexible approach to deciphering how signs function and convey meaning across various contexts. Whether you're a researcher, a practitioner, or simply curious about the nuances of communication, mastering this framework is crucial for effective engagement with signs in any field. By diving into Charles Peirce's semiotic theory, we gain a valuable tool for interpreting signs across a spectrum of disciplines (Queiroz & Merrell, 2006). This theory not only sheds light on the intricate processes behind meaning-making and communication but also helps us navigate the complexities of how we interpret signs in diverse cultural and social contexts. In essence, Peirce's framework equips us with the insights needed to decode and appreciate the subtle layers of meaning in our everyday interactions.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

### General Background about Research Type and Design

The semiotic analysis of the logos of State Islamic Universities (UIN) in Central Java offers a fascinating journey into the visual language and deeper meanings these symbols convey. By using a qualitative descriptive method, this research dives into the subtle semiotic signs embedded in these logos, providing a nuanced interpretation of how they represent the identities and core values of their respective institutions. The study is designed as a case study, focusing on the logos of five prominent UIN institutions in Central Java. This approach allows for a deep exploration of each logo within its specific institutional context, shedding light on the distinct semiotic elements at play. Data collection was carried out through a meticulous documentation technique, gathering visual materials from online repositories and official university sources. This careful process ensures that the analysis is grounded in accurate and relevant information. By integrating these methods, the study aims to reveal how these logos act as mirrors of each university's unique identity and values, offering a richer understanding of their symbolic significance within the educational landscape.

### Research Subject

This study employs purposive sampling to select the five universities under examination, a method particularly suited to the research's focus on institutions that have undergone significant visual identity transformations, specifically their logos. Purposive sampling is ideal in this context as it allows for the intentional selection of universities that are most pertinent to the research questions, ensuring that the sample effectively captures the phenomenon being studied. The selected universities have all transitioned from IAIN (State Institute for Islamic Studies) to UIN (State Islamic University), making them exemplary cases for analyzing the impact of such transitions on visual identity. According to data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, as of 2022, there are only five State Islamic Universities (UIN) in Central Java, all of which have completed this transition. Consequently, these five universities constitute the entire population relevant to the study, providing a comprehensive view of the phenomenon under investigation. The universities include UIN Walisongo in Semarang, UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri in Purwokerto, UIN Raden Mas Said in Surakarta, UIN Salatiga in Salatiga, and UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid in Pekalongan. By encompassing all five UINs in Central Java, the study ensures a complete and detailed analysis, capturing the unique identity shifts reflected in the universities' logo changes.

### Research Instruments and Procedure of Data Collection

In this study, a meticulously crafted checklist served as the central tool for analyzing the logos of Islamic State Universities (UINs) in Central Java. Researchers

utilized this checklist to systematically catalog and categorize the symbols and elements present in each logo. By documenting every detail on paper sheets, the checklist enabled precise and comprehensive note-taking. The validity of the checklist was ensured through alignment with Charles Peirce's semiotic theory, which classifies logos by identifying their representamen (the form of the sign), object (what the sign refers to), and interpretant (the meaning derived from the sign). This theoretical framework guided the adjustments made to the checklist, ensuring it accurately captured the semiotic aspects of the logos. To confirm its effectiveness, the checklist underwent preliminary testing on a small subset of logos. Feedback from researchers who tested the checklist was used to refine and improve it, ensuring reliability and accuracy in the final version. A literature-based validation process also supported the checklist's alignment with semiotic principles. For data collection, logos were sourced from online platforms. Each logo was analyzed using the refined checklist, documenting symbols and their meanings according to Peirce's theory. The findings were then interpreted descriptively, providing a clear understanding of how each logo conveys its institutional identity through semiotic elements.

### Data Analysis Technique and Theoretical Framework

The exploration of State Islamic University (UIN) logos in Central Java was invigorated through a semiotic lens, drawing upon Charles Peirce's renowned semiotic theory and Cerrato's (2012) insightful color theory. Peirce's framework, which delves into the representamen (the form of the sign), object (what the sign stands for), and interpretant (the meaning derived), was instrumental in dissecting how these logos convey the universities' identities and core values.

