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Inter-narrative Pattern Based on a Relativistic Cultural Perspective: A Proposed Solution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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Abstract

A perspective based on cultural relativism is noticed as a solution when addressing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) associated with social and human issues. The reality is that when we address the SDGs related to the themes of culture, society, equality, and cooperation, we have to face conflicts and collisions between cultural value systems in terms of identity side. Any personal identity tied to a community's socio-political identity must be seen as shaped in interaction with space and time, that is, within a specific period of time. It is not an inherent characteristic that we must look for because once we assume that identity is the essential property that we must look for, we default to separating this one value from other values. Therefore, comparing and positioning one value with different values is very risky. From the perspective of cultural relativism, we realize that emphasizing one value as superior or more important than another is inappropriate. A metaphysical proposal based on the inter-narrative model can be formulated as a dialogue between differences based on respect and harmony. This proposal emphasizes that harmony between private space and common interests is guaranteed when the "unconditional commandment" of personal happiness is not only meaningful to the owner's personal life and experience but also aims to create a viable network of connections that expands the private sphere, and combines them towards a common purpose. This article will analyze sustainable development goals' social and human issues and propose solutions based on inter-narrative metaphysics.

Keywords: Inter-narrative, Cultural Relativism, Sustainable Development

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Introduction

Among the 17 SDGs under the United Nations 2030 Agenda, the SDGs groups related to the social aspect always bring about controversies and conflicts when the implementation touches the customs, living habits, and behaviors of ethnic minority groups. "Relativity" in Richard Rorty's perspective is consistent with the concept of "liberal hope", honoring the "imagination" and "self-creation" of the cognitive subject. This proposal is applied as a metaphysical foundation of intersubjectivity because cultural relativism does not impose subjectivity on considering the cognitive object.The process of explaining and understanding a cultural, social, and human object must come from within the culture in which the object is formed.

Franz Boas's theory also proves that cultural relativism does not deny the role of individual perspectives and standard systems. However, to evaluate other cultures according to one's standards, one must understand the values and standards of other cultures and not be bound by the values and standards of one's own culture. This leads to planning in thinking and action when implementing the SDGs related to the social aspect that different social contexts create different values and standards. This does not mean that we should unconditionally accept other cultural models without bias in their context. Every assessment is always personal. Each individual has the right to comment and re-describe the object according to cognitive ability, data, and perspective. However, a standard model for sustainable development must go beyond individual values to aim at a common value.

1. Multidimensional Perspectives on a Custom

The story of sustainable development and its social and human aspects is always an essential and sensitive topic. All development plans and solutions must not stand within the interests and care of people. People are both the subject and the object of sustainable development. However, it is sensitive in that, in approaching and providing solutions related to people and society, it is inevitable to avoid sensitive and difficult-to-access topics, which are the customs that have been attached for a long time in ethnic communities. These customs sometimes contradict sustainable development goals and even cause negative consequences.

Let's take an example of a long-standing custom, which is "Bride kidnapping" (pulling wife) is a common practice among the Hmong community in northern Vietnam.

Sung Thi So, a Hmong girl born in 2002, was kidnapped and forced to be a wife three times. The last time she was kidnapped, she thought about committing suicide to free herself. However, all the fears and prohibitions were small compared to the fear of missing out on the university entrance exam. The dream of creating a better life for herself was enough to keep her alive.

A few months after escaping to her parents' home, Sung Thi So was admitted to Hanoi Law University with an impressive score of 28.5 out of 30 in the university entrance exam. That same year, her resilience and determination helped her win the Yen Bai "Outstanding Ethnic Minority Student" award for the 2020-2021 school year.

"After being kidnapped three times to be a wife, I was determined to study law. I want girls like me in remote areas to have equal access to education, as well as respect and freedom to choose their marriage path," So shared.[1]

In the past, despite studying at a boarding school in the district, Sung Thi So still became a victim of bride kidnapping. The first time So experienced such a thing was in 8th grade. A strange boy from a neighboring village kidnapped her during the local New Year festival. The second time, she was kidnapped by a boy from another village just before she entered high school.

From a sympathetic perspective, we would probably be outraged and want to abolish this custom immediately. A custom that, from the perspective of equality and fairness for women, is crazy and backward. However, let us look at another perspective.

The custom of "bride kidnapping" is a unique tradition only found in the Hmong ethnic minority. In ancient times, material products such as food or jewelry were in short supply due to backward living and production conditions and low labor productivity. Meanwhile, marriage ceremonies and customs required expensive wedding gifts such as silver coins, buffaloes, pigs, chickens, wine, rice, etc.; some men at that time could not afford to get married.

There were Hmong couples who loved each other and promised to live together for life, but due to difficulties, they could not come together; moreover, due to self-respect, the girls could not go live with the boys before officially getting engaged. Therefore, the Hmong came up with the idea of "bride kidnapping" for couples in difficulty to solve their difficulties and start married life. If the couple loves each other from before but does not have enough money to pay the dowry or the girl's parents disagree, the two will discuss a plan for the man to perform the wife-capturing ceremony.

On the appointed day, the man appears with his friends to "capture" the girl and bring her home. The "pulling wife" custom usually occurs at night. According to customs, once the girl has gone to the groom's house, her soul has entered it, and it is not easy to return. On the third day, the groom's family sends someone to the bride's house to officially inform that the girl has been taken to the groom's house to get married, and at the same time, ask the bride's family for permission to hold the wedding ceremony, set the time and agree on the gifts. According to Hmong tradition, the wife-capturing ceremony must always be held, then the wedding can take place. The custom of catching wives usually takes place in early spring. According to the Hmong people, "pulling wives" is a good custom, both a part of the wedding ceremony as a form of "reasoning" of the Hmong people and also shows the value of women because when a woman is pulled back to be a wife, it proves her value. Therefore, many women are proud to be "pulling wife," and men, when they decide to "pull wives," must be responsible for their wives.[2]

2. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Concerning the Social Aspect

In the United Nations 2030 Agenda, member states agreed on 17 sustainable development goals in 2015. These goals are divided into three main groups according to the "wedding

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[1] Source: https://e.vnexpress.net/news/trend/a-hmong-girls-journey-from-kidnapped-to-attorney-4721696.html
[2] Source: https://en.qdnd.vn/culture-sports/culture/bride-kidnapping-a-fine-custom-of-hmong-people-537528

cake" model: economic, social, and environmental aspects. In the group of the Social Goals and Indicators, including SDG 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, and 16, are considered an important and essential dimension to measure the development of a country and the sustainability of the whole world because they focus on enhancing and maintaining the productivity of human resources through successive generations. This group of goals requires the utilization and maintenance of essential social services such as health and education and ensuring social equity in distributing natural resources without depleting them. The social dimension of the SDGs includes a set of targets and indicators that measure overall progress and are linked to other economic and environmental dimensions.

- SDG 3 aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages.
- SDG 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, ensuring women's rights to access health care and education services and to participate fully in political and economic life.
- SDG 6 aims to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- SDG 10 aims to reduce inequalities within and between countries.
- SDG 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

When we talk about social goals and indicators, it is clear that the issues we analyze in the example of the "pulling wife" custom of the Hmong people in northern Vietnam can easily lead to sensitive and negative consequences. How do we approach this issue most accurately? That is the first question. The next question is how do we prevent a custom closely linked to the lifestyle and production of ethnic minorities from affecting the overall picture of development for the common good?

3. A Relativistic Cultural Perspective

Balancing and reconciling sustainable development goals that bring shared values to the community and cultural characteristics of local and regional areas requires an inter-narrative approach based on cultural relativism.

First, let us discuss the issue of the individual and the community. According to Richard Rorty, the formation of an individual's self cannot be separated from the network of interactions between him/her and the external environment to which he/she belongs. The self must be seen as an entity with fundamental characteristics dependent of the external environment.

> Our language, as much as our bodies, are shaped by our environment. Our languages could no more be "out of touch" with our environment (grandiosely the world) than our bodies could […] Rorty is thoroughly Darwinian. That is, like all the other pragmatists, Rorty, takes Darwin seriously and tailors his account to fit and build on Darwin. (Nielsen, *Richard Rorty* in Shook & Margolis, 2009, p. 132)

That is, an individual cannot be understood as an entity that exists independently of the living spaces and interactions of which he/she is a member. Rorty's consistent view has been that the subject can only form an experienced self in interaction with others in a specific context.

This helps us understand clearly the approach to the relationship between individual life and community life.

In a follow-up commentary, Patricia Rohrer has linked Rorty's ideas to Taylor's in a more nuanced and practically feasible way by softening Rorty's beliefs and comparing them to Charles Taylor's ideas that the purpose of the private sphere is to strive for private happiness (the meaning of life) and the purpose of the community is to pursue common interests rather than opposed interests.

Rorty proposes a cultural relativism in which it is inappropriate to emphasize one value as dominant or more important than another. Any personal identity related to the sociopolitical identity of a community must be seen as formed in interaction with space and time, that is, a specific period. It is not an inherent feature that we have to find because once we assume that identity is an essential property that we have to find, we automatically separate one value from others and thus risk comparing and positioning one value against others. Harmony between private happiness and the common good is ensured when the "unconditional commandment" for private happiness makes sense for the subject's personal life and experience and aims to create a viable network of connections that expand the private sphere and incorporate the communal purpose.

Rohrer's account of "unconditional commandments" focuses primarily on the social and moral conditions in the search for a rational and non-confrontational extension between individuals and communities. As Taylor suggests, the self is defined by identifications and commitments that "which provide the frame or horizon within [...] which I am capable of taking a stand."[3] An individual's identity cannot defined by rational or metaphysical grounds but on moral and spiritual commitments to "the nation or tradition to which they belong."[4] However, this can only happen if we define the self in a larger dimension – a moral orientation – that exists not only in the private sphere but also as the individual's ability to govern space.

It is a type of cultural relativism that does not impose itself on how an object of cognition is viewed. The process of interpretation and understanding must come from within the culture in which the object is formed. This perspective is similar to the theory proposed by Franz Boas and his colleagues, who proposed a cultural relativism that does not deny the role of personal perspectives and systems of standards. However, to evaluate other cultures according to an individual's standards, the individual must understand the values and standards of other cultures and not be bound by the values and standards of his own culture. This proposal also emphasizes that different social contexts create different values and standards. However, this does not mean we should unconditionally accept other cultural models unbiased in their context. Every evaluation is always personal. Each individual has the right to comment on and describe the subject according to his or her cognitive abilities, data, and views.

Conclusion

Under Vietnam's Penal Code, so-called "bride kidnapping" (or pulling wife) can be charged with unlawful arrest, detention, or imprisonment and face up to two years in prison or up to

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[3] See Taylor, Charles (1989), pp. 27.
[4] Ibid., pp. 27.

ten years if the crime is considered severe. Those who assist in the kidnapping can also be prosecuted as accomplices.

In a "bride kidnapping" incident that occurred in Quy Hop district, Nghe An province, in 2017, the men involved in the attempted kidnapping of a young girl were summoned for a warning. Authorities in many mountainous areas in northern Vietnam have been asked to encourage local ethnic communities to abandon their outdated and illegal "bride kidnapping" practice. Legal experts admit that it will only change for a while because the practice is deeply ingrained in the lives and culture of local people.

The inter-narrative approach, based on cultural relativism, provides a cognitive and educational solution to address sustainable development goals and ensure harmony in preserving Indigenous cultural values.

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Theater for Development: The Existence and Transformation of Folk Performances in the East Java Across the Time

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Abstract

Historically, Theatre for Development (TfD) cannot be separated from the history of pre-colonialism, especially that which occurred in third world countries. TfD is a part of development communication, and it has become an important part of several countries, especially third world countries, although its practice is not as widespread as before. In Indonesia, before the existence of modern entertainment media such as television and social media, people grew up with folk performance (Pertura). Folk Performance has lived through the ages because of the inheritance process carried out by its adherents. Communication for development through folk performance continues to live among themselves, originates from their original culture and is useful as a means of interacting on different occasions. Thus, it is not uncommon for them to pass on moral values using this media to their descendants. As a multicultural country, every region in Indonesia has many styles of folk performances. In East Java, *ludruk* is local wisdom in the form of folk performance which still exists as traditional entertainment. The plays brought to the stage vary from social criticism, politics, advice on moral values to realities that are close to everyday life. However, the nuances of the criticism were mixed into something humorous so that it was popular with public. By using qualitative-explorative approach and data collection from with literature study, this paper will explain the transformation of Theatre for Development in East Java which still exists today using a development communication perspective.

Keywords: Development Communication, Folk Performance, Transformation

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Introduction

In terms of the development process, targets would not be achieved unless those targets are communicated. Thus, to mitigate that possibility, development communication is indispensable (Sarvaes, 2008). Development communication is defined as a communication strategy integrated with development projects. According to Mefalopulos (2008), development communication "supports sustainable change in development" precipitates the conducive environment for development, assesses risks and opportunities, and disseminates information which drives social change. Thus, Childers & Colle in Sarvaes (2008) state that communication is a vital component in development programs.

There are a range of approaches in development communication, one of which is through theatrical performance. In *The Handbook of Development Communication and Social Change* (2014), this approach is referred to as *Theater for Development* (TfD) which is defined as an instrument that uses drama and theater to catalyze social changes within the framework of development. For Asante & Yirenkyi (2018), Theater for development is a development approach which involves the public to establish development actions. Wilson (1994) in Asante & Yirenkyi (2018) also stated that theater for development illustrates the reality through a 'slice-of-life representation', performed with costumes and dialogues which showcase life experiences and trigger reactions from the audiences.

Several previous studies about TfD, such as *Theater as an Agent of Change: Mobilising Against Marijuana Addiction in Tombia Ekpetiama Community in Bayelsa State* (2020) and *Theater for development in contemporary Nigeria: problems and prospects* (2020) show that theatrical approach can represent social issues in a dramatic manner, so audiences can discern those issues in fresh and critical ways.

In Indonesia, the Theater for Development approach is manifested through folk performances. Waluyo & Rosmawati (2014) define folk performance as a traditional art in the form of folk-art performance reproduced by local culture. As a socio-cultural symbol, folk performance acts as value-filled entertainment that can reinforce social identity. Harahap (2012) denotes the strong attractiveness of folk performance, because it has been born and cultivated among society, which potentially reach a broader audience (one to many).

Folk performances in Indonesia are usually showcased in a traditional art exhibition based on each local culture (Panduan Pembinaan Pertura Kota Surabaya, 2018). Along with the Community Information Group (KIM), Media Supervisor Group, and Professional Organization Communication Institution, folk performance has the responsibility to disseminate appropriate information according to local needs and characteristics, aligned with the Regulation of the Minister of Communication and Information of the Republic of Indonesia No. 08/PER/M.KOMINFO/6/2010 about the guidelines for the development and empowerment of social communication institutions. Folk performance has the responsibility to disseminate information and absorb community aspirations.

The Province of East Java is one of the regions in Indonesia, which has a strong historical relationship with Theater for Development. For instance, it is noted that *Ludruk* was an instrument used to criticize the Japanese colonialism in Surabaya (Waluyo, 2000). *Ludruk* itself can be defined as a folk performance in the form of traditional theatrical art from Surabaya, East Java. The strong relationship between Theater for Development praxis in East Java folk performance is the basis of this research as a contribution to Development

Communication discipline by exploring its approaches in theatrical performances. Using the qualitative-explorative approach, as well as data collection through literature study, this research aims to explore the existence and transformation of folk performance in East Java as a tool for social change.

Theoretical Framework

Theater for Development

Theater for development/ popular theater/ Community theater/ folk Theater is a theory that uses theatrical performance as a tool for social interventions, such as driving social changes, enhancing critical consciousness, and empowering communities to elevate their quality of life. According to Asante & Yirenkyi (2018), theater for development is a development approach, which involves community in establishing the development actions.

Theater has the ability to illustrate reality through story-telling. Wilson (1994) in Asante & Yirenkyi (2018) refers to it as a (slice-of-life representation), complete with costumes and dialogue that shares a relatable story and evokes reactions from the audiences. Theater for development (TfD) is a medium to drive community participation in the development process democratically (World Bank, 1994). Therefore, it is obvious that theater for development becomes a model of participative development communication, challenging the elitist communication model. Its core focuses are to 'fix' and empower poor and underdeveloped communities with resources and knowledge from their own (Asante, 2016; Asante & Yirenkyi, 2018).

According to Prentki (1998), there are two major theories related to the development of TfD; the *Critical Pedagogy* popularized by Paulo Freire in the 1960s and *Participatory/Popular Theater* popularized by Augusto Boal Popule through his work, *theater of the oppressed* (1970-1980). As stated by Freire (1972) in Prentki (1998), "*Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue, there is no communication, and without communication, there can be no true education.*" Freire's ideas influence the theater for development mode because it operates through dialogues. Thus, this model's orientation is to build consciousness in the form of reflections to recognize the power that shapes community.

Result and Discussion

Transformation of Folk Performance as a Tool for Social Change Throughout the Ages

The rapid enhancement of digital technology has an immense impact on the communication process within society. However, there are some communities which still benefit from the utilization of traditional communication media (Panduan Pembinaan Pertura Kota Surabaya, 2018). Traditional media cannot be separated from traditional art, which is a form of art extracted from folklores in traditional media (Nurudin, 2004). Folk performance can be defined as a traditional art that is birthed and cultivated within a society, which manifests in a range of forms, such as puppetry, folk story-tellings, folk dances, ballads, and comedies (Harun & Ardianto, 2012). In its development, folk performance was enhanced and empowered by the government that utilizes it as a development communication medium. It means that in the traditional performance, government can disseminate and circulate

information through lores and narrations delivered by artists (Panduan Pembinaan Pertura Kota Surabaya, 2018).

That statement is supported by the existence of the Regulation of the Minister of Communication and Information of the Republic of Indonesia No. 08/PER/M.KOMINFO/ 6/201 about the guidelines for the development and empowerment of social communication institutions. Folk performance has the duty to disseminate information and absorb community aspiration. Here, folk performance is expected to be an alternative communication and information medium for communities with certain characteristics. Along with the Community Information Group (KIM), Media Supervisor Group, and Professional Organization Communication Institution, folk performance has the responsibility to disseminate appropriate information according to the local needs and characteristics. Although, there are some principles that should be considered; 1) Sinergy, 2) Structured, 3) measured, 4) integrated, 5) Participatory, 6) Sustainability, 7) Collaboration.

Specifically, in article (4), development and empowerment of social communication institution in this context is directed to:
  a. Actualize national information dissemination network;
  b. Drive community participation in democracy and development, as well as act as an enhancer of value;
  c. Drive mass media quality improvement and public information literacy; and
  d. Develop an information society.

According to Harahap (2012), folk performance has a strong attractive quality that has been cultivated among the people. Moreover, in the context of rural communities, development communication through folk performance has a great possibility to reach a broad audience. In Indonesia, folk performance becomes an important part of its history. There are at least four crucial periods that explain the role of folk performance as a medium to drive social change (Waluyo, 2000; Panduan Pembinaan Pertura Kota Surabaya, 2018). Those are:
  1) Folk Performance during pre-independence/colonialism period
     In this period, folk performance was a tool for resisting colonial power.
  2) Folk Performance during the old order
     Became a tool for propaganda of the authorized party.
  3) Folk Performance during the new order
     In this period, it became an Enlightenment platform (top-down) or development communication media for government to the public.
  4) Folk Performance during the post reformation – present days
     Through the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, it collaborates with the government to disseminate development messages and cultural preservation channel.

The four periods explain the important role of folk performance in Indonesia until the present days. Folk performance as a development communication medium can be enjoyed by all levels of society with a various range of education levels due to its relatable and entertaining messages, which can easily influence people's behavior. According to Istiyanto (2003), folk performance lives within and comes from the community and acts as an interaction platform in one different opportunity. Thus, it is not rare that moral values are inherited strongly in the community.

The need for traditional communication media will always live based on the need for moral inheritance that the community considers valuable, effortless, and unaffected by foreign

cultures. Folk performance can be defined as a local wisdom, which is a local idea that is wise, full of discernment, and positive, cultivated and subscribed by the community (Sartini, 2004). This results in making folk performance survive the ages and reinforced due to the continuous inheritance.

Folk Performance: Traditional Style of Development Communication Agents in East Java

Figure 1: Theater for Development Praxis in Mojokerto Regency
(Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Mbyi0sc8CQ&t=8256s)

In East Java, Theater for Development practices still exist and are popular until these days. As discussed previously, the post-reformation period of Theater for Development has been guided by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics as a government's ally in disseminating development messages and preserving culture.

On November 7th 2022, the regent of Mojokerto Regency carried out an outreach on excise regulations at the Pulorejo Village Field, Dawarblandong District, using the medium of folk performances. There, the regent of Mojokerto used folk performances including Reog Ponorogo, Campursari, traditional dances, and slapstick as development communication agents. The messages focus on the issue of controlling the circulation of illegal cigarettes, considering that excise on tobacco products is one of the sources of national income that are used for development and community welfare.

Development messages against illegal cigarettes are conveyed through the narrative of *dagelan* performances (slapstick). The folk performance that becomes a development communication agent comes from their authentic local culture. Thus, everyone in Mojokerto Regency, despite their educational level, could enjoy the light and entertaining messages delivered by the performance.
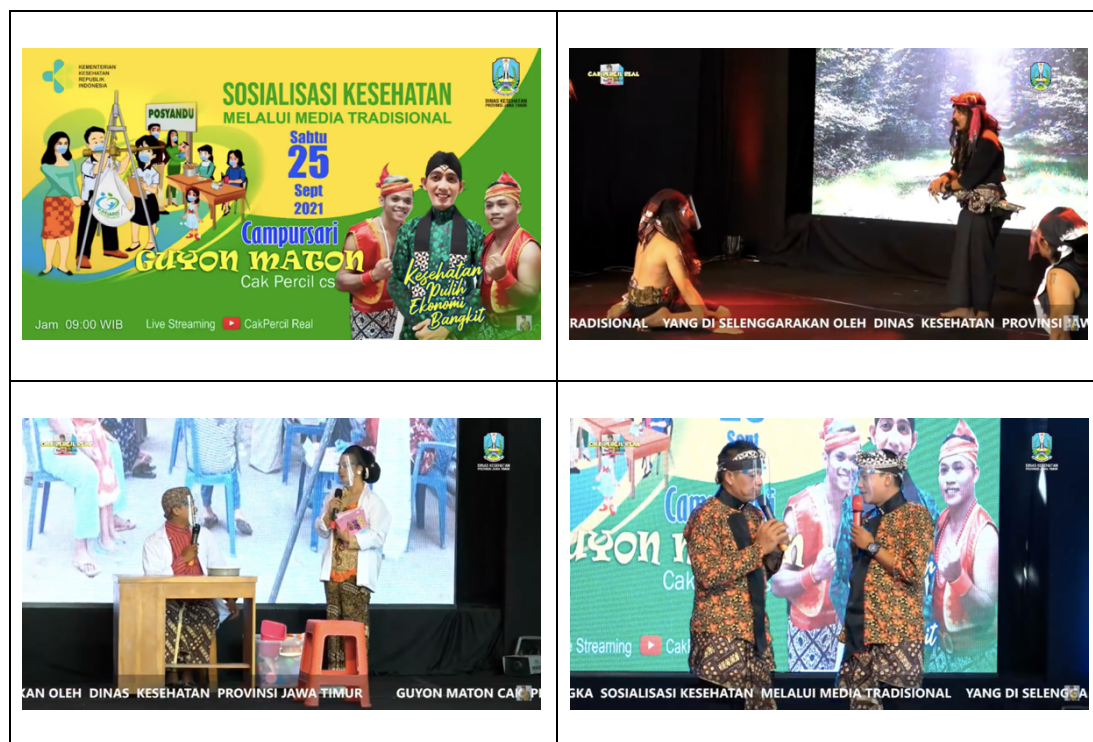
Figure 2: Outreach on Health Issues by the East Java Provinvial Health Service
Through Folk Performances
(Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GU9_1K45Ggg&t=7462s)

On September 25th 2021, the East Java Provincial Health Service carried out an out reach activity for public health services such as Posyandu through slapstick folk performances. In the development communication process, the messages conveyed included health facilities for pregnant women, hours of health examination services, and the community's rights in accessing health services. Different from the Mojokerto Regency which holds performances in open fields, the East Java Provincial Health Service did this via Youtube live stream due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 3: Folk Performance in Surabaya
(Source: Tribunjatim.com; Panduan Pembinaan Pertura Kota Surabaya, 2018)

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Surabaya City government held folk performances every once a month. One of which was *Ludruk* that was performed in each sub-district to provide entertainment and outreach with traditional nuances towards the community.

In 2017-2019, folk performance became one of the development communication approaches which turned into a top priority for the Surabaya Mayor in providing direction, outreach, training, and extension for the community.

Ludruk hit its golden age in the New Order era because it dominated everyone's preference of entertainment. The development and transformation over the age have made lude increasingly forgotten. Capturing the state of *Ludruk* which has been increasingly being run over, the government of Surabaya City collaborates with *Ludruk* artists to preserve the tradition. Instead of modernizing *Ludruk* by providing them with indoor theater buildings, the governor teamed up with them and assigned them the duty as a development communication agent of Surabaya City Government.

Conclusion

There are four crucial periods that explain the role of folk performances, such as a tool of resistance against colonialism, a tool for propaganda of the party in power, a tool for information or development communication media for the government (top-down) and its partners in delivering messages, as well as preserving culture. Folk performances can still exist and live across the ages because of several groups that still utilize traditional media which later on are reinforced by the government by assigning them the duty of development communication agents. The provincial government of Eat Java still uses folk performances for development communication while adapting to the modern conditions, for example by broadcasting them via online live stream or when it becomes a routine program (act as a primary tool) in disseminating development messages. This innovation was implemented with the hope that folk performances could become an alternative medium of communication and information for the people.

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An Exploratory Study to Reconcile Urdu Language and Contemporary Logo Design

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Abstract

This study explores the integration of traditional Urdu script with contemporary logo design principles to create a cross-cultural visual style that retains cultural authenticity while appealing to global audiences. Urdu script, known for its fluidity and unique ligature-based system, is prominent in South Asia, especially in Pakistan and India. Yet, much of the graphic design in these regions has been shaped by Western influences, limiting the development of Urdu-specific typography in modern branding. To address this gap, the study employed four distinct design approaches: (1) Non-Ligature Form: breaking down Urdu's conventional ligatures to present letters in disconnected forms, allowing designers to experiment with shapes and new arrangements; (2) Geometric Shapes: using fundamental shapes like circles, squares, and rectangles as structural frames for Urdu characters, thus blending traditional typography with minimalist modern aesthetics; (3) Single-Letter Design: isolating individual Urdu letters as standalone design elements, showcasing their unique forms and enhancing their use as recognizable symbols; and (4) Conceptual Design: applying Gestalt principles to create symbolic and visually engaging logos, where Urdu characters take on conceptual shapes to convey brand meanings. Through these approaches, the study illustrates how Urdu script can be adapted to contemporary branding while preserving its cultural essence. The final case study on the Pakola brand, a popular Pakistani beverage, demonstrates how these design methods can generate logos that are both locally resonant and globally recognizable. This hybrid design style offers a foundation for future Urdu typography development, fostering innovative design that bridges cultural heritage with modern visual communication (Boutros, 2007; Shehab & Nawar, 2020).

Keywords: Urdu, Graphic Design, Calligraphy, Cross-Cultural Communication, Branding, Logo Design, Contemporary Logo, Conceptual Logo, Typographic Logo, Typography

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Introduction

Languages shape visual communication, with each script offering unique design potential. While English is dominant in international design, Urdu holds a significant place in South Asia. With over 230 million speakers worldwide, Urdu's script presents a flowing, cursive structure that is like Arabic and Farsi in appearance but distinct in alphabet and phonetics (Munir & Ifftikhar, 2024). Unlike English, which easily lends itself to typographic experimentation, Urdu typography remains closely tied to traditional calligraphy, limiting its use in contemporary design (Boutros, 2007).

In response to the growing need for multicultural communication, this research proposes a fresh approach: blending Urdu script elements with modern typographic principles. Such integration could enable Urdu to function visually beyond its verbal content, allowing for innovative logo designs that resonate across cultures. By exploring the visual applications of Urdu without the constraint of its customary ligature forms, we open new opportunities for designers to experiment and redefine how Urdu script communicates meaning (Duncan, 2020).

Historical Context of Script and Design

Urdu script traces its lineage to early visual communication systems, evolving through prehistoric art, Mesopotamian logographs, Egyptian hieroglyphics, and the Greek alphabet. Each of these ancient systems laid essential groundwork for Urdu's distinctive form.

1. Prehistoric Communication: Over 40,000 years ago, early humans used cave paintings and petroglyphs to tell stories and convey beliefs visually. This foundational use of symbols to represent ideas influenced the development of structured writing systems that followed (Little, 2021) (Figure 1).

2. Mesopotamian Logographs: Around 3200 BCE, Sumerians created cuneiform, one of the first writing systems, which evolved from pictographs to logographs, allowing symbols to represent words and ideas. This move to abstract symbols paved the way for scripts like Urdu, which blends phonetic and symbolic elements (Spar, 2004) (Figure 2).

3. Egyptian Hieroglyphics: Egyptian hieroglyphics combined pictorial symbols and phonetics to represent sounds and meanings. This layered system inspired later scripts, including Urdu, by demonstrating how symbols could convey complex meanings through both form and sound (The British Museum, 2024) (Figure 3).

4. Greek Alphabet: The Phoenician alphabet introduced symbols for sounds, later adapted by the Greeks, marking a shift to phonetic alphabets. This phonetic focus influenced Urdu's approach to representing sounds through distinct letter shapes (Howitt, 2020) (Figure 4).

Urdu's cursive structure, symbolic ligatures, and phonetic versatility reflect these historical influences, making it a rich, visually expressive script well-suited for innovative design. The evolution of graphic design in Arab and Persian regions was deeply influenced by social and political factors, which encouraged designers to experiment with traditional scripts. As Arab designers migrated to the West, they began developing typefaces that combined Arabic calligraphy with Western typographic styles, leading to the creation of new fonts that retained

cultural elements but were adapted for broader audiences (Shehab & Nawar, 2020). Urdu, despite its close ties to Arabic and Persian scripts, has not experienced the same typographic evolution due to limited development within Pakistan's design industry. This has resulted in a gap in Urdu typography, which remains heavily reliant on calligraphy (Ijaz et al., 2022).
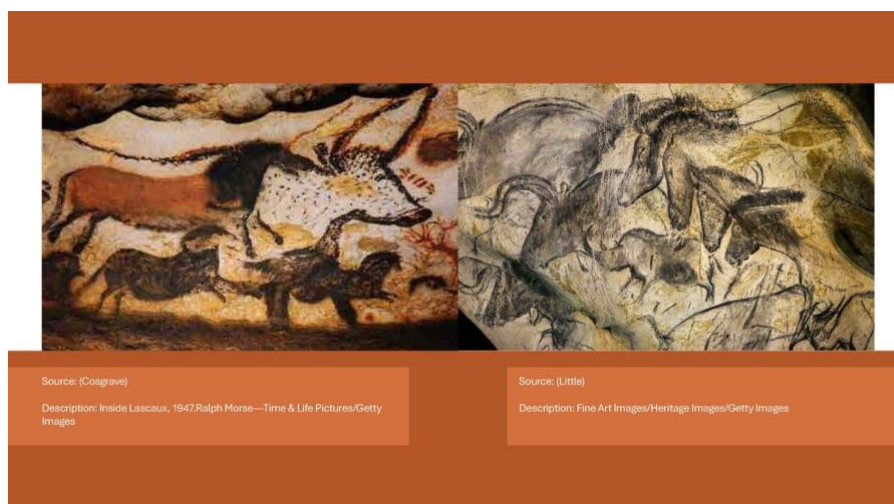
Figure 1: Prehistoric Cave Paintings
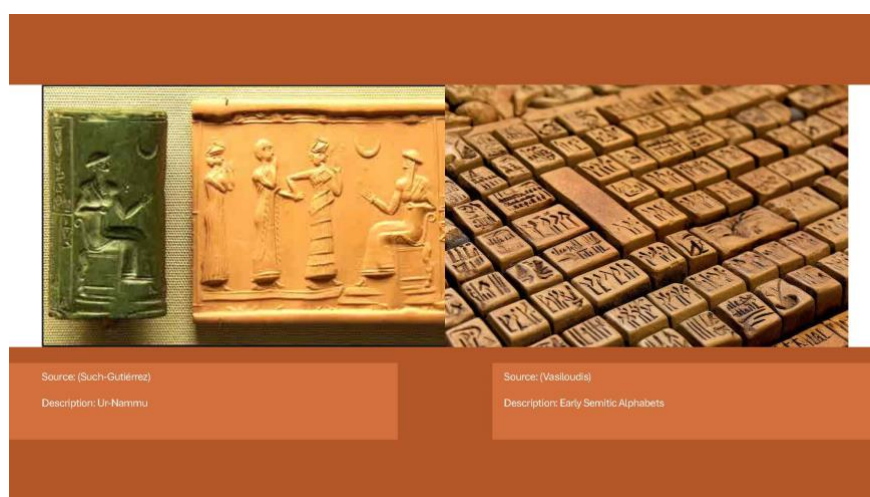
Figure 2: Mesopotamian Logographs
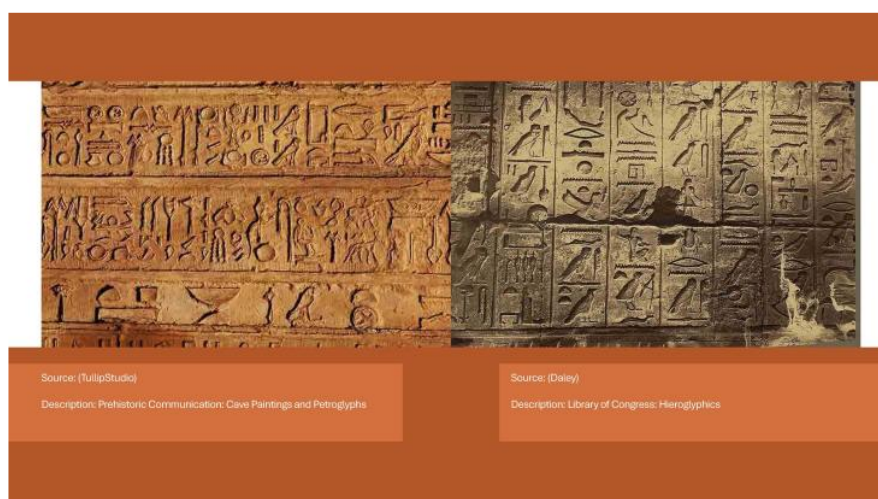
Figure 3: Egyptian Hieroglyphs
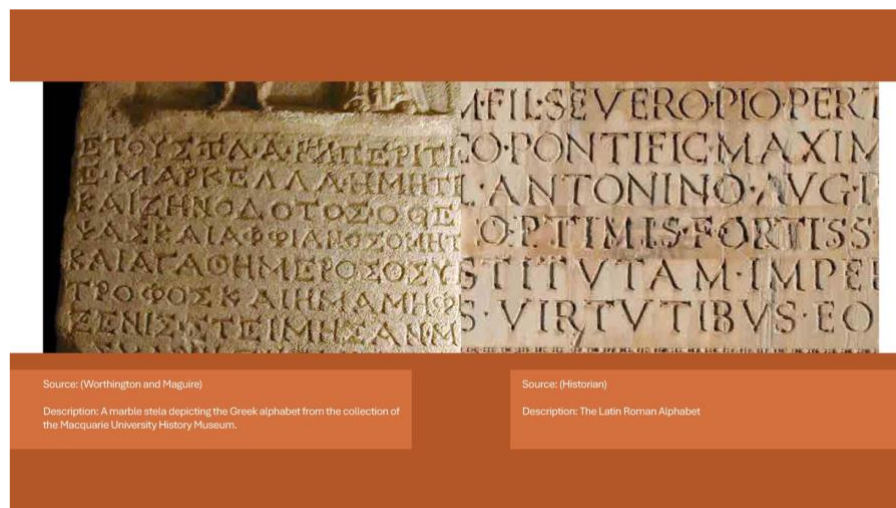
Figure 4: Greek Alphabet Tablets

Study Focus

This research explores how to treat Urdu script as a purely visual form, minimizing its traditional verbal associations. By focusing on established Pakistani brands, in this case, Pakola, this study emphasizes experimental design approaches without altering brand identity. Pakola, with its association with Pakistan's green national color, serves as a canvas for this exploration, representing how Urdu script could be visually modified to maintain cultural significance while achieving a modern look (Mooney & Coorey, 2017).

