
Iconic Attributes of Ergo-Iconic Value: A Synthesis for Sustainable Product Excellence

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Abstract:

Despite extensive research on ergonomics, aesthetics, and user experience, limited studies have integrated these perspectives to explain how iconic value is formed and sustained in the marketplace. This study aims to conceptualize the iconic attributes that constitute ergo-iconic value and to develop a novel theoretical framework through a systematic synthesis of literature indexed in Scopus and Web of Science. Drawing on theories of ergonomics, emotional design, aesthetics, value-based marketing, cultural branding, and the digital platform economy, the study constructs a comprehensive conceptual model of ergo-iconic value. The findings define ergo-iconic value as a superior value proposition derived from three dimensions of comfort: functional comfort, usability comfort, and pleasure comfort. Furthermore, three core iconic attributes are identified: symbolic and visual appeal, emotional connection and cultural identity, and economic activation and practical value. These attributes operate across visceral, behavioral, and reflective levels of user experience, consistent with Norman's emotional design framework. The study further proposes the concept of Cultural Resonance Capital to explain why products, services, or digital content with comparable ergonomic and aesthetic qualities may exhibit different levels of market acceptance, consumer attachment, and longevity. As a conceptual study, the proposed framework requires empirical validation across diverse contexts. Nevertheless, it offers theoretical and practical insights for designers, marketers, and SMEs seeking to create sustainable value through the integration of functional performance, emotional engagement, and cultural resonance in the Industry 5.0 era.

Keywords: Ergo-Iconic Value; Iconic Attributes; Product Design; Competitive Advantage; User Experience; Cultural Resonance Capital; Emotional Design; Value-Based Marketing

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1. Introduction

In contemporary markets, customer satisfaction is no longer determined solely by product functionality. Consumers increasingly evaluate products and services based on the overall experience they provide, including emotional engagement, symbolic meaning, and perceived quality. Previous studies have shown that dissatisfied customers often refrain from directly communicating complaints; however, negative word-of-mouth can significantly affect organizational reputation, customer retention,

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and financial performance (Arruda Filho & Barcelos, 2021; Furrer et al., 2021; Hossny, 2022). Consequently, organizations are encouraged to move beyond functional performance and incorporate design elements that enhance user experience, such as ergonomic usability, sensory comfort, visual appeal, and emotional resonance.

Within this context, the concept of ergo-iconic value has emerged as a promising framework that integrates ergonomics and iconicity. Unlike the ergo-aesthetic perspective, which focuses primarily on the interaction between ergonomics and visual aesthetics, ergo-iconic value extends this relationship by incorporating symbolic, emotional, and cultural dimensions that influence how users perceive and interact with products and services. According to Andriyansah et al. (2023), ergo-iconic value reflects the perceived superiority of a product or service through three dimensions of comfort: functional comfort, usability comfort, and pleasure comfort.

Despite its growing application in areas such as SME development, tourism, and digital content strategies, the conceptual structure of the iconic dimension remains underdeveloped. Existing studies have predominantly emphasized the outcomes of ergo-iconic value while providing limited explanation regarding the specific attributes that constitute iconicity and the mechanisms through which these attributes generate value (Andriyansah & Fatimah, 2020a). As a result, there is still no comprehensive framework that systematically explains the components of iconic value and their relationship with ergonomic and experiential dimensions.

Addressing this gap, the present study seeks to identify and conceptualize the core attributes of the iconic dimension within ergo-iconic value through a synthesis of relevant literature. The study proposes a conceptual framework that integrates perspectives from ergonomics, emotional design, cultural branding, and value creation theories. By clarifying the attributes that shape iconic value, this research contributes to the theoretical development of ergo-iconic value and provides a foundation for future empirical investigations. Furthermore, the proposed framework offers practical insights for designers, marketers, and SMEs seeking to create meaningful and differentiated user experiences in the context of Industry 5.0, where human-centric innovation, cultural relevance, and sustainable value creation have become increasingly important.

2. Theoretical Background

Ergonomics and User Experience

Ergonomics, as defined by the International Ergonomics Association (IEA), is the scientific discipline concerned with understanding interactions among humans and other elements of a system, and the profession that applies theory, principles, data, and methods to design in order to optimize human well-being and overall system performance. In the context of product design, ergonomics utilizes anthropometric data to determine optimal product size, shape, and form to facilitate use (Järvelin, 2010; Mackenzie Glander-Dolo, 2018; Strasser, 2009).