This approach allowed for a rich analysis of the logos' visual components, revealing how shapes and symbols craft a narrative of institutional ethos. Adding another layer of depth, Cerrato's color theory was employed to decode the symbolism embedded in the logos' color schemes. This theory helped uncover how different colors project attributes like prestige, stability, and growth, further enriching the understanding of each logo's message. The study followed a meticulous process of interpreting and describing both visual and symbolic elements of the logos. By aligning the analysis with Peirce's and Cerrato's theories, researchers ensured that their interpretations were firmly rooted in theoretical foundations. To enhance credibility, findings were cross-referenced with existing literature on institutional branding. This methodical approach addressed the research questions by identifying and elucidating the semiotic signs within the logos and exploring the visual similarities across the UINs. Through this thematic analysis, the study offered valuable insights into how these logos articulate the values and identities of the State Islamic Universities, showcasing how theoretical frameworks can illuminate the meaning behind visual symbols. To facilitate a clearer understanding of the analysis, we present the theoretical framework as follows:

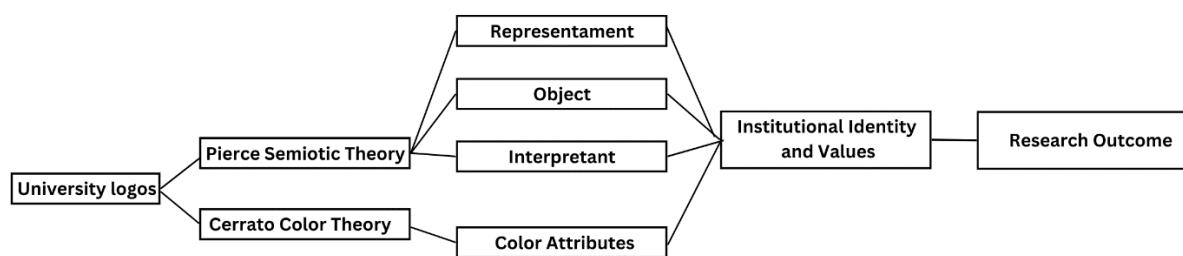


Figure 2. Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework directed the analysis of UIN logos by breaking down their visual and symbolic elements into representamen, object, and interpretant, following Peirce's theory. The researchers then reconstructed the meaning of these elements by integrating them with Cerrato's color theory insights. This combined approach deepens our understanding of how semiotics and color psychology shape institutional branding in Islamic education. It offers valuable insights for designing and strategizing logos for educational institutions.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Findings

Table 1. The Analysis of Logos of UINs in Central Java

Logo	Charles Pierce's Semiotic Framework		
	Representamen (Form)	Object (What It Represents?)	Interpretant (Meaning)
 <b>Datum 1</b>	Pentagon-shaped object ( <i>gunungan</i> )	Javanese cultural symbol, Five pillars of Islam, Pancasila	The integration of Islamic, cultural, and nationalistic values
	Star amidst the four knots with nine rays	Tauhid symbolism and Walisongo symbolism	The teaching of Islamic values by Walisongo
	Four symmetrical knots	Cultural significance	It preserves and embraces local culture
	lines connecting these knots	Unity and integration	It fosters inter connections of Islamic, traditional and nationalistic values
	UIN inscription shaped like butterfly wings	Transformation and growth	It commits to transformational and growth mindset
 <b>Datum 2</b>	Walisongo	Institution name and identity	Evoking the legacy of the nine saints (Wali Songo) in Java, symbolizing the institution's commitment to Islamic education and values.
	Blooming flower petal in an octagonal shape	Growth, flourishing, and beauty	It reflects the institution's dedication to nurturing students' development in terms of knowledge
	The eight buds at the edge of the flower petal	Growth and potential	It reflects the institution's dedication to nurturing the potential of its students and providing a comprehensive educational experience
	UIN inscription in a form of a book	Knowledge and learning	suggests that the university is a repository of knowledge and a center for continuous academic learning
	Words: Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta	Institution name and identity	It conveys identity and the location of the university
	Eight pistils	8 cardinal points	Divine yet inclusive, providing excellent quality education for all