Methodology and Preliminary Brand Experiments

To develop a foundation for the Pakola brand logo, preliminary experiments were conducted with three other prominent Pakistani brands: Qarshi, Shan, and Bundu Khan. These projects allowed us to explore different approaches to Urdu typography, blending the script with various conceptual and geometric elements.

1. Qarshi (Ligatures): Qarshi's logo experimentation focused on the rich ligature style of Urdu script, preserving the flowing connections between letters. This approach emphasized the beauty and harmony in Urdu ligatures, making it possible to create a brand identity that speaks to purity and wellness. Ligatures were manipulated to maintain readability while giving the logo a refined, organic look that fits with Qarshi's brand image of health and natural products (O'Connor, 2015) (Figure 5-10).

2. Shan (Conceptual): Shan Foods, known for its spices, inspired us to explore Urdu typography through conceptual design. Using Gestalt principles, Urdu letters were stylized in a way that suggested concepts of freshness, quality, and culinary heritage. The letterforms were modified to incorporate crown-like shapes, reflecting the brand's emphasis on premium quality. This design exercise highlighted how Urdu script could visually convey product qualities without relying on literal representations, adding depth to the logo through symbolic elements (Martin & James, 2022) (Figures 11-16).

3. Bundu Khan (Geometric Shapes and Conceptual Letter Shape): For Bundu Khan, a popular Pakistani restaurant brand, geometric shapes were experimented with to represent Urdu characters. Squares, circles, and rectangles were used to explore how Urdu letters

could be framed to maintain both cultural relevance and aesthetic appeal. This geometric structuring simplified Urdu forms, enabling a minimalist, modern look that diverged from traditional calligraphic style but retained cultural significance. The logo also incorporated single-letter designs, such as a "ب" shape that symbolized the food the brand is famous for, emphasizing Bundu Khan's traditional culinary roots in a contemporary format (Bokhua, 2022; Duncan, 2020) (Figures 17-22).

Figure 5: Qarshi Ligature Concept
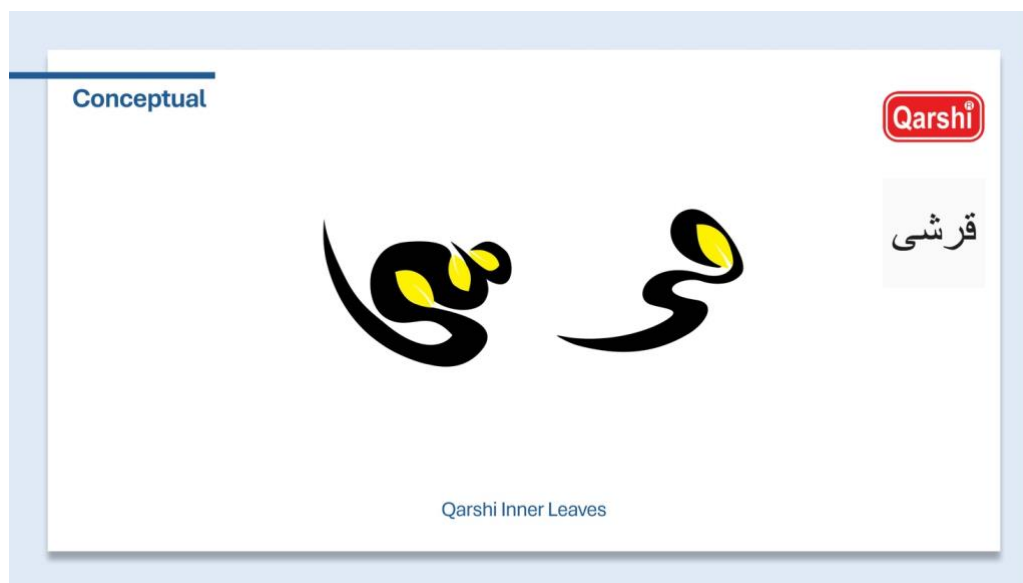
Figure 6: Qarshi Inner Leaves
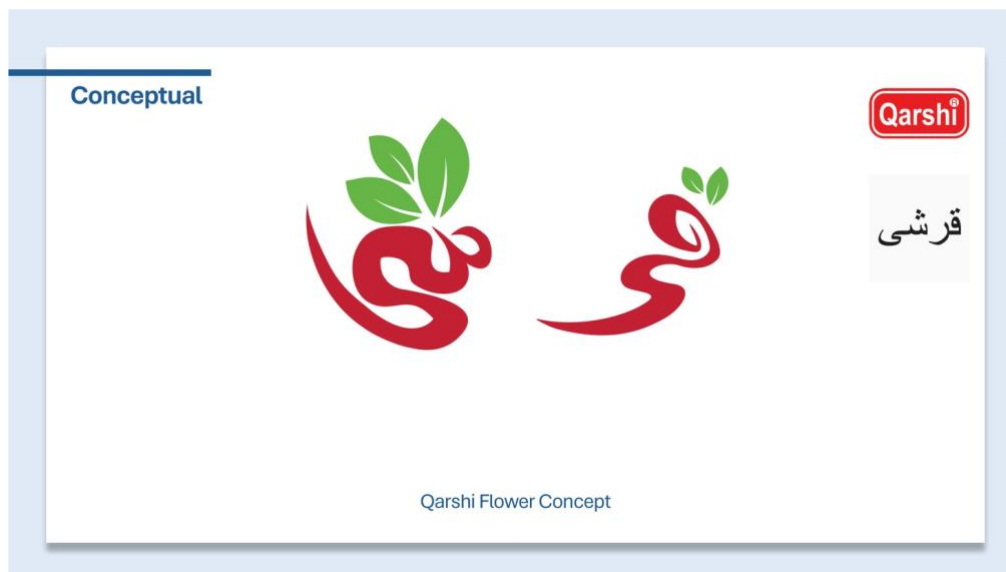
Figure 7: Qarshi Flower Concept
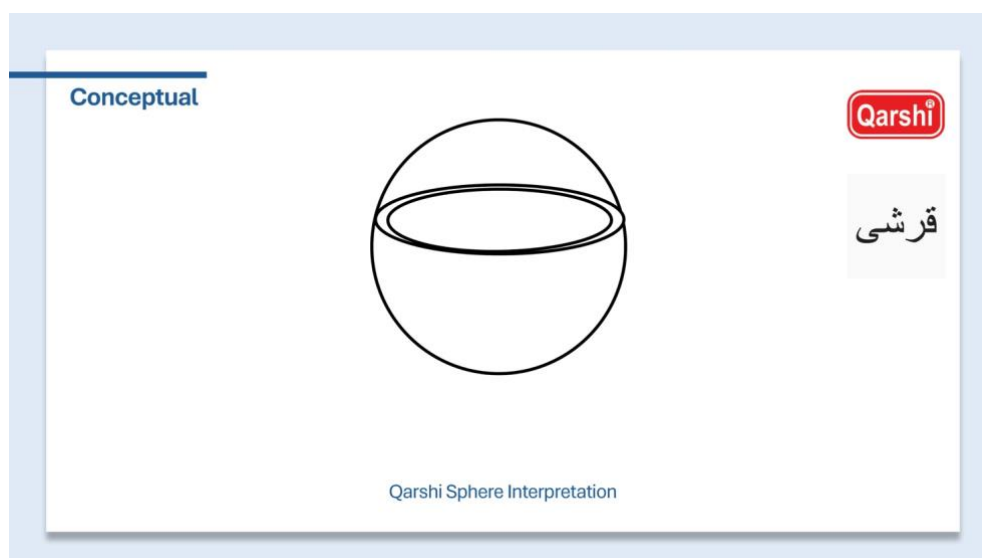
Figure 8: Qarshi Sphere

Figure 9: Qarshi Bowl Concept
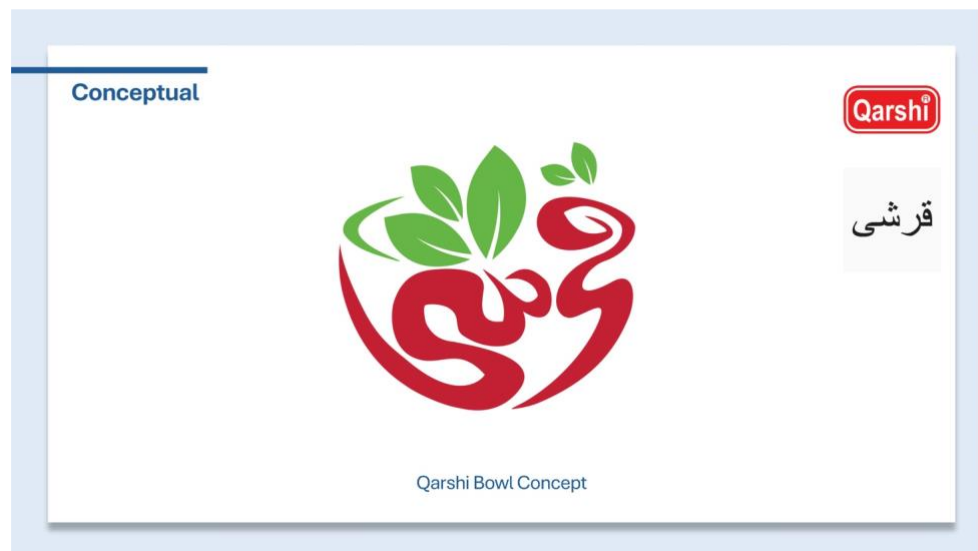
Figure 10: Qarshi Flower Bowl
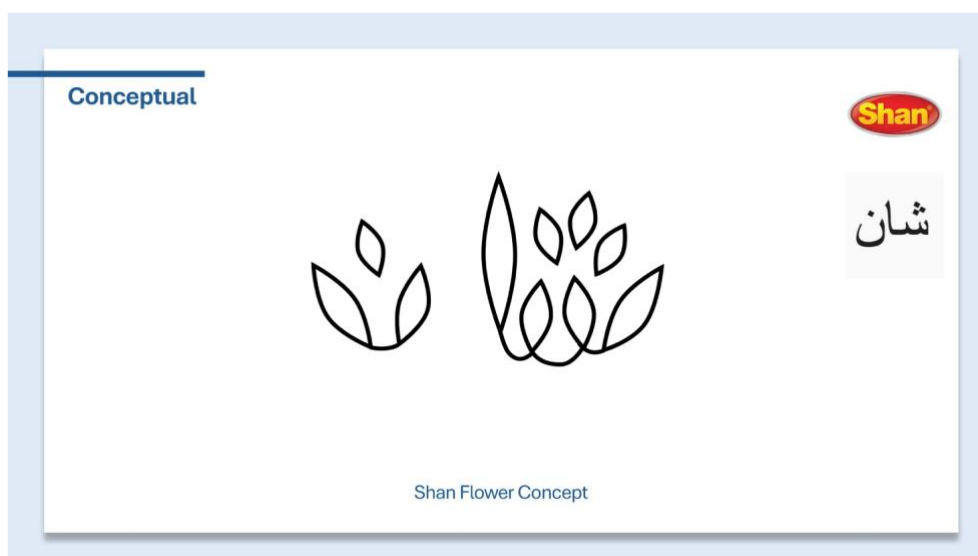
Figure 11: Shan Flower

Figure 12: Shan Crown
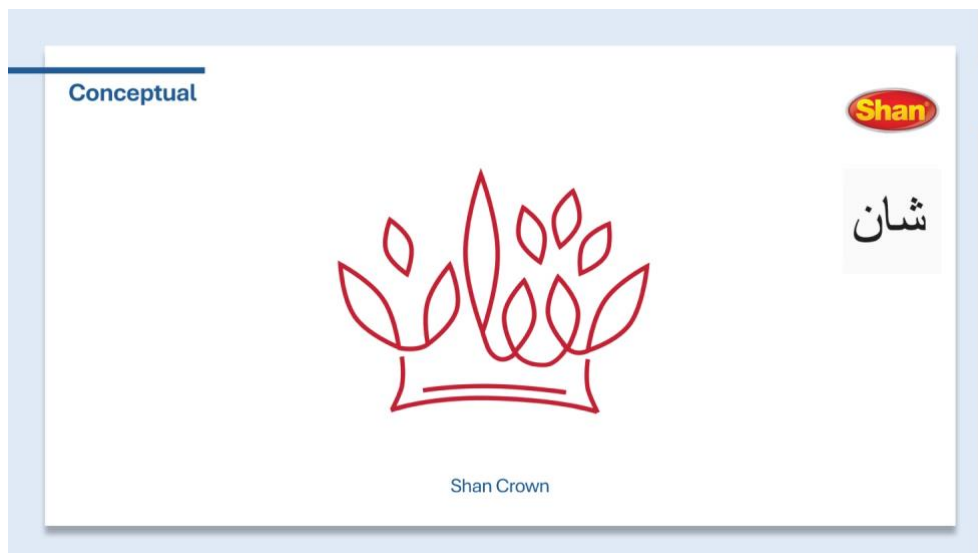
Figure 13: Shan Crown
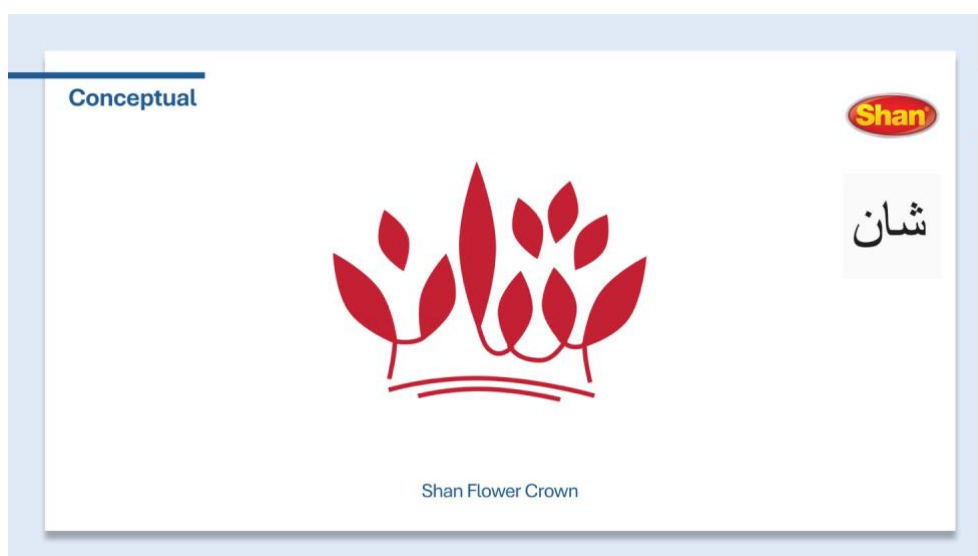
Figure 14: Shan Flower Crown
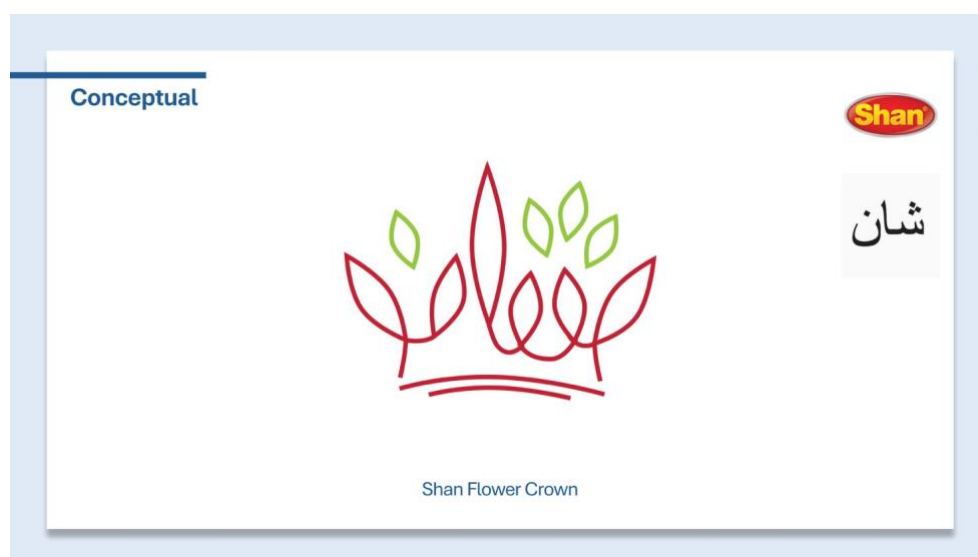
Figure 15: Shan Flower Crown

Figure 16: Shan Flower Crown
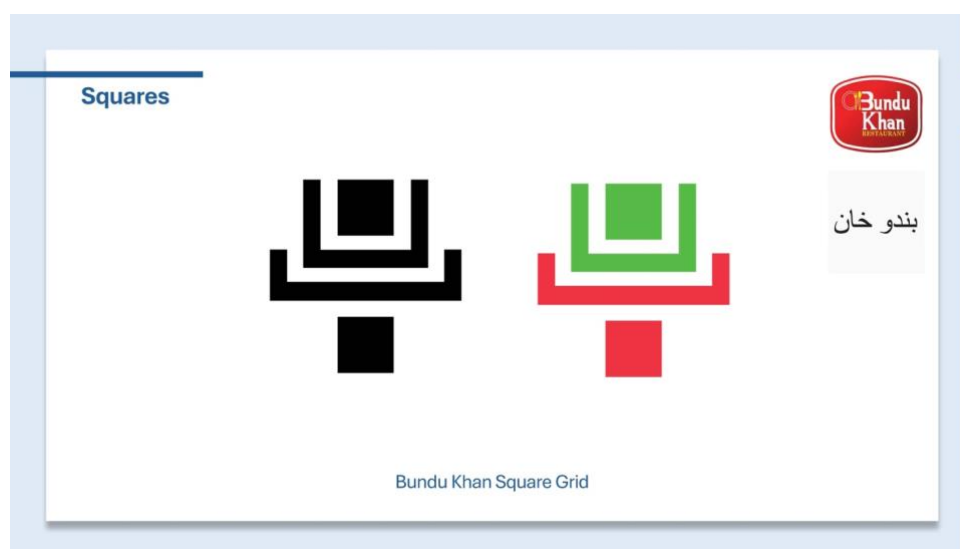
Figure 17: Bundu Khan Square Grid
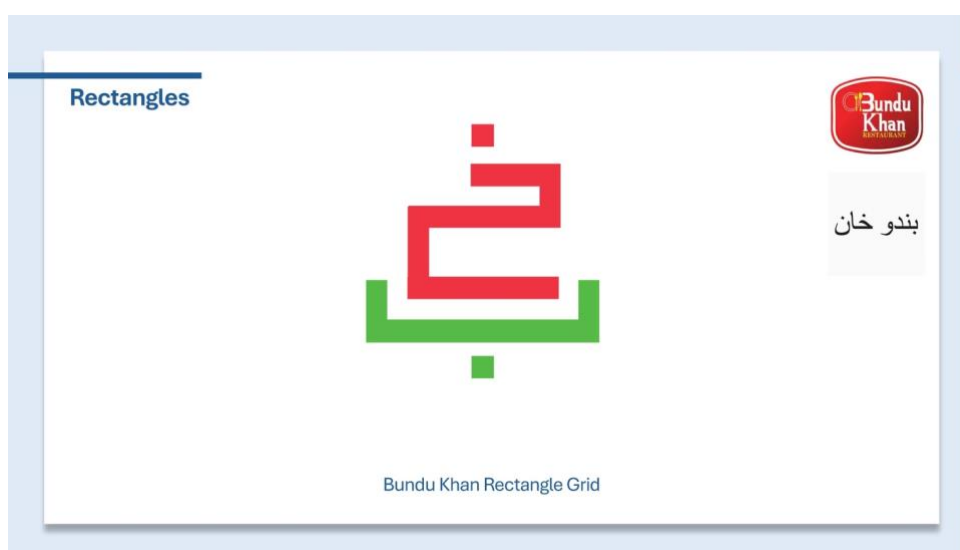
Figure 18: Bundu Khan Rectangle Grid
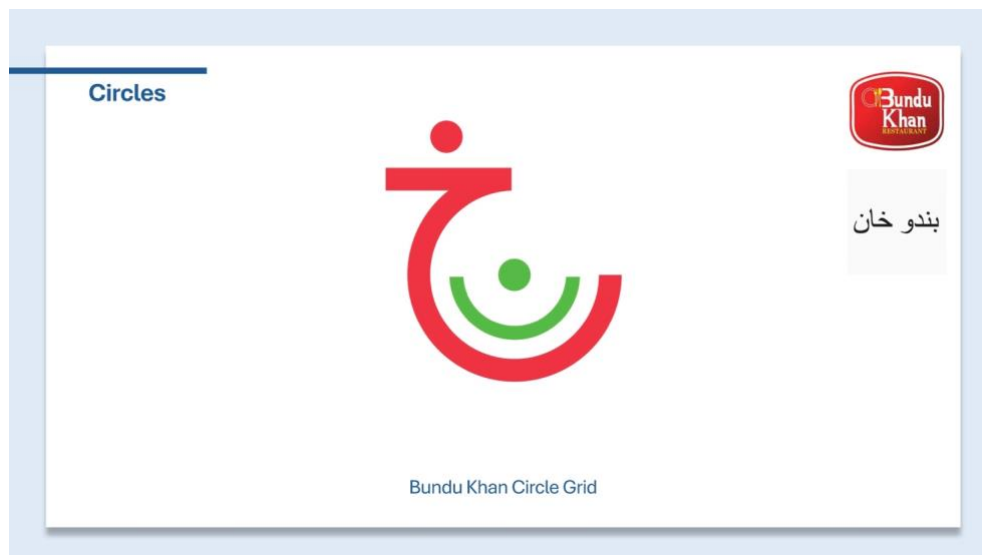
Figure 19: Bundu Khan Circle Grid
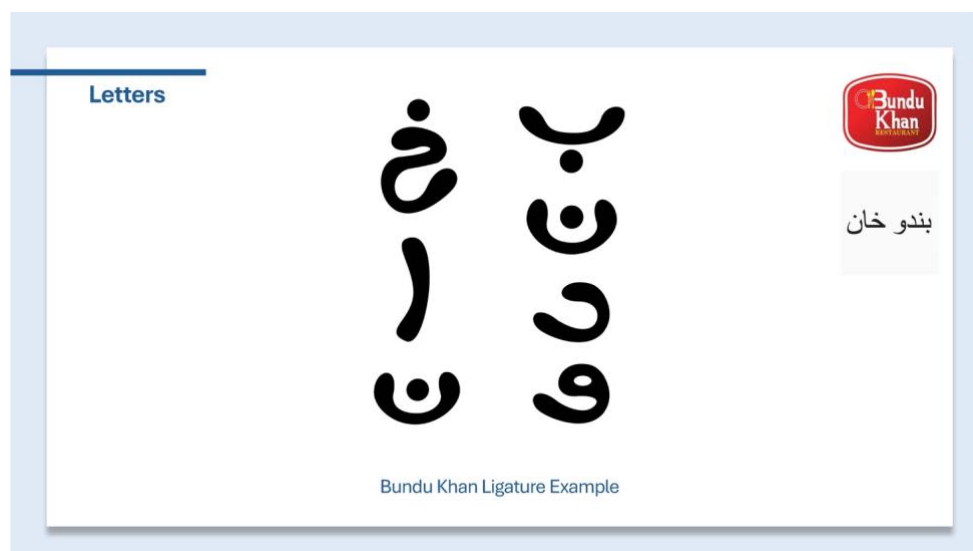
Figure 20: Bundu Khan Ligature
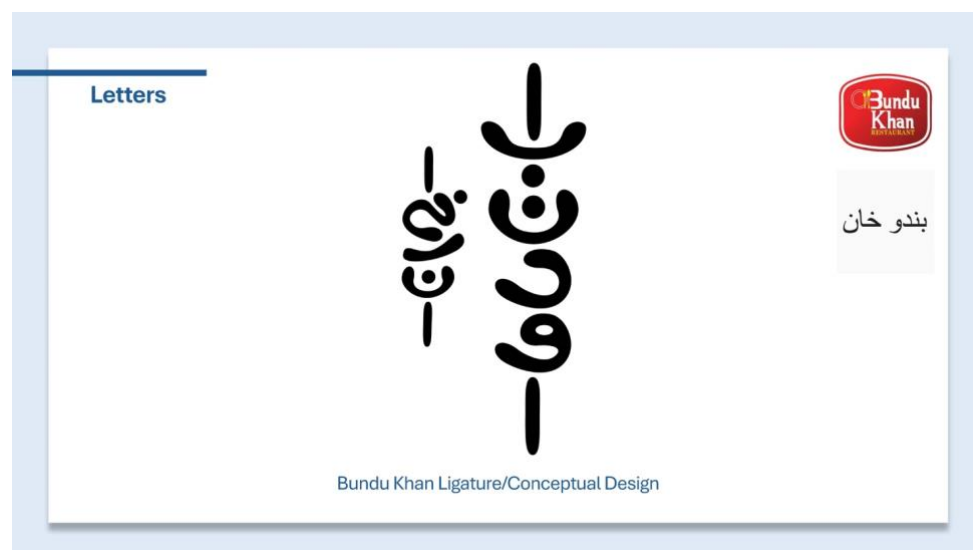
Figure 21: Bundu Khan Ligature Conceptual Design
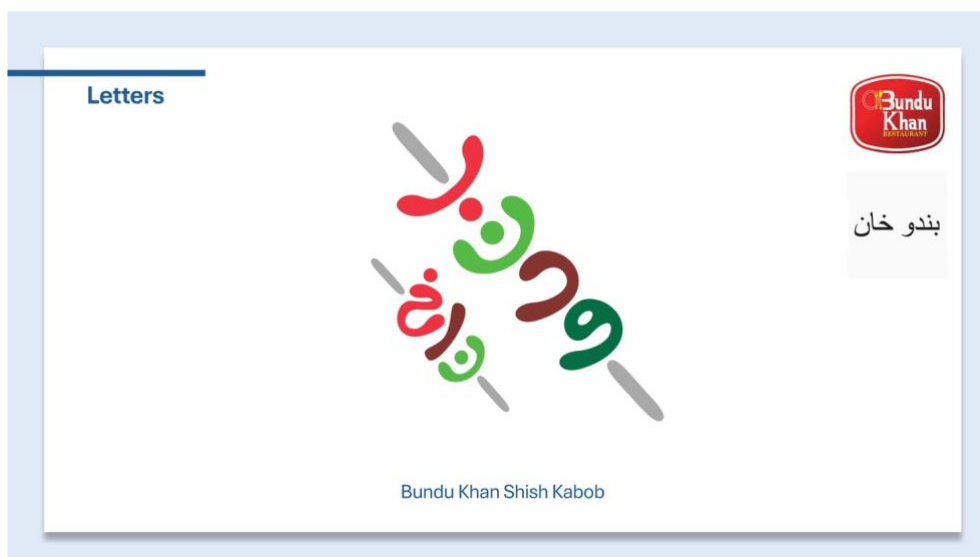
Figure 22: Bundu Khan Shish Kabob Design

Application to Pakola Brand

The insights gained from the preliminary projects with Qarshi, Shan, and Bundu Khan provided a solid foundation for experimenting with the Pakola brand, a beloved Pakistani carbonated drink known for its distinctive green color and strong association with Pakistani identity. Building on the approaches used for these brands, each technique was applied—ligatures, conceptual design, and geometric shapes—to the Pakola logo, aiming to preserve its cultural associations while modernizing its visual style.

1. Ligature Form: Inspired by the Qarshi design, a simplified ligature style was used to connect Pakola's Urdu script with a bold, cohesive design that retained the fluidity and familiarity of traditional Urdu letters.

2. Geometric and Conceptual Forms: Drawing from the geometric and conceptual work with Bundu Khan and Shan, rounded droplet shapes were introduced to represent Pakola's liquid nature, incorporating vibrant green hues inspired by Pakistan's national flag to further reinforce Pakola's connection with national pride (Nemeth, 2020).

3. Multilingual Iterations (Urdu, English, Japanese): To showcase Pakola's cultural resonance across languages, logo iterations were developed in Urdu, English, and Japanese. Each iteration was designed to capture Pakola's identity while adapting to the visual characteristics of each script. The Urdu version emphasized traditional ligature forms, while the English and Japanese versions employed geometric simplicity and minimalism to make the brand accessible to a broader, global audience. These multilingual conceptual designs reinforced Pakola's cross-cultural appeal and also demonstrated how Urdu script can be stylized alongside other languages to maintain brand coherence and cultural inclusivity (Figures 23-29).

Through these experiments, the Pakola brand logo illustrates how Urdu characters can be adapted into innovative designs that connect with audiences in different cultural contexts. The combination of Urdu, English, and Japanese iterations demonstrates the flexibility of the Urdu script and its potential to represent a brand across diverse linguistic and visual systems.

This approach underscores the importance of culturally adaptive design and sets a precedent for future logo creation in multilingual branding contexts.

Figure 23: Pakola Ligatures

Figure 24: Ligatures Suggesting a Water Droplet

Figure 25: Using Brand Colors

Figure 26: Pakola Logo in English

Figure 27: Pakola Logo in Urdu and English
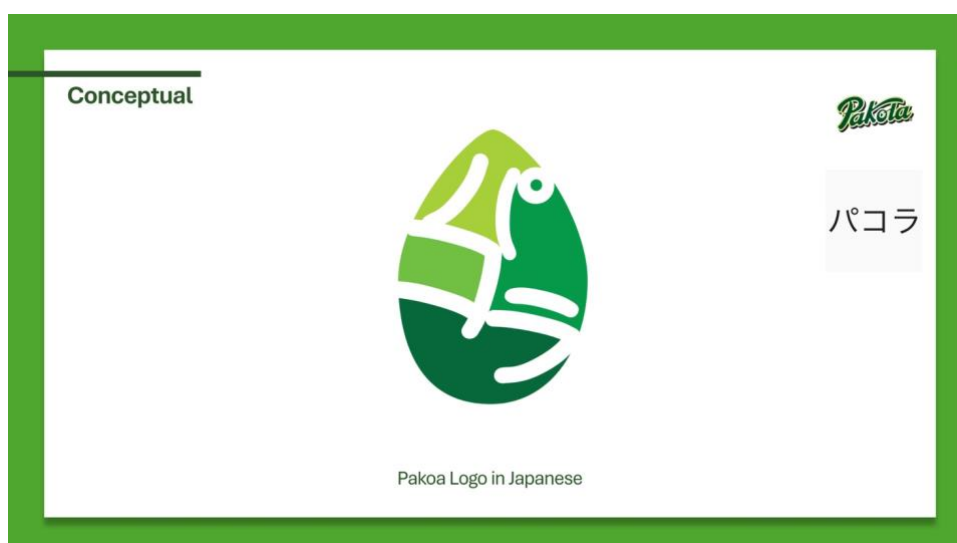
Figure 28: Pakola Logo in Japanese

Figure 29: Pakola Logo in Urdu, English, and Japanese

Observations and Insights

The experimental designs reveal that Urdu script has the potential to engage global audiences when visually adapted in unconventional ways. Breaking down traditional ligatures and reimagining Urdu characters as standalone elements allows for a fresh perspective on Urdu's role in branding. While certain designs challenged readability, they also stimulated viewers to think beyond conventional typography, fostering an appreciation for the cultural and visual depth of Urdu script (Bokhua, 2022; Nemeth, 2020).

This study demonstrates that Urdu script, when treated as a design form, can enhance brand identities and expand the boundaries of visual communication in Pakistan. This approach underscores the need for continued experimentation with Urdu typography to establish a unique visual language that speaks to both local and international audiences (O'Connor, 2015).

Conclusion

This research bridges the gap between Urdu's rich calligraphic tradition and modern design needs. By introducing new ways to engage with Urdu script, designers in Pakistan can establish an innovative visual vocabulary that resonates with global design standards. The findings emphasize the importance of cultural representation in typography, advocating for the development of Urdu typefaces that retain cultural authenticity while offering creative flexibility. Through experimentation with non-ligature forms, geometric structures, single-letter symbols, and conceptual designs, this study contributes to the evolving landscape of Urdu graphic design. As Urdu typography continues to develop, designers are encouraged to explore its potential as a powerful tool for visual storytelling and cross-cultural communication.