Furthermore, user experience refers to the overall impact perceived by users before, during, and after interacting with a product or system in a particular environment. This experience encompasses not only tangible physical products but also digital interfaces, audio elements, and even aromas, as illustrated in the "Smell-o-vision" initiative in 1960 film production (Lauriault & Lindgaard, 2006). Companies such as Frog Design (Fabricant, 2005), Alessi, and Swatch exemplify approaches that prioritize customers' emotional experiences (Chen & Lee, 2024).

The integration of ergonomics with user experience design represents a paradigm shift from purely functional optimization to holistic experience creation. This shift acknowledges that product success depends not merely on physical comfort and usability but on the entire spectrum of sensory, cognitive, and emotional responses elicited during user-product interaction. Contemporary ergonomics has evolved into a multidimensional discipline that integrates physical, cognitive, and organizational domains, forming a comprehensive foundation for human-centered design (Bhavsar et al., 2024; Chen & Lee, 2024).

Aesthetics and User Perception

Aesthetics is the study of the impact of product form on human emotions. Perception of product usefulness value becomes one of the main criteria considered by designers in designing products to meet user needs. Senses such as sight, hearing, and touch collect physical characteristics from stimuli, and the brain processes them using knowledge and information stored in long-term memory, leading to perception that enables us to interpret and recognize environmental stimuli (Fan et al., 2016; Hong et al., 2008).

According to Norman, (2004) categorizes users' emotional responses to products into three levels of interaction: (1) visceral, directly related to emotional experience through the five senses that define product appearance; (2) behavioral, determined by evaluation of product performance and usability; and (3) reflective, referring to long-term experience that can evoke objective feelings about what the product creates for users, related to their culture, identity, education, and memory (Jacob-Dazarola et al., 2016; Lee, 2007).

Norman's tripartite framework provides a crucial lens for understanding how aesthetic elements operate at multiple cognitive and emotional levels simultaneously. Visceral design addresses immediate, pre-conscious reactions to sensory qualities such as color, texture, and form. Behavioral design concerns itself with the pleasure and effectiveness of use. Reflective design engages with meaning-making processes, where aesthetic choices communicate brand identity, cultural values, and personal significance. This multi-level approach positions aesthetics as a strategic resource rather than mere decoration (Bhandari et al., 2019; Norman, 2004; Tractinsky, 2004).

Ergo-Iconic Value: Definition and Dimensions

Ergo-iconic value is defined as market value superiority with distinctive product comfort encompassing three dimensions: comfort in function value, comfort in usefulness value, and comfort in pleasure value. In the context of tourism and creative

economy, ergo-iconic value is understood as a combination of aesthetic, functional, and symbolic values inherent in products or content. Research demonstrates that ergo-iconic value plays an important role in driving social media content virality and influencing user perceptions of promoted products or services.

Research by Andriansyah et al., (2023) examined the influence of ergo-iconic positional advantage on competitive performance and innovation of SMEs in West Java, involving three dimensions: iconic service marketing, ergonomic product value, and positional advantage. These findings indicate that ergo-iconic value is not merely a theoretical concept but has measurable practical implications for business performance.

The conceptualization of ergo-iconic value represents a significant theoretical advancement by synthesizing previously disparate streams of research. According to Candi et al., (2017); Creusen & Schoormans, (2005) The three-dimensional structurefunction, usefulness, and pleasure parallels Jordan's hierarchy of consumer needs in product design, yet extends this framework by explicitly incorporating cultural and symbolic elements through the iconic dimension, advancing beyond essentialist conceptions of product value.

3. Iconic Attributes of Ergo-Iconic Value

Based on literature synthesis, this article identifies three primary attributes that constitute the iconic dimension of ergo-iconic value:

Symbolic and Visual Appeal

The first attribute of iconic value is the capacity of a product or service to convey symbolic meaning through strong visual elements. Research on social media content virality demonstrates that content containing strong aesthetics and cultural symbols has greater appeal and is capable of building engagement that is both emotional and cultural(Candi et al., 2017; Creusen & Schoormans, 2005). This visual appeal does not stand alone but is closely related to how consumers interpret products as representations of identity, status, or particular cultural affiliation.

According to Crilly et al., (2004); Hu et al., (2022) In the context of product design, product form influences consumers' first impressions, so designers must create products that meet consumers' aesthetic preferences. Aesthetics has become a critical competitive factor in differentiating products during decision-making processes and purchasing behavior. This symbolic-visual attribute operates at both the visceral and reflective levels of user interaction creating instant appeal while simultaneously generating long-term meaning tied to user identity.