Logo	Charles Pierce's Semiotic Framework		
	Representamen (Form)	Object (What It Represents?)	Interpretant (Meaning)
	Round background	The concept of unity, inclusivity, or completeness that the circle represents.	The round background symbolizes the institution's commitment to unity, holistic education, and well-rounded learning.
<b>Datum 3</b>	Geometric ( <i>gunungan</i> )	Javanese cultural symbol	It represents the preservation and incorporation of cultural heritage and traditions within the modern context of the university.
	Black dot in the center of <i>gunungan</i>	Unity, existence, and grandeur of God	It reflects the institution's focus on its fundamental mission and guiding philosophy, representing unity, origin, and a central source of wisdom
	Wings with five feathers each	Great will to fly high, Freedom	the ability to explore new ideas and opportunities, reflecting the institution's commitment to fostering an environment where students can freely pursue their intellectual and personal growth.
	Words: UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri	Institution name and identity	It signifies the official and formal identity of the institution
	Opened book	Willingness to learn	Open access to knowledge and the spirit of learning and development.
	Round border	Preservation	It represents the protection and preservation
	Shining Sun	light, knowledge, and life	The institution will illuminate minds and spreading knowledge and wisdom all over the world
<b>Datum 4</b>	The "W" letter	<i>Wasathiyah</i>	The university will be always committed to moderation and inclusiveness, avoiding extremes in any aspect of life
	Seven Golden Rays	The 7 cores of Islamic <i>Wasathiyah</i>	There are seven yellow rays that symbolize the main values of Islamic <i>Wasathiyah</i>
	Words: Universitas Islam Negeri Salatiga	Institution name and identity	The name of the university is Universitas Islam Negeri Salatiga and it's located in the city of Salatiga

Logo	Charles Pierce's Semiotic Framework		
	Representamen (Form)	Object (What It Represents?)	Interpretant (Meaning)
	The UIN acronym written in Allah calligraphy	The Islamic values as the core of the university	This indicates that UIN Salatiga is an educational institution based on Islamic principles and devotion to God
	Star with eight golden tips	Oneness of God	It communicates the institution's dedication to adhere to one God as a source of power that guide all aspects of the institution
	Dual gate	Access, Opportunity, and Progress	It symbolizes access to knowledge and new opportunities, representing the institution as a pathway to learning, growth, and future success.
	Dot	Unity, Divine Guidance and Enlightenment	The university promotes unity and inclusiveness, bringing together diverse elements under God's guidance.
	Star with nine tips Outside the dot	The Walisongo	The Walisongo symbolize a rich cultural and religious heritage through their role in spreading Islam and integrating it with local cultures.
	Acronym UIN shaped like an open book	Willingness to learn	An open book symbolizes access to knowledge and the institution's commitment to education.
	A pen facing upwards	Creativity, Knowledge and Learning	The pen symbolizes creativity and communication, with its upward orientation representing growth and encouraging free expression.
	Words: Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan	Institution name and identity	The institution legally named as Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid located in the city of Pekalongan

After deconstructing each element within the logos, researchers merge the findings with Cerrato's color theory. Following this analysis, Table 2 is some of the most dominant colors found in the logos.

Table 2. Analysis of Colors Theory

Theory of Colors According to Herman Cerrato		
Color	Meaning	
	Positive	Negative
<b>Dark Green</b>	Dark green symbolizes growth, stability, and endurance. It is associated with safety, balance, and harmony, promoting a calm and supportive environment. In the educational context, dark green can reflect an institution's commitment to long-term development, financial stability, and the nurturing of new ideas and knowledge.	Dark green is also commonly associated with money
<b>White</b>	white symbolizes new beginnings and a clean slate, offering an open canvas for fresh ideas and innovation. Its inherent simplicity and clarity promote organization and efficiency, creating a well-structured and orderly space conducive to learning. Additionally, white represents purity and cleanliness, which can contribute to a sense of fairness and neutrality within educational settings.	Excessive use of white can lead to a perception of sterility and coldness, potentially making the environment feel impersonal and detached. This might result in a sense of emptiness or isolation, which could detract from creating a welcoming and engaging atmosphere for students. Balancing white with other colors can help mitigate these effects, ensuring that the educational space remains both functional and inviting.
<b>Yellow</b>	yellow is associated with cheerfulness, optimism, and mental stimulation. It can enhance creativity and academic proficiency by brightening the environment and stimulating intellectual activity. Yellow is also linked to clarity and decision-making, making it a good choice for promoting engaging and dynamic learning spaces.	excessive yellow may lead to anxiety and restlessness. It can cause overstimulation and irritability, which might hinder focus and calmness in an educational setting. Therefore, while yellow can be uplifting and energizing, it is best used sparingly to avoid creating a disruptive environment.
<b>Gold</b>	gold symbolizes excellence, prestige, and high quality, suggesting that an educational institution offers a premium experience and values superior achievement. It is associated with success and victory, indicating a commitment to achieving outstanding results and nurturing top talent. Gold can also reflect happiness and wisdom, contributing to a positive and inspiring learning environment.	It might be perceived as pretentious or overwhelming if used excessively. It can imply a sense of self-importance or materialism, which might not align with the values of inclusivity and accessibility in education. Additionally, gold can sometimes translate poorly in digital formats, potentially diluting its intended message of quality and excellence.
<b>Light Green</b>	Light green symbolizes growth, renewal, and freshness. It fosters balance, harmony, and emotional calm. In an educational context, light green reflects a supportive learning environment, encourages innovation, and revitalizes	Light green commonly associated with lack of experience