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Using Animation Media to Enhance Digital Citizenship Education:
Developing and Validating Educational Content for Bangkok Students

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Abstract
This paper presents the development and validation of digital citizenship educational content using animation media for upper primary and lower secondary school students in Bangkok, Thailand. Aimed at cultivating a digitally literate community and fostering critical thinking skills, the project produced five animated episodes covering key aspects of digital citizenship: Cyberbullying awareness, data privacy, online investment risks, e-commerce safety, and online fraud prevention. Validation by experts ensured relevance, comprehensibility, and alignment with current contexts and students' cognitive levels. Results indicate that integrating animation media into digital citizenship education effectively engages students in analyzing scenarios, character behaviors, and problem-solving approaches. Clear learning objectives were established for each episode, facilitating comprehensive assessment of students' understanding and satisfaction. The animated content was well-received, featuring intriguing narratives, appropriate depth, visually appealing graphics, and suitable language for the target audience. This study underscores the potential of animation media in nurturing responsible digital citizens.

Keywords: Animation, Digital Literacy, Digital Citizenship

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Introduction

In the digital age, young people are exposed to vast amounts of online content, making digital literacy and citizenship essential skills. With social media becoming an integral part of daily life, it is crucial to equip students with the knowledge to navigate this landscape safely and responsibly. This study focuses on the use of animation media to teach digital citizenship to students in Bangkok, with the objective of building a digitally resilient society. The project aims to enhance students' understanding of key aspects of digital citizenship, including cyberbullying awareness, data privacy, and the risks associated with online activities such as e-commerce and investment.

Objective

The primary objectives of this study are:
1. To develop and validate educational content on digital citizenship in the form of animated media targeted at students.
2. To assess the effectiveness of animation in promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills related to digital citizenship.
3. To foster digital literacy among students by teaching them to recognize and respond to risks in the digital environment.
4. To evaluate the reception and comprehension of the animated media by students and educators in Bangkok.

Methodology

The research methodology followed a mixed-method approach, beginning with content development and validation phases. Five animated episodes were created, each focusing on a specific aspect of digital citizenship. These were reviewed by experts in digital literacy, media production, and pedagogy. Post-release, the episodes were evaluated using a Likert scale-based survey distributed to students and teachers across 14 schools in Bangkok. Statistical analysis of the survey responses was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the educational material. Data were collected through pre- and post-assessments, questionnaires, and feedback from both students and educators.

The methodology adopted for this study includes several key steps:
1. Content Development: Five animated episodes were produced, each focusing on different aspects of digital citizenship: cyberbullying, data privacy, online investment risks, e-commerce safety, and online fraud prevention.
2. Expert Validation: The episodes underwent validation by a panel of experts, including educators, media specialists, and legal professionals. This process ensured the content's relevance and appropriateness for the target age group.
3. Pilot Testing: The animated episodes were piloted in schools in Bangkok, targeting students in upper primary and lower secondary levels. Feedback was collected through surveys and focus group discussions with both students and teachers.
4. Data Collection: Quantitative data were gathered through a Likert scale survey measuring student engagement, understanding, and satisfaction with the animated content. Qualitative feedback was also collected to identify areas for improvement.
5. Analysis: The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to assess the overall effectiveness of the animations. Qualitative feedback was analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns in students' responses.

Findings

The animated episodes were well-received by the target audience, with high levels of engagement and comprehension. Students demonstrated a significant increase in their ability to critically analyze digital scenarios, understand the consequences of online behavior, and apply problem-solving strategies to avoid risks such as online fraud and cyberbullying. Teachers also reported that the animations provided an effective tool for discussing digital challenges in the classroom.

The survey results indicated high engagement and satisfaction among the students. Key findings include:
- The episodes were well-received, with content being rated highly for clarity, relevance, and appeal.
- Students showed a notable increase in their understanding of digital risks, with specific emphasis on cyberbullying prevention, online investment awareness, and e-commerce safety.
- Teachers observed a significant improvement in students' ability to critically assess online information and behavior.

The findings indicate that the animated episodes were highly effective in engaging students and promoting a deeper understanding of digital citizenship topics. Key results include:
1. Student Engagement: The animation media was well-received by students, with high ratings for engagement and visual appeal. The interactive and narrative-based format allowed students to relate to the content and apply it to real-life scenarios.
2. Comprehension: Students demonstrated a strong understanding of the key digital citizenship concepts presented in the episodes. They were able to identify risks in online interactions and suggest appropriate responses to digital challenges.
3. Critical Thinking: The animation encouraged students to analyze character behaviors, identify ethical dilemmas, and suggest solutions. This approach fostered critical thinking skills, particularly in relation to online safety and ethical digital behavior.

The collection of opinions on digital media: Animation from teachers responsible for disseminating and recording media usage, as well as students participating in the project, was conducted through simple random sampling. The respondents answered a questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = the least, 5 = the most), with the following criteria for interpreting the data:

       Average score of 1.00 – 1.80: represents the least
       Average score of 1.81 – 2.60: represents little
       Average score of 2.61 – 3.40: represents moderate
       Average score of 3.41 – 4.20: represents much
       Average score of 4.21 – 5.00: represents the most

The analysis of opinions on digital media: Animation is presented in the following table.

Table 1: Nipithwittaya, S., Srikolchan, A., & Chureemas, R. (2023).
"Encoding to Digital Resilience Code." Thai Media Fund, Thailand.

Title	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
The content presented in the media is interesting.	4.93	0.27	the most
The number of storylines is appropriate.	4.27	0.43	the most
The visuals and graphics are attractive and engaging.	4.79	0.47	the most
The language is easy to understand.	4.43	0.50	the most
It is suitable for the students' level.	4.71	0.43	the most
Students have increased awareness of consuming information in the digital world.	4.64	0.50	the most
Students understand the precautions they need to take in the digital world.	4.50	0.50	the most
There is a tendency for students to develop resilience against the digital world.	4.64	0.52	the most
Students can identify situations that pose risks in the digital world.	4.50	0.52	the most
Students understand how to prevent dangers in the digital world.	4.50	0.61	the most
Overall, the use of media promotes the development of students' resilience in the digital world.	4.52	0.47	the most

Results

Quantitative analysis revealed that students' digital literacy improved significantly after interacting with the animated content. Key findings include:
- High satisfaction with the visual appeal and narrative structure of the animations.
- Improved ability to recognize and address risks in digital environments.
- Strong positive feedback from educators on the suitability of the content for classroom integration.

The study produced the following notable results:
- The animated episodes were rated highly by students and educators for their ability to convey important digital citizenship concepts in an engaging and understandable manner.
- Students showed significant improvement in their ability to recognize and mitigate risks in online environments, particularly in relation to cyberbullying and data privacy.
- The use of animation media was found to be an effective way of promoting digital literacy, with students reporting increased awareness of online risks and how to avoid them.

- Teachers noted that the animated content facilitated classroom discussions and provided a useful tool for introducing complex digital citizenship topics in an accessible way. The animated episodes achieved an average satisfaction score of 4.79 out of 5, with students demonstrating an enhanced awareness of the risks associated with digital environments. The content's graphics, narrative, and language were deemed appropriate for the target age group. Furthermore, there was a strong correlation between exposure to the animated content and improved digital literacy, as evidenced by pre- and post-assessments of students' understanding of digital citizenship.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates the potential of animation media as an effective tool for teaching digital citizenship. The animated episodes successfully engaged students, enhanced their understanding of online risks, and promoted responsible digital behavior. By integrating animation into digital citizenship education, schools can equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the online world safely and ethically. Future studies could explore the long-term impact of such educational interventions on students' digital resilience and behavior.

Acknowledgements

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Revealing the Spatial Continuum: Definition, Typologies, Elements, Possible Interpretations, and Contexts From the Kuroshio

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Abstract

The spatial continuum is an intangible architectural element that can observe human-environment connections achieved by exploring the role of environments, particularly the ocean. The ocean's influence on social health is recognised through the contexts brought by the sea-to-land evolution of the Japanese and Philippine vernacular, which established the Kuroshio as the shared oceanic force between the two societies. The comparison between the vernacular evolution of these two Asian architectural identities was pre-established through their vernacular townhouse types, the *machiya* and the *bahay na bato*. Three stages were formed through an iterative process of the grounded theory methodology. First, transferability was applied to varying definitions from established literature, extracting the general meaning and elements. Second, Wright's process of studying prints is utilised by detecting the elements and the direction and movement of subjects in 230 pieces of prints from Japan, or *ukiyo-e*, and the Philippines made between 1600 and 1959, identifying eight types. Third, the frequencies of the eight types in the spaces of assembly of the typical design of the vernacular townhouses, nine of Wright's building designs, and five public aquariums were observed and interpreted based on these frequencies, direction from the point of refuge, and elements inside and outside the spaces. Manifestations of the spatial continuum between architecture and environments are examined and introduced as a design tool for guiding spatial arrangement and human-environmental connectivity and as a methodological tool with architecture as the processor. This study investigates the interplay between architectural design and human-environment interactions.

Keywords: Spatial Continuum, Human-Environment Interactions, Prints, Ukiyo-E, Japanese Architecture, Philippine Architecture

Introduction

Experiences in nature and connecting with nature are two entirely different things. Experiences in nature pertain to activities done in nature while connecting with nature involves a sense of being connected to a place, a memory, or a particular species in nature. It was suggested that connection emerges in adults and children when nature is interactive through exploration, care and responsibility, observation, learning, and familiarity with a particular landscape. People enjoy nature through multiple dimensions such as affection and attraction, intellectual development, spirituality, and symbolism (Kellert, et al., 2024). Thus, the impact of the natural environment on social well-being and health is increasingly recognised (Li, 2018; Kuo, 2015; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Ulrich, 1991; 1981) including an unlikely natural environment to consider, the ocean (Beute, et al., 2021). Alas, the continuous disconnect from nature has been growing since the 1950s, with a cultural shift away from nature evident in decreasing references in popular media while references to man-made environments have remained stable. Aside from the loss of physical and psychological benefits from engagement with nature, the increasing lack of reference to nature in cultural products, being agents of socialisation, also indicates a shift of curiosity, respect, and concern from the natural world to the otherwise natural (Kesebir & Kesebir, 2017). Yet, there remains a strong interest in connecting with nature, with experiences in natural settings fostering a sense of responsibility and commitment to environmental conservation (Kellert, et al., 2024). This leads to a strong agreement from empirical evidence that contact with nature is associated with environmentally protective attitudes and behaviours (Kesebir & Kesebir, 2017; Kellert, et al., 2024).

Spaces with natural elements encourage interaction with the natural environment through social interaction, passive recreation, or physical activity (Li, 2018; Kuo, 2015; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Ulrich, 1991; 1981) as such environments reduce stress by providing a sense of calm and relaxation (Ulrich, 1991). The effectivity of such spaces may come from an innate human tendency to seek connections with nature and other living things coming so far as becoming reflected in our cultural practices, aesthetic preferences, and psychological wellbeing (Wilson, 2003; 1984). On the contrary, spaces that resemble environments characterised by high levels of visual complexity, noise, intensity, and movement can create stress and fatigue (Ulrich, 1991). Opportunities for experiencing and connecting with nature have been in decline, especially in areas undergoing rapid suburbanisation (Pyle, 2002).

Contexts

Societies throughout history have excluded the ocean as an influencing force (Rüegg, 2021; Bolster, 2006). However, the ocean, like other natural environments, plays a crucial role in maintaining the social fabric of its peripheral societies. Spaces developed in archipelagic societies along the Kuroshio Current are uniquely connective with nature. As pre-colonial and indigenous Philippine architecture was identified as being part of the stilt house system, the predominant architectural system in the Austronesian region with the concept and structure of an oceanic architectural origin, the primeval boathouse called *balangay* (Lico, 2021), similarities to these Austronesian architectural styles were also noticed in the pre-Buddhist architectural styles (Lico, 2021; Arbi, Rao, & Omar, 2015), namely the *taisha-zukuri* style attributed to the Izumo-Taisha shrine in Izumo, the *sumiyoshi-zukuri* style attributed to the Sumiyoshi-Taisha shrine in Osaka, and the *shinmei-zukuri* style attributed to the Ise Jingu shrine in Ise, which served as the foundations of succeeding design evolutions within Japan proper (Young & Young, 2007). Thus, Lico (2021) argued that an element of

spatial continuity can be confirmed and observed in the architecture of these societies despite Blench's (2010) dismissal of any possible Austronesian linguistic or archaeological influence on Japan proper. Regardless of Blench's (2010) dismissal, detections of the presence of architectural elements that may be identified in Japanese architecture, influenced by it or otherwise, in other architecture of Asia-Pacific is still possible as a major factor remains to be overlooked in their respective evolutions which is the climate brought by the Kuroshio Current. The Kuroshio, as a shared oceanic force, instigates climatic social change imprinted in the region's architectural evolution and elements.
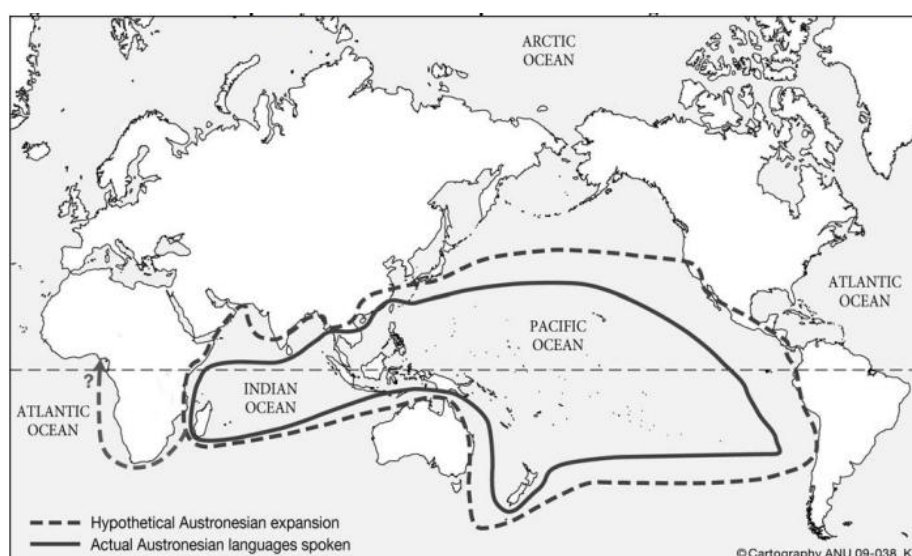
Figure 1: Extent of Contemporary Austronesian and Possible Migrations by Blench (2010)
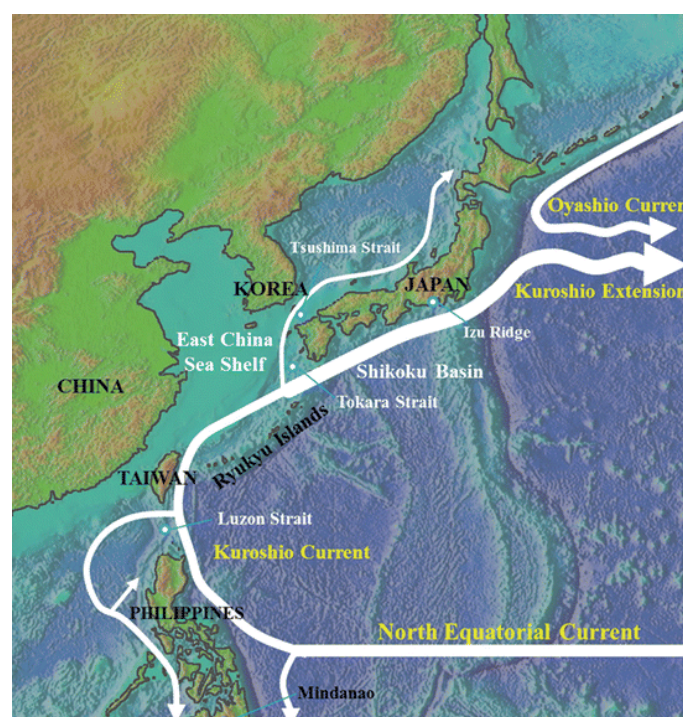
Figure 2: Path of the Kuroshio Current[1]

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[1] Image Source: https://media.springernature.com/lw785/springer-static/image/chp%3A10.1007%2F978-3-319-00822-6_1/MediaObjects/314596_1_En_1_Fig1_HTML.gif

People establish different relationships between themselves in a space relative to their location horizontally or vertically (Kim, 2002; Wright, 1955). These relationships and their corresponding behaviours are then reflected in architecture. Architectural concepts, like Frank Lloyd Wright's notion of prospect (Kim, 2002), reflect individuals' relationships with the space and the environment. Changes in architecture over time mirror shifts in societal values and behaviours, as seen in Wright's evolution of the shingle-style house. Studies on the architectural evolution in archipelagic societies along the Kuroshio provide insights on how social change has influenced architecture (Young & Young, 2007; Zialcita & Tinio, 1996). By connecting these findings with Wright's works, there is a recognition of spatial continuity as a common element in architectural design across different cultural contexts (Kim, 2002; Nute, 1994; Wright, 1955). The evolution of the typical shingle-style house reflected social change in America inevitably affecting contemporary American architecture. Similarities between the evolution and social use of the spaces of the *machiya*, the Japanese townhouse, and the *bahay na bato*, the Philippine townhouse, were observed noting the centrality of the guest reception room and the veranda to the social activities of the household (Lico, 2021; Nihon Minkaen, 2014; Young & Young, 2007; Zialcita & Tinio, 1996) which was then reinforced in Kim's (2002) study of Wright's buildings wherein the main spaces of assembly and social activity are highlighted for the presence of the spatial sequence either in the interior or towards the exterior.

Appleton (1975) suggests that prospect and refuge influence our aesthetic judgments. Kim (2002) characterised Wright's concept of prospect as relationships between object and subject, land and building, nature and self, and people and self as a single unit. He described Wright's concept of prospect into three perspectives: 1) as a composition of the basic form for the prospect, 2) as an exterior prospect, and 3) as an interior prospect. In the concept of exterior prospect, he described Wright's works as having a space for refuge with a view of the prospect at close range. Meanwhile, in the concept of interior prospect, he described Wright's works as having an emotional impact on the public space. Prospect and refuge on the spatial scale is now the extended space and the compressed space appearing in a sequence enabling the experience of dynamic movement in the spaces (Kim, 2002) becoming a singular entity of spatial continuity. As an element, spatial continuity was seen in Wright's works and is heavily attributed to his fascination for Japanese art and architecture being derived from the concept of *Ma*. Nute (1994) chronicled several similarities between traditional-style Japanese buildings and Wright's works indicating the presence of the element in Japanese architecture. The now accepted yet vague connection between Wright's works and Japan was developed rather than just a support for his organicism (Nute, 1994). Thus, this study aims to give meaning to the "spatial continuum" beyond a short reference by Garda et al. (2017) while describing *ma*.

Methodology

The study outlines strategies for theoretical sampling, emphasising the importance of selecting cases that show relevance, variation, or deviance to address the research problem. Transferability, or the generalisation of contexts between cases, is highlighted as a crucial concept (Spradley, 2016; 1979) with funnelling, a form of observational focus, and constant enquiry (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002) forming the methodological structure of this study. The constructivist grounded theory design is guided by Charmaz's (2006) framework that emphasises qualitative research methods for theory development. This approach involves constantly comparing data, concepts, and cases aiming to develop theories through iterative analysis and interpretation. Through this structure, the study looks to construct a theory that

comprehensively captures the complexity and contextuality of the spatial continuum phenomenon.
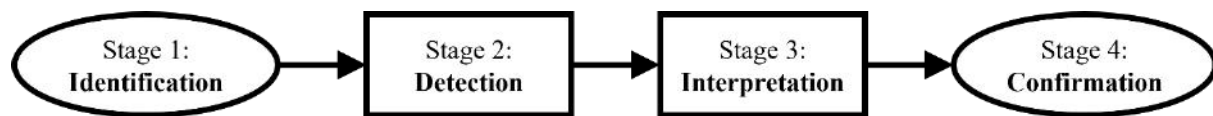
Figure 3: Methodological Framework

There are four stages to the methodological framework of this study. These are 1) identification, 2) detection, 3) interpretation, and 4) confirmation. In each stage, a set of analyses is conducted following the simultaneous implementation of the data-gathering procedures. At every level, there is a matrix or matrices wherein a full round of the methodological structure is conducted. The procedures for funnelling, constant enquiry, and transferability are combined and simplified into tabular forms to better ease data collection. Lastly, the control groups are the established literature and the spatial organisations while the subject group is the prints wherein the established literature and the spatial organisations serve as the independent variables, the prints serve as the mediating variable, and the spatial continuum serves as the dependent variable. Approaching the data with Wright's process of analysing Japanese prints, as narrated in his book *"The Japanese Print: An Interpretation"*, would provide a more accurate data interpretation and representation. This analytical procedure translates into Stage 1 corresponding to observation and structure, Stage 2 corresponding to recollection and geometry of form, and Stage 3 corresponding to recognition and idea.

		Stage 1: Identification	Stage 2: Detection	Stage 3: Interpretation
The Japanese Print: An Interpretation	Composition	Structure	Geometry of Form	Idea
	Form detection	Observation	Recollection	Recognition
	Principle	Simplify	Dramatise	Conventionalise
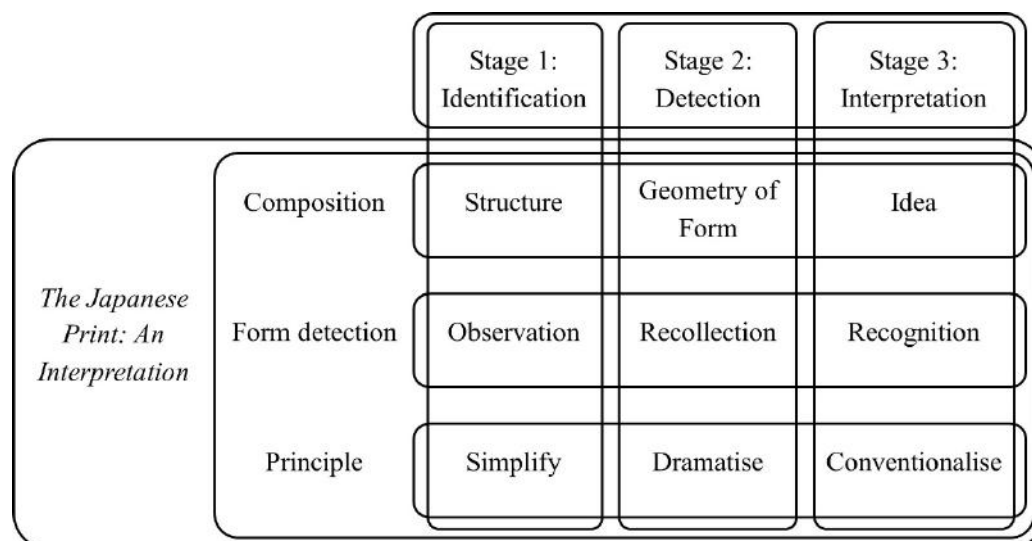
Figure 4: The Methodological Framework Contextualised in Wright's Analytical Process

In Stage 1, the identification of terms is conducted by the transferability of current definitions. Since current definitions are scattered throughout the established literature related to this study, transferability removes overlaps and simplifies long definitions into shorter definitions. Definitions from established literature are categorised into their respective terms and keywords are extracted from such definitions. Similar, synonymous, or overlapping keywords are provided with a code. Keywords that do not belong to any code are considered extraneous variables. A series of comparative ethnographic narrative analyses on the prints, as mediating variable sets, will be conducted following sets of detection criteria. The detection criteria are designed to detect codes in the prints that would show indicators for definition, typology, elements, or interpretation of the spatial continuum phenomenon. Through the detection

criteria, these codes can be categorised and compared easily with other codes possibly detecting more extraneous codes or "noise" in the prints. Stage 2 is comprised of different sets of comparative analytical matrices focusing on detecting 1) settings, 2) elements, 3) typologies, and 4) definitions in the subjects. These detection criteria coincide with the procedures of funnelling wherein 1) the detection of settings corresponding to the "grand tour", 2) the detection of elements corresponding to the "mini tour", 3) the detection of typologies corresponding to the focused observation, and 4) the detection of definitions corresponding to selective observation. Moreover, the detection of elements corresponds to a case-controlled study while the detection of typologies corresponds to a cohort study. In Stage 3, the interpretation of the core category is done first through the spatial organisation around the main space of assembly of each building sample. The sequence analysis comes from Kim's (2002) study of prospect and refuge in Wright's works. The sequence to be applied in this interpretation matrix is the same sequence by him which is 1) simultaneous and 2) successive. A simultaneous sequence means that the presence of refuge and prospect is in a singular space or separate spaces without barriers. A successive sequence means that the presence of refuge and prospect is in separate spaces with barriers (Kim, 2002). The core category is then interpreted through these sequences. Then, the detection of architectural elements in the subject buildings is conducted. These specific elements are detected in the building case studies for this study.

Conclusion

The study involves analysing a diverse collection of 230 prints, primarily Japanese woodblock prints along with European prints depicting Philippine scenes, categorised into indoor, outdoor, and both settings. Emphasis is placed on detecting key elements like human figures, architectural forms, architecture-like forms, spaces for assembly, and intermediary spaces based on the study's proposed definition of spatial continuity. Literature by Zialcita and Tinio (1996), and Nihon Minkaen (2014) are identified as crucial for interpreting the data effectively. After eliminating redundant prints and applying selection criteria, 62 samples are chosen for deeper analysis, focusing on artists specified in Frank Lloyd Wright's "*The Japanese Print: An Interpretation*", namely Hokusai, Hiroshige, and Toyokuni among others mentioned, revealing 8 prevalent spatial continuum types.
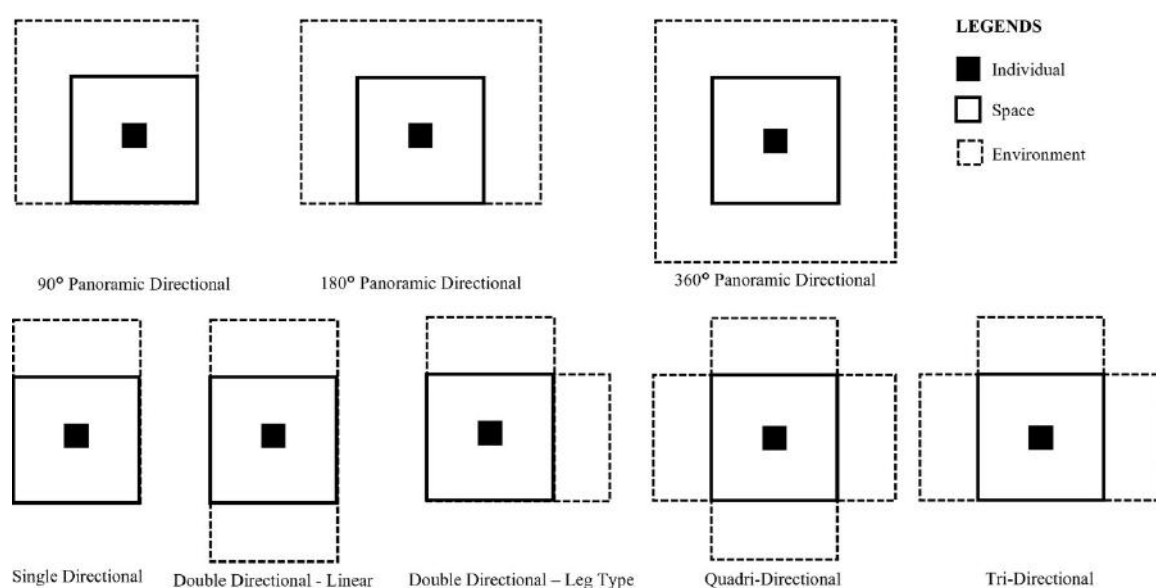
Figure 5: Spatial Continuum Types

8 spatial continuum types are detected with varying levels of frequency. These are 1) the single directional type, 2) the double directional – linear type, 3) the double directional – leg type, 4) the 90° panoramic directional, 5) the quadri-directional type, 6) the radial or 360° panoramic directional type, 7) the tri-directional type, and 8) the 180° panoramic directional type. The single-directional, double-directional, and the radial directional spatial continuum types have the highest frequencies. Four types of environmental direction sequences were observed namely 1) natural – inward, 2) natural – outward, 3) urban – outward, and 4) interior. The most common of these environmental direction sequences is the natural – outward sequence. These elements, types, and direction sequences can be retraced on the prints for further confirmation of the existence of spatial continuity in the artwork. There are two potential uses for the spatial continuity as a tool: 1) as a design tool in arranging primary, secondary, and tertiary elements and establishing spaces of assembly and intermediary spaces, and 2) as a methodological tool for providing interpretations based on contextual and architectural principles.
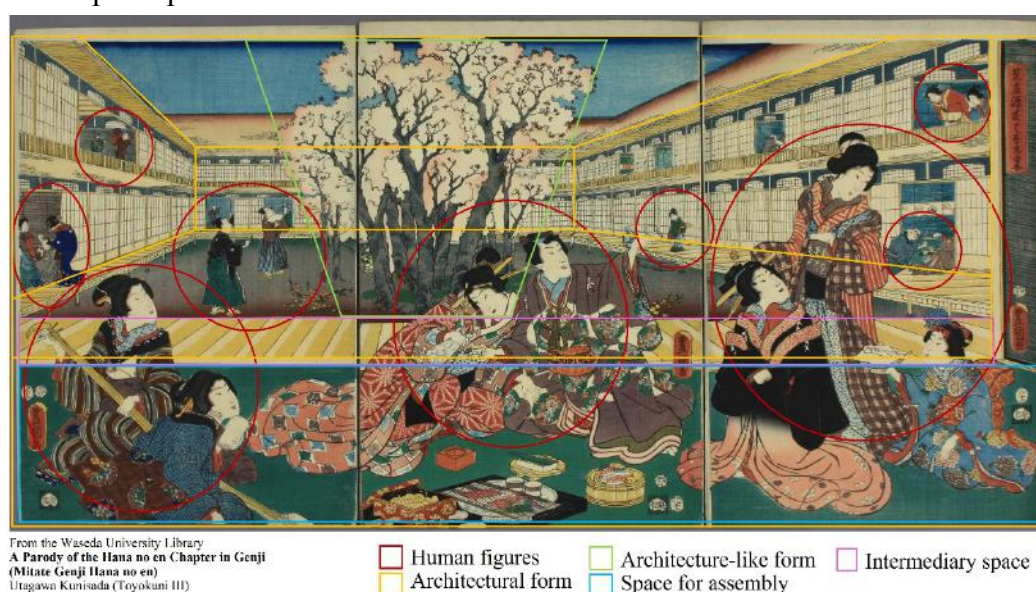
Figure 6: Elements of Concern Plotted on a Sample Print

Figure 7: Typology, Environmental Direction Sequence, and Environmental Element Equivalency Percentage of a Sample Print

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A Cross-Cultural Comparative Exploration of Serbian and Japanese Stage Traditional Folk Dance

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Abstract

Throughout history, traditional folk dances, songs, and music have been performed and presented on stage. These performances have endured for centuries and continue to be an important part of cultural expression of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage around the world. The author aims to conduct a comparative analysis of stage presentations of traditional folk dances, songs, and music in the contemporary form of Serbian and Japanese theatre, which, at first glance, seem coherently different from one another. Specifically, the focus will be on the theatrical form of «Nihon-buyō» (日本舞踊) while observingly comparing it to the choreographic genres, forms, and movements within the Serbian «Scenska tradicionalna narodna igra i muzika» (Сценска традиционална народна игра и музика), in order to identify similarities and potential future evolutions in the artistic creation of stage presentations. This paper will delve into the historical, dramaturgical, theatrical, (ethno)choreological and artistic aspects of these forms, examining their respective features, elements, and techniques. Through an analysis of these theatrical forms, the author seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on cross-cultural artistic exchange and the evolution of folkloristic theatre in a contemporary context.

Keywords: Stage Traditional Folk Dance and Music, Nihon-buyō, Traditional Folk Dance Choreography, Ethnochoreology, Theatre Studies, Serbia, Japan, Ethnochoreology

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Introduction

Upon initial consideration, the comparison of intangible and tangible cultural heritage presentations for the stage across diverse cultures can be perceived as perplexing. This is primarily due to variations and differences in language, customs, way of life, and other contributing factors. In this case, the geographical distance between Serbia, located in Southeastern Europe, and Japan, situated in East Asia, presents an additional layer of complexity to this comparison. Both cultures exhibit a strikingly similar understanding and appreciation of aesthetics and the fine arts through dance, song, and music, which serves as the fundamental basis for exploring and comparing the theoretical and practical facets of Serbian and Japanese Stage Traditional Folk Dance and Music.

In Serbia, the concept of traditional folk dance presentation for the stage (Scenska tradicionalna narodna igra/Сценска традиционална народна игра) is relatively new. While the first engagements with it began in the early 20th century with artistic and scientific approaches of likes such as various Russian artists, Maga Magazinović (1882-1968), and Ljubica S. (1894-1974) and Danica S. (1898-1960) Janković, Japan's historical premises for *Nihon-buyō* – Japanese dance (日本舞踊) were established in the 17th century.

The classical and theatrical presentation of traditional folk dances on stage in Japan has its origins in the 8th century through the fundamental dance styles of *Mai* (舞) – revised, lateral, and slower circular movements lower to the ground, *Odori* (踊) – larger, vertical and more leaping energetic movements, and *Furi* (振り) – mimetic, imitational, and gestural movements (Pronko and Hall 2016: 131), which laid the foundations for the theatrical forms of *Nō* (能), *Kabuki* (歌舞伎/かぶき), and *Kyōgen* (狂言) [see Appendix A].