The symbolic-visual dimension functions as a semiotic system where design elements serve as signifiers of cultural meanings, social positions, and personal values. This semiotic function explains why certain products achieve 'icon' status they become cultural referents that transcend their functional utility to embody broader social meanings(Danesi, 2013; Hu et al., 2022). The visual-symbolic appeal thus operates as

a form of cultural capital that users can appropriate to construct and communicate their social identities.

Emotional Connection and Cultural Identity

The second attribute is the product's capacity to evoke a sense of identity and emotional attachment. Research on sustainable tourism indicates that ergo-iconic value emphasizes comfort characterized by local icons. This means that iconic value is not universal but is always embedded in specific cultural contexts that provide meaning and emotional resonance for users (Andriansyah & Fatimah, 2020).

This emotional connection aligns with findings in discussions about legacy design, where enduring products are not only functional products but also products that create emotional connections with their users. As stated in the panel discussion commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Freedom Chair, iconic products are those that 'adapt to evolving needs while maintaining their comfort and functionality' (Scully & Uniyal, 2017; Trento et al., 2011). This attribute operates primarily at the reflective level, where long-term experience with products creates meaning tied to users' culture, identity, and memory.

The emotional-cultural dimension draws on theories of place attachment, cultural identity, and collective memory. Products that successfully activate this dimension become repositories of personal and collective narratives, serving as material anchors for identity construction and cultural continuity. The batik aromatherapy and bamboo batik innovations in Indonesian SME contexts exemplify how traditional cultural forms can be reinterpreted through contemporary functional needs, creating products that simultaneously honor cultural heritage and address modern lifestyle requirements (Nindiani et al., 2022; Trento et al., 2011; Wesnina et al., 2025).

Economic Activation and Practical Value

The third attribute is the capacity of iconic value to be translated into tangible economic activation. Research on viral social media content shows that ergo-iconic value not only attracts attention visually but also provides information and practical meaning that drives economic decision-making. Content with high aesthetic and symbolic value has greater potential to increase purchase motivation and contribute to local economic growth.

In the context of SME development, ergo-iconic value plays a role in creating competitive advantage through a combination of ergonomic product value and iconic service marketing. This attribute affirms that the iconic dimension of ergo-iconic value is not merely decoration or ornamentation but has measurable economic consequences. This distinguishes ergo-iconic value from pure aesthetic approaches that are often detached from functional and economic considerations.

The economic activation dimension positions iconic value as a strategic resource with tangible market implications. This attribute operates through multiple pathways: (1) price premium justification; (2) purchase motivation enhancement; (3) loyalty and advocacy generation; and (4) market expansion. These economic mechanisms

transform cultural capital into financial capital, demonstrating that iconic attributes are core drivers of sustainable competitive advantage and business performance (Dell'era, 2010).

Conceptual Novelty: Cultural Resonance Capital as a Synthesis of Iconic Attributes

Based on the identification of the three attributes above, this article offers conceptual novelty in the form of Cultural Resonance Capital as a synthesis of the iconic attributes of ergo-iconic value. Cultural Resonance Capital is defined as the capacity of a product or service to create meaningful resonance with users through the integration of three elements:

1. **Symbolic Significance:** The product's ability to carry cultural meaning that is recognized and valued by the user community, operating at visceral and reflective levels.
2. **Functional Viability:** The product's capacity to meet users' functional needs with ergonomically standardized comfort, operating at the behavioral level.
3. **Economic Activation:** The product's ability to be translated into exchange value and measurable economic contribution, connecting the reflective dimension with market practice.

This novelty complements existing frameworks by providing an explanatory mechanism for why some products with equivalent ergonomic and aesthetic value have different market longevity. Cultural Resonance Capital explains that products capable of integrating the three elements above simultaneously will create stronger bonds with users, which in turn generates sustainable competitive advantage.

This framework also extends understanding of ergo-iconic value beyond the context of physical products to the realm of services and digital content. Research on content virality demonstrates that ergo-iconic value can be a key factor that combines elements of aesthetics, culture, and function to create engagement with tangible economic transaction value. Thus, Cultural Resonance Capital becomes an analytical instrument applicable across sectors and contexts.