ideas while promoting overall student well-being and development.		
<b>Black</b>	black symbolizes authority, sophistication, and professionalism, enhancing the formal and prestigious image of institutions	it can also be intimidating or somber if overused, potentially affecting the welcoming and supportive atmosphere needed for learning.
<b>Orange</b>	orange signifies energy, enthusiasm, and creativity. It is associated with stimulating learning environments and encouraging engagement. The color can boost mental activity and make spaces feel warm and inviting, promoting a sense of excitement and motivation.	overusing orange might create a feeling of superficiality or distraction, potentially making the environment seem less serious or overly stimulating. Balancing its use is essential to maintain a productive and focused educational atmosphere.

## Discussion

### Datum 1

Datum 1 introduces us to the captivating Javanese symbol known as the *gunungan*, a remarkable emblem often referred to as The Tree of Life. This symbol is more than just a design; it embodies the heart of Javanese cultural and spiritual heritage. Muhajirin (2010), highlights its role as a profound representation of life's essence, deeply rooted in tradition and spirituality. Meanwhile, while Nilotama et al. (2022); Sulistyono (2023) view the *gunungan* as a symbol of origins and the ultimate culmination of life, further enriching its significance. Through this emblem, we not only glimpse into the rich tapestry of Javanese culture but also connect with the timeless journey of life itself. In Central Java, the *gunungan* symbolizes a deep connection to cultural beauty and spiritual values. While Cerrato (2012) suggests that dark green is commonly associated with money in Western contexts, this interpretation doesn't quite fit in the Javanese cultural setting. In Java, dark green carries a different significance, primarily linked to spiritual and cultural symbolism rather than financial connotations. Thus, applying Western color meanings to the *gunungan* might misrepresent its intended cultural message, particularly in the context of logos for State Islamic Universities. While the *gunungan*'s symbolic use of dark green reflects its deep cultural and spiritual meanings in Java, it also connects with broader color interpretations that impact various aspects of Indonesian identity, such as the Pancasila and its role in national unity and harmony.

According to Won & Westland (2016), the color green signifies reliability, while Al Qurtubi as cited in Hidayat (2020) links it to the beauty of new plant life. The pentagon-shaped *gunungan* symbolizes both the five pillars of Islam and the core values of Pancasila, Indonesia's foundational ideology. Sarwanto et al. (2021), highlight that Pancasila, with its five principles, is central to Indonesian harmony, serving as the moral and ethical guide that unites the nation's diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural groups. Embracing Pancasila fosters unity and peace, setting an example of tolerance and harmony globally.

The emblem features four symmetrical golden knots, representing the four cardinal directions and the institution's dedication to integrating Islamic education with traditional values, ensuring a balanced and methodical learning approach. The central star with nine rays symbolizes enlightenment and divine guidance, reflecting the wisdom of the Walisongo, who played a crucial role in spreading Islam in Java. According to Sunyoto (2017), the Walisongo, a group of figures who spread Islam from the late 15<sup>th</sup> to the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, were pivotal in the history of Islam's dissemination in Java and the

archipelago. The use of yellow adds energy and vitality, creating a dynamic and engaging educational environment. Overall, the design harmoniously combines stability and vibrancy, guiding and inspiring students in their academic journey.

The white lines weaving through the knots in the university's logo are more than just design elements; they symbolize the core values of unity and integration. These lines represent the university's mission to bridge diverse fields of knowledge and foster a tight-knit community. The use of white, emblematic of purity and clarity, underscores the institution's dedication to open and transparent communication. In addition to these connections, the UIN inscription, crafted in the shape of butterfly wings, embodies a continuous quest for beauty and transformation. This design choice reflects the university's aspiration to evolve and excel. Meanwhile, the inscription of Walisongo pays homage to the revered Nine Saints of Java, tying the institution to a rich legacy of Islamic scholarship and spiritual guidance. Together, these elements create a powerful narrative of integration, growth, and commitment to both educational excellence and deep-rooted values.