During the Edo period (1603-1867), a new form of traditional folk dance presentation on stage, known as *Nihon-buyō*, was developed, following the footsteps of Kabuki and partially Nō (Salz 2016: 141). In contemporary practices, Nihon-buyō serves as an umbrella term for all Japanese traditional folk dances, dance styles, and forms, after the need for a differentiation between *Seiyō-buyō* – Western dance (西洋舞踊), nowadays called *Dansu*, and Japanese dance (Valentine 1998: 113; Pronko and Hall 2016: 137) which was introduced in 1907 by Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859-1935). The evolution of this theatrical and dance form has been significantly influenced by Western dance forms following the Meiji period (Meiji Ishin/明治維新), from 1868 to 1912. The contemporary form of Nihon-buyō and its separation from Kabuki was realised after this period of Western influence.

Both cultures present a recent or developing origin to the terminological aspect of the stage adaptations for traditional folk dances. After its first engagement in Serbian history, different researchers tried to establish a basis in nomenclature for this phenomenon, where terms such as *Folklore Theatre* (Serb.: Folklorni teatar/Фолклорни театар), *Stage Folklore* (Serb.: Scenski folklore/Сценски фолклор), *Folklore on Stage* (Serb.: Folklor na sceni/Фолклор на сцени), *Choreographed Folklore* (Serb.: Koreografisani folklor/Кореографисани фолклор) etc. were established (Ivančan 1971; Антонијевић 1984; Ранисављевић 2021: 249).

Only recently, a coherent analysis of these terms was conducted by Vesna Bajić Stojiljković, in which she discussed these different notions and concluded that "In a tangle of numerous terminological inaccuracies, starting with the concepts of *scene, scenic, choreography of folk dance, stage performances, application of folk dance*, etc., which were conceptualized in the

aforementioned doctoral thesis, the phrase *stage folk dance* was born. It is proposed to use it as an umbrella term for the entire stage presentation of the folk dance" (Бајић Стојиљковић 2017: 96). This conceptualised term was later reevaluated and renamed into *Stage Traditional Folk Dance and Music* by Nikola Petrović due to arising and ongoing international debates on nomenclature in the domains of ethnochoreology, ethnomusicology, and ethnology (Петровић 2023: 5-6).

However, the Japanese corresponding term is not as particular as in the Serbian language and its English translation. The earlier discussed Nihon-buyō by itself suggests the presentation of (Japanese) traditional folk dances for the stage due to its historical and formal aspects and implements the general definition of Stage Folk Dance and Music. The previously mentioned *Nihon-buyō* refers to the performance of traditional Japanese folk dances on stage, considering its historical and formal elements. It aligns with the general definition of stage folk dance and music, although it does so within a different cultural context and established period.

Choreographic Genres and Forms

The fundamental presentation of traditional folk dances, songs, and music for the stage in Serbia is based on the concept and installation of a *Folk Dance Choreography – FDC* (Бајић Стојиљковић 2019: 23). This term derived from the Greek *Chorea* - dance (χορεία) and *Grafos* – writing (γραφή) and presents "every made and round up entirety in which kinetics, or, the movement of a human's body are the main structural element, which is being realised in a determined time in space. A choreography in dance is the art of creating, inventing and compiling dances and music into a harmonious, artistically formed whole, but also a concrete author's work realised through the aforementioned creative process" (Бајић Стојиљковић 2019: 150).

The choreographical works are categorised into various genres and subgenres based on their content, while the shape or form of the FDC is classified into choreographic forms. Vesna Bajić Stojiljković has identified three primary genres and subgenres in the content of the FDCs, namely *Divertissement* (*local or regional*), *Dramatisation* (*ritual-custom or general thematic*), and *Variation* (*monothematic or polythematic*) [ibid. 173].

MEGAGENRE	STAGE PRESENTATION OF TRADITIONAL FOLK DANCE AND MUSIC	
METAGENRE	STAGE TRADITIONAL FOLK DANCE	STAGE TRADITIONAL FOLK MUSIC

METAGENRE	STAGE TRADITIONAL FOLK DANCE		
SUPERGENRE	STAGE PRESENTATION	TRADITIONAL FOLK DANCE CHOREOGRAPHY (TFDC)	STAGE-MUSIC PROGRAM

SUPERGENRE	TRADITIONAL FOLK DANCE CHOREOGRAPHY (TFDC)		
GENRE	DIVERTISSEMENT	DRAMATISATION	VARIATION
SUBGENRE	Local / Regional	Ritual-Custom / General-Thematic	Monothematic / Polythematic

Figure 1: Classification of Different Genres (within the sphere of Stage Traditional Folk Dance and Music, established by Vesna Bajić Stojiljković, modified and translated by Nikola Petrović) (Бајић Стојиљковић 2019: 173; Петровић 2023).

Although the choreographic history of the FDCs in Serbia demonstrates a vast repertoire of all genres and subgenres (in contemporary practice, predominantly the genres of local Divertissement and ritual-custom Dramatisation), the Japanese *Nihon-buyō* practices, primarily, "contain strong dramatic elements, including lines of dialogue. Even when the dance does not originate from a longer drama, characterization is essential. Dances feature roles fictional or factual" (Salz 2016: 142) based on "legendary tales or popular affairs" (Sakata, Marumo and Hachimura 2009: 3). The aforementioned dramatic elements have been mostly passed down by Kabuki, which by itself is based on dramatic presentation, making Nihon-buyō as a whole part of the choreographic genre of Dramatisation. To be more precise, it would fall under the subgenre of General-Thematic Dramatisation since the emphasis lies on the presentation of non-ritualistic narratives, which are accompanied by the recitation or singing of the overall plot.

With this, Nihon-buyō distincts the dramatic forms into two categories: 1. *Tachi-yaku* (立ち役) – roles for male performers where a male character is presented; 2. *Onna-gata* (女形) – roles for female performers where a female character is presented.

Choreographic forms constitute a crucial facet of the choreographic genres. These forms are instrumental in shaping the overarching structure of a dance composition. In this context, the choreographic forms of an *Étude* (Serb.: Etida/Етида) and a (chamber) *Sujet* (Serb.: Siže/Сиже) can be deemed as the most accurate representation of choreographic practices in both cultures. An Étude, similar to its musical counterpart, is a form that presents a character in a developing dramatic narrative, performed by a single individual. During the

choreography, the plot and character develop to an extensive finalisation in which emotions, complexity, and performing abilities are shown (Абрашев 2001: 244-245).[1]

In addition to that, a Sujet shows similar characteristics as a choreographic form, but involves multiple acting individuals, a longer duration and a more complex plot. A necessary component of a Sujet is a coherent problem in the dramatic narrative involving all dramatic roles, which results in the compound progress of the actors. This problem would be resolved after its culmination and thus finalise the whole narrative (Петровић 2023: 26-28).[2]

In contrast, the Sujet and *Thematic* (Serb.: Tematična/Тематична) forms are two distinct approaches to Dramatisation. The Sujet is characterised by its intricate plot, which centres around a specific dramatic narrative. However, the Thematic choreography employs an overarching theme, such as love or war, without delving into character development. Hence, the Sujet's focus on a rich and complex storyline distinguishes it from the Thematic form, which emphasises a broader concept (Абрашев 2001: 205-214; Мелехов 2015: 65-66).

Although the choreographic forms, Étude and Sujet, present the same overall elements in Dramatisation, the essence and emphasis are different. While the Sujet focuses mostly on a developing story, the Étude's attention moves towards the dramatic role of the performer and its unfolding progression.

In this case, the choreographic practice of Nihon-buyō could be considered for both forms. Solo performances present a dramatic plot, and the dramatic role develops throughout the entire choreography, which, as discussed earlier, presents the choreographic form of Étude. Although this choreographic form from the Serbian perspective understands a shorter time span for a performance, in Nihon-buyō, these can vary between "10-40 minute solos" (Salz 2016: 142). However, multiple-actor performances can be seen in certain Nihon-buyō pieces, in which the dramatic narrative and the character development are both presented at the same time.

Movement and Stylisation

The Serbian traditional folk dances are characterised by a distinct and specific structure, form, and overall movement, in which the legs are the primary motor of kinetics. In contrast to Japanese traditional folk dancing, where the hands, arms, and head (through micro-movements) also play a significant role, Serbian traditional folk dances place a greater emphasis on lower body movements.

Looking at the structure of the general traditional folk dance practice by both cultures, a main distinction has to be made: Serbian traditional folk dances have a structure and specific steps, while Japanese dance relies purely on local and/or regional dance styles without specific basic dance step patterns. Marcelle Azra Hincks writes in this context:

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[1] See as example: https://youtu.be/UQ4m7mnHnZQ?t=122 [2:00-8:08 min.](accessed 29/10/2024). – "Kod novoga krojača", depiction of a tailor in a humoristic Étude performed by Boban Kostić, choreography by Boban Kostić, and musical arrangement by Bora Dugić.
[2] See as example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yllzW7mOsE (accessed 29/10/2024). – "Mustaći", depiction of a tavern-story in a humoristic chamber Sujet performed by Boban Kostić, Vladimir Drljan, Jovan Jovanović, and Negovan Jovičić, choreography by Nevena Antić, musical arrangement by Aleksandar Aca Antić and Božidar Boki Milošević.

> Whereas our dance consists almost entirely of rhythmical gymnastics with no set purpose but that of striking graceful attitudes, the Japanese dance, like the ancient Greek dance, is entirely of a pantomimic nature, and strives to represent in gesture an historical incident, some mythical legend, or a scene from folk-lore; its chief characteristic is always expressiveness, and it invariably possesses a strong emotional tendency. (Hincks 1910: 7)

It is crucial to highlight the variability and complexity of traditional folk dancing adaptations for stage performances. As previously posited, Nihon-buyō, for instance, is rooted in three fundamental dance styles, which yield an exponential interpretation of musicality, dramatic narrative, and body movements.

Conversely, such a characterisation cannot be ascribed to Serbian Stage Folk Dance and Music. The traditional folk dancing of Serbia and Serbian ethnic groups outside of Serbia exhibit a multitude of styles that are highly dependent on ethnochoreological zones, ethnochoreological regions, and local areas (see Васић 2011; Ivančan 1971). Despite the variations in styles, the dances are characterised by strict structures that leave little room for interpretation, in contrast to Japanese dancing, which allows for more freedom of expression and interpretation.

The concept of *style* can be acknowledged as a complex phenomenon, particularly because it entails a nuanced differentiation between two interrelated yet distinct notions, namely, *stylised* and *authentic* if there is a connotation to be made with the presentation on stage. In traditional folk practices, the term "style" refers to a set of distinctive postures or movements that are unique to a particular cultural community. These practices not only serve as a form of artistic expression but also contribute to the cultural identity and heritage of the society in question, giving it the debated attribute of "authentic".

However, choreographic creation and composition have different approaches to this aspect, where style or stylisation is the operation of "devising a compositional process for the presentation of traditional dances. Based on the style of the dance, analysis of the ways of varying certain interpretations of traditional dances, the choreographer realises the dance composition through a personal artistic and aesthetic creative process and interpretation and performers" (Лоноћ 2018: 202).

In the context of choreographic composition, stylisation also involves modifying basic dance step patterns, specifically their movement structure, which is commonly presented in Serbian *Traditional Folk Dance Choreographies – TFDCs*.

As a result, it can be established that stylisation presents "every contact with fixed structures for the purpose of public performance" (Бајић 2006: 35), that from a narrow perspective, is every change within a choreography for the stage in accordance with the artistic vision of the choreographer. These changes "unfold through [a] kinetic, auditive and visual process" (Лоноћ 2018: 202 cited in Петровић 2023: 32). Primarily, the concept of *Varying-Condensing-Expanding* (Serb.: Variranje-Sažimanje-Proširenje/Варирање-Сажимање-Проширење) defines the stylised dances on the stage, as earlier mentioned.

Following the choreographic stylisation, the difference between Serbian Stage Traditional Folk Dance and Japanese Nihon-buyō lies primarily in the expressiveness of basic dance step patterns. While the variation of these is an integral part of the kinetic composition in the

Serbian stage presentation of traditional folk dances, primarily based on techniques from ballet, the Japanese corresponding side relies on the stylisation of "general Japanese aesthetic concerns, or even wider Japanese orientations beyond the confines of the arts (…)[and] do not always provide consistent documentary evidence for generalisation. Discrepancies on the degree of symmetry, and on the extent of regularity in rhythmic structure and of employment of the aesthetic pause, all counsel caution in the interpretation of Japanese dance as a cultural document" (Valentine 1998: 119).

However, due to the cultural context, there is difficulty in establishing a generalisation for the classification of movement in Nihon-buyō, both the theatrical form as well as the general contemporary terminological aspect of Japanese traditional folk dancing, yet, a distinction in movement can be made while observing the development of dramatic narratives.

Serbian Stage Traditional Folk Dance is characterised by a dramatic narrative conveyed through grand mimicking gestures and acting, while still using the structural aspect of traditional folk dances as a basis throughout a choreography. In contrast, the Japanese Nihon-buyō employs subtle head movements and prop manipulation, mainly a fan, known as *Ōgi* (扇), to convey meaning, emotion, and addition to the overall dramatic narrative.[3]

Although the Serbian corresponding side makes use of different props, the approach to it is different. It is based on the same emphasis on storytelling as is the movement of acting, by grand mimicking and direct gestures.[4]

Both dance forms showcase the performers' skills in physical storytelling, albeit through different stylistic approaches to movement.

Conclusion

The comparison of *Scenska tradicionalna narodna igra* and *Nihon-buyō* reveals intriguing similarities in the presentation of traditional folk dances on the stage. These similarities are predominantly apparent in the categories of choreographic genres and forms. However, it is important to note that the two cultures approach these categories differently due to their unique cultural contexts. Specifically, the Japanese theatrical form has been developed over a longer period of time and has a more established historical foundation. Joyce Rutherford Malm states in this instance:

> Kabuki had become legitimate, respectable, mature, classical. A great deal of its new status as art was due not only to having absorbed some of the form and content of Nō, but also some of the aura of Nō. This aura consisted of more than the advantage of being "establishment" or the snobbishness implied by such terms as "good music" or "culture", although there were elements of these. The aura of Nō which helped Nihon Buyō to mature artistically was that same aura which the Nō itself had inherited from

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[3] See as example: https://youtu.be/1KxDVAUghWY (accessed: 29/10/2024). – Presentation of the Kabuki-odori style in Nihon-buyō in the piece "Fuji Musume", written by Katsui Genpachi, choreography by Fujima Taisuke and musical arrangement by Kineya Rokusaburō, first premiered in 1826.
[4] See as example https://youtu.be/kGVyuKEZBlQ (accessed: 30/10/2024). – Prop exercise in which performer and student Boban Kostić presents the dramatic role of a drunk villager while working and using a jug made out of clay as the main prop, Belgrade Dance Institute – IUI, Department of Stage Folk Dance and Music, 13/09/2020, Belgrade, Serbia, personal archive.

centuries of Japanese theatrical tradition, an aura containing the gifts of both life and death: the gifts of life are from the physical world; the gifts of death from the beyond. The aura is rebirth. (Rutherford Malm 1977: 21)

Despite the differences, there are still corresponding facets that build the basic understanding of the presentations in both cultures, including entertainment, aesthetics, artistic expression, and cultural heritage.

The present study has primarily focused on the examination of choreographic and movement structures of different cultures (see Appendix B). However, for the purpose of identifying further similarities or differences between the two cultures that can lead to mutual benefit in their artistic creations and performances, it is essential to explore other parameters as well and ask questions such as:

- *Is the stage architecture similar/different?*
- *Do they treat a stage in the same manner?*
- *Are there similarities/differences in scenography?*
- *In what way do different audiovisual media benefit the overall performance?*
- *Can choreographies and all genres/forms be established outside of the cultural context?*
- *How does choreography benefit the collaborative and social/cultural aspect of a group of performers – an ensemble?*
- *Are there similarities/differences in rehearsal practices – What is the rehearsal culture? What is the relationship between the theatrical/performative forms and the audience?*
- *What is the relationship between the performance and the audience?*
- *How does a performer or choreographer experience the performance?*
- *Can both practices of traditional folk dance presentation for the stage develop further?*
- *Can there be a fusion between the current practices and the practices of other dance genres/cultures and their stage techniques?*

Appendices

Appendix A

Western period¹	8th	9th	12th	14th	17th	18th	19th	1900—1945	1945—Present
Japanese era¹	Nara (710—794)	Heian (794—1185)	Kamakura (1185—1333)	Muromachi (1333—1573) / Momoyama (1573—1603)	Edo (1603—1868)			Meiji (1868—1912) / Taishō (1912—1926) / Shōwa (1926—1989)	Heisei (1989—Present)
Standard term	Ancient		Medieval		Early modern			Modern / War-time / Post-war	Contemporary

Genre: Kagura, Gigaku, **BUGAKU**, Ennen, Ta-asobi, Dengaku, Okina sarugaku, Sangaku → Sarugaku → **NOHGAKU (NOH)**, Sarugaku → **NOHGAKU (KYOGEN)**, Shirabyōshi, Kusemai, Kōwakamai, Biwa hōshi, Jōruri, Kojōruri, Kugutsu → **NINGYŌ JŌRURI** → **BUNRAKU**, Furyū → **KABUKI**, **NIHONBUYO**, Bon odori, Sekkyō, Kōshaku → Kōdan, Waraibanashi → **RAKUGO**, Okinawan kumiodori, **SHIMPA**, **SHINGEKI** (Modern spoken drama), Musicals, Takarazuka, Kamishibai, Shinkokugeki, Taishū engeki, Angura experimental, Butoh, Post dramatic performance art

Key

BOLD & CAPITAL	Major genre
●	Developing, flourishing, continuing creatively
⦿	Still developing and expanding, but past its peak
○	Consolidation, codification, continuity
◖	Surviving, regularly performed
◗	Continued only by semi-professionals / regional remnants
◉	Extinguished or absorbed

SHINGEKI (modern theatre)

Appendix A: Historical timeline of Japanese theatrical forms (Salz 2016: 33).

Appendix B

COMPARISON OF *SCENSKA TRADICIONALNA NARODNA IGRA* AND *NIHON-BUYŌ*		
PARAMETERS	SCENSKA TRADICIONALNA NARODNA IGRA	NIHON-BUYŌ
Choreographic genres	Divertissement (local or regional); **Dramatisation (ritual-custom or general-thematic)**; Variation (monothematic or polythematic)	**Dramatisation (ritual-custom, but mostly general-thematic)**
Choreographic forms	Divertissement, **Étude**, **Sujet**, Love Duet, Matchup, Suite, Quadrille, etc.	**Étude**, **Sujet**
Traditional Folk Dances	Structured basic dance step patterns	Unstructured basic dance step patterns
Traditional Folk Styles in Dancing	Various, dependent on ethnographic zone and area	Mai, Odori, Furi
Active Body Areas in Movement	**Lower Body**, lesser Upper Body	**Lower Body**, Upper Body

Appendix B: Table of comparative parameters and results for Stage Traditional Folk Dance and Nihon-buyō (commonalities are bolded).

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Japanese Pop Culture's Influence on the Process of Transnational Children's Identity Identification in "Monstrous" Graphic Novel

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Abstract

Monstrous is an autobiographical comic created by Sarah Myer, narrating her experiences as a South Korean descendant adopted by a German family who was living in America. The struggle of value differences between oneself, family, and school environment is a dilemma faced by transnational individuals. While struggling to identify her identity, Sarah was referencing Japanese pop culture to express herself and connect with her peer groups. This research utilizes a semiotic analysis method combined with literature review analysis. The semiotic theory used is Roland Barthes' theory, which seeks meaning from the collection of signs within the work. To elucidate the meanings found in semiotic analysis, literature review through social identity theories is required for the observed phenomena to be understood. Through this research, in pop culture, especially through fictional characters, there is cultural hegemony of other countries that can influence the formation of transnational individual identities. This is because individuals perceive the application of fictional character values as signs to form perceptions and judge others. The relationship between state hegemony can pose a challenge for transnational individuals in forming identities through popular culture. The challenge is in the form of isolation which occurred because moral and norm values attached in pop culture is different than standard moral and norm values in society and it clashed. Meanwhile, the history and relation between countries also have a significant role in the identity construction process of a society that form the state hegemony.

Keywords: Transnational Identity, Graphic Novel, Pop Culture

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Introduction

Pop culture has an important role to construct adolescent identity. Influence of pop culture can be dispersed through music, game, animation or sequential arts. In pop culture commodities there is a phenomena of media adaptation therefore it can be easily received by adolescents. Content inside of pop culture commodities can be a role model to construct their identity. Role model of identity can be obtained through creation of world building inside a narration which includes character designs, conflict, theme and background of the story (Park, 2024)In the creation of role models through sequential arts, it can be seen that the main characters have an important role due to confronting several different situations until they reach the ideal attitudes and dreams. The discovery of ideal attitudes can be inserted with morale or norm values that align with country ideology.

The process to find, develop and construct an identity can be clearly shown through autobiographical graphic novel or graphic memoirs. Inside of autobiographical graphic novel, the mental condition can be visualized through composition of panels, strokes, and art styles. The composition inside sequential arts can be an embodiment of self-identity. Particularly in autobiographical graphic novel, the comic artists need to design the character that represent themselves (McCloud, 1993).

The concept of self-representation demonstrated by comic artist to readers is an indicative of symbolic body expression. The body as a symbol can be describing age, sex, gender, race, ethnicity, beauty, health and fashion within the character design (Refaie, 2013). Through the meaning of body within self-representation character in autobiographical graphic novel, readers can see the stereotypes of individuals. The meaning of self can stand alone because it is related with other people and environments. There are 2 aspects that need to be considered such as internal self (health, physical and genetic) and the judgment from other people as external self. The relation of those aspect is reciprocal (Hidya Tjaya, 2014).

The tittle of autobiographical graphic novels that was observed in this research is Monstrous created by Sarah Myer. Autobiographical graphic novel has 272 pages that narrated the experience of Sarah Myer who is an orphan from South Korea. She was adopted by Germany family and live in the United States of America (USA). Sarah adopted when she was a baby, therefore she unable to recognize her biological parents. Sarah grew up with pop culture that she consumed through comics, animation series and cinema. Difference of race between Sarah and her stepparents in the beginning of graphic novel was not considered as important matters. However, when people around Sarah judged her, Sarah started to question her identity. The question about identity emerged because Sarah has physical differences with other children. Sarah feels hurted because she unable to adapt with society standard around her.

Fictional characters used by Sarah as reference to express her existence and she also utilized it as safe spaces from the bullying that was experienced by her. Position of pop cultures as a safe space form transnational children replaced religion and role of parent guidance in postmodern society. Postmodern condition defined by Jean Francois Lyotard is a collapsed condition of metanarrative to provide universal truth. In postmodern condition, alternate narratives are offered as a medium to deliver message about human independency (Storey, 2021; Lyotard, 1984).

Sarah, with her South Korean background, faces a complex dilemma due to her step-parents' German cultural heritage and their American living environment. This situation epitomizes the challenge of being a transnational individual — someone expected to navigate and pledge allegiance to multiple countries. Balancing ties to her homeland while adapting to her adopted country is a simultaneous and ongoing process for her.

The research aims to address the question: "How does Japanese pop culture play a significant role in the development of transnational adolescents, and how do comic artists' efforts to adapt values from Japanese pop culture serve as a reference for ideal identity?"

Research Method

The research was conducted through a semiotics method to address the meaning of text within autobiographical graphic novels. After semiotics analysis, the meaning of text was defined through literature studies that related with social identity theories. Semiotics method is an analytic method that is conducted through interpretation of several patterns or a comparison of signs. Semiotics theory used in this research is based on Roland Barthes. Roland Barthes identified a meaning through signifiers and signified. The signs that occurred several times can be seen as a set of signs inside of graphic novel pages.

In the purpose of observing the repetition of signs, pages in graphic novels can be positioned as lexicon. Lexicon is a set of signs that create a simplified narration. The group of lexicon can be divided as several steps of growth from transnational individuals such as toddler, child, adolescent, and young adult. Growing steps from Sarah's character can be found through pages that show changes of hairstyle and her taste in pop culture products. Based on growing steps there were efforts by Sarah to identify what kind of character was suitable as reference for the identity construction process. Identification in constructing identity defined by Charles Brenner in psychoanalysis research is experience of an individual to understand objects, other people and environment which need to be adapted (Brenner, 1974).

In every Individual there are 3 layers of consciousness: id, ego and superego. The Id represents a collection of wishes and dreams, the ego embodies rationality and perception of reality lastly superego encompasses feelings of guilt. During the identification process, members of a group use leader values as their reference of superego. Demand and ambition of the leader became a standard of rules within a group or community. The figures of leaders that can serve as identification models are religion leader, parents, community leader or fictional characters within pop culture commodities. The observation about identification process conducted by Sarah can be shown through following pages:

Figure 1: Sarah's Difficulties in Getting Along in Any Play Group

The toddlerhood phase of Sarah can be depicted from page 6 to page 56. During toddlerhood, Sarah's stepparent introduced the Mermaid cartoon through cinema. Sarah is interested in mermaids because they have supernatural abilities compared to other toys. Aside from mermaids, Sarah also liked Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles characters. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles is a group of mutant turtles who fight evil and live in the sewer. Sarah chose to mimic Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle as inspiration because it is unique compared to other toys which is considered as normal standard. The interest of Sarah for certain figures was not welcomed by her peer group. Because she didn't get a good response from other girls, Sarah tried to befriend a boy's peer group. When Sarah played with the boy's peer group, she realized that she didn't fit with their style of play. On the toddlerhood stage, Sarah's friends and toys selection were divided by sex categories; other differences such as race and ideology are not considered as important points.

Figure 2: Classification of Roles According to Physical Appearance

Sarah's childhood is shown in page 56 to page 137. In her childhood, Sarah had interest in varieties of Japanese's pop culture. Sarah played along with Power Ranger's characters and mimicked Sailor Moon anime hairstyle. Power Ranger is a TV series with an action genre about a group of young adults who fight evils for justice. Within the series, one of the artists has the physical appearance of an Asian person and acted as Power Ranger Yellow. The signs of Asian people were depicted through yellow as a symbol of Asian people's skin color. Sarah was forced to choose Power Ranger Yellow by her friends because she had a similar background, however Sarah disagreed with her friend's suggestion.

Furthermore, Sailor Moon's main character named Usagi Tsukino also became Sarah's inspiration. In the Sailor Moon animation series, Usagi Tsukino is the main character who has a background as a celestial being from the moon. When Usagi Tsukino lived on Earth, she disguised herself to be a normal school student who fought an evil organization to protect her friends. Sarah adapted the idea of a celestial being disguised as a normal person, because she also feels different from her friends, and it is also from Japan. Sarah though Japan animation can replace South Korea as cultural representative reference because it has similar origin which is from East Asia. When Sarah stated Usagi Tsukino was her reference model, Sarah's friends disagreed because the character has blonde hair which is not incline with Sarah's physical appearance. In the childhood stage, Sarah has difficulty identifying her race background and her friends are also very aware of Sarah's differences. Although Sarah identified as a person from East Asia, the origin country of Sarah still not considered important point in the childhood stage.

Figure 3: Other People's Responses to Sarah's Cosplay Costumes

The adolescent hood of Sarah can be seen in page 138 to 185. In adolescence, Sarah tried to participate in cosplay activities in a Japanese pop culture festival. The participation of Sarah in the Japanese Pop Culture festival got a good response from another participant, however Sarah's background as a South Korean person when she played as Ash (Satoshi) from Pokémon animation series has a different meaning for certain people. People who realized Pokémon animation series are from Japan, therefore they look at Sarah as an imposter. When Sarah was an adolescent, the hegemonic power of South Korea was not powerful. South Korea when Sarah was an adolescent was a developing country that had been colonized by Japan. Certain people also have stereotypes about Korean women, which was an entertainer used by the Japanese military during the colonial era. Negative label of Korean women became a bullying source obtained by Sarah.

Figure 4: Awareness of Sexual Attraction

Sarah's young adulthood phase shown in page 185 to 254. In this phase, Sarah felt an identity crisis because norm and moral values within herself were different from other people. In this phase. Sarah used Evangelion as her identity reference, especially from the main character named Shinji Ikari. Evangelion is an anime about 3 adolescents which are Shinji Ikari, Rei Ayanami and Asuka Langley Soryu. They piloted giant mechs called Evangelion to defeat enemies who threaten humanity. The heavy burden carried by adolescents creates tension in its narration. Existential discourse in Evangelion is the main topic of the story because Shinji Ikari needs to construct his own values although his environment demands him to defeat enemies. Sarah mimicking Shinji Ikari fashion style and adapting Evangelion series values for her daily life. In this phase, cosplaying was not only a hobby, but it became a statement.

In young adulthood, Sarah realized she had her own values and accepted herself as queer. However, this acceptance also stirred feelings of resentment towards her social environment. Sarah's struggle to construct her own identity began to improve as she accepted the traumas from her childhood. She acknowledged being mentally wounded by her environment and sought support from her close friends and family. The decision to seek help after experiencing harm from her environment was key to Sarah's healing.

Result

Pop culture offer support for transnational individuals to identify different values between oneself and environment. The support can be started from the toddlerhood phase when an individual experienced an interest in media contents. Identification process through pop culture is an experiment conducted more than one times. When the experiment conducted, other people have a role as a judge toward a values that suitable to be adapted by someone, From the presentation of Sarah's story in an autobiographical graphic novel, the growth phase of Sarah and several signs can be found. The signs are divided into signifiers and signified based on Roland Barthes's semiotic theory. The list of the phase and signs can be illustrated through this graph:

Table 1: The Sign and Signifiers Found in "Monstrous" Graphic Novel

Growth Stage	signifier 1	signifier 2	signified
Toddler	Mermaid Pictures and TMTT Toys	Worried about getting along in a play group	Gender identification markers
Childhood	Power ranger and Sailor moon role play	Classification of roles according to race in playgroups	Racial identification markers in social interactions
Adolescence	Cosplay activities and anime pop culture festivals	Other people's responses to cosplay costumes	Signs of hegemonic identification
Young Adult	identity crisis and daily clothing style choices	Awareness of sexual attraction	Self value identification marker

Gender identification phase can be shown in Sarah's toddlerhood, she played mermaid and TMTT toys. Sarah as a toddler tried obtained the reference for her identity from pop culture commodities, Sarah also utilized it as connector with her friends. Sarah's friends taste for the toys was divided by duality of gender, girls and boys.

Construction of stereotypes through played toys by girls was a princess doll. From the toys, the toddler could acknowledge the values of ideal girls. The values consist of taste about fashion, manners, and ideal home. On the other hand, TMTT consists of the expectation of boyhood, which is active to solve problems and have adventures in rough ways to show masculinity. In the aim to construct self-identity, an individual has pure perception as blank papers in the beginning. The concept of blank papers is aligned with the John Locke concept named Tabula Rasa. However, interaction with society makes an individual realize about existence of self. In the beginning, the judgment about self is obtained from other people's taste such as parents, friends, school environment.

Based on interactionist theories by Mead and Cooley, the concept about identity construction is also influenced by culture in society. Identity constructed through communication and participation in society. The communication and participation acts occurred several times in 1 period (Burke & Stets, 2023).

In her childhood, Sarah played as a member of Power Rangers with her peer group. In the Power Ranger narration as a pop culture product, there was an effort to grant a label to other people. Grant of labels occurred in the role of power ranger, the red ranger is Caucasian as the leader, the blue ranger is Caucasian with high intelligence, pink ranger is Caucasian with beauty. Other rangers such as yellow and black played by minorities, black ranger by black person who has strong power and yellow ranger as an Asian person with martial arts skills. Based on Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy, labelling is an effort to acknowledge strangers through generalization which is equal to totalization of other people's identity.

The disagreement with totalization by society can result in exclusion even though it is also an effort to maintain self-existence. The exclusion can occur to an individual who is different

from people's perception. An individual can feel interiority when deserted by society, they will construct their personal goals which are different from the expectations of others. The institutionalized of totalization is exteriority which is the meaning of the environment created by society's perspective. In identity construction, interiority and exteriority has a reciprocal relationship through a discourse until it has an agreement.

Sarah feels that her exclusion is related with the narration in anime or manga, especially Sailor Moon. Through Sailor Moon's narration, Sarah felt safer and protected from her social environment because Sarah believes the narration of Sailor Moon is relatable with her daily life problem. Sailor Moon's character, Usagi Tsukino is an adopted daughter and lives as common people on Earth, specifically in Japan. Sarah positioned herself as Usagi Tsukino because they have similar identity as an adopted child in foreign country. However, Sailor Moon narration as an escape mechanism from society can become a double edge sword, because Usagi Tsukino has blonde hair which is uncommon for Asian people. Because Sarah has no physical attributes like Usagi Tsukino, Sarah is mocked by her friends. Sarah felt confused because manga originated from Japan, which is an East Asian country, the narration also has a Japanese environment setting therefore the main character is not visualized and has Japanese people attributes.

Hegemony identification can be seen in Sarah's adolescent phase. Hegemony operates in the form of expectations of society such as taste and perception which produce a meaning system. Experience and visualized practices become intertwined to confirm each other (Powers, 1973). In toddlerhood Sarah granted with Asian stereotype label, however, in the adolescent phase, the meaning becomes more complex and specific. The specific label can be seen at the scene in the graphic novel when Sarah cosplaying as Ash Ketchum (Satoshi), a character from anime and manga series called Pokémon.

The graphic novel establishes Sarah's South Korean background. This fact adds a layer of complexity to her cosplay of a Japanese anime character, considering the historical tension between the two countries (South Korea was a Japanese colony until 1945). As Sarah's friends point out, this clash of cultures becomes a source of mockery for Sarah. Sarah is labelled as a Korean comfort woman because she is seen as submissive to Japanese pop culture. South Korea's hegemony in the Monstrous autobiography graphic novel is not as strong as current conditions.

Clash of hegemonies between countries confirming pop cultures as a soft power. In the soft power of a country, there are hidden ideologies known as odorless culture. Ideologies disseminated through pop cultures can be portrayed in a form of mimesis. Sarah was also mocked because of the act of mimesis to other country's hegemony. In this context, hegemonies especially from countries who had historical tension become an obstacle for transnational individuals to construct their identity. It is due to the fact; transnational individuals always try to find the root of their heritage although the source has been deviated.

in Sarah's young adulthood phase. She identified herself as an anime character in Neon Genesis Evangelion named Shinji Ikari. The identification was established through mimicking Shinji Ikari's fashion style in this phase, Sarah's social environment did not grant her negative label anymore because Japanese pop culture had been acknowledged by society.