The Cultural Resonance Capital framework advances theoretical discourse by providing a meso-level construct that bridges micro-level user experience research with macro-level cultural economy analysis. The framework posits that sustainable value emerges not from maximizing individual dimensions but from achieving strategic coherence across symbolic, functional, and economic elements creating synergistic effects where each dimension amplifies the others.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a conceptual research design using a narrative literature review approach to identify, synthesize, and elaborate the iconic attributes of ergo-iconic value. A narrative review was considered appropriate because the study seeks to develop a novel conceptual framework rather than test predefined hypotheses. This

approach enables the integration of knowledge from multiple disciplinary perspectives, including ergonomics, aesthetics, user experience, marketing, emotional design, and cultural studies, to construct a more comprehensive understanding of the iconic dimension of value creation.

The literature was collected from peer-reviewed publications indexed in Scopus and Web of Science that discuss ergonomics, aesthetics, iconicity, emotional design, cultural identity, user experience, and value creation. Selected studies were analyzed using an analytical procedure adapted from the rhetorical move analysis framework, which facilitates the systematic identification, categorization, and synthesis of concepts across diverse bodies of literature. The analytical process consisted of four stages, as illustrated in Figure 1.

The first stage involved conceptual identification through a close reading of the selected articles. At this stage, definitions, dimensions, and theoretical attributes associated with ergo-iconic value were extracted and compared across studies. Particular attention was given to identifying iconic elements that had been discussed implicitly within existing ergo-iconic frameworks but had not yet been systematically conceptualized.

The second stage focused on thematic categorization. Concepts identified from the literature were grouped according to recurring themes that reflected the iconic dimension of value. Through an iterative coding and comparison process, three dominant thematic categories emerged: symbolic and visual appeal, emotional connectedness and cultural identity, and economic activation and practical value. The categorization process was repeatedly refined to ensure conceptual coherence and consistency across sources.

In the third stage, findings from the thematic categories were synthesized to develop theoretical propositions. Relationships among concepts identified in the literature were examined to uncover common patterns, complementary perspectives, and underlying mechanisms linking ergonomic and iconic value. This process led to the development of the Cultural Resonance Capital framework, which integrates symbolic, functional, emotional, and economic dimensions into a unified conceptual model.

The final stage involved conceptual validation. Rather than conducting statistical validation, the proposed framework was assessed through comparison with relevant empirical studies in related domains, including social media content virality, ecological identity in green SMEs, and sustainable tourism development. This comparative analysis was undertaken to evaluate the explanatory relevance of the framework and to examine its applicability across different contexts. Through these four analytical stages, the study generated an integrated conceptual model that explains how iconic attributes contribute to the formation of ergo-iconic value and long-term market resonance.

4. Empirical Findings/Results and Discussion

Enriching Value-Based Marketing Foundations

Theoretically, the elaboration of iconic attributes of ergo-iconic value makes significant contributions to the development of marketing theory, particularly in the realm of value-based marketing and cultural branding.

First, this article expands the scope of Resource-Based View (RBV) by identifying that path-dependent cultural uniqueness can become a resilient engine of economic growth. Ergo-iconic value functions as an intangible resource that is difficult to imitate because it is embedded in specific cultural, historical, and local identity contexts. This enriches understanding of how competitive advantage can be built not only through technological innovation or operational efficiency but through strategically activated cultural capital (Maurer et al., 2011).

Second, this article offers an expansion of the cultural capital construct in marketing. Research shows that cultural resonance a brand's ability to 'participate in living and dynamic culture' becomes a key factor distinguishing enduring brands from mere passing trends. Within the ergo-iconic value framework, Cultural Resonance Capital operates not only at the symbolic level but is also integrated with functional (ergonomic) and economic dimensions. This aligns with Kantar's findings that brands with high cultural vitality grow nearly six times faster than brands with low cultural vitality (Curth et al., 2026).

Third, this article integrates perspectives of performativity and platform economy into the study of ergo-iconic value. Research on green SMEs shows that the construction of ecological identity through digital media reflects complex interactions among local values, global consumer expectations, and algorithmic logic of digital platforms. These findings affirm that ergo-iconic value is not a static construction but performative shaped, negotiated, and reproduced through representational practices in digital spaces (Trento et al., 2011).

Marketing Strategies Based on Ergo-Iconic Value

Product Differentiation Strategy Development

For marketing practitioners and product developers, understanding iconic attributes provides concrete guidance for creating meaningful differentiation. Research demonstrates that SMEs can add ergo-iconic value to increase buyer interest through product innovation that combines functional value with iconic appeal. In practice, this means:

Integration of local wisdom with modern function: As demonstrated in studies of aromatherapy batik and bamboo batik, the deconstruction of tradition into functional-sensory solutions creates added value not possessed by conventional products.