The logo of Datum 1 encapsulates the institution's identity and mission as an Islamic higher education institution rooted in Javanese cultural values. It features symbols like the *gunungan*, knots, a nine-pointed star, and butterfly wings, reflecting a blend of Islamic tradition, Javanese culture, and modern values. The use of green signifies fertility, growth, and hope in Javanese culture, while the symbols represent the intellectual and spiritual heritage of Islamic teachings and local wisdom. Thus, the logo represents UIN Walisongo Semarang's commitment to inclusive, culturally relevant Islamic education.

## Datum 2

Datum 2 features a blooming flower petal in an octagonal shape, symbolizing growth, beauty, and harmony. The dark green petal represents knowledge and prosperity, emphasizing the institution's commitment to academic excellence. In contrast, the light green petal reflects renewal and ongoing development, highlighting the institution's support for continuous growth and innovation. This combination of dark and light green in the design portrays a dynamic, holistic vision of education, showcasing the institution's dedication to nurturing students through both deep-rooted excellence and continuous renewal.

At the center of this vibrant design are eight orange pistils, each one a radiant symbol of the university's commitment to both inclusivity and high-quality education. These pistils, arranged like a sunburst, echo the eight cardinal directions, symbolizing the university's dedication to guiding students from all backgrounds. The bold orange hue of the pistils signifies enthusiasm, creativity, and a drive for success, perfectly capturing the university's dynamic spirit and high standards. But the logo's story doesn't end there. The design features an open book, a timeless icon of learning and knowledge. This book is not just a symbol; it represents the university's role as a wellspring of wisdom and a hub for continuous academic development. It embodies a space where intellectual curiosity thrives and where students are encouraged to engage in lifelong learning and scholarly excellence.

Adding a layer of historical depth, the inscription "Universitas Raden Mas Said" pays homage to a significant figure in Javanese history. Named after Raden Mas Said, a heroic prince known for his resolute defense against Dutch colonial forces Hendro (2017), the university's name carries a legacy of courage and perseverance. The inclusion of "Surakarta" anchors the institution in its geographic and cultural roots, highlighting its importance in the regional and national educational landscape. In essence, the UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta logo is a vibrant narrative of the university's values, history, and mission. It reflects a commitment to excellence, inclusivity, and intellectual growth,

making it a powerful symbol of the institution's dedication to nurturing future leaders and scholars.

The logo of Datum 2 isn't just a visual design—it's a vibrant reflection of the institution's mission. The blooming flower petals in the logo symbolize growth and the nurturing of knowledge, highlighting the university's commitment to student development. The bright orange pistils represent enthusiasm, creativity, and a drive for success, with their circular arrangement symbolizing global excellence rooted in Islamic values. The inscriptions "Raden Mas Said" and "Surakarta" further anchor the logo in its heritage. "Raden Mas Said" honors a local hero renowned for his intellectual contributions and resistance, while "Surakarta" ties the university to its regional and national educational landscape. Overall, the logo powerfully embodies the institution's identity, values, and commitment to advancing inclusive, forward-thinking Islamic education.

### Datum 3

Datum 3 features a striking design: a deep green circle encircled by a golden border. This emblem is not just a visual representation but a symbol of the university's core values and lofty aspirations. The dark green at the heart of the design represents stability, growth, and an unwavering commitment to deepening knowledge. It reflects the university's dedication to long-term development and intellectual expansion. The golden border surrounding this circle adds a touch of prestige and excellence, symbolizing the university's pursuit of high standards and distinction. Gold, often associated with unity and integrity, enhances the overall impression of a distinguished institution. This luxurious hue underscores the university's aim for superior educational quality and a reputation of excellence. Together, the dark green and gold create a powerful image of a university that is both grounded and grand, dedicated to academic rigor and ethical values. The design conveys a holistic approach to education, where every element is thoughtfully integrated to support a vision of unity and exceptional achievement.