In her young adulthood, Sarah acknowledges her existence and constructs her own values independently of others' recognition. The notion to construct individual values mentioned by

Jean Paul Satre, he stated that self-existence is more important than essence. The existence of an individual is shaped by their actions and decisions, not by the label others assign to them. Sarah does not abandon her roots as a South Korean descendant; however, she ignores the social demands imposed on her by others.

Discussion

Taste can be shaped by the cultural environment of a society. Within identity construction, cultural unconsciousness plays a role in creating values within a country or specific region (Bourdieu, 1993). Cultural unconsciousness can be acquired by an individual who experiences dynamic movement. This dynamic cultural movement is evident in the shifting meaning of South Korean citizenship and the broader East Asian identity, influenced by the global impact of their pop culture development.

Fundamentally, race is a floating semiotic sign (Hall, 1997) that can evolve over time. This is evident in the case of Sarah, a South Korean descendant, who is continuously insulted by bullies during her adolescence. During the early 1990s to 2000s, South Korea's condition was still unrecognized by many people in America. From their perspective, South Korea was a developed country still in the phase of rebuilding after World War II.

Korean peninsula became independent in 1945 from Japan occupation. After South Korea Independency, the country led by a militaristic government that had an anti-communist ideology, USA gave financial support to establish a new South Korea government. However, the support that given by USA suspected to have subliminal interest to obtain control of South Korea government.

The attempt to control through the impact of financial support conducted by the USA caused a coup d'etat led by Park Chung Hee's group. After the influences of Park Chung Hee recognized by USA, long term program to develop South Korea economy growth had been established. The long-term plan to develop economy growth was successful, so it named Miracle from the Han River (Byung Kook & Ezra F, 2011).

Hegemony clashes between countries inflict a difficulty to transnational children construct their identity, the phenomena can be visualized through Sarah's stories. Sarah couldn't acquire the language and culture of South Korea because the lack interactions with individuals who come from similar backgrounds. Sarah's identity construction can be different if South Korea hegemony when Sarah growth was already strong.

Pop culture as hegemony can grant references to identity construction however it also has influence to create isolation to individual. The isolation can be occurred because moral and norm values attached in pop culture is different than standard moral and norm values in society. Fictional character as pop culture element is a symbol that can be utilized in interaction. Believed fictional character can shape perception or impression for others.

Sarah's condition in the autobiography graphic novel titled Monstrous can be compared with graphic novels that raise similar issues such as Be Prepared created by Vera Brosgol in 2018. Within the Be Prepared graphic novel, parents' effort to introduce their child about homeland cultures can be portrayed in registering their child in scout. The scout group in the Be prepared graphic novel consists of migrated children from the same background.

In Be Prepared there are 3 steps of Vera as the main character who had transnational identity experienced identity seeking process. The steps of transnational children seeking their identity can be divided into 3 phases which are seeking recognition phase, mimicking phase and integrated phase (Johanes, 2023). However, the guidance in mimicking phase experienced by transnational children can be better if they have reference from an older person beside their parents as mentor. The reference can act as a mentor to directing transnational children how to confront the assimilation process in society. Mentors can also establish support groups to ensure transnational children have solidarity. To create solidarity, the transnational children need to obtain recognition of a new identity as "peranakan", not recognition based on the ability to acquire original cultures and language from their homeland.

The establishment of support groups can bridge the gap that religion, parents, and pop culture cannot fill in the identity construction process of transnational children. In this process, parents must recognize that understanding societal conditions and media literacy is essential to facilitate discussions about cultural acculturation with their children.

Conclusion

The history and relation between countries have a significant role in the identity construction process of a society. Inside a country, individuals who have transnational identity confront additional difficulty in the form of moral and norm values clashing. The clash of values occurred within the self and stigma granted by the society environment.

The function of graphic novels as a medium of communication is very effective because it can visualize a condition that cannot be manifested physically such as development of mental condition, and steps to construct an identity. Although in the visualization through graphic novels, phenomena or conditions have been framed by certain individuals or groups. Based on the reason above, race stereotyping cannot be avoided in the creation of graphic novels. However, the existence of transnational identity in graphic novels can be counted as an effort to challenge creation of frame within the medium, therefore can stimulate further discussion and critical thinking of readers.

Inside of an autobiography graphic novel which discusses issues about transnationality, the reader can understand the process of acculturation of everyone can be different. The result can also be different from an individual who joined different social groups. The acculturation result can be influenced by the condition of social group, possessed expertise, and character expectation in one environment. In the theory stated by John W. Berry, acculturation strategy can be divided by several point such as assimilation, integration, marginalization and separation (Sam & Berry, 2006). Through graphic novels, the result of acculturation can be visualized clearly.

In the graphic novel "Monstrous," the acculturation strategy repeatedly manifests, becoming an integral layer of Sarah's experiences. These interconnected experiences significantly shape Sarah's decisions at each stage of her identity construction process, while also contributing to her trauma.

The resolution of Sarah's story illustrates that she not only embraced differing opinions from others, but also discovered a solution to her identity construction dilemma through the acknowledgment of her mental health. Her realization and acceptance of her mental condition

played a pivotal role in this process. Sarah seeks support and establishes a support group from her friends in the young adulthood phase.

This research has limitations in interpreting meaning due to its exclusive reliance on sociological literature. In addition to interpreting signs through the semiotic method, it is essential to consider the biological condition of the main character. Furthermore, the study requires updated information on the current hegemonic positions of relevant countries, such as the USA, Japan, South Korea, and Germany. Comparing these contemporary hegemonic positions with their historical counterparts will provide a more comprehensive analysis.

Acknowledgements

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Intergenerational Solidarity in Pixar's "La Luna"

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Abstract

This paper aims at examining intergenerational bonds in Disney and Pixar's short film *La Luna* (2011). More specifically, Bengtson and Schrader's (1982) taxonomy of six dimensions of intergenerational solidarity are considered in relation to De Bono's (1985) Six Thinking Hats as a way of pilot-testing a theory of a conflict-free mechanism against a problem-solving methodology. The empirical site of inquiry is *La Luna* where three representatives of three generations – a grandfather, a father, and a son – express their different worldviews leaving open the possibility of resolving in a non-conflicting manner the imbalances between them. The research question that guided the design of this study is as follows: Under which conditions may intergenerational solidarity be an animated Disney movie takeaway in the case of coming-of-age narratives? The hypothesis of this study is that although the process of literally trying out different hats on the youngest member does not interfere with his personal drive, it facilitates personal growth because of the positive affirmation he receives by his family. A screenshot analysis of the film revealed that among the conceptual dimensions of intergenerational solidarity was "affectual solidarity" (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991), which defined the final positioning of the boy's hat when crisis struck. The study prepared the ground for perceiving the role of familist thinking in Disney's universalist messages. In consequence, it has created the implications for generating culture-specific content for research purposes and for conveying a culture of familist discourse in the context of Disney's impact on defining family relationships.

Keywords: *La Luna*, Familist Thinking, Intergenerational Solidarity, Pixar Shorts

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Introduction

The rationale behind putting in the picture *La Luna* (2011) as the most emblematic Pixar short of all is its tribute to coming-of-age storytelling in Disney animation movies. More specifically, *La Luna* is about a young boy who embarks on a journey of self-discovery accompanied by two members of his family, viz. his father and grandfather. As the story progresses, conflict arises between the different generations not so much in relation to their objectives in life as in relation to the way they are accustomed to handling problem situations.

Therefore, this paper is also about connecting a movie script's conflict resolution conventions to effective problem-solving. And because in this case the most appropriate generational strategy against conflict is indicated by the dramatic impact of a prop item (i.e., the boy's hat), which is launched in different positions on the boy's head, De Bono's (1985) "Six Thinking Hats" methodology has been chosen to indicate the achievement of the intended outputs and the sustainability of the potential outcomes. More specifically, if the change in position of the boy's hat is a generational symbol that invites and provides opportunities to consolidate thinking on how crises are to be dealt with, the same could be claimed about a possible change in the coloring of the hat each time a decision is due for the story's progress. The proposed aesthetic intervention in the hat's coloring is intended at suggesting thinking stages that are compatible with the story's message about preserving intergenerational solidarity as maintenance of harmony in the family is another major issue when it comes to Disney takeaways.

At this point, Bengtson and Schrader's (1982) different dimensions of intergenerational solidarity are introduced as a way of developing a correspondence to the decisions triggered by the different ways of thinking suggested by the hat's different colors. To this end, it would be wise to keep in mind the following question: Are Disney takeaways universalist because decisions have been dramatically prepared by the gradual process of thought formation or culture-generated because decisions are the outcome of familist thinking?

Toward a Definition of Intergenerational Solidarity in a Coming-of-Age Narrative

The Cambridge dictionary definition that "coming-of-age refers to the time when someone matures emotionally, or in some other way or to the time when something starts to become successful" gives a first insight into the complexities of a coming-of-age narrative that embraces intergenerational solidarity as its core takeaway. According to Cruz Saco (2010, pp. 9-10), "intergenerational solidarity" is defined as "bonding between and among individuals in multigenerational family networks" which serves the purposes of "overcoming adversity within families". How the pursuit of harmony can prevent family discord before it reaches a peak is dealt with by Bengtson and Schrader (1982) who have developed the intergenerational solidarity dimensions model. This model includes:
- the "associational dimension", i.e., how family members engage in different activities
- the "affectual dimension", i.e., how and if family members reciprocate positive sentiments
- the "consensual dimension", i.e., how family members negotiate family values
- the "functional dimension", i.e., how family members exchange help and support
- the "normative dimension", i.e., how strong family members preserve intergenerational roles and obligations
- the "structural dimension", i.e., how close family members live together

A specific characteristic of the "normative dimension" is "familism" which according to Parrott & Bengtson (1999) refers to "norms of family obligation", viz. an established set of norms to which members of a multigenerational family are expected to adapt and adhere. How familism has given rise to discussions about familist thinking in Disney movies is clarified further below.

Developing the Research Question

Before moving on to the main research question of this paper, which is "Under which conditions may intergenerational solidarity be an animated Disney movie takeaway in the case of coming-of-age narratives?", the following question should be considered first for the purposes of drawing distinctions among Pixar shorts: "Do coming-of-age Pixar shorts have cultural or intergenerational solidarity dimensions?"

A careful scan of Pixar Short Films Collections, Volumes 1, 2, 3 and 4 has produced the following results: *La Luna* (2011) in Pixar Short Films Collection, Volume 2, *Bao* (2018), *Piper* (2016), and *Sanjay's Super Team* (2015) in Pixar Short Films Collection, Volume 3 can be classified as coming-of-age Pixar shorts that belong to different categories. More specifically, *Bao* and *Sanjay's Super Team* have cultural dimensions, *La Luna* has intergenerational solidarity dimensions while *Piper* has mainly universalist dimensions.

Having sorted coming-of-age Pixar shorts into categories, focusing on the main research question comes next. Thus, taking into consideration that there are Pixar shorts with cultural dimensions, such as the individualism versus collectivism dimension, and Pixar shorts with intergenerational dimensions such as the normative dimension, debating whether or not to acknowledge intergenerational solidarity as an animated Disney movie takeaway in coming-of-age narratives is contingent upon recognizing the contribution of familist thinking. Thus, understanding how intergenerational solidarity works in the plot development of a coming-of-age narrative seems feasible as long as it becomes common knowledge through pertinent viewer training that familist thinking:
- contributes to the main character's transformation by allowing or disallowing certain aspects of identity development
- runs parallel with problem-solving in that it affects the type of action to be taken
- supersedes Bengtson and Schrader's (1982) six dimensions of intergenerational solidarity in that it is not only part of the normative dimension, but affects all dimensions
- provides an alternative to dimensionalizing cultures following Hofstede's (1984) dimension of "individualism versus collectivism" in that it provides a rationale on specific cultural behavior
- is culture-generated because it is often a characteristic of specific cultures
- creates a holistic picture of intergenerational solidarity in that it goes beyond the boundaries laid down by Hofstede's (1984) theory of cultural dimensions as well as Bengtson and Schrader's (1982) theory of intergenerational solidarity dimensions

La Luna **(2011)**

What follows is a pertinent focus on that coming-of-age Pixar short with intergenerational solidarity dimensions. A key issue for discussion is the fact that the intergenerational solidarity dimensions in Enrico Casarosa's *La Luna* are culturally based. To verify this, it suffices to seek recourse to the movie creator's interviews to gain more insight as to how to

look for specific evidence in the movie itself. Such evidence would be facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, etc., all of which are reminiscent of his Italian background.

Below, three screenshots from *La Luna* illustrate the generational struggle between the grandfather and the father over the hat's optimum position on the young boy's head (Figure 1). In fact, it was the effect of this non-verbalized struggle that never came to a climax that fueled a lot of this research into the cultural roots of the family's behavior. The mere fact that the young boy and the grandfather stoically accept the father's option without stretching the matter further became the first clue as to why rising above the narrow confines of individualistic concerns should be accorded special importance.

Figure 1: Three Screenshots of the Generational Struggle in Casarosa's (2011) *La Luna*

In his interviews about *La Luna*, Casarosa has not shown any hesitation in admitting that there is a strong autobiographical connection to his own Italian background as his grandfather and father had been in constant discord when he was a child. In movie character terms, Casarosa himself would be Bambino, Papà his father and Nonno his grandfather (Figure 2). And even if each one of them seems to be set in his own ways, not showing any appreciation of each other's ways of acting whatsoever, Casarosa affirms in a reassuring kind of way: "people have very strange ways of showing affection and love, so I always like to think that their love had to be there" (Young, 2012).

Figure 2: Screenshots of Nonno, Bambino, Papà in Casarosa's (2011) *La Luna*

Obviously, the autobiographical elements are there as well as the realization in hindsight that the creation of a coming-of-age story with intergenerational solidarity dimensions does not use the past only for inspiration but also for self-healing reasons. Even if Casarosa's Italian background is not prioritized in the storytelling process, the cultural hints can easily be picked up because Casarosa has allowed viewer access to the complexities of his own family relationships.

Data Sources and Analysis

It would not be an overstatement to claim that *La Luna* is the kind of coming-of-age movie that invites the viewers to step in with their own way of thinking to unlock hidden messages. Following this line of logic, the research data came from:
- processing visual content (i.e., capturing gestures and facial expressions in screenshots)

- acknowledging familist thinking as regulatory in that it does not allow the chasm dividing the three generations to grow wider
- associating familist thinking with problem-solving as surviving mechanisms that fuel each other
- looking for a culture-specific rationale behind the movie's creation
- building upon Pixar's fondness for autobiographical storytelling

At the same time, the intervention activity was about unveiling the possibility of applying De Bono's method of Six Thinking Hats to create a cause-and-effect relationship between thinking and problem-solving. This explains why it focused on a screenshot analysis of the movie's:

- main tension (i.e., settling intergenerational differences especially in the case of the huge star that required sweeping in an effective way)
- answer to the main tension (i.e., trying out different working solutions during crisis without falling out)
- resolution (i.e., accepting the fact that the representative of the younger generation is entitled to the dimension of intergenerational solidarity of his choice)

In other words, De Bono's (1985) method of Six Thinking Hats was pilot-tested as a way of investigating conflict-free resolution skills in line with different intergenerational solidarity dimensions.

Why the Six Thinking Hats

At this point, it would be useful to explain which thinking attitude each colored hat represents (Figure 3). More specifically, the white hat, here colored in grey for practical reasons, represents a neutral type of thinking, the red hat a highly emotional type of thinking, the black hat a negative thinking attitude, the yellow hat a positive thinking attitude, the green hat creative thinking and the blue hat an organized type of thinking.
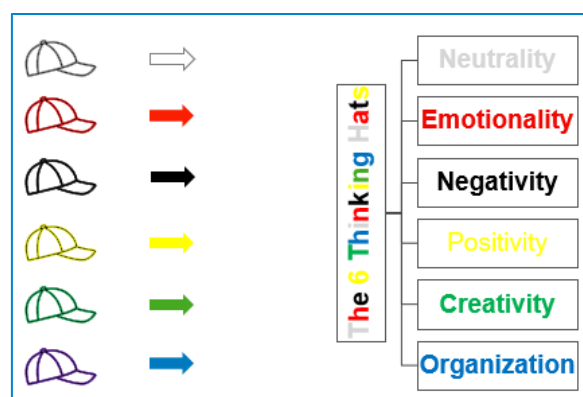
Figure 3: De Bono's (1985) Six Thinking Hats

Still, a major question remains open: What makes the "Six Thinking Hats" method applicable? Some possible explanations include that:

- ✓ the very act of changing hats takes thought in a different direction
- ✓ rehearsing hats to find the most fitting one resembles the act of rehearsing different types of thinking to find the most effective one
- ✓ being aware of which type of thinking takes the lead every time a decision is due entails acknowledging one's needs and wants

✓ identifying the different thought processes at play also entails acknowledging the possibility of interaction patterns in these thought processes
✓ the deliberateness or consistency behind the adoption of a specific type of thinking may reflect one's passage through different developmental stages
✓ such "developmental stages" in the adopted way of thinking may include culture-specific dimensions, such as intergenerational solidarity dimensions

From De Bono's (1985) Six Thinking Hats…

Going back to the main research question, "Under which conditions may intergenerational solidarity be an animated Disney movie takeaway in the case of coming-of-age narratives", providing an answer is dependent upon unlocking familist thinking. In fact, adopting a Disney-specific perspective on cultural behavior when considering De Bono's different types of thinking as associated with solving issues of intergenerational strife is the formula of success for discovering the prevalent presence of intergenerational solidarity.

In the light of such a perspective, an artistic intervention in the visual content of the movie could prove helpful in unveiling the movie creator's culture-specific intentions (Figure 4). As a first point, applying De Bono's symbolism of colors to the boy's hat can create a linkage between:

- the neutral type of thinking (i.e., the white hat) and the boy's lack of initiative to take any individual responsibility for changing the hat's position in the event of causing distress to his family
- the emotional type of thinking (i.e., the red hat) and the boy's longing to take part in a family activity on equal terms
- the negative type of thinking (i.e., the black hat) and the boy's curiosity and risk-taking behavior to offer his personal contribution to the family
- the positive type of thinking (i.e., the yellow hat) and the boy's optimism that the younger generation can make a fresh proposal on the negotiation of family values
- the creative type of thinking (i.e., the green hat) and the boy's resolve to break and reset the norms through creativity
- the organized type of thinking (i.e., the blue hat) and the boy's success in achieving a harmonious balance between family tradition and novelty of ideas through an emphasis on the affective bonds among family members
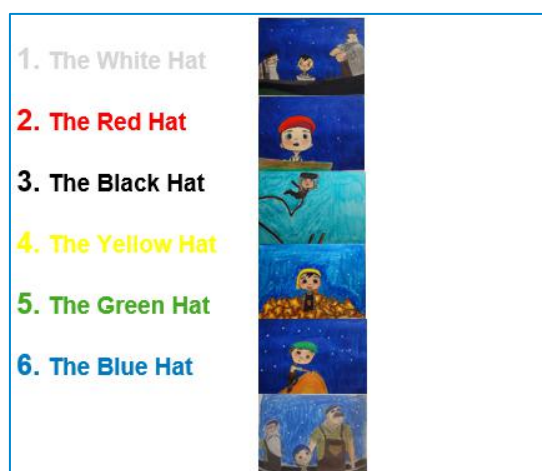
Figure 4: Bambino's Six Thinking Hats From Casarosa's (2011)
La Luna (an artistic intervention)

… To Bengtson and Schrader's (1982) Six Dimensions of Intergenerational Solidarity

Therefore, assuming that the boy's initially neutral type of thinking serves the purposes of structural solidarity due to the fear of driving the other family members away during a family venture, the switch to the emotional type of thinking is almost called for. In fact, as soon as the young boy realizes that associational solidarity is required of all of them in order to engage in and implement a joint activity, he lets go of neutrality and ponders the possibility of proving himself worthy of greater responsibility. And, because positive thinking may have been preceded by negative thinking because of the risk involved when deciding to participate on equal terms, compromising with functional solidarity for survival reasons during crisis is followed by discovering consensual solidarity for the renewal and reaffirmation of family values. It is no wonder that part of the resolution is owed to creative thinking which enhances normative solidarity by providing a broader view of the impact of changing the way family norms are negotiated. However, resolution is best achieved through organized thinking when the young boy feels finally free to point towards the way that leads to affectual solidarity by identifying reciprocity as the pattern to abide by when building stronger family relationships (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Screenshots From Casarosa's (2011) *La Luna* Illustrating Bengtson and Schrader's (1982) Six Dimensions of Intergenerational Solidarity

Results, Discussion and Implications

The results of this study resonate at different levels. At movie screenshot analysis level, the application of the Six Thinking Hats method revealed the inherent symbolic attributes of the young boy's hat's different positions. This approach raised no applicability issues as discovering familist thinking behind all boy's actions raised the barriers to effective implementation and facilitated problem-solving. What is more, the idea of having familist thinking credited with providing conflict management mechanisms created the conditions for identifying opportunities for a more in-depth analysis of Disney storytelling. The devised correspondence between the Six Thinking Hats method and the dimensions of intergenerational solidarity exposed the Disney-specific approach to coming-of-age storytelling as it simulated the cause-and-effect relationship between thinking and acting in intergenerational solidarity terms.

At the same time, it became obvious that further experimentation with associating academic thinking with popular culture narrative forms was the indicated way of providing an answer

to the main research question, "Under which conditions may intergenerational solidarity be an animated Disney movie takeaway in the case of coming-of-age narratives?". More specifically, by identifying a Disney-specific rhetoric, it became possible to take cultural research to a different level. Therefore, at cultural research level, a preliminary framework aimed at demystifying Disney takeaways elucidated the link between a culture of origin and a Disney-specific perspective on coming-of-age stories. As it turned out, *La Luna's* takeaways were about giving viewers the opportunity to contemplate the results of a possible choice between a norm-based and a free-of-norms behavior within the context of a given culture whilst allowing the researcher to identify cultural patterns in family decision-making and draw inferences about human family dynamics.

The above results have created some important implications. To begin with, the adaptation of visual content (i.e., the artistic intervention) for the purposes of methodological emphasis can open new pathways to cultural understanding. On a further note, the cause-and-effect approach to isolating screenshots for sequencing movie analysis can aid the retrieval of culturally specific data with a universal impact. In this respect, the data retrieval methods can provide the teaching material for an EFL video lesson as TEFL is considered to be an ideal means to "bring home to students how popular culture can lead to thinking differently" (Ypsilanti & Karras, 2024, p. 174). And because, in this case, thinking differently is part of the culturally specific agenda of Disney movies, Disney scholarship can be further enhanced by looking for the creator's origin and/or originality of thought processes.

Conclusion

For the purposes of this study, Casarosa's *La Luna* has been selected as the most representative case of a Pixar short coming-of-age story. The selective focus on a prop item (i.e., the boy's hat), which constitutes a constant presence throughout the movie, has shown the way towards unlocking the potential (e.g., didactic) of the cultural resources contained in Disney movies. Such unlocking has been made possible by building bridges between academic thinking and film viewing from a cultural perspective. The specific awareness that familist thinking sustains the plot development and holds the reins on the young hero's character transformation is a core issue in the discussion of Disney takeaways which requires further exploration and research. Just the same, the general awareness that looking through the lens of intergenerational solidarity dimensions can reveal defining aspects of a Disney-specific approach to character and story development represents a pressing need for change in the critical reception of Disney animated family movies. Hence, the lingering question: If collectivist cultures lead by example in forming and valuing close bonds among members of an extended family (Karras, 2024), can Disney family rhetoric lead by example in showcasing intergenerational solidarity in speculated conformance with what film viewers are catered to in a family movie?

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Cultural Expressions of Scriptural Cosmology:
Case Study of Temple Art of Select Temples in Kumbakonam

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Abstract

This research article explores how complex linguistic elements of scriptural cosmological aspects manifest as cultural expressions through a case study of the creation legend associated with select temples at Kumbakonam in Tamilnadu. While the extant works spotlight the creation myth associated with Kumbakonam and some of its famous temples, the scriptural connections still needed to be established. The current research paper leverages this opportunity and endeavors to connect key cosmological aspects of Vedic and Puranic scriptures with the creation myth linked to some of the temples of Kumbakonam. This paper uses field visits to select temples to study their paintings. It also analyses the narratives available in the digital media to complement the field studies. Based on the analysis, this paper concludes that the creation legend of Kumbakonam links back to Vedic and Puranic cosmological concepts with temple art, enhancing the value of the narration. The scriptural connection of the Kumbakonam creation myth aligns explicitly with the Nasadiya and Hiranyagarbha Suktas of the Rig Veda and the Puranic concept of cyclic creation-sustenance-dissolution-re-creation. This research article also emphasizes the need to restore and preserve such invaluable artistic communication at temples for a more effective cultural continuity so that such legends can thrive in the digitally oriented third millennium.

Keywords: Temple Art, Cosmology, Vedas, Puranas, Cultural Expressions, Kumbakonam, Vedic Cosmology, Puranic Cosmology

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1. Introduction

Kumbakonam, in the southern Indian state of Tamilnadu, is a cultural capital of excellence. It has temples for pilgrimage, a sacred tank for holy dips, exquisite temple art, artisans making Divine idols using metal casting (Bhoopathi et al., 2020), architectural marvels of temple construction, traditional handloom silk and cotton weaving, and many unique cuisines.

Historically, the city has gone by different names – kudavayil, kudamukku, kudandhai, and presently Kumbakonam (Champakalakshmi, 1978) – all names geographically symbolizing (Nanda, 2012) a pot-like landscape. The city is the mouth of River Kaveri in the form of an opening of a pot (tip of a triangle), which further expands into a pot-shaped delta (base of a triangle) towards the East before draining into the Bay of Bengal.

Kumbakonam (Aniruddh, 2022; Kumbakonam and mahamagam, 1933) is also closely associated with ancient creation myth (from now on referred to simply as 'myth'). A pot (Kumba in Tamil) containing the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*) and the seed of creation (*sṛṣṭi bhīja*) rested here after floating from the sacred Meru Hill in the great deluge during the process of dissolution (end of an eon – implying the previous) and before the next creation cycle (beginning of next eon – the present) can commence. Lord Shiva (one of the Hindu Trinity) broke open the pot with an arrow so creation could begin again in the new eon (the present). The nectar spilt over various parts of Kumbakonam, where temples exist today (in addition to a temple at the spot where Lord Shiva aimed at the pot with an arrow) and a sacred pond, Mahamagham.

To commemorate the significance of this myth (Selvakumar & Thangaraju, 2016), Kumbakonam celebrates the Mahamagham festival (symbolically the KumbhMela of the South) every 12 years. The festival occurs on a full moon day, with the Sun transiting the Aquarius zodiac sign (Kumba raasi in Tamil language) and Jupiter and Moon transiting the Magha nakshatra (popular view is that the Magha corresponds to Regulus star) in the Leo sign (Simha raasi).

Unlike the KumbhMela in the North (Haridwar, Ujjain, Prayagraj, Nashik), where sacred rivers flow through the cities, Kumbakonam's festival is unique because, as per the legend, sacred rivers arrive at the holy Mahamagham pond (where drops of nectar from the pot fell). Even today, pilgrims take a sacred dip on a specific date every 12 years to cleanse their sins. With such religious, historical, mythological, and cultural significance, Kumbakonam is almost synonymous with the Mahamagham festival (Balasubramanian, 2016).

The association of Kumbakonam with a creation myth inspires intriguing questions, especially around the extant literature's interest in analyzing cosmogonical narratives in Hindu texts[1]. Is there a connection between this myth and the texts? If so, what texts and what concepts? Integrating this curiosity with artistic expressions found at Kumbakonam's

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[1] González-Reimann, L. (2009). Cosmic Cycles, Cosmology and Cosmography. Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism, vol. 1, 411-28. Editor-in-Chief Associate Editors Knut A. Jacobsen, Helene Basu, Angelika Malinar, Vasudha Narayanan. Leiden: Brill. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2212-5019_BEH_COM_1020020; Kak, S.C. (2001). Yajnavalkya and the Origins of Puranic Cosmology. arXiv: History and Philosophy of Physics.; Brereton, J. P. (1999). Edifying Puzzlement: Ṛgveda 10. 129 and the Uses of Enigma. Journal of the American Oriental Society, 119(2), 248–260. https://doi.org/10.2307/606109; Kak, S.C. (2002). The Cyclic Universe: Some Historical Notes. arXiv: History and Philosophy of Physics.

temples leads one to another enticing and plausible dimension at the intersection of myth-scriptures-art. Is there an association? If so, in what way?

The connection of the Kumbakonam creation myth with texts and temple art is the premise the current research seeks to explore to understand how literature and arts converse and converge in ensuring the cultural legend thrives for millennia.

2. Scope, Aim and Method

This study aims to pivot on the cultural legend of the Kumbakonam creation myth and explore its connection with the Hindu texts and temple arts. This topic can bring multiple domains of knowledge on the same interaction platform. Accordingly, the scope of this work involves analyzing the temple art available at select Kumbakonam temples associated with the myth through field study and correlating it with the cosmogonical notions found in the Vedic and Puranic literary genres. Accordingly, this research paper sets the following objectives,

   a) to understand how digital media represents the myth using textual and literary analysis. (sec. 1.2)
   b) to analyze temple art depicting the myth through field study. (sec. 1.3)
   c) to connect artistic expression with cosmogony-related textual passages in the Rig Veda and Puranas using textual interpretation conducive[2] to understanding scriptural cosmogonical notions that are amenable to correlating with temple art. (sec. 1.4)

3. Creation Myth of Kumbakonam

3.1 Representation in Digital Media

The analysis of how digital media represents the myth involved using a combination of 'textual and literary analysis methodology for qualitative research' for reviewing digital media. The scope included searching for a combination of keywords (temple art, cosmology, vedas, puranas, cultural expressions, Kumbakonam, creation, myth, legend) in books, web, images, and videos in digital format. The following are the key findings from this analysis.

   • Digital traceability of Puranic poetry literature (Kumbakonam Puranam in the Tamil language) in praise of the city's legendary religious significance. Notably, only one of the four or five such works by Sokkappa Pulavar is now traceable in digital media. (Supplementary Readings).
   • Other related books (digitally accessible) focus on the history of temples or the Mahamagham festival.
   • The Kumbakonam legend surrounding the creation myth is intrinsically associated with Mahamagham festival (as observed in the Google Trends summary – Figures 1, 2, 3 below).

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[2] Engler, S., & Stausberg, M. (Eds.). (2021). The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion (2nd ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003222491; Murti, S.M. (2018). Methodology in Indological Research. India: Bharatiya Book Corporation. ISBN:9788185122694; Kashyap, R. L. (2017). Semantics of Rig Veda (revised ed.). India: SAKSHI.; New Horizons of Indological Research. (2013). Adat, D. (Ed.). India: Kunjunni Raja Academy of Indological Research & New Bharatiya Book Corporation; Kuiper, F. B. J. (1970). Cosmogony and Conception: A Query. History of Religions, 10(2), 91–138.

- There are numerous representations of the legend in digital media (images, videos, online blogs) as a pilgrimage tourism status of a recurring cultural event of the Mahamagham festival.
- There is no research article or web blog available on connecting the legend of Kumbakonam, surrounding the creation myth, with the scriptures, Vedic/ Puranic, except for the specific Tamil poetry literature available on Kumbakonam Puranam, which has limited presence in digital format (one of four or five such books).
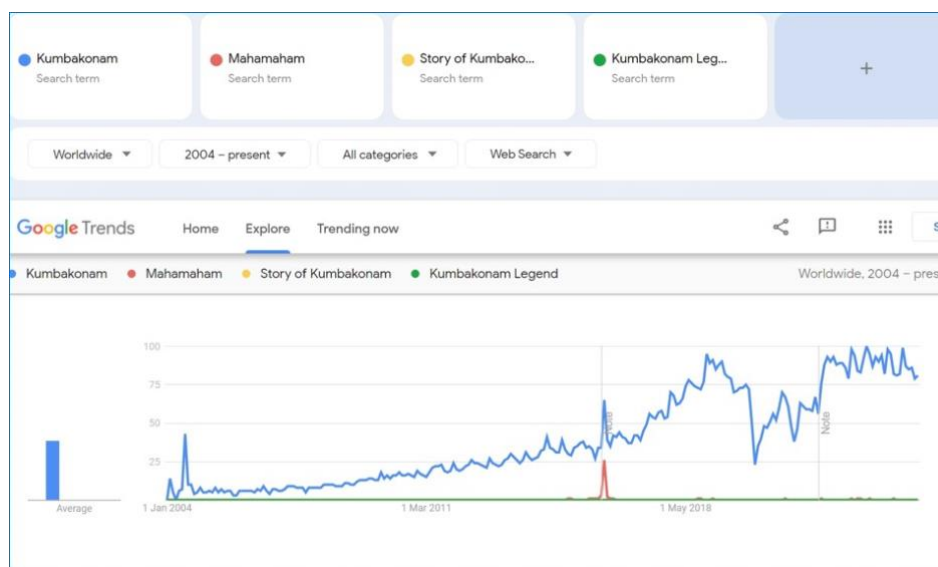
Figure 1: Google Trends Summary – Web Search
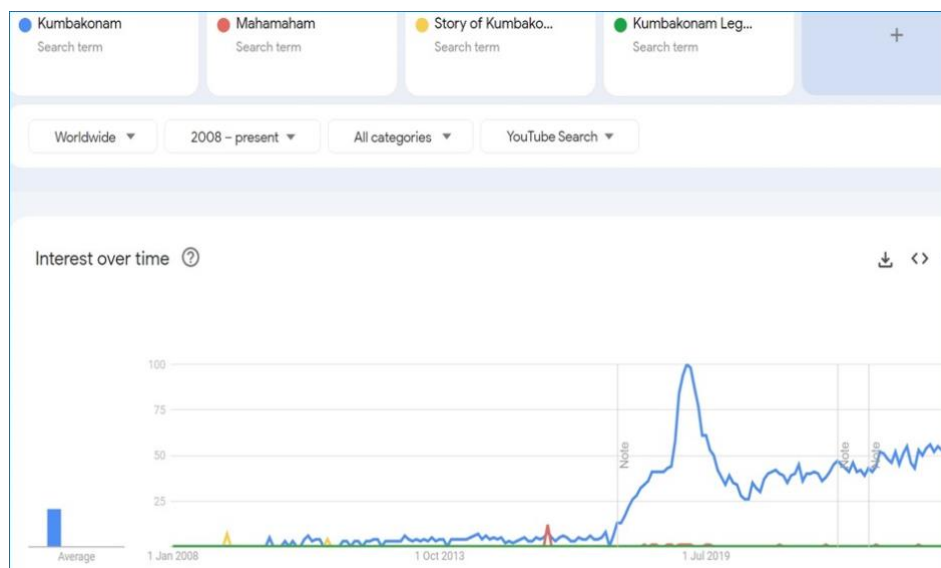
Figure 2: Google Trends Summary – YouTube Search
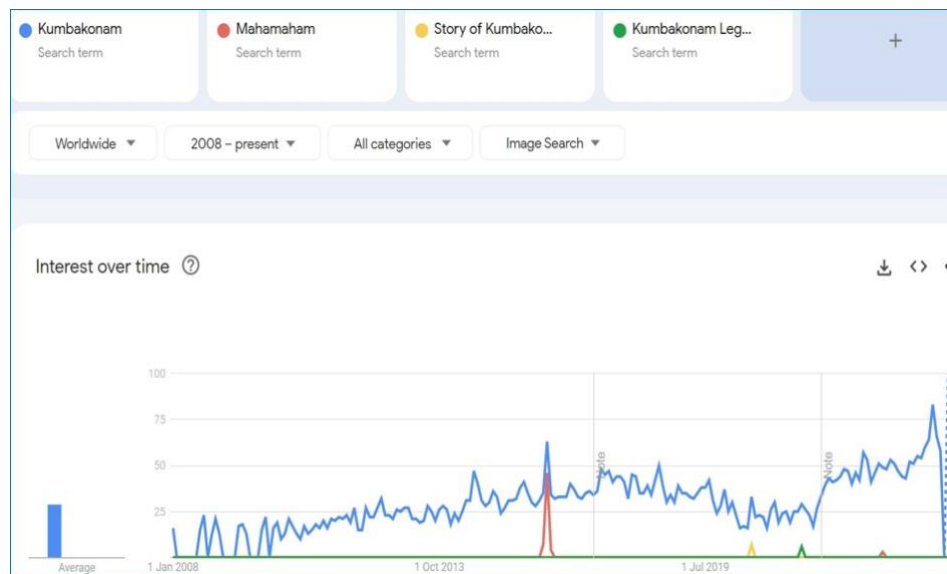
Figure 3: Google Trends Summary – Image Search

3.2 Illustration of Temple Art

Fulfilling the second objective of this research paper necessitated detailed fieldwork at temples in and around Kumbakonam city to analyze the art representing the creation myth. Four temples aligned with the scope of this work: two specifically covered reasonably well-preserved art illustrating the myth, and the other two highlighted the connection with the Vedas.