Strengthening self-identity congruity: Products with iconic value enable consumers to express self-identity through consumption, creating premium loyalty that transcends price considerations.

Digital Marketing and Viral Content Strategies

Research on social media content virality in the West Nusa Tenggara tourism sector shows that ergo-iconic value which combines aesthetic, symbolic, and functional elements—becomes a primary factor attracting public attention and strengthening positive perceptions of destinations. Practical implications include:

- Content that resonates culturally has higher virality potential compared to content relying solely on visual appeal.
- Management of aesthetic and symbolic value in digital content becomes an effective tourism marketing strategy in the social media era, where platforms like TikTok dominate (50%) as sources of tourism information.

Service Marketing and Customer Experience Enhancement

In the context of service industries, research on three-star hotels in ten Indonesian tourism destinations proves that ergo-iconic value can support improvement in hotel marketing performance. Practical implications include:

- Focus on service delivery referring to ergo-iconic value variables encompassing functional comfort, iconic resonance, and symbolic value can become a service differentiation strategy.
- Customer experience integrated between physical comfort (ergonomics) and cultural meaning (iconic) creates deeper and more sustainable customer engagement.

Economic Activation and SME Development

Research on furniture SME development shows that product innovation creating ergo-iconic value becomes a major step for companies to differentiate their products and increase consumer appeal in purchase decision-making. Implications for SMEs include:

- Utilization of marketing intelligence to identify local iconic elements that can be integrated into products.
- Development of marketing intelligence as part of marketing information systems for more effective market penetration.

- Economic activation through multiplier effects: Ergo-iconic value not only increases product sales but also revitalizes local supply chains, creates labor specialization, and strengthens place branding.

Contributions to Marketing Management: A Synthesis

The articulation of iconic attributes of ergo-iconic value provides contributions across four dimensions, as summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Contributions of Ergo-Iconic Value Research to Marketing Management

Dimension	Contribution
Theoretical	Enriches RBV by identifying cultural capital as a strategic resource; expands the cultural capital construct in marketing; integrates performativity and platform economy perspectives.
Methodological	Provides an analytical framework (Cultural Resonance Capital) to examine interactions among functional, symbolic, and economic values in products and services.
Practical	Offers guidance for product differentiation strategies, viral content development, service marketing enhancement, and SME economic activation based on ergo-iconic value.
Policy	Provides a basis for developing place branding and sustainable tourism that integrates technology with local values.

Thus, the conceptualization of ergo-iconic value and its iconic attributes not only enriches marketing theory but also provides practical instruments applicable for business practitioners, marketers, and policymakers in facing increasingly complex and meaning-oriented contemporary market challenges.

5. Conclusions

This article has identified three iconic attributes of ergo-iconic value symbolic and visual appeal, emotional connection and cultural identity, and economic activation and practical value and has offered conceptual novelty in the form of Cultural Resonance Capital as a synthesis framework.

Theoretical Implications: This article enriches ergo-iconic value literature by providing more systematic elaboration of the iconic dimension. The Cultural Resonance Capital framework offers a bridge among ergonomics, aesthetics, and cultural marketing studies. By positioning cultural resonance as an integrative construct operating across visceral, behavioral, and reflective levels of user

interaction, the framework advances understanding of how products and services create sustainable value in meaning-oriented markets.

Practical Implications: For design and marketing practitioners, understanding iconic attributes and Cultural Resonance Capital can serve as guidance in developing products that are not only functionally comfortable but also culturally meaningful and economically valuable. Strategies for content with ergo-iconic value can be used as effective tools in attracting market interest and increasing economic transactions.

Limitations and Future Research Directions: This study is conceptual in nature and requires empirical validation. Future research is recommended to empirically test the Cultural Resonance Capital model in various product and service contexts and to develop valid measurement instruments for the three identified attributes. Specific research directions include: (1) quantitative validation of the Cultural Resonance Capital construct across diverse industry sectors; (2) cross-cultural comparative studies; (3) longitudinal research on Cultural Resonance Capital evolution; (4) platform-specific studies on algorithmic mediation; and (5) intervention studies testing the effectiveness of strategies based on Cultural Resonance Capital principles. In conclusion, the Cultural Resonance Capital framework represents a significant advancement in understanding how products and services create sustainable competitive advantage in contemporary markets. By integrating functional excellence, cultural authenticity, and economic viability into a coherent strategic framework, this research provides both theoretical insights and practical guidance for navigating the increasingly complex, meaning-oriented landscape of Industry 5.0 markets.

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