At the heart of the logo, the geometric *gunungan* stands out as a powerful symbol of Javanese culture, rich with noble values and deep-rooted traditions from the university's local heritage. This iconic emblem reflects a legacy of cultural wisdom that informs everyday life and scholarly pursuits. Surrounding the iconic *gunungan*, the wings in the logo soar with ambition and a dedication to intellectual freedom. They capture the university's dynamic spirit and its relentless pursuit of new ideas and innovations. Each feather on these wings carries deep significance: the initial five feathers pay homage to the Five Pillars of Islam, reflecting the foundational principles that guide the institution's spiritual and educational framework. Meanwhile, the additional five feathers honor Pancasila, symbolizing a commitment to a balanced and thoughtful approach to education. This elegant combination of symbols highlights the university's aspiration to harmonize traditional values with modern learning, embodying a vision of scholarly excellence and cultural integrity.

At the base of the wings, three feathers embody core Islamic principles—Iman (faith), Islam (submission), and Ihsan (excellence)—illustrating the seamless integration of spiritual values with academic growth. The open white book nestled within the logo represents the university's dedication to learning and openness. Its white pages symbolize purity and clarity, echoing the institution's commitment to high ethical standards and transparent practices. Together, the wings and open book create a vibrant image of a university committed to fostering a welcoming environment for continuous learning. Rooted in both moderate Islamic values and the core principles of Pancasila, the logo embodies a philosophy of principled and expansive education.

The *gunungan* in the logo subtly embodies Allah's grandeur and unity, with its shape representing divine omnipresence. The single black dot symbolizes God's eternal and limitless nature, marking the university as the starting point for a successful journey. The pentagon shape also reflects the integration of Pancasila's values into daily student life, blending spiritual and national ideals seamlessly.

At the base of the logo, the inscription of Prof. KH. Saifuddin Zuhri stands as a tribute to his legacy and contribution to Islamic education. KH. Saifuddin Zuhri, who served as Minister of Religious Affairs from 1962 to 1967, is honored for his pivotal role in advancing Islamic higher education. His efforts led to the establishment of the State Islamic Institute (IAIN), a cornerstone for higher learning among Muslim youth. Under his leadership, IAIN expanded provincially and established 14 branches nationwide, significantly enhancing teaching quality and educational infrastructure (Faridah & Hakim, 2020). This inscription not only pays homage to his impactful work but also underscores the university's commitment to his vision and legacy in Islamic education.

The UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri logo vividly embodies the institution's vision and mission as a leading center for Islamic higher education. It seamlessly integrates Javanese cultural values and Pancasila with a deep reverence for the oneness of God, while also advancing knowledge. The symbols within the logo—each rich with meaning—create a multifaceted portrayal of the university's core values and objectives. The design illustrates a harmonious fusion of Islamic tradition, Javanese heritage, modern ideals, and divine unity, highlighting the institution's commitment to both local roots and global excellence. This logo is more than a mere emblem; it is a powerful representation of UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri's dedication to fostering an inclusive, progressive, and competitive educational environment.

#### Datum 4

Datum 4 presents the logo with a prominent yellow shining sun, immediately evoking thoughts of light, knowledge, and vitality. This radiant sun signifies the university's role as a beacon of enlightenment, illuminating minds and spreading wisdom globally. The vibrant yellow color enhances this imagery, symbolizing intellectual energy and a dynamic, engaging learning environment. Additionally, the yellow "W" in the logo embodies the principle of *Wasathiyyah*—moderation and inclusiveness. This element underscores the university's commitment to balanced and moderate approaches, steering clear of extremes. The bright yellow of the "W" reflects both intellectual vigor and a lively academic atmosphere, emphasizing the university's dedication to fostering a balanced, inclusive, and stimulating educational experience. Together, the sun and the "W" represent a commitment to vibrant, thoughtful, and comprehensive education.

The seven white shining rays inside the logo represent the core values of Islamic Wasathiyyah, embodying principles such as taking the middle path (*tawassuth*), uprightness (*i'tidal*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), consultation (*syura*), reform (*islah*), exemplary conduct (*qudwah*), and friendship (*muwathanah*). The purity of the white color in these rays reflects the university's dedication to moral integrity, peace, and unity, symbolizing its commitment to balanced and ethical guidance. Surrounding these inner rays are seven shining yellow rays, symbolizing the dynamic and vibrant nature of the university's academic environment. The yellow color signifies intellectual energy and vitality, portraying a lively atmosphere conducive to active learning and growth. These outer rays emphasize the university's focus on fostering a dynamic, forward-thinking approach to education, encouraging intellectual curiosity and innovation. Together, the "seven white shining rays inside and seven shining yellow rays outside" encapsulate the university's holistic vision. The inner white rays underscore a foundation of ethical values and unity,

while the outer yellow rays radiate the energy and vibrancy of a thriving educational experience. This emblem signifies an institution committed to upholding moral purity and harmony while actively pursuing intellectual excellence and vitality.