The following art (Figure 4) is at Sri Aadi Kumbeshwar Temple (https://maps.app.goo.gl/HNKhSAWYaZMcHccp8). The pictorial explanation is available in both English and Tamil. This art has eleven images sequentially narrating the myth. Remarkably, the first, second, and eighth pictures spotlight the Puranic-style narrative of the myth, with the involvement of Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva in the Hindu Trinity.

Figure 4: Art at Sri Aadi Kumbeshwar Temple

The explanation of the first picture suggests that saving the creation from destruction is equivalent to beginning the creation again after dissolution (*pralaya*). The subsequent pictures clarify that re-creation after dissolution is possible by using the contents of the pot –

nectar of immortality (*amṛta* in Sanskrit and amudha in Tamil) and the seed of creation (*sṛṣṭi bhīja* in Sanskrit). Picture five is directly associated with the temples today at those five locations where the open pot's contents settled after it broke.

The following art (Figure 5) is a combination of four pictures displayed at Sri Banapureeswarar Temple, from where Lord Shiva aimed at the pot with an arrow located north of Sri Aadi Kumbeshwar Temple (https://maps.app.goo.gl/aZ8f1xB349rpU88g9). From left to right, this art starts with the picture showing the deluge, then Lord Brahma praying to Lord Shiva to safeguard creation, followed by the sacred pot floating in the flood, and with the last image depicting Lord Shiva breaking open the pot with an arrow.

Figure 5: Art at Sri Banapureeswarar Temple

Unlike the previous two, the following depictions (Figures 6 and 7) do not directly depict the myth but instead focus on the significant role of Vedas in the Puranic cyclic creation-dissolution-re-creation process.

The art (Figure 6) found at Sri Veda Narayana Perumal Temple in the vicinity of Sri Aadi Kumbeshwar Temple (https://maps.app.goo.gl/K5mgKaD4xejgisQF6) spotlights Lord Brahma praying to Lord Vishnu, who, at the end of the prayer, helped restore the Vedas – a Puranic idea involving two of the Trinity but connecting to the Vedas' role.

Figure 6: Art at Sri Veda Narayana Perumal Temple

The next image (Figure 7) is not actually a temple art but the architectural design of a unique chariot-styled sanctum sanctorum at Sri Vedanta Nayaki and Sri Viswanatha Swamy Temple at Thepperumanallur, near Kumbakonam (https://maps.app.goo.gl/5h4mWhbwNuF5Z6HQ9).

According to local legend, there is a belief that the Goddess Vedanta Nayaki is reciting Vedas until the next eon, and when the recitation stops, the dissolution of the present eon begins.

Figure 7: Unique Chariot-Styled Architecture of Sanctum Sanctorum at Sri Vedanta Nayaki and Sri Viswanatha Swamy Temple, Thepperumanallur, Near Kumbakonam

3.3 Connection With Vedic and Puranic Cosmology

For the third objective of this research paper, this section proceeds to analyze the following scriptural texts based on the Kumbakonam creation myth described in digital media that corroborates well with temple art. The textual passages chosen (purposeful sampling) for a thorough consideration align well with the central theme of the creation myth – commencement of re-creation (breaking the pot to bring out the seed of creation) after dissolution (*pralaya*). Such a purposeful sampling is easily feasible based on the extensive work on cosmological aspects of Vedas and Puranas that is available as part of this thesis[3].

> *nāsȧdāsīnno sadȧsīttȧdānīṁ nāsīdrajo no vyȯmā paro yat | kimāvȧrīvȧḥ kuha kasya śarmȧnnambhȧḥ kimȧsīdgahȧnaṁ gabhīram* (RV_10.129.01 – first verse of Nasadiya Sukta of the Rig Veda Samhita)

The above verse is from the most popular Nasadiya Sukta (hymn), cited and analyzed extensively for cosmogony. It describes the state of the cosmos before creation began, primaeval origin. Specifically, the beginning of the hymn with complex usage, '*nāsȧdāsīnno sadȧsīttȧdānīṁ*' is relevant for correlation with the Kumbakonam creation myth. As it posits

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[3] Sivaram, S. (2023). Cosmological Aspects in Scriptures limited to Vedas Puranas and Yoga Vasishta. [Doctoral thesis, Assam University]. Shodhganga@INFLIBNET. https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/523872

that neither *asat* nor *sat* existed before creation, the implication is profound as *asat* and *sat* must always be considered together. Such an interpretation is consistent with other Vedic and Puranic textual references. Decoding *asat* and *sat* require analysis of another Rig Vedic hymn on cosmogony.

> *dᴇvānā́m pū̠rvye yᴜ̠ge'sᴀ̇tᴀ̠ḥ sad ᴀ̇jāyata* (RV_10.072.02b)

> *dᴇvānā́ṁ yᴜ̠ge prᴀ̇thᴀme'sᴀ̇tᴀ̠ḥ sad ᴀ̇jāyata | tadāśᴀ̠ anvᴀ̇jāyantᴀ̠ tadᴜ̇ttᴀ̠napᴀ̇dᴀ̠spari* (RV_10.072.03)

The phrase "*sᴀ̇tᴀ̠ḥ sad ᴀ̇jāyata*" means *sat* arose from *asat*. In the above verse, not only do *asat* and *sat* occur together, but they also indicate a possible mutual relationship. This Vedic usage is particularly useful to apply to the Kumbakonam creation myth, where the pot can symbolize *asat*, and the seed of creation and the nectar of immortality that the pot contains can symbolize *sat*.

Intriguingly, the interpretation of *sat* arising from *asat*, akin to the seed of creation and nectar appearing from the pot after an arrow breaks it, has a connection to another important cosmogonic hymn of the Rig Veda, the Hiranyagarbha Sukta.

> *hi̠rᴀ̠ṇyᴀ̠gᴀ̠rbhaḥ samᴀ̇vartᴀ̠tāgrᴇ̇ bhū̠tasyᴀ̇ jᴀ̠taḥ patᴜ̠rekᴀ̇ āsīt | sa dᴀ̇dhāra pṛthᴜ̠vīṁ dyāmᴜ̠temāṁ kasmaᴜ dᴇvāyᴀ̇ hᴀ̠viṣᴀ̇̄ vidhema* (RV_10.121.01a)

It describes the creator god's emergence from the golden cosmic embryo at the beginning, primaeval origin. The purport is that the creator god, *sat*, appeared from the golden cosmic embryo, *asat*, except that the Kumbakonam creation myth occurs between the dissolution of the previous eon and the re-creation of present eon. Hence, instead of the creator god (*sat*) arising from a golden cosmic embryo (*asat*), the seed of creation (*sṛṣṭi bhīja* as *sat*) emerges from the pot (asat). Thus, the myth and its expressions through temple art correlate directly with these Vedic passages.

While the select Vedic texts shed light on one part of the Kumbakonam creation myth (seed of creation, *sat*, arising from the pot, *asat*), they do not discuss the other part involving time as *pralaya*, dissolution of the previous eon through the great deluge. The discussion of *asat-sat* as 'pot-seed of creation' is inseparable from dissolution (*pralaya*). Without safeguarding the seed of creation in a pot, the re-creation of the current eon is not possible, whereas without *pralaya* occurring, safely storing the seed of creation in a pot is not required.

So, the two-way consideration of *asat-sat* adds a third, *asat-sat-pralaya*. Such a three-dimensional approach is consistent with the Kumbakonam creation myth elaborated in digital media and represented in temple art. According to the myth, the pot gets carried away in the flood waters and stops at Kumbakonam, so *pralaya* is synonymous with the great deluge. Therefore, bringing in the third dimension of *pralaya* to arrive at a comprehensive scriptural connection coherent with the myth without invoking Puranas is not easy. Another way of looking at the three-way association of *asat-sat-pralaya* is how it is analogous to space-life-time, where *asat* symbolizes five great elements, including space, *sat* represents all life forms, and *pralaya* represents time. Notably, space-time continuum is a vital concept in physical cosmology.

Puranas elaborate on the cyclic process of creation-dissolution, which eventually leads to re-creation (*sarga-pralaya-pratisarga*). Bhavishya Purana (BhvP) talks about countless cycles of time in which creation and dissolution occur. Also, this verse uses *saṃhāra* for dissolution instead of the commonly used *pralaya*. BhvP clarifies that creation happens when a new period begins, and dissolution happens when it ends. Brahmanda Purana (BndP) supports the cyclical Universe with repetitive cycles of creation-dissolution-re-creation using the phrase *punaḥ punaḥ* (again and again). Markandeya Purana (MarkP) states that time (*kāle vai pralayasyānte*) triggers and controls the process of creation-dissolution-re-creation.

manvantarāṇyasaṃkhyāni sargaḥ saṃhāra eva ca tathāpyahe sadā brāhme manavastu caturdaśa (BhvP_1.2.107)

kalpādau sṛjate tāta ante kalpasya saṃharet dinaṃ tasyeha yattāta kalpāntamiti kathyate (BhvP_1.2.85)

triṣu kāleṣu tasyaitā brahmamastanavo dvijāḥ / manvantareṣviha sraṣṭumāvarttante punaḥ punaḥ (BndP_2.3.107)

vyākhyātumupacakrāma punaḥ sargapravarttanam / atra vo varttayiṣyāmi yathā sargaḥ prapatsyate (BndP_3.4.9)

etadicchāmyahaṃ śrotuṃ tvatto bhṛgukulodbhava / yadāna sṛṣṭirbhūtānāmasti kinnu na cāsti vā / kāle vai pralayasyānte sarvasminnupasaṃhṛte (MarkP_46.2)

Based on these Puranic passages, this research infers that the Kumbakonam creation myth refers to the timeline where re-creation (*pratisarga*) happens with the breaking of the pot containing the *sṛṣṭi bhīja* at the end of pralaya. The myth occurs at a point in time among the repeating cycles.

The following image (Figure 8) summarizes the connection of the Kumbakonam Creation Myth with Vedic and Puranic cosmological aspects.

Figure 8: Connection of Kumbakonam Legend With the Vedic and Puranic Cosmology

4. Conclusion

This explorative study of correlating the temple art at selected temples in Kumbakonam with the cosmological notions of scriptures leads this research to conclude that the creation myth of Kumbakonam connects both the Vedic and Puranic ideas with temple art, therefore complementing the value of the textual narration. Moreover, the myth's scriptural connection corresponds with the ideas expounded specifically in the Nasadiya and Hiranyagarbha Suktas of the Rig Veda, as well as the prominent theme of cyclic creation, sustenance, dissolution, and re-creation highlighted in the Puranas.

While the Kumbakonam legend's foundation is the Puranic genre in terms of its narrative style that influenced the development of temple art, there is a conceptual alignment to the core principles of the Vedic hymns. Such a result is possible by the fact that certain temples in the area emphasize the importance of Vedic texts in the process of re-creating the next eon following the dissolution of the existing one, implying that Vedas play a vital role in the execution of the Puranic cyclic process.

This work also finds that digital media, although having several narrations on the myth associated with Kumbakonam, has an extensive link to the pilgrimage status of the Mahamagham festival but relatively limited coverage of the myth's conjunction with the temple art and scriptures.

Thus, this research underlines the significance of restoring and conserving such invaluable creative communication at temples for more efficient cultural continuity so that scriptural ideas in the textual format appeal more effortlessly and powerfully to the technologically leaning third millennium with increasing reliance on digital media.

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Lifestyle-Oriented Urban Collage, the Future of Hong Kong "Tong Lau"? A Case Study of Tai Hang District

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Abstract

Emerging in mid-19th century Hong Kong, *Tong Lau* represents a unique architectural heritage blending Chinese traditions with colonial influences, characterised by ground-floor shops and upper-floor residences. Despite their historical significance, many *Tong Lau* face demolition due to intensive urbanisation. This research examines how Tai Hang District, a historic neighbourhood in Hong Kong, demonstrates an alternative approach to *Tong Lau* preservation through "urban collage." Adopting field surveys, this study reveals how traditional buildings integrate with contemporary uses, creating a dynamic landscape where old and new coexist. The research documents how bottom-up initiatives, particularly through creative business adaptations and community engagement, have enabled *Tong Lau* preservation whilst fostering neighbourhood vitality. This transformation manifests across physical adaptations, evolving business landscapes, community space creation, and cultural-digital interactions. The findings suggest that such organic, collage-like approaches offer viable alternatives for heritage preservation, demonstrating how historic urban fabric can be protected whilst remaining responsive to contemporary needs.

Keywords: Micro Regeneration, Lifestyle-Oriented Motivation, Cultural Sustainability

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1. Introduction

Urban transformation in historic districts often manifests as a complex interplay of seemingly contradictory elements. These spaces embody what Hayllar & Griffin (2009) describe as inherent dualities, namely the convergence of old and new, traditional and modern, preservation and change. Such urban environments are not merely physical containers of architectural heritage but dynamic social spaces where daily life unfolds through countless interactions and activities.

As noted by Yau (2009), the conservation of built cultural heritage in heavily developed urban areas is fraught with challenges, particularly due to economic forces and land management policies that prioritize development over preservation. While the Hong Kong government has attempted to address these challenges through initiatives like the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme, the effectiveness of such top-down approaches remains questionable, often leading to fragmentation and social costs (Hou & Wu, 2019). This dilemma has traditionally resulted in binary outcomes: either complete redevelopment or strict preservation. This study proposes an alternative framework of "urban collage" - a process where multiple layers of urban life coexist and interact, creating a rich mix of spatial and social experiences. Through this lens, we examine the transformation of Tai Hang, a historic neighbourhood in Hong Kong. Originally established as a working-class district defined by its *Tong Lau* architecture and local industries, Tai Hang presents a unique case of organic urban evolution. Unlike the wholesale regeneration seen in many Hong Kong districts, its transformation has been incremental and gradual, allowing for the preservation of both physical heritage and community bonds. This study explores how urban collage manifests across multiple dimensions: through physical building adaptations, evolving commercial landscapes, community-driven social spaces, and cultural-digital transformations. Through investigating these layers of urban collage in Tai Hang, this research argues that such an approach represents a viable alternative for heritage district evolution. The case demonstrates how historic urban fabric can be protected while remaining responsive to contemporary needs, offering valuable insights for other historic districts facing similar pressures of urban change.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Urban Regeneration, Place-Making and Community Development

Contemporary urban regeneration theory has evolved significantly beyond mere physical renewal to embrace a comprehensive approach to urban development. Carter et al. (2017) conceptualise urban regeneration as an integrated vision and action that seeks to resolve urban challenges while delivering lasting improvements across economic, physical, social, and environmental dimensions. This holistic understanding aligns with the assertion of Romanelli et al. (2022) that successful urban regeneration must support social capital and community engagement to promote sustainable development. Such a multifaceted approach recognises that urban spaces are complex ecosystems where physical infrastructure, social dynamics, and economic activities are inextricably linked.

Within this context, place-making emerges as a critical strategy for implementing comprehensive urban regeneration, offering practical mechanisms to bridge physical transformation with social and cultural objectives. Place-making transcends traditional urban design by actively engaging with the social fabric of communities. Friedmann (2010)

emphasises that effective place-making must be rooted in local knowledge and community values, enabling residents to maintain their connection to place while adapting to changing urban conditions. This perspective is reinforced by Heath et al. (2017), who highlight how place identity plays a crucial role in fostering community ties and enhancing the regeneration process. The integration of place-making principles into urban regeneration strategies creates what Zukin (2009) terms "authentic" urban spaces – areas that preserve their distinctive character while accommodating contemporary needs and aspirations.

The implementation of this integrated approach requires effective mechanisms for community engagement and participation. Kagan and Duggan (2011) demonstrate how community art serves as a powerful tool for engagement, enabling diverse populations to actively participate in the regeneration process. This approach is particularly effective because it creates accessible platforms for dialogue and co-creation, allowing communities to express their needs and aspirations through creative means. Hurtado (2020) further emphasizes how participatory decision-making processes can address social inequality while ensuring regeneration efforts align with community interests. Such involvement builds social capital and ensures the sustainability of regeneration initiatives through genuine community ownership.

Heritage environments present unique opportunities and challenges for implementing these participatory approaches to urban regeneration. Gravagnuolo and Girard (2017) demonstrate how heritage-led urban regeneration can serve multiple objectives: preserving historical significance, fostering social cohesion, and stimulating economic development. This multifaceted approach transforms heritage assets from potential constraints into valuable resources for sustainable urban development. The success of such initiatives often depends on innovative strategies that respect historical authenticity while accommodating contemporary needs. Practical strategies for achieving this balance often emerge through creative placemaking interventions. Whybrow's (2020) framework of public art as a performative cultural entity provides a valuable approach for activating heritage spaces while maintaining their cultural significance. This concept is complemented by Stevens' (2007) notion of the "ludic city," which emphasises how designed interventions can create new opportunities for community engagement without compromising historical value. Such approaches demonstrate how careful curation of creative activities can enhance both the physical and social dimensions of heritage spaces, contributing to their sustainable regeneration while preserving their essential character.

2.2 Historical Context of "Tong Lau" and Development of Tai Hang District

Tong Lau, or "Chinese tenement buildings," emerged during Hong Kong's rapid urbanisation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a distinctive architectural response to the city's expansion (Chu, 2012). During the British colonial period, these buildings were developed to accommodate the increasing population, particularly waves of mainland migrants seeking economic opportunities. The architectural significance of *Tong Lau* lies in its unique hybrid design, which synthesizes Chinese spatial organization with Western construction techniques (Sedova, 2023). These buildings typically feature commercial spaces at street level with residential units above, maximizing land use in the densely populated urban environment. Their architectural elements, including distinctive balconies, tiled roofs, and decorative façades, exemplify the cultural fusion characteristic of colonial Hong Kong (Chu, 2012).

Tong Lau buildings played a crucial role in Hong Kong's socio-economic development beyond their architectural significance. They provided affordable housing solutions for working-class families and small business owners, creating what Medici et al. (2018) describe as "vertical communities." These buildings became incubators for local enterprises and social networks, supporting the economic mobility of immigrant families while maintaining traditional social structures. The mixed-use configuration not only addressed housing needs but also fostered vibrant street-level commerce, contributing to the development of close-knit urban communities.

The development of Tai Hang district, situated between Causeway Bay and Tin Hau in Hong Kong Island's Eastern District, exemplifies the evolution of *Tong Lau* within Hong Kong's urban landscape (Figure 1). Originally a fishing village, Tai Hang began its transformation in the late 19th century as Hong Kong expanded under British colonial influence. The district's development accelerated significantly after World War II, driven by an influx of mainland migrants that created unprecedented housing demands (Ng, 2002). This demographic shift catalysed the construction of numerous *Tong Lau* buildings, which became integral to the district's architectural and social fabric (Figure 2). The resulting urban landscape reflected a unique blend of Chinese and Western influences, characteristic of Hong Kong's colonial period development patterns.

Figure 1: Location and 3D Model of Tai Hang (Source: Author)

Figure 2: Traditional Chinese Tenement Building (*Tong Lau*) in Tai Hang District
(Source: Author)

Figure 3: Tai Hang Community Comparison
(Left: Historical photograph, Source: Chan, 2016; Right: Current state, Source: Author)

In recent decades, Tai Hang has undergone another transformation, emerging as a notable example of organic urban regeneration (Figure 3). The district has attracted creative industries and young entrepreneurs who have revitalised the ground-floor spaces of *Tong Lau* buildings, establishing lifestyle-oriented businesses such as cafes, craft shops, and bookstores. This new wave of development has created what can be described as a "lifestyle-oriented urban collage," where contemporary businesses coexist harmoniously with traditional shops (Lai, 2024). The district's cultural heritage, particularly the famous Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance, has been actively preserved and promoted through initiatives such as art tours, city walks, and the establishment of a Fire Dragon Museum.

The evolution of Tai Hang demonstrates the complex interplay between preservation and renewal in Hong Kong's urban development. Community engagement has become increasingly crucial in shaping the district's development trajectory, with local stakeholders actively participating in planning processes (Yau & Chan, 2008). Environmental considerations have also gained prominence, with initiatives to integrate green spaces and enhance public areas becoming priority concerns for both residents and planners (Jian et al., 2024, Cheung, 2024). These developments reflect a broader shift towards more sustainable and community-oriented urban regeneration approaches, while maintaining the distinctive character that *Tong Lau* buildings and local traditions have imparted to the district.

2.3 Social Media Influence on Urban Spaces: Wanghong Urbanism

The emergence of social media platforms has fundamentally reshaped urban regeneration and place-making processes, particularly in heritage contexts. This digital transformation is exemplified by the phenomenon of "Wanghong" (internet-famous) Urbanism, where locations gain prominence through social media visibility, subsequently catalysing increased foot traffic and economic activity (Jian et al., 2021). Boy and Uitermark (2017) conceptualise this as an urbanisation process characterised by dynamic relationships among physical, digital, and social spaces, where urban development is increasingly mediated through digital narratives rather than solely shaped by physical interventions. This digital-spatial interface has particular significance for heritage contexts, where traditional urban fabric intersects with contemporary forms of social engagement and economic revitalisation, fundamentally altering how urban environments are perceived, experienced, and transformed.

The theoretical framework of Wang-hong Urbanism, as conceptualised by Jian et al. (2021), demonstrates the dynamic interactions between three interconnected spheres: physical space (characterised by urban regeneration), digital space (manifested as place in media), and social space (experienced as media in place). This tripartite relationship creates a complex ecosystem where urban transformation is simultaneously shaped by and shapes digital representations and social interactions. The framework illuminates how physical urban regeneration initiatives interact with digital media representations, while social space mediates this relationship through lived experiences and cultural practices. Digital communications technology, rather than replacing local community relations, has enhanced them by creating new forms of spatial interaction and place attachment (Zook and Graham, 2007). This digital-spatial dynamic manifests in how social media users function as active place-makers, creating and consuming spatial narratives through their digital practices, whilst simultaneously influencing physical urban development through their preferences and behaviours.
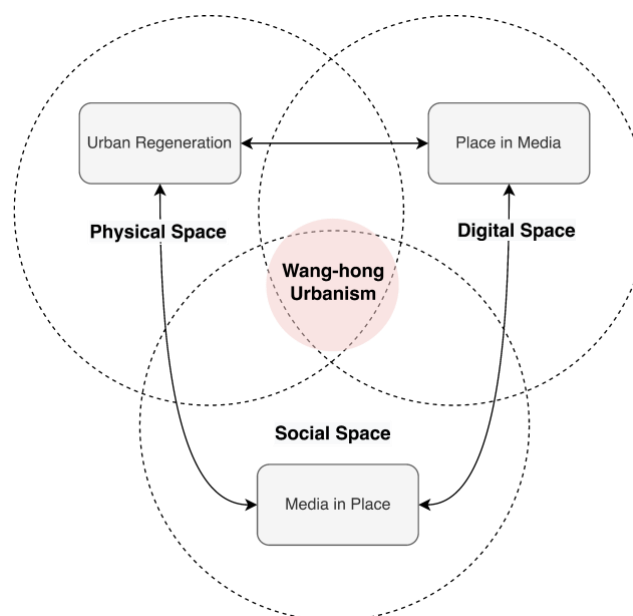
Figure 4: Conceptual Framework of Wang Hong Urbanism
(Source: Jian et al., 2022)

The manifestation of this theoretical framework can be observed through what Klausen (2017) terms a "culture of mediatisation," where the digital-spatial interface actively reshapes urban spaces through media narratives and technological affordances. Social media platforms, particularly image and video-sharing platforms such as Xiaohongshu, TikTok, and Instagram, serve as primary mediators in the relationship between physical and social spaces. While these platforms have potential for facilitating productive dialogue between urban stakeholders, the growing emphasis on creating "instagrammable" spaces reflects a fundamental shift in how physical spaces are conceived and developed. This transformation often prioritises visual appeal over functional urban planning, resulting in spaces designed primarily for digital consumption rather than community use (Jian et al., 2020, 2022).

In heritage contexts, the implications of Wang-hong Urbanism are particularly profound and multifaceted. The fusion of offline and online business models, enabled by time-space convergence (Adams, 2009), has allowed historical districts to transcend physical limitations and reach broader audiences, driving economic revitalisation. Digital platforms have enhanced participatory planning and strengthened community voice in urban governance,

whilst becoming crucial tools for documenting local history and cultivating collective memory (Hood & Reid, 2018). However, this digital transformation presents complex challenges to social equity and heritage authenticity. The selective representation privileging particular aesthetics may inadvertently marginalise certain community groups, whilst the concentration of digital attention among select stakeholders can skew development priorities towards commercial interests rather than heritage preservation (Jian et al., 2021). This tension between digital visibility and authentic preservation raises critical questions about the future of heritage district development in an increasingly mediatised urban landscape.

3. Methodology

This research utilises field observation to examine the urban transformation of Tai Hang district. Between December 2023 and July 2024, the research team conducted five field surveys, documenting spatial patterns, architectural characteristics, and community activities within the neighbourhood. The surveys consisted of visual documentation through photography, observation of land use patterns, and documentation of daily community activities. This approach enabled the recording of both physical urban features and social dynamics, including business operations and public space utilisation. The collected data was analysed to understand patterns in urban development and community life, providing insights into the district's transformation.

4. Results and Discussions

Based on the field observations and collected data, the transformation of Tai Hang can be analysed through four distinct aspects: physical morphology and architectural heritage, changing business landscape, community life and social interactions, and environmental qualities. These aspects collectively demonstrate how the district has evolved while maintaining its distinctive character.

4.1 Physical Transformation and Spatial Adaptation of "Tong Lau"

The development of the Tai Hang District in Hong Kong reflects the broader socio-economic and urban transformation that the city has undergone over the past century. This district, known for its unique blend of traditional and modern elements, has experienced significant changes due to urbanisation, government policies, and community initiatives.

The field survey reveals that Tai Hang presents itself as an "urban collage," where new interventions are carefully inserted into the existing urban fabric like patches in a quilt. This collage effect manifests not only in the horizontal juxtaposition of old and new elements but also in the vertical layering of functions within individual buildings. While the original *Tong Lau* structures remain largely intact, new businesses and functions are "patched" into these historical containers, creating a three-dimensional mosaic of urban life.

At the urban scale, the district has largely retained its historical fabric, characterised by its network of narrow streets and preserved *Tong Lau* buildings. Most *Tong Lau* structures maintain their original three- to four-storey scale, contributing to a consistent streetscape that reflects the area's historical character. The district's unique street pattern, including Sun Chun Street and School Street, remains intact, fostering an intimate pedestrian environment that encourages street-level activities. At the building scale, this collage approach is particularly evident in how new functions are inserted into existing structures without

fundamentally altering their architectural integrity. Rather than undertaking wholesale renovations, building owners and businesses have adopted a more subtle approach, integrating contemporary elements while preserving the original spatial organisation and architectural features. These different approaches to architectural collage in Tai Hang can be observed in various forms, from spatial reorganisation to material applications (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Architectural Collage in Tai Hang: Left: Structural Preservation With Functional Adaptations; Right: Material-Based Interventions in Building Fabric (Source: Author)

Figure 6: No. 3 School Street Building Exterior and Details (Source: Author)

A notable example of this layered adaptation is No. 3 School Street, a 1930s building that exemplifies this collage-like transformation. While we were unable to access the interior of No. 3 School Street during our field surveys due to its private nature, media reports and published materials suggest that this 1930s building exemplifies the collage-like transformation of the district (Epoch News HK, 2023). According to these sources, while retaining its original granite walls with sympathetic red brick repairs, the building has been reimagined through careful insertions: a modern salon has been integrated into the ground

floor, a music hall inserted into the second floor, whilst the third floor maintains its residential function. This approach to adaptive reuse demonstrates how new programmes can be thoughtfully collaged into historical structures without compromising their essential character (Figure 6).

4.2 Changing Business Landscape

The business landscape of Tai Hang demonstrates another dimension of urban collage, where traditional and contemporary commercial activities are interwoven into the district's fabric. Field observations reveal a rich tapestry of businesses where long-established local trades persist alongside new lifestyle-oriented establishments.

This commercial collage is particularly evident in the ground floor spaces of *Tong Lau* buildings (Figure 7). Auto repair workshops continue to operate from their street-level locations, their mechanical activities spilling onto the narrow streets. Local florists and dai pai dong serve their longtime customers, maintaining the authentic working-class character that has long defined Tai Hang. These traditional businesses operate alongside newly established artisanal coffee shops, craft beer bars, and boutique design studios, which have been thoughtfully inserted into renovated *Tong Lau* spaces. For instance, along Sun Chun Street, traditional metal workshops and local grocery stores remain active, while adjacent spaces house contemporary fusion restaurants and lifestyle boutiques.

The evolution of the district's commercial character has been organic rather than wholesale. Unlike other regenerated areas in Hong Kong where traditional businesses have been completely displaced, Tai Hang maintains a delicate balance. Traditional establishments continue to serve the local community's daily needs, while new businesses attract visitors and younger residents, contributing to the area's economic vitality without overwhelming its original character. This gradual transformation has created a dynamic neighbourhood where auto mechanics work next door to third-wave coffee roasters, creating a unique urban experience that bridges different eras of Hong Kong's commercial culture.

Figure 7: Commercial Coexistence in Tai Hang: Left: A Recently Opened Café; Right: Traditional Car Upholstery Workshop (Source: Author)

4.3 Community Engagement and Social Space Creation

In Tai Hang, social spaces emerge not through traditional urban planning but through organic community engagement and daily interactions. The narrow streets and alleyways, though not designed as formal public spaces, have evolved into vibrant social venues where community

life unfolds. These spaces function as an extension of both residential and commercial premises, creating informal gathering areas that foster social interaction.

The district's social spaces demonstrate a form of "lived collage," where different community activities overlap and coexist. Residents actively appropriate public space by placing personal furniture—chairs, stools, and even sofas—along the streets, effectively claiming these spaces as extensions of their private domains (Figure 8). This informal appropriation of public space creates a distinctive urban environment where the boundaries between private and public become blurred. During regular business hours, mechanics work on vehicles while neighbours chat on their personal seats nearby; elderly residents rest on their brought-out furniture while schoolchildren pass through; shop owners extend their displays onto the street while residents hang laundry above.

This organic creation and appropriation of social space is particularly evident during festivals and community events, when residents and business owners collaborate to temporarily transform the streets. Traditional celebrations, such as the Fire Dragon Dance during Mid-Autumn Festival, see the entire community participating in the transformation of everyday spaces into ceremonial grounds, demonstrating how deeply embedded cultural practices continue to shape the district's social landscape.

Figure 8: Residents' Furniture in Public Space: Informal Appropriation of Street Space
in Tai Hang (Source: Author)

4.4 Cultural-Digital Transformation and Heritage Branding

The cultural landscape of Tai Hang is experiencing a new form of collage, where traditional heritage elements merge with digital-age expressions and contemporary branding. While maintaining its historical essence, the district has become increasingly visible on social media platforms and tourism applications, creating a layered narrative that combines physical and digital presence.

Traditional cultural elements, such as the Fire Dragon Dance, have gained renewed significance through digital documentation and social media sharing. Local events and festivals are no longer just community celebrations but have become cultural attractions that draw visitors seeking authentic urban experiences. These heritage elements are being reinterpreted and branded in ways that appeal to both tradition-minded locals and experience-seeking tourists.