The star with eight tips in the logo symbolizes the oneness of God, radiating His mercy in all directions. This star not only represents divine guidance but also reflects the institution's dedication to providing an education that is balanced, holistic, and enlightened, deeply rooted in Islamic values while embracing a global outlook. The acronym "UIN" styled in Allah's calligraphy serves as a powerful visual representation of the university's Islamic identity, underscoring its foundation on faith and devotion to God. Meanwhile, the inscription "Universitas Islam Negeri Salatiga" clearly identifies the institution, anchoring its role as a leading center for Islamic higher education in Salatiga. This combination of symbols and inscriptions elegantly captures the essence of Datum 4, blending spiritual devotion with a commitment to academic excellence.

In the Datum 4 logo, the subtle image of a golden tree carries profound symbolic significance. This golden is more than just a decorative element; it is a powerful emblem rich with symbolic meaning. Across various studies on relief motifs found in the sacred buildings of Central and East Java, the tree shown in the logo might be the tree of Kalpataru. The tree of Kalpataru is frequently associated with the "tree of life" (Laili, Ananda, Putra, & Prahardana, 2022). Jana & Dana (2022) explained more that kalpataru is often depicted as an intricately carved tree of life, is a symbol steeped in myth and reverence. This tree is celebrated as the embodiment of divine abundance and prosperity, representing the gateway to heaven or paradise. Its majestic form, brimming with life, evokes a sense of nature's boundless generosity and eternal blessings. Within the Datum 4, the golden tree echoes these spiritual ideals, encapsulating the institution's vision of spiritual prosperity, everlasting growth, and the enduring success of its students and faculty. These symbols reflect the university's commitment to quality education rooted in core Islamic values, reinforcing its mission as a leading institution of higher learning dedicated to both spiritual and academic excellence.

But for some reason, we have to consider this. Although the golden tree with its vibrant yellow highlights emphasizes enthusiasm, optimism, and positive energy, Cerrato's color theory suggests that excessive use of yellow can trigger anxiety and restlessness, potentially disrupting concentration in an educational setting. While yellow adds cheerfulness, an overabundance may make the logo seem overly ambitious, overshadowing principles of balance and harmony. To address this, incorporating softer hues alongside yellow can help maintain the logo's inspiring yet calming essence, aligning with the institution's goal of providing holistic and effective education.

In summary, the Datum 4 combines vibrant yellow and a golden tree to symbolize intellectual energy, spiritual abundance, and balanced growth. The yellow sun and "W" represent dynamism and moderation, while the white rays signify core Islamic values of integrity and unity. The golden tree echoes the Kalpataru, symbolizing prosperity and eternal growth. However, excessive yellow could cause anxiety and disrupt focus, so balancing it with softer colors is crucial to maintaining a calming and effective educational environment.

## Datum 5

Datum 5 immediately draws attention to the striking contrast between the light green inner gate and the dark green outer gate. According to Suwarna as cited from Maulana & Sari (2020), the word "gate" is derived from the Sanskrit term "gopura" or "gapura," which means "gateway" or "entrance". This design symbolizes a dual pathway to knowledge and growth, reflecting the university's commitment to offering both fresh

opportunities and a solid foundation for personal and academic development. The light green inner gate represents the beginning phase of growth, symbolizing renewal, vitality, and the vibrant potential of students as they embark on their educational journey. It illustrates the university's role in opening doors to new ideas, knowledge, and opportunities, encouraging students to embrace the start of their learning experience with enthusiasm. The dark green outer gate represents stability, maturity, and the enduring foundation that supports long-term intellectual and personal growth. It emphasizes the university's commitment to creating a stable environment conducive to sustained excellence. Combined with the light green inner gate, which symbolizes new beginnings, these elements illustrate the university's holistic approach to education, guiding students from the excitement of initial exploration to steady, mature development, ultimately preparing them for future success.

The golden dot in the logo symbolizes unity and enlightenment, emphasizing the university's role in fostering a cohesive and inclusive community guided by divine principles. The star with nine golden tips honors the Walisongo, revered figures who spread Islam while preserving local cultures, reflecting the university's deep respect for cultural and religious heritage. Gold throughout the emblem signifies prestige and excellence, underscoring the institution's commitment to high standards in education and integrity. The letters 'U' and 'N' resemble an open book, symbolizing the ongoing pursuit of knowledge, while the letter 'T', shaped like a pen, represents the teaching process aimed at intellectual growth rooted in Indonesian identity. The pen's upward direction signifies a commitment to continuous learning and achievement, with its light green color representing freshness and growth, and the gold symbolizing the glory and majesty in the quest for knowledge. Together, these elements depict a university dedicated to cultivating a united, enlightened, and culturally rich academic community.

The inscription "Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid" serves as a tribute to a remarkable figure in Indonesian history—K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, a key leader in Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia's largest Islamic organization, and the 4th President of the Republic of Indonesia. His legacy is not just political but profoundly educational. Scholars like Kurniawati & Junaidi (2023) and Asiyah (2021) have extensively analyzed Wahid's progressive educational philosophy, which advocates for a harmonious blend of traditional and modern Islamic education while remaining firmly rooted in Islamic principles. This philosophy, known as neo-modernism, encapsulates his vision of integrating modern Islamic thought with traditional wisdom.

Beyond the realm of education, Wahid's philosophy touches on essential societal issues such as the relationship between religion and the state, pluralism, democratization, and the empowerment of indigenous communities. His advocacy for peaceful coexistence, pluralism, and democratic values reflects a holistic approach to contemporary challenges, deeply anchored in Indonesia's rich cultural heritage. The word "Pekalongan" in the inscription signifies the institution's geographic roots, while its bold black lettering symbolizes the university's elegance and sophistication.

In essence, Datum 5 encapsulates the institution's dual mission: to foster new opportunities while providing a robust foundation for growth. The light green gate symbolizes fresh beginnings and the vibrant potential for students' intellectual and personal development, while the dark green gate represents stability and maturity, ensuring a supportive environment for continuous growth. The golden dot at the center of the logo signifies unity and enlightenment under divine guidance, while the nine golden tips of the star honor the Walisongo, embodying the university's deep respect for cultural and religious heritage. The use of gold throughout the logo conveys prestige and

excellence, reflecting the university's commitment to maintaining the highest standards in education.

## CONCLUSION

Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory offers a profound framework for deciphering the symbolic meaning embedded within the logos of State Islamic Universities (UIN) in Central Java. By applying Peirce's theory, it becomes evident that each visual element in these logos is not merely decorative but serves as a conduit for deeper cultural and spiritual identities. The logos reflect a robust fusion of Islamic values, Javanese traditions, and a sense of nationalism, illustrated by the recurring use of symbols like the *gunungan*. This symbol, rich in Javanese cultural significance, represents the Tree of Life and metaphorically embodies the journey of spiritual growth and life itself.

Complementing this analysis, Herman Cerrato's color theory deepens our understanding of the psychological impact of color within these logos. The consistent use of seven colors—dark green, light green, white, yellow, gold, black, and orange—across the five UIN logos is intentional, with each hue carrying a specific connotation. Yellow signifies energy and enlightenment, often linked with stars or the sun to symbolize wisdom and the spread of knowledge. White embodies purity and moral integrity, grounding intellectual pursuits in ethical principles. Gold, representing prestige and spiritual wealth, underscores the universities' dedication to excellence and ethical education.

The integration of Peirce's semiotic theory with Cerrato's color theory enriches this research, offering a multidimensional analysis that reveals the logos as more than visual symbols. They are intricate narratives that blend cultural heritage with modern aspirations. The logos of UINs in Central Java are not merely identifiers but visual stories that articulate an inclusive and culturally resonant vision of Islamic education. This fusion of tradition and modernity, spirituality and intellectualism, positions these logos as powerful symbols of the universities' broader educational mission.

## RECOMMENDATION

The study on UIN logos in Central Java showcases several limitations that offer directions for future research. Firstly, its regional focus limits generalizability to other UINs or Islamic institutions in other Indonesian regions or international contexts. Secondly, while stakeholders' perceptions were examined, the methodology lacks in-depth explanation, suggesting a need for richer research designs in future studies. Additionally, adopting a longitudinal approach could provide insights into how perceptions of UIN logos evolve over time amidst societal changes and institutional developments. Moreover, future studies could empirically assess the investigation of potential gender and cultural differences in stakeholders' perceptions of UIN logos to enhance the understanding of logo design's broader impact. In brief, by considering these recommendations, future studies are expected to fill in the gaps and contribute to the field by offering richer and more comprehensive findings.

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