This cultural-digital transformation is particularly evident in how new businesses incorporate local heritage into their branding. Cafés and restaurants often reference the district's

industrial past or traditional crafts in their interior design and marketing narratives. Digital platforms and food blogs frequently highlight the contrast between traditional Dai Pai Dong and contemporary dining establishments, turning this juxtaposition into a distinctive feature of Tai Hang's identity.

5. Conclusions

The urban transformation of Tai Hang exemplifies a sophisticated form of urban collage that operates across multiple dimensions. What makes this district particularly fascinating is how its spaces have evolved into what could be seen as "urban stages" where daily life unfolds as a form of spontaneous social performance. Drawing from Huizinga's (1938) concept of "magic circle", these streets and alleyways function beyond their physical dimensions, creating temporary realms where residents craft their own social reality through informal space appropriation and community engagement.

Unlike many regenerated districts in Hong Kong, Tai Hang's evolution demonstrates how gradual, organic transformation can preserve community character while accommodating contemporary urban needs. As Kolb and Kolb (2010) suggest, the success of such spaces lies in enabling users to engage through desire rather than prescribed rules. The success lies not in prescriptive design but in providing the community with opportunities to shape their environment. The informal street furniture, collaborative festivals, and fluid public-private boundaries all serve as "tools" through which residents actively participate in place-making.

Most significantly, this bottom-up approach to urban collage presents an alternative model for *Tong Lau* preservation. Rather than facing demolition or rigid conservation, these historic buildings find new life through adaptive reuse while maintaining their original architectural integrity. The layering of old and new, traditional and contemporary uses demonstrates how *Tong Lau* can be protected through active engagement rather than passive preservation. This organic transformation not only safeguards the physical heritage but also sustains community vitality, offering a viable pathway for heritage conservation that balances preservation needs with community development. The success of Tai Hang suggests that urban collage, when implemented thoughtfully and gradually, can serve as an effective strategy for protecting historic urban fabric while fostering sustainable neighbourhood evolution.

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Integrating Indonesian Cultural Values in Creating Visual Identity for International Forum: Indonesian Cultural Context in Graphic Design

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Abstract

The importance of designing a visual identity as a strategy to promote a positive image of a country is increasing in the context of globalization. Visual identity is a critical element in building and strengthening the nation's image. As a country that participates in and hosts several international forums, Indonesia has involved professional practitioners in designing the identity of these activities. This research explores the cultural context in designing visual identities for international forum activities as a case study, namely the G20 in 2022 and the ASEAN chairmanship in 2023, in collaboration with the Indonesian Graphic Designers Association (ADGI) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. As a professional association, ADGI has a vision to create a healthy and equitable graphic design industry ecosystem to form a strong visual identity for Indonesia. Through a descriptive qualitative approach involving literature studies, analysis of design documents, and interviews with sources involved in the design process, this article further explains how this identity symbolically reflects Indonesian culture's diversity, distinctiveness, and richness. This research contributes to understanding the identity design process for international forums and broadens insight into the importance of reflecting cultural identity in a global context. This research's conclusions can guide graphic designers and decision-makers to pay more attention to local cultural values in international representation.

Keywords: Branding, Culture, Graphic Design, Nation Identity, Professional Association, Visual Identity

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Introduction

In the context of globalization, visual identity is an important tool for a country to project its image internationally. Globalization encourages countries to differentiate themselves through unique and recognizable symbols because a visual identity significantly influences international perception. Visual identity, which includes logos, color schemes, and overall imagery, serves as the face of a country, communicating its values, culture, and aspirations to a global audience. In this context, a well-designed visual identity is not just a representation of a country's face but a strategic effort to assert a country's presence and relevance in global affairs.

A strong visual identity is essential to promoting a positive image of a country. Visual identity acts as a bridge between a country's cultural heritage and future aspirations, which can present an appealing image to global audiences. In international forums and events, a professionally created visual identity can highlight a country's strengths, foster a sense of pride among its citizens, and resonate with a diverse global audience. Visual identity can also enhance diplomatic relations and economic movements by creating a positive impression, especially in an era where soft power is increasingly important. A country's visual identity relates to the discussion about nation branding and the theory and evidence of soft power.

In Nation Branding theory, visual identity is used as a strategic tool to create a positive perception in the eyes of the world, reflecting a country's cultural values, vision, and strengths (Anholt, 2016). Nation branding is a strategic means to enhance a country's global image and reputation, often utilizing cultural and political narratives to drive international influence. On the other hand, the theory of soft power is a fundamental mechanism that allows countries to achieve these goals through attraction and persuasion rather than through repressive systems or violence. The combination of nation branding and soft power has proven to be an effective strategy for countries to build alliances, attract investment, and improve their global standing, especially in a world where perception and narrative can have as much impact as traditional forms of power (Bolin & Stahlberg, 2023; Gallarotti, 2023; Nye, 2009; Surowiec, 2016).

Indonesia's participation in international forums, such as the G20 Summit and the ASEAN Chairmanship, underscores the nation's active role in global diplomacy and economic discussions. These events provide Indonesia with a platform to showcase its rich and diverse culture through visual identity designs that are distinctive and deeply rooted in the country's cultural context. In collaboration with the Indonesian Graphic Designers Association (ADGI), over the past three years, the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken this opportunity to showcase Indonesia's modernity while respecting its cultural heritage. The visual identity created for these events symbolizes Indonesia's commitment to contribute positively to global dialogue and reinforces its image as a nation that values tradition and innovation.

This study explores the cultural context in designing visual identities for international forums, namely the 2022 G20 Summit and the 2023 ASEAN Chairmanship, where Indonesia hosting the event. The second visual identity was designed through a selection and curation process thanks to the cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and the Indonesian Graphic Designers Association. The presentation of this research was carried out to explore the works of professional graphic designers who apply cultural contexts so that

the findings in this exploration can help as educational material for graphic design learners, practitioners, and also policymakers in government.

Figure 1: G20 International Forum 2022 in Indonesia
(Source: retrieved from Kompas.com, 17 February 2022)

Figure 2: ASEAN Chairmanship International Forum 2023 in Indonesia
(Source: retrieved from Kompas.com, 6 September 2022)

The Role of Professional Associations in Visual Identity Design

ADGI (Asosiasi Desainer Grafis Indonesia) is a professional organization established to develop and advance the graphic design industry in Indonesia. As a forum for graphic designer professionalism throughout Indonesia, ADGI focuses on professional development, quality improvement, and creating a healthy and fair ecosystem in the design industry. ADGI often collaborates with various institutions, including governments and international organizations, to ensure that the graphic designs reflect cultural values and professional quality standards.

ADGI's role in the visual identity design process for international forums such as the G20 2022 and the ASEAN Chairmanship 2023 is about more than aesthetics and professionalism. It's about ensuring that the designs produced are culturally relevant. ADGI's involvement in

these projects underscores the importance of professional designers in shaping Indonesia's national image on the international stage, ensuring that the resulting designs represent the cultural richness and values that Indonesia wants to convey.

Qualitative Descriptive Research Approach in Graphic Design

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach that describes the process of designing a visual identity in the context of Indonesian culture. This method was chosen to explore the meanings contained in the visual identity, and how the identity is designed for international forums such as the G20 2022 and the ASEAN Chairmanship 2023, which are significant platforms for global cultural exchange. Through this approach, the research not only describes the visual elements, but also examines the symbolic depth of the design in reflecting the richness of Indonesian culture.

This research is supported by literature that includes references from literature sources such as theory books, research articles, and design documents on visual identity design and literature on Indonesian culture. These sources help explain the theoretical context of cultural reflection in visual identity. For visual representation, the author refers to Stuart Hall's circuit of culture approach and Roland Barthes' semiotics to help analyze signs and visual elements. The design document analysis was also carried out on the visual design process used in the G20 2022 and the ASEAN Chairmanship 2023. This analysis focuses on visual elements, such as symbols and colors, that represent Indonesian culture. Interviews with selected designers and stakeholders involved in the design process were also conducted to obtain direct information about the goals and cultural interpretations communicated through the design.

Analysis on Both Visual Identity Designs

In this research, the design objects studied are the visual identity of the G20 in 2022, designed by Seto Adi Witonoyo from a graphic design studio called Satu Collective, and also the visual identity of the ASEAN chairmanship in 2023, designed by Adji Herdanto from graphic design studio called Studio Akronim. Both designers are members of the Indonesian Graphic Designers Association (ADGI) and were then selected from five other finalists in the curation stage carried out jointly between the association and the relevant ministries.

G20 2022 Visual Identity

The G20 is an international forum comprising 19 countries and countries that are members of the European Union. It aims to review policies related to the global economy. In 2022, Indonesia will host the G20 for the first time, so this moment is significant for Indonesia. The central theme, *"Recover Together, Recover Stronger"* reflects joint efforts to face post-pandemic challenges. Indonesia uses this to show the strength of its culture and the uniqueness of its nation through visualizations that symbolize the spirit of cooperation and optimism in facing the future.

Figure 3: G20 Visual Identity Logo in 2022 by Seto Adiwitonoyo
(Source: G20 visual identity design document by Seto Adiwitonoyo)

The design of the 2022 G20 logo is inspired by *wayang*, a traditional Indonesian performing art recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. *Wayang* represents Indonesian art and mythological stories and contains moral values and life philosophies. The main symbols in this design are *gunungan*, and *dalang*, where *gunungan* symbolizes cosmological balance, and *dalang* represents control throughout a story (Kustopo, 2020). In the G20 logo, the *dalang* symbolizes Indonesia's role in leading global discussions, as if directing the course of a story in a *wayang* performance. The *dalang* symbolizes wisdom and control, reflecting Indonesia's hope to lead discussions toward a fair and balanced global solution for all. In the context of the G20, this element illustrates Indonesia's active role in directing global discussions toward better economic recovery.

Figure 4: Depiction of Wayang and Puppeteers (Dalang) in Indonesian Culture
(Source: G20 visual identity design document by Seto Adiwitonoyo)

The G20 2022 logo also contains several essential elements that reflect Indonesian cultural values. The silhouette of a mountain symbolizes the end of a chapter but also signifies a new beginning, following the theme *"Recover Together, Recover Stronger."* The mountain, the symbol used in the logo, has a deep meaning in wayang performances, namely the representation of the balance of the cosmos between macro and micro and a sign of transition from one chapter to another in the story (Santosa, 2021). In the context of the G20, the mountain reflects a joint effort to start a new chapter in global economic recovery.
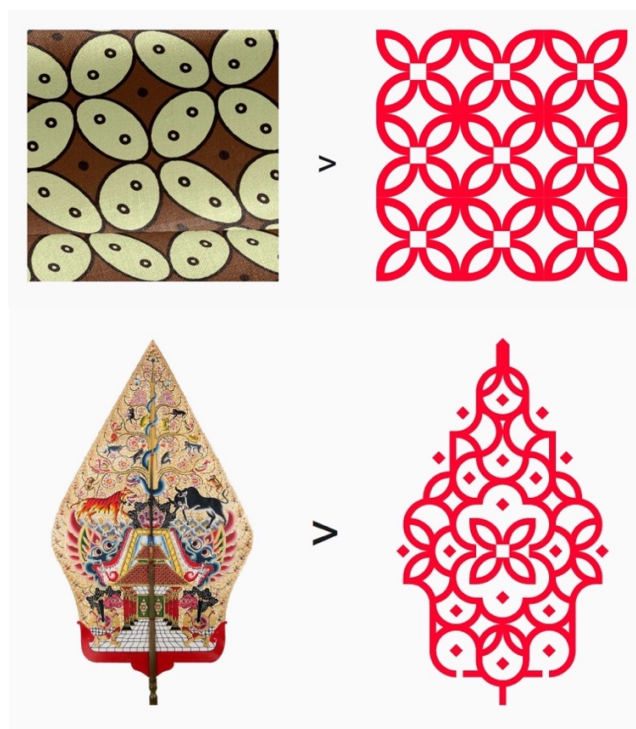
Figure 5: Symbolic Depiction of Mountains From Kawung Batik Elements
(Source: G20 visual identity design document by Seto Adiwitonoyo)

The graphic element of kawung batik, a traditional batik motif from Javanese culture in Indonesia, is used to fill the inside of the gunungan. In Javanese culture, this motif symbolizes a cycle of life, perseverance, and determination to continue to develop and contribute to others (Kusrianto, 2021). In this design, the use of kawung in the logo design is intended to emphasize the values of togetherness and cooperation.

The combination of red and blue colors in the logo reflects strength and stability, with color gradations inspired by the beauty of the sunrise. In general, the visual design of the G20 2022 integrates the philosophy of Indonesian culture into a modern and relevant visual identity on the global stage while still highlighting the cultural heritage and deep local values. Figure 6 shows how this identity is applied to other graphic elements.
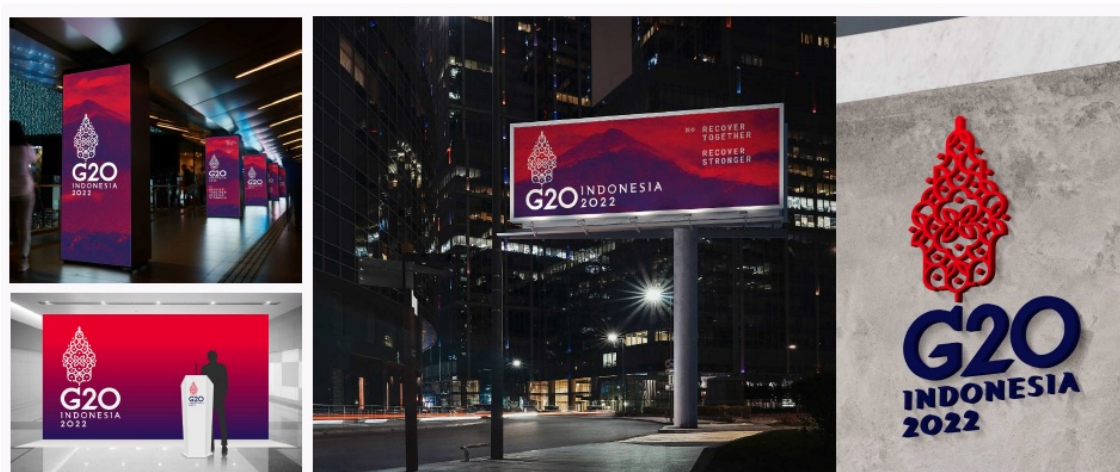
Figure 6: Application of the G20 2022 Visual Identity
(Source: G20 visual identity design document by Seto Adiwitonoyo)

Visual Identity of ASEAN Chairmanship 2023

In 2023, Indonesia was entrusted to host the ASEAN chairmanship. Therefore, a strong visualization is needed to represent Indonesia's vision and mission in the ASEAN forum. The theme is "ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth," which reflects ASEAN's position in local and global contexts and acts as a driver of peace and prosperity. The 2023 Indonesia ASEAN Chairmanship targets ASEAN development that is resilient, adaptive, and inclusive, with a focus on the benefits of the people in the region and the world.

Figure 7: Visual Identity Logo of ASEAN Chairmanship in 2023 by Adji Herdanto
(Source: ASEAN 2023 Visual Identity Design Document by Adji Herdanto)

The selected ASEAN 2023 logo design concept, designed by Adji Herdanto, is based on ASEAN countries' geographical and cultural similarities. Elements that show geographical conditions, flora and fauna, and cultural values are the common thread that unites all elements under the auspices of ASEAN. This logo also depicts unity through the use of symbols that represent nature and Bio-Diversity. This inspiration emphasizes that although different, ASEAN countries have strong similarities that are the basis of their togetherness and unity.

The visual identity of ASEAN 2023 is designed using symbolic elements that reflect the richness of nature. The sky, mountains, and oceans are chosen based on the representation of stability, development, and connectivity between islands in the ASEAN region. The Maleo bird, a species endemic to Sulawesi, is used as a central symbol that depicts the pride and biological richness of Indonesia (Setiawan, 2020). The Maleo bird is chosen for its unique characteristics that symbolize humility and cooperation. Unlike most birds, it lives more on land, which reflects the values of mutual cooperation and humility that are the characteristics of Indonesian culture.
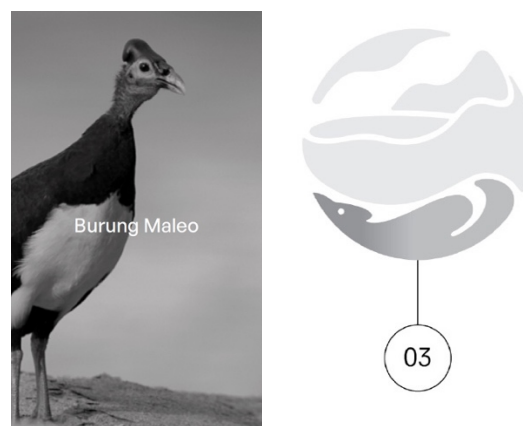
Figure 8: Depiction of the Maleo Bird on the Visual Identity of ASEAN 2023
(Source: ASEAN 2023 Visual Identity Design Document by Adji Herdanto)

The sky, mountains, and oceans are also used as symbols in the design, which have symbolic meaning in Indonesian culture. The sky symbolizes protection and great aspirations, while the mountains reflect stability and resilience, which match the spirit of Indonesian people when facing challenges. As a connecting element between the islands, the ocean not only shows Indonesia's geographical position as an archipelagic country but also reflects the value of connectivity and cooperation between regions.

Figure 9: Depiction of Nature in the Visual Identity of ASEAN 2023
(Source: ASEAN 2023 Visual Identity Design Document by Adji Herdanto)

The multi-layered color combination of pink, lavender, blue, green, and yellow in the design represents the diversity of ASEAN cultures, people, and natural beauty. This is intended to illustrate the spirit of uniting various cultural backgrounds and identities into one harmonious whole.
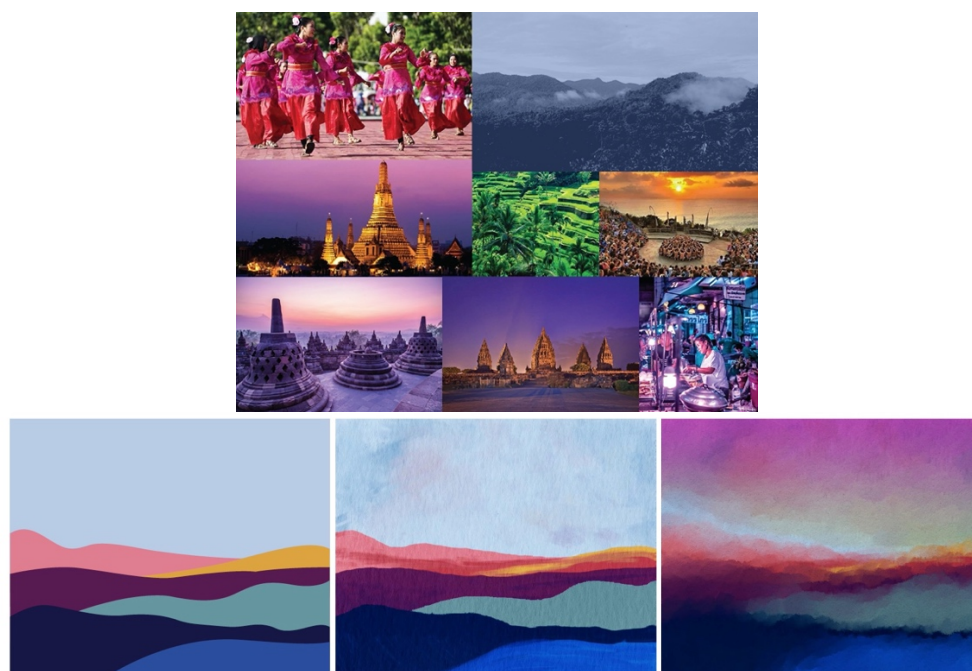
Figure 10: Depiction of Color Layers in the Visual Identity of ASEAN 2023
(Source: ASEAN 2023 Visual Identity Design Document by Adji Herdanto)

By using symbols that have deep meaning in the context of Indonesian culture and nature, the visual identity of ASEAN 2023 elevates the values carried by Indonesia, namely togetherness, diversity, humility, and resilience in maintaining unity in the ASEAN region. Figure 11 shows how this identity is applied to other graphic elements.

Figure 11: Application of the Visual Identity of the ASEAN Chairmanship 2023
(Source: ASEAN 2023 Visual Identity Design Document by Adji Herdanto)

Discussion

Cultural Representation in Visual Identity

Cultural representation and symbolization are essential to creating a strong narrative in visual communication design. In the context of visual identity design for international forums such as the G20 2022 and the ASEAN Chairmanship 2023, the visual elements function beyond aesthetics—they reflect national values, culture, and identity. Through the approach of Stuart Hall's representation theory and Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, this article will review how the visual elements in both designs reflect and symbolize Indonesian cultural values.

Stuart Hall explains that representation is a process in which meaning is produced and exchanged through language, signs, and images to describe something. In this case, representation conveys information and shapes broader social and political perceptions (Procter, 2004). Hall also argues that representation cannot be separated from the cultural and social context surrounding it, so a visual representation can be properly understood only if it is studied in the context in which it is produced and consumed (Hall et al., 2013).
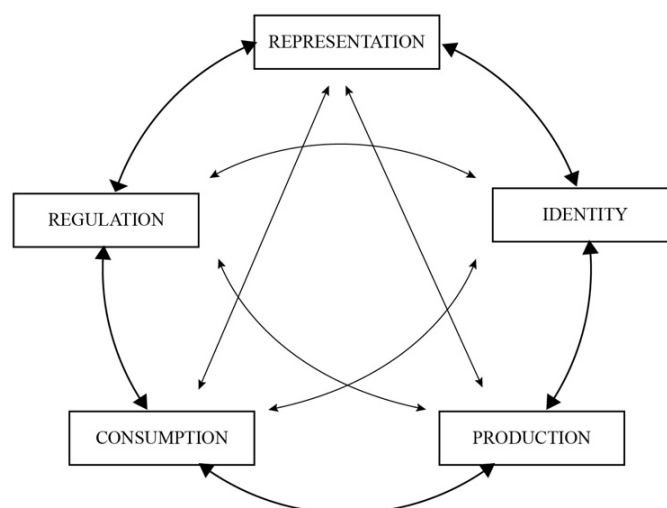
Figure 12: Adaptation of Circuit of Culture by Stuart Hall

In the visual identity design of the G20 2022, *wayang* elements such as *gunungan* and *dalang* are used as visual representations of Indonesian culture. In wayang performances, gunungan is a symbol of transition between story chapters and cosmic balance, reflecting joint efforts to overcome challenges and achieve global balance. Meanwhile, the puppeteer (*dalang*) who controls the course of the story illustrates Indonesia's active role as a leader in this global forum. When associated with Hall's theory, the use of traditional symbols like this is an effort to link the global narrative (economic recovery after the pandemic) with the local cultural context, which shows Indonesia's important role in bringing about change.

Similarly, the visual identity design of the 2023 ASEAN Chairmanship uses the symbol of the Maleo bird and natural elements such as the sky, mountains, and oceans to represent the values that Indonesia wants to convey in the ASEAN context. The Maleo bird, which is an endemic species from Sulawesi, was chosen to depict humility and connectedness between ASEAN countries. Based on Hall's theory, this meaning is constructed through the relationship between the symbol and the local context where this bird is part of everyday life. This is Indonesia's way of showing that despite ASEAN's cultural diversity, there are elements that can unite the countries in the region.
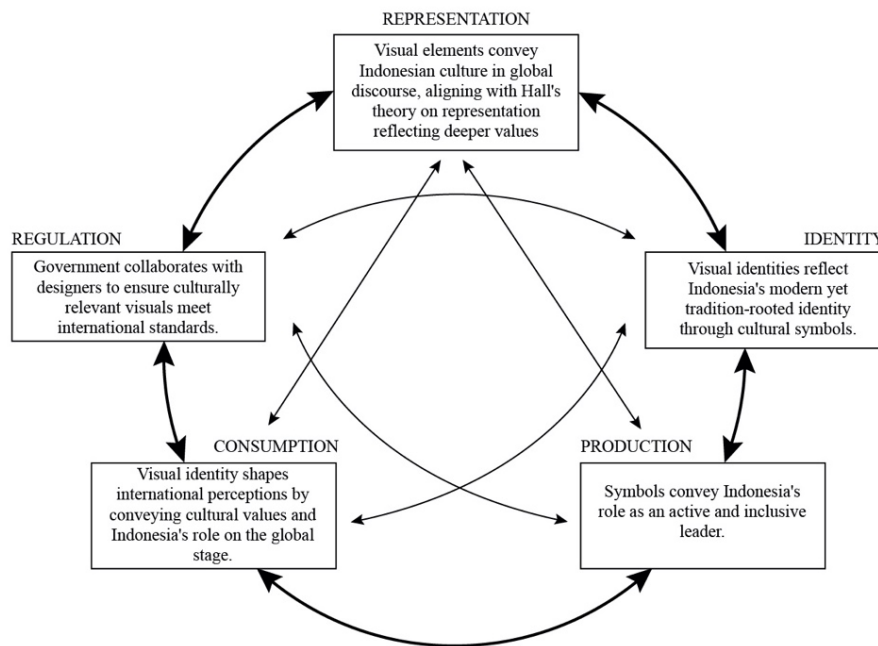
Figure 13: Mapping Case Studies on Hall's Circuit of Culture Theory

The following is an explanation of the mapping of the case study on the cultural circuit:

- Regulation: This regulatory process also includes how the government works with professional designers to ensure that each visual element is not only culturally relevant but also complies with standards accepted in international forums, such as color psychology, visual hierarchy, and universal design principles.
- Consumption: The audience plays a crucial role in interpreting and giving their meaning to the visual identity displayed. In this international forum, these visual elements provide information about the event and communicate cultural values and Indonesia's role in the international world. The audience's interpretations can shape the international community's perception of Indonesia.
- Production: The designers created these symbols with the intention of communicating Indonesia's active and inclusive leadership role.
- Identity: Using traditional cultural symbols in identity, the visual identity is designed to reflect Indonesia's strong and modern identity, yet rooted in tradition.
- Representation: These visual elements are integrated in such a way as to provide deep meaning and present Indonesian culture as part of the global discourse, which follows Hall's theory of how representation can reflect values that are greater than just visual objects.

Cultural Symbolism in Visual Identity

In his semiotics theory, Barthes distinguishes between two meaning levels: denotation and connotation. Denotation is the literal meaning of a sign, while connotation is an additional meaning that is cultural or ideological (Sebeok, 2001). Barthes also discusses how these signs can form myths—narratives legitimizing certain ideologies (Noth, 1990; Tejera, 2022).

In the G20 2022 design context, the gunungan and dalang elements have denotative meanings as part of the wayang performance art. However, at the connotative level, the gunungan symbol held by the dalang symbolizes leadership and control in a global situation. This shows Indonesia's role in guiding global discussions towards a good solution for all parties. When associated with Barthes' theory, this is an example of the formation of a modern myth. Indonesia uses traditional symbols to convey a narrative about leadership that is full of integrity and prioritizes shared welfare. This narrative contains an ideology about collaborative leadership based on local culture. Myths in Barthes' context are not myths in the sense of folklore or legends but rather cultural constructions used to convey ideological messages. Myths work by transforming denotative meanings into part of a larger narrative that often seems "natural" and is taken for granted by society. Myths legitimize particular social views or values, making them seem like universal truths and cultural constructions (Barthes, 2013).

In the 2023 ASEAN Chairmanship Identity, the Maleo bird has a denotative meaning as a bird species that lives in Sulawesi. However, connotatively, it carries a message about simplicity and responsibility to protect the environment. The choice of this flightless bird shows that ASEAN, under Indonesia's leadership, focuses on sustainable development and shared responsibility in maintaining regional stability. Based on Barthes' theory, this symbol also forms a modern myth about ASEAN as a region prioritizing cooperation, peace, and sustainability.

Table 1: Connotative, Denotative Meanings and Myth Formation in the Case Study of the G20 Visual Identity

Level 1			Level 2	
Reality --> Sign --> Culture				
Denotative	Signifier / Signified	Connotative		Myth
Gunungan as a symbol used in the opening and closing of the wayang story.	Wayang, Gunungan, Dalang, Batik Motif, Duotone Color.	Gunungan represents a symbol of the balance of the cosmos, as well as the change from one phase to another.		Transition towards post-pandemic economic recovery as an active role in advancing economic life in a new phase. With the hopes for balance and determination to continue to live, grow, and always get better in every stage. The visual design creates a myth about Indonesia as a country that leads the world towards a better future, integrating local wisdom into a global context.
Dalang as the controller of the story.		Dalang represents Indonesian leadership.		
Batik Pattern (Kawung) as life cycle and mutual cooperation.		Kawung represents new sustainable cooperation.		
Duotone Color		Color gradation represents the new beginning.		

Table 2: Connotative, Denotative Meanings and Myth Formation in a Case Study of ASEAN Visual Identity

Level 1			Level 2	
Reality --> Sign --> Culture				
Denotative	Signifier / Signified	Connotative		Myth
Maleo bird is an endemic bird species from Sulawesi, known for its life on land rather than flying.	Maleo Bird, Sky, Mountain, Sea, Color Gradation. Maleo Bird, Sky, Mountain, Sea, Color Gradation.	Maleo represents Humility, Connectedness, And Sustainability.		A community that is able to face challenges together, with cultural richness as its strength and with Indonesia as a leader that embraces diversity and leads with shared values. This myth provides an ideological narrative about strength through unity and harmony in diversity, which is expected to provide a positive impression of ASEAN and Indonesia in the eyes of the world.
Sky, Mountain & Sea as a geographical location of ASEAN Countries.		Sky, Mountain & Sea are similarities in geographical conditions; also similarities in cultural values and common goal.		
A spectrum of colors that reflect the natural beauty and diversity of flora and fauna		Colors symbolize the cultural, social, and ethnic diversity of ASEAN member countries.		

In Stuart Hall's view, the representation produced by this design depicts Indonesia as a host and a leader with a vision to bring positive change to the world. This reflects the role of culture in shaping meaning and how that meaning is conveyed to the world. Meanwhile, through Barthes' lens, the visual symbols in this design work at denotative and connotative levels to form a new myth about the role of Indonesia and ASEAN in maintaining stability and driving growth in the region. Both designs combine local elements with universal meanings by utilizing rich cultural symbols, creating a strong narrative that a global audience can accept. The representation and symbolization through this visual design show the beauty of Indonesian culture and strengthen the country's image as an integral part of the global community committed to cooperation and peace.

Challenges and Opportunities in Creating a Visual Identity That Reflects Local Culture

In creating a visual identity that reflects local culture, several challenges must be faced, including choosing the correct symbols to represent cultural richness without getting caught up in stereotypes or misrepresentations. Another challenge is communicating these cultural elements to international audiences who may not be familiar with the local cultural context, so the design must be universal yet authentic. In addition, the design must be relevant to global needs, such as the theme of cooperation or economic recovery, which are sometimes difficult to align with traditional symbols. However, there is a great opportunity, namely introducing and strengthening cultural identity internationally, increasing global awareness and appreciation of local cultural heritage. Through this process, countries can leverage rich cultural elements to create a strong nation branding and build a narrative that connects the local and the global, which serves as an effective form of cultural diplomacy.

The Role of Graphic Designers in Representing National Culture in International Forums

The role of graphic designers in representing national culture in international forums is crucial, especially professionalism in presenting a visual identity that is not only aesthetic but also full of symbolic meaning that reflects the cultural values of a country. Graphic designers become a bridge between local culture and global audiences. Through their expertise in combining traditional elements and modern aesthetics, they help strengthen nation branding that can improve the country's image in the international world.

Graphic designers, in international forums such as the G20 2022 and the ASEAN Chairmanship 2023, shoulder a significant responsibility. They are not just creators of visual identity but also communicators who use visual language to represent national cultural identity. Their task is to ensure that the symbols they choose not only carry literal meaning but also possess a connotative layer that can effectively shape the desired narrative on the international stage.

Conclusion

This study highlights how Indonesian cultural values are integrated and reflected in visual identity to create a strong impression in international forums. It also delves into the pivotal role of professional graphic designers in shaping Indonesia's image and national branding. These designers, through their creative and strategic use of cultural elements, play a crucial role in crafting a visual identity that resonates with global audiences. Overall, this study shows that visual identity design is not just an aesthetic process, but also a practice of deep cultural representation.

Research findings show that the visual identity design for the G20 and ASEAN utilizes traditional elements, such as gunungan, dalang, and Maleo birds, as visual representations of Indonesian culture. With Stuart Hall's theoretical approach, these elements function as symbols that contain literal meanings and form narratives relevant to global and local contexts. In Barthes' semiotic theory, these elements have denotative and connotative meanings that help create myths about leadership, cooperation, and sustainability, strengthening Indonesia's positive image in the eyes of the world. The combination of colors, symbols, and other visual elements depicts a strong, adaptive national identity that can face global challenges.

This provides important insights for graphic designers and policymakers in developing visual identities for international forums. For graphic designers, this study emphasizes the importance of "cultural sensitivity," a deep understanding and respect for the cultural elements used in visual design. It is not just about using these elements, but about using them in a way that respects their cultural significance and ensures they are interpreted effectively by global audiences. This requires a delicate balance to avoid stereotypes or misunderstandings, and to create visual identities that are authentic yet modern and relevant to various groups.

For policymakers, this study emphasizes the importance of collaboration with professional graphic designers in the process of designing national visual identities. The government needs to provide space and support for designers to develop concepts that are in line with the desired vision of cultural diplomacy and national branding. This also includes budget allocation and regulations supporting the creative process and ensuring high design quality standards.

Recommendations for Further Research in this area include further exploration of how cultural elements from various regions in Indonesia can be integrated into visual identity designs to enrich the national narrative. Further research can focus more on testing the specific impact of visual elements on global audience perceptions, for example, through surveys or case studies involving participation from international audiences to measure how effective the visual elements are in conveying the desired message.

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Pink Films at the 1983 Manila International Film Festival:
Diplomacy Through Erotic Cinema Between the Philippines and Japan

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Abstract

The state-sponsored Manila International Film Festival (MIFF) of the 1980s was among the more controversial film festivals of its time. Boycotted by several guilds due to its connection with the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos Sr., the MIFF relied on the presence of renowned Asian filmmakers to legitimize itself. The 1983 iteration of the festival, however, gained notoriety for allowing the release of uncut Filipino erotic films bordering on pornography to compensate for the decreased funding from an almost bankrupt Philippine state. Defending their decision to release titillating pictures, organizers of the MIFF suggested that Filipinos should look at Japanese pink films to see how a mature industry could create beautiful movies through images of sexual desire. Indeed, Japanese films have a significant presence in this festival, with more than half of the featured Japanese productions being of the pink variety. Likewise, articles, reports, and interviews in Marcos-controlled newspapers and magazines highlighted the development and artistry of pink films. Through the discursive analysis of these documents, this study shows how the discourse about pink films illustrates the cultural diplomacy between the Philippines and Japan in the context of the Marcos regime. It argues that the Marcos state used the international acclaim of pink cinema to justify its contradictory film development policies. At the same time, the positive portrayal of pink films in the Philippine press helped soften Japan's image among Filipinos at a time of rekindling memories of Japanese wartime atrocities due to its reemergence as an economic power.

Keywords: Pink Films, Bomba Films, Manila International Film Festival, Erotic Cinema

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Introduction

On January 24, 1983, the Manila International Film Festival opened to the public with a speech from then-President Ferdinand Marcos Sr. about the power of cinema to transcend social boundaries and connect people and communities (Philippine Policy Statement, 1983). Listening to his carefully curated words were the most famous individuals in the film world, from Hollywood stars like George Hamilton, Virginia Mayo, and Ben Kingsley to well-renowned directors like Xie Jin and Richard Attenborough. Also appearing in the festivities was Nagisa Oshima, the renowned director of thought-provoking and fearless erotic films such as *In The Realm of the Senses* and *Empire of Passion*, and was also, at the time, serving as the head of the Directors Guild of Japan. Oshima served as the head jury of the festival. The auteur was an astute selection, considering that one of the core themes of that year's MIFF was the importance of freedom of expression on the silver screen. As someone who fought film censorship, the Japanese director was the authoritative voice on this thorny issue.

Ironically, amid all the pomp and luxury were widespread protests against the festival. At the crux of these protests were local and foreign erotic pictures being screened uncut in the MIFF. Rumors soon swirled that Filipino sex flicks, or bomba films, and their foreign counterparts included pornographic scenes disapproved by state censors. Maria Kalaw-Katigbak, the chair of the censorship arm of the Philippine government, publicly criticized the festival organizers, putting her at odds with Imelda Marcos, the wife of the president and the main sponsor of the expensive event. Personalities in the Philippine film industry also questioned why Marcos allowed erotic pictures considered illegal to be released in theaters while heavily censoring political films critical of the regime.

As this happened, the Philippine Daily Express and Bulletin Today, two broadsheets controlled by the Marcos regime, published editorials and features about the wisdom of Japan's politics and culture and the strength of its economy. Among those features were articles praising the Japanese approach to cinematic erotica, emphasizing how sex functioned as a showcase of the complexities of the human condition. Outside the Marcos-controlled press, however, criticisms over Japanese financial support to the regime increased, with some expressing fears of the potential remilitarization of Japan after decades of economic success. In this repressed but dynamic media ecosystem, Japan functioned as a role model and, paradoxically, a specter from the past and in the future.

Marcos, Erotica, and 'Modern' Cinema

The key to fully understanding such contradictions was the Marcosian project of constructing a 'modern' national cinema in the Philippines. The interaction of the Marcos family with the silver screen harkened back to Ferdinand Marcos' first presidential run in 1965. Through the propaganda film *Written by Destiny* [Iginuhit ng Tadhana] (1965), the Marcos campaign presented Ferdinand as a man of wit and talent destined to lead the Philippines to greatness, effectively creating and visualizing myths about Marcos in cinematic form. Recognizing the power of cinema early on, Ferdinand Marcos funded more films with themes similar to those of Written by Destiny. Pictures like *One Under the Heavens* [Pinagbuklod ng Langit] (1969) and *Guerilla Strike Force* [Maharlika] (1970) lionized the Marcoses and further perpetuated the myths attached to the family.

It was unsurprising then that the Marcoses spent a lot of political influence and government resources in modernizing local film production to transform the Philippines into the

filmmaking capital of Asia. The Manila International Film Festival (MIFF) was supposed to be the pinnacle of their sponsorship of moving pictures. Patterned after the Cannes and Berlin Film Festivals, Imelda Marcos claimed that the foremost goal of the MIFF was to attract international distributors for local films while elevating the cinematic taste of the Filipino masses. The government spent no holds barred for the festival, diverting the funds meant for the modernization of the Philippine General Hospital to fund the building of the Manila Film Center that would house a film laboratory and archives and an auditorium where the opening and closing ceremonies would happen (Lico, 2003). Imelda also used the festival to put forward her plans to establish a state-funded institution to finance artistically inclined Filipino productions.

However, the first iteration of the MIFF, which ran from January 18-22, 1982, was controversial at home and abroad. For one, the Marcoses funded the project when the Philippines was experiencing rapid economic decline. Philippine GDP growth declined from 5.6% in 1979 to 3.7% in 1982. In two years, the GDP growth rate trended negative to -7.04% in 1984 and -6.86% in 1985 (World Bank Open Data, 2024). Sponsoring an expensive event was seen as uneconomical, especially because poverty is rampant in the country.

Likewise, the 1982 MIFF was directly tied to a scandal that tarnished the reputation of the Philippines abroad. On November 17, 1981, the scaffolding on the fourth floor of the then-under-construction Manila Film Center collapsed, pouring tons of cement onto the workers below. An estimated 7 to 169 people died because of the accident, which the press blamed on the overworking of laborers who rotated for three shifts across 24 hours to stick to the very tight construction schedule demanded by Imelda (Lico, 2003). The tragedy and the media blackout that followed received local and international condemnation, a big enough backlash for the Directors Guild of France to boycott the festival and notable figures like actor Charles Heston and 20th Century Fox head Sherry Lansing to decline their invitations (Sicam, 1983). Worse, speculations soon spread that several bodies were intentionally abandoned in the hardened cement to comply with the festival deadline, an urban legend that still stands today.

The cost and controversies of the first MIFF made it hard for the regime to support and finance its next iteration. Indeed, Finance Minister Cesar Virata disapproved the $5 million subsidy requested by the festival organizers for the second MIFF (Lico, 2003). The lack of official government subsidies forced festival organizers to explore alternative sources of funds. To ensure it would push through, the festival organizers decided to take advantage of MIFF's power to show movies uncensored and allowed erotic films to participate in the festival. This decision, however, would contradict the regime's official policy against sex flicks, one shaped by the complicated relationship between the Marcoses and erotic films.

Sex flicks first exploded in the Philippines in the 1960s and the earliest pictures to titillate the Filipino screens were foreign productions. Most of these films came from Scandinavian countries, the United States, and Japan. Filipino media referred to scenes of nudity in these movies as bomba, which, in English, can be translated to bombshell (Villasanata, 2009). The word bomba also had a political connotation, as the press used it to describe exposés of political scandals in the Philippines (Quirino 1969, 18). In other words, the term referred to concealed images exposed to the public and created an uproar.

At first, the government allowed the entry of foreign erotic pictures. But by the early 1970s, Filipino producers began following the trend. Ruben Abalos' *Thisrty* [Uhaw] (1970) opened the floodgates for the production of local erotic pictures collectively known as bomba films.

Soon enough, the word bomba became synonymous with the Filipino erotic genre, and the local industry recovered thanks to the popularity of these sex flicks. While critical of erotic pictures, the Marcos government allowed bomba films to be released in theaters, partly because sex films were also popular in industrialized countries like the United States and Japan. Being lenient towards cinematic erotica was seen by the regime as a marker of modernity, thus making the government ambivalent toward completely censoring prurient pictures despite protests from the more conservative sectors of Philippine society.

Such an approach changed when the press exposed the president's affair with American erotic actor Dovie Beams during her shoot for Guerilla Strike Force. It tainted the family man image of Ferdinand Marcos and contributed to his declining popularity in the early 1970s. After establishing the dictatorship in 1972, the Marcos regime immediately implemented policies that prevented the production and exhibition of foreign and local erotic films. According to media scholar Talitha Espiritu (2017), this clampdown was an attempt to restore the notion of a national family tainted by the President's affair with an actor who came from the country's former colonizer (p. 54-115).

The strict censorship of erotic pictures, however, did not last, as it resulted in the decline of the market share of Filipino productions at the local box office. The number of local productions decreased from 245 in 1970 to just 160 in 1973. Likewise, the market share of Filipino films declined from 33 percent in 1970 to 21 percent in 1973 (Garcia and Marasigan, 2001, p. 15). Hoping to reverse the trend, the dictatorship lifted most of the restrictions in 1974, only requiring producers to make sure that erotic scenes do not mirror the commercialized bordering pornographic from the United States and aligning productions with Filipino cultural values. Producers responded by replacing the mestizo, or half-Filipino, actors with moreno, or brown-skinned, ones. The policy worked and the market share of Filipino films jumped to 27 percent in 1976 (Garcia and Marasigan, 2001, p. 15). As the dictatorship entered the 1980s, producers and filmmakers began pushing the limits of state permissiveness, releasing bolder films than what came before the declaration of Martial Law. It encouraged the government to impose strict regulation of cinematic prurience once again.

Thus, allowing the exhibition of uncut erotic pictures at the MIFF put the Marcos regime in a dilemma. It was fundamentally a violation of state policy. Still, the popularity of cinematic sex among Filipinos meant that it was the only way to justify the financial feasibility of an expensive international film festival amid a cash-strapped economy. It was under such conditions that the MIFF organizers looked to the global respect and recognition that Japanese erotic pictures, or pink films, gained during the 1960s and 1970s for inspiration.

Pink and bomba films emerged in different but parallel social milieus. Both sex genres developed amid widespread Japanese and Filipino protests against the American military bases in their respective countries, government concerns over the rise of Communism and red politics among university students, and the younger generation's exploration of a more open and public discussion of gender and sexuality.

Yet, the trajectory of the two sex genres could not have been so different. While the Philippine government censored bomba films, major Japanese film studios embraced cinematic erotica, which, in many ways, saved its industry amid competition against television. The success of Japanese erotica also extended to film festivals, where films like Nagisa Oshima's *In the Realm of Senses* gained acclaim for using sex to communicate human experience. The praises came despite the obscenity charges the Japanese government filed

against a publisher that released a book with stills censored in the film's original run in Japanese cinemas. Bomba films did gain recognition over time, with pictures like Tikoy Aguiluz's *Boatman* and Peque Gallaga's *Scorpio Nights* receiving acclaim in international festivals. However, the popularity of these artistic erotic films stemmed from their critique of the Marcos regime and its views on politics and sexuality, which the President and the First Lady wanted to change.

For the regime, pink films could serve as an alternative model of erotic artistry, one that turned inwards to explore the human experience instead of outwards to repudiate the regime. Likewise, pink cinema offered an alternative notion of erotic artistry from individualistic American films perceived by the Marcoses as incompatible with Filipino culture. Such a perception came from the evolving economic relationship between Japan and the Philippines during the Marcos regime.

Philippine-Japanese Relations Under the Marcos Regime

For most of the 1950s and 1960s, the economic relationship between Japan and the Philippines focused on war reparation payments. According to Sudo (2014), Japanese-Philippine relations during this period were ambivalent (p. 40-41). On one hand, the two countries were allies due to their geopolitical importance to the United States and the presence of American military bases in their territories. However, bitter feelings born out of Japan's violent occupation of the Philippines during the Second World War lingered in the memories of many Filipinos. Such ambivalence influenced policymaking, with the Philippine Congress refusing to sign the Treaty of Amity, Trade and Navigation of 1960 which would have normalized the trade and cultural relations between the two countries after Japan finished paying war reparation.

Marcos reversed the policies of his predecessors and signed the treaty after establishing his authoritarian regime. Influenced by Japan's postwar rise as an industrial powerhouse, the Marcos regime tried to foster strong political, economic, and cultural relations and signed the treaty in 1973. The regime's gamble paid off, as Japanese aid and investment increased significantly, and by 1975, Japan had replaced the United States as the number one source of bilateral Official Development Assistance for the Philippines. As the table below shows, the number of Japanese ODAs implemented by the national government increased five-fold from 1969 to 1990.

Table 1: Number of Japanese Oda-Funded Projects in the Philippines From 1969 to 1990

AREA		1969-1975	1976-1980	1981-1985	1986-1990
Regional	North Luzon	0	3	3	3
	Central Luzon	1	3	10	3
	South Luzon	0	0	1	2
	Visayas	1	0	8	4
	Mindanao	0	0	2	0
	Manila	4	10	12	22
National		5	9	10	27
TOTAL		**11**	**25**	**46**	**62**

Source: Potter, 1996, p. 36

While political, cultural, and economic relations between the Philippines and Japan improved and deepened during the Marcos years, it also reignited concerns over Japan's potential as a

neo-colonial power. Progressive Filipino academics like Renato Constantino (1979) and Eduardo Tadem (1983) described Japan's economic presence as a form of economic invasion. Amado Ma. Guerrero (1985) shared this sentiment in the article "The Japanese Threat," where he argued that Japan was invading the Philippines "not through bullets but through debts" (p. 13).

The negative image of Japan among Filipino progressives was also a product of its financial assistance to the Marcos regime. As American scholar David Wurfel (1987) pointed out, American economic aid to the dictatorship initially shielded Japan from criticism. However, once Japanese aid exceeded that of the United States, Japan became a target of progressive and nationalist groups opposing the regime. Guerrero sarcastically expressed this when he argued how the anti-nationalist Philippine government welcomed the Japanese not just with open arms, but also with the open legs of Filipino hospitality girls (Guerrero 1985, p. 16).

Guerrero's last point was important because it showed how the emerging economic imbalance between Japan and the Philippines produced asymmetrical relations. Japanese exports flooded the Philippines without taking much of Filipino exports outside of products from extractive industries like logging and fishing, which, as Guerrero (1985) pointed out, have an environmental impact on nearby Filipino communities (p. 13). Filipino women hoping to work in Japan's entertainment scene ended up becoming entertainers and prostitutes in the red-light districts of booming Japanese cities. Likewise, Wurfel pointed out how the Filipinos came to believe that Japanese *yakuza* played an active role in the proliferation of crime and prostitution in Manila, a by-product of the so-called sex tourism that attracted many Japanese men (Wurfel, 1987).

Perhaps even more worrying for Japan's image was how the criticisms reignited memories of wartime atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers. For example, Bulletin Today described a case of a Japanese teacher employed in a Japanese-exclusive school in Makati city who hit two Filipino women with a golf club as reminiscent of how the *kempetai* beat up Filipinos during the war (Wurfel, 1987). There were also public debates and concerns on whether a potential Japanese military build-up to offset Soviet and Chinese influence in the Asia-Pacific region would benefit the Philippines. Some pointed out that developing Japanese military capabilities might encourage the country to regress to its militaristic past.

Japanese officials were aware of these criticisms and went out of their way to foster goodwill by providing scholarships for Filipino students and sponsoring cultural programs that would strengthen Filipino-Japanese relations. Cinema became one of the instruments of Japanese soft power as the country took advantage of the popularity and acclaim of Japanese films in the international scene to strengthen Japan's image among the Filipino public. It was within this context that Japan sent a delegation to the Manila International Film Festival despite its controversies.

Pink Films at the MIFF

Japan only had the third-largest film delegation at the 1983 MIFF, but half of the films it sent to the festival were erotic, the most of any country. Pink films filled up a significant portion of the out-of-competition slots with state-run theaters screening films like *Edo Porn* (1981), *Lady Chatterley in Tokyo* (1977), and *Empire of Passion* (1978). Organizers also included a special screening of Nagisa Oshima's In the Realm of Senses in the festival program,

complete with a talk from the Japanese auteur about the power of erotica to communicate provocative ideas and his struggle in releasing the film in the face of stringent censorship.

A Panorama report on Oshima and his talk written by Jose Quirino referred to the auteur as a former "red student" who became disillusioned with the extremist policies of the communists. The Filipino magazine emphasized how Oshima's treatment of the erotic was more personal than political. Quirino did mention the director's concern about freedom of expression but also argued that such a struggle was more about art than politics. Indeed, the article emphasized how the director has become apolitical and, in the process, has become a true artist. It quoted Oshima stating how people at the bottom "will always stay there regardless of any political system." The article implied that cinema was at its best when it focused on interpreting the human experience and was devoid of politics. Quirino did admit that Oshima still had political views, but he also argued that the mature Oshima was not against any form of government, he was only against anything that "would enforce control over the mind of man" (Quirino, 1983, p. 16-17).

One cannot say whether the published statements of Oshima were sincere or curated. Nevertheless, the article tried to reframe the issue of freedom of expression as an artistic instead of a political question. This reframing was crucial because while the regime promoted freedom of expression concerning sexual content, it was also censoring social realist films perceived to be critical of the Marcos presidency. Indeed, the most vocal voices against the MIFF from the film industry were the Filipino filmmakers whose pictures were censored by the state, such as Lino Brocka and Ishmael Bernal. Through Oshima's stature and the popularity of his films, the article justified the contradictory film regulation policies of the dictatorship.

The release of pink films in the MIFF also opened the gate for a series of articles in Marcos-controlled broadsheets emphasizing how Filipinos should be disciplined and open to new ideas like the Japanese. Teodoro Valencia, for example, used the discussions about Japanese films in the MIFF to argue that the Filipino opposition to the Marcos regime should learn some lessons from Japanese politics, noting how the Japanese opposition against then-Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone managed to unite and challenge the ruling Liberal Democratic Party while still showing respect and recognition to the prime minister. Valencia then compared Nakasone's political maneuvers to the power plays of Ferdinand Marcos and former Filipino presidents like Manuel Quezon and Sergio Osmena (Valencia, 1983, p. 9).

An article written by Manuel Car Santiago praised the nationalism and discipline embraced by the Japanese and how these virtues allowed Japan to develop its industries on par, if not exceeding that of the United States. Santiago also asked why the Japanese managed to do this while the Philippines struggled with poverty and economic malaise. He argued that Japan's economic miracle was due to its protectionist policies, a clear expression of nationalism (Santiago, 1983, p. 6). In another article, Teodoro Valencia contrasted Japanese nationalism to Filipino colonial mentality, noting how Filipinos embraced the negative foreign news about the country, including the criticisms of the MIFF. In the article, Valencia (1983) lamented how most of the criticisms came from *old foggies,* who only talked about the immorality of bold films but failed to do anything to help the youth (p. 6).

The discussions about Japan and the Philippines also extended to security concerns and economic opportunities. In his article in Bulletin Today, for example, Apolonio Batalla (1983) noted how Japan has assured that it would never become militaristic even if were to

develop its military capabilities (p. 6). Another article highlighted how two Japanese firms proposed to fund the expansion and modernization of the Iligan Steel Mill in Southern Philippines and the construction of a multi-purpose dam in Northern Luzon. The author encouraged Filipinos to be thankful to the Japanese because they were the only country willing to invest in the Philippines at a time when it was suffering from economic woes (Bulletin Today, 1983, 32).

Tying this together was Merlinda de Jesus's article on Japan's supposed ability to economize scale and costs, arguing that Filipinos should follow the austere attitude of the Japanese. Using cinema as an example, De Jesus (1983) pointed out how having a big budget was not an assurance of creating a good film. According to the author, Filipinos should focus on sensibilities and sensitivities attached to human values. Contrasting Japanese austerity to American excess, she argued that Filipinos must follow the former's lead in promoting the idea that "small is beautiful" (p. 6).

How effective were these efforts to present Japan as a model to Filipinos? It was worth pointing out that the 1983 MIFF became controversial, and the Marcos regime tried to save face from the protests by implementing a stricter film censorship policy after the festival. It inspired another wave of protests, this time from the film industry, and the dictatorship retracted the new censorship laws. Likewise, the government put on hold all future iterations of the MIFF. Months later, festival organizers announced the cancellation of the 1984 MIFF in favor of a smaller and more localized festival called Cinemathon.

Criticism of Japan also increased after 1983. In 1984, the Filipino nationalist group Kilusang Mayo Uno (May One Movement) launched a series of protests against Japan's economic assistance crucial to the survival of the Marcos regime and its constant presence in the Philippine fishing industry that threatened the livelihood of local fishermen. Another protest was launched, this time by prominent opposition politicians, against a $247 million Japanese loan for the Marcos government despite the increasing reports of human rights abuses committed by his regime and the recent assassination of Benigno Aquino Jr., Marcos's chief political rival. According to Wurfel, protesters burned an effigy of Nakasone together with that of Marcos in these protests (Wurfel, 1987). These protests showed that instead of improving Japan's image, its economic and cultural ties to the Marcos regime only made the country complicit in the abuses of the dictatorship in the eyes of the opposition forces that eventually ousted the Marcoses from power.

Conclusion

The protests after the 1983 MIFF suggested that the attempts to present a more positive image of Japan during the festival backfired as it connected Japan's soft power to a controversial festival and, to an extent, an increasingly unpopular regime. Nevertheless, the overrepresentation of Japanese erotic films in the festival suggested how the regime, and to an extent, the Filipino public saw the Japanese film industry as a possible alternative model to Hollywood for a modern 'nationalist' cinema for the Philippines, one that married the desire for a cinema reflecting national culture while following global trends such as those of sex flicks. Such a view was born of Japan's increasing economic and cultural presence in the Philippines. However, this perspective failed to gain steam in the early 1980s due to criticisms of Japan's financial aid to the Marcos regime.

It was unsurprising then that the idea of "Japanese pictures as alternative modern cinema" developed after the collapse of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986. The Japanese legislature reeled over the investigations on the ODA corruption scandals of the Marcos regime, one that eventually led to the passage of Japan's ODA Charter in 1992. Likewise, the country remained the primary provider of bilateral aid to the Philippines after the dictatorship, suggesting that the positive ties were about Japan and the Philippines, not Japan and the Marcoses. The decoupling from the Marcos regime and the continued positive economic relations facilitated the increase of Japanese-Filipino co-productions such as *Kinkyu Yodibashi* (1995) and *The Guys from Paradise* (2000). Ironically, the positive relationship in terms of cinema between Japan and the Philippines flourished well after the regime that laid the foundation for such interaction ended.

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Body as an Intrinsic Value of Communication

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Abstract

The Syrian Civil War has profoundly impacted many people, particularly those who have been displaced. Women, often rendered invisible, find that their voices are inadequately recognized as relevant in various contexts. However, women in the Middle East have transformed their bodies into intrinsic values to communicate with the external world. This paper analytically investigates why women's bodies hold intrinsic value in expressing the concept of autonomy. I argue that republican political philosophy has a notable shortcoming in acknowledging the body as an interactive sphere of autonomy. On one hand, republican political philosophy recognizes the significance of the body; on the other hand, it deprioritizes the value of bodily integrity in favor of non-domination. This challenge can be addressed by prioritizing the body to justify autonomy. The views discussed include those of Forst, Pettit, and Pallikkathayil. The "Freedom Portrait" serves as a case study to emphasize the importance of prioritizing the body in this justification. In contrast to Forst's conception of republican autonomy, I aim to highlight Pallikkathayil's strongest objections to the Kantian attachment to bodily rights, which she refers to as the "assurance" and "adjudication" problems. A key insight from this analysis is that as long as there is any constraint on the value of bodily integrity in favor of non-domination, the republican account of autonomy is unconvincing. This insight is crucial for revealing specific types of alternative voices as performative action not only as a dimension of politics but also art.

Keywords: Body, Freedom, Autonomy, Republicanism, Integrity

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1. Introduction

The issue of the body has been explored throughout the history of philosophy in various aspects. There are numerous discussions and inspiring contributions regarding the concept of the body in relation to the external world, particularly within the Anglo-Saxon philosophical tradition. To connect this to the idea of bodily integrity, it is essential to briefly introduce the concept of the body. Hume notes, "Nothing is more usual than to apply to external bodies every internal sensation that they occasion" (1777: 78). Similarly, Locke posits that the mind and body are crucial categories. He asserts, "The mind-body problem is not a genuine problem that we are intellectually obliged to resolve, but one created by us, and often misidentified as a problem that we can and should solve" (1998, p. 113, referenced from Kim, 2019). J.S. Mill expands this discussion in his work "On Liberty," stating, "In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute over himself, over his own body and mind; the individual is sovereign" (Mill, 1859, p. 4). Mill's emphasis on individual independence is tied to the concept of freedom and autonomy, which is significant for constructing liberal rights grounded in a democratic society.

2. On Freedom and Republican Political Philosophy

 The relationship between liberal conceptions of freedom and the body's autonomy, as well as the republican conception of freedom concerning civil rights, is examined from different perspectives. One philosopher contributing to the republican ideas of freedom, autonomy, and interference is Pettit (2012). Pettit conceptualizes the problems of legitimacy, justice, and the free will of citizens through a neo-republican lens of non-domination. According to Pettit: "The slaves may not be interfered with, but on the conception of freedom as non-domination, they lack freedom. They are not their own men or women. The second implication distinguishing rival conceptions of freedom pertains to the possibility of interference without domination" (Pettit, 2012, p. 73). **Interpretation:** Non-domination is the primary condition for freedom, and this form of freedom can exist independently of interference. Furthermore, freedom as non-domination must operate without any interdependent restrictions.

Suppose person X is employed by person Y and works as a laborer on Y's farm. However, person X is not compensated for the work they perform. Despite this, person X fulfills their responsibilities. In this situation, it is challenging to define the notion of interference; nonetheless, X's experience suggests that no explicit interference occurs. However, this does not imply that there is no domination. According to Pettit's theory, as person X is considered to be working as a slave, the concept of freedom is constrained by the idea of (non)domination. Pettit's arguments are significant for understanding individuals' self-construction, as he states, "they are not their own men or women." Additionally, his perspective is crucial in terms of the social ontology of freedom. According to Forst, "for Pettit, republicanism is fundamentally a theory of legitimate government based on a specific notion of freedom as 'non-domination,' which signifies the social status of being relatively insulated from arbitrary interference by others and of having a sense of security and standing among them" (Forst, 2017, p.160, referencing Pettit, 2017). From this viewpoint, "a slave is an extreme example of a dominated human being who is unable to enact any law" (ibid., 2017, p.160). Later, I will connect and elaborate on Pettit's relevant perspective in relation to the case of the Yazidi woman. The second perspective is the first type of Kantian republican approach to the concepts of the body and freedom, which considers freedom as self-determination. According to Forst, "the dignity of a free person can never be understood

merely in terms of the 'enjoyment' of freedom or specific liberties; it is always also a matter of the freedom to legislate for oneself, the freedom of normative self-determination" (Forst, 2017, p.157). Moreover, through the notion of freedom, "the laws generated through it do not only protect freedom—they also express freedom" (Forst, 2017, p.158). Based on Forst's relevant views, freedom embodies two main aspects. First, it relates to self-determination, wherein a person is regarded as an autonomous moral and political being. Second, it involves a person's role as a lawmaker, reflecting their authority over themselves and their own decisions. According to the first type of Kantian republican philosophy, the concept of freedom pertains to self-determination, through which the autonomous decision-making process serves as an expression of human freedom. In other words, no law can be justified or protect a person's freedom unless it is mutually justifiable to those whom it binds.

3. Bodily Integrity and Freedom

Returning to the question of bodily integrity in relation to freedom, Herring and Wall offer valuable insights. In their paper titled "Nature and Significance of the Right to Bodily Integrity," they define bodily integrity as "the right not to have your body touched or interfered with without your consent" (Herring & Wall, 2017, p. 568). This definition underscores the importance of autonomy and consent regarding each individual's body. Based on this perspective, any form of violence, torture, or physical interference with a person's body is prohibited. The right to one's body being whole and intact is fundamentally about making decisions regarding one's own body and self-determination—that is, "the right to be free from physical interference" (Feldman, 2002, p. 241). What do I mean by suggesting that the idea of bodily integrity serves as a credible justification for freedom? The concept of bodily integrity encompasses two main meanings in the context of this paper, both related to the notion of self-ownership. Fabre notes that "in the prevailing liberal ethos, if there is one thing that is beyond the reach of others, it is our body in particular and our person in general" (Fabre, 2006, p. 1). The first meaning of bodily integrity aligns with Fabre's statement and implies the dignified treatment of a person's integrity. The second meaning relates to the epistemic validity of bodily integrity, which involves the notion of consent. A dignified treatment of a person's integrity necessitates viable social and moral conditions where individuals can live without the threat of slavery, torture, or violence. In other words, any form of torture, violence, or abuse directed at a person's dignity also violates their bodily integrity. This first meaning is particularly relevant when considering the treatment of marginalized individuals by radical groups. The term "invisible people" can encompass those outside the reasoning practices, motivations, and ideological preferences of such groups. For instance, the treatment of Yazidi women by ISIS exemplifies a blatant disregard for human dignity. When women are captured and subjected to abuse and violence by such radical groups, their bodily integrity is often compromised. Although such extreme cases put the concept of bodily integrity at risk, this does not imply that it is entirely ineffective in these contexts. Now, let me explain the second meaning of bodily integrity. Some may contest the idea of bodily integrity based on certain idealized epistemological reasons and motivations. The epistemic validity of the claim to bodily integrity raises questions, particularly since, in some belief systems, adherents may engage in bodily torture during specific rituals or religious practices. For example, some members of the Caferi sect of Islam may inflict harm on themselves on sacred days for the sake of their divine beliefs, claiming they do not feel pain during these acts. This consent-based interpretation of bodily integrity is not critically examined in my paper, as it appears to involve free will. However, the epistemic validity of the claim regarding bodily integrity doesn't end there.

To broaden the discussion about bodily integrity, I differentiate between Palikkathayil's objections to Kantian bodily treatment, which she refers to as "assurance" and "adjudication" problems. Palikkathayil poses the question: How can respecting your rights, in the absence of assurance, allow you to violate mine? (Palikkathayil, 2017, p. 7). She argues that the problem of assurance is not directly linked to the idea of respect but rather to the incompleteness of our rights (ibid., 2017, p. 7). Furthermore, she emphasizes the significance of the assurance problem as it relates to freedom, which is crucial for understanding interference (Palikkathayil, 2017, pp. 7-8). According to Palikkathayil, there are different ways to interpret the relationship between interference, assurance, and the concept of freedom. She explains this with two scenarios: "Suppose that you have determinate bodily rights but do not have assurance. (R1) In one way, the link between your bodily rights and your freedom is broken here, similar to the case of property rights. (R2) However, in another sense, your bodily rights continue to play a role in enabling your freedom by satisfying its preconditions." (Palikkathayil, 2017, p. 8). We can refer to these two interpretations as R1 and R2. In my interpretation, R1 aligns with the Kantian republican tradition of freedom as a token group, which relates to the theories proposed by Forst and Pettit. In contrast, R2 is connected to Palikkathayil's understanding of freedom concerning bodily rights. This second interpretation is particularly compelling as it more substantively justifies the idea of bodily rights in relation to freedom. Thus, we arrive at three justificatory accounts of freedom concerning bodily rights: 1. Pettit's view of bodily rights as non-domination for freedom. 2. Forst's view of bodily rights as self-determination for freedom. 3. Palikkathayil's view of bodily rights as a precondition for freedom. This paper focuses on the example of a Yazidi woman fleeing areas occupied by ISIS in 2015, which serves as a crucial case study. According to photographer Shahine, who documented the moment of Yazidi women escaping ISIS and reaching territory controlled by Kurdish forces, this moment is captured as a "freedom portrait." It illustrates "a woman shedding her black garments after safely arriving in Kurdish-controlled areas" in Gire Spi in Rojava, Syria.

Figure 1: Freedom Portrait. "Incredible moment elated Syrian women rip off strict Islamic robes and headscarves after escaping religious persecution under ISIS." by Jenny Stanton for MailOnline 6 June, 2015.

Was this the moment of freedom? For instance, the slave women can still be politically non-autonomous, even in the absence of interference. In this context, based on Forst's claim, it seems that freedom of normative self-determination is not a sufficient idea to address the case of the Yazidi woman, particularly since the notion of self-determination lacks normative justification when divorced from the principle of bodily integrity. Secondly, Pettit's claim appears conditionally justifiable in this context. The concept of freedom as non-domination—

rather than mere interference—should be broadened to incorporate the original position of bodily integrity. The normative dependence of freedom on the idea of non-domination should include bodily integrity as a fundamental requirement for freedom. The concept of Yazidi women being "their own" signifies their expression of actual voices, emphasizing these women's voices by affirming their bodily integrity in relation to their circumstances. Herring and Wall state that "bodily integrity is non-reducible to the principle of autonomy. Bodily integrity relates to the integration of the self and the rest of the objective world" (2017:566). Similarly, Pallikkathayil notes that "bodily rights continue to play a role in enabling you to be free."

4. Concluding Remarks

The above points two main purposes. First, it is about demonstrating why bodily integrity is the primary condition for autonomy. Second, to explain why a woman's body has a performative dimension that reveals autonomy. These aims overlap, illustrating how a woman's body serves as a space where the self comes into being through alternative interactions and expressions of voice. This remains an open question for now. Bodily rights are an essential right for human beings; they do not only represent a natural right that necessitates freedom but also a political right aimed at fulfilling human desires and capacities. Furthermore, bodily rights often involve the enjoyment of being one's "own master" over one's body in a relevant context, which can also be interpreted as "positive liberty," or freedom to act (Berlin, 1969, p. 8). The "Freedom Portrait" explores deep dimensions concerning the idea of the body and a woman's interaction with the external world, raising the question of whether these are their actual voices. It also invites normative justifications of rights in terms of the actual voices of marginalized individuals. This normative dimension, highlighting women's voices, signifies the question, "Am I an object or a subject?" (cited in Richard's essay, The Curator-Writer) in a performative sense. The performative artist Yayoi Kusama illustrates the significance of the physicality of art and its relation to mirroring the self-portraits of women and genders. In examining the performative aspects present in both the case of the Yazidi woman and Kusama's art, I believe we can draw connections between politics, philosophy, and art.

Note

This topic is explored in detail in the paper "Why Does the Idea of Bodily Integrity Matter?" (Gülal, 2022). Although some sections of this paper have been reformulated from previous work, the primary focus is on bodily integrity in relation to women's voices through this paper.

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Cultural Capital Development: A Case Study of Local Entrepreneurs on Textile Design and Production in Nan Province, Northern Thailand

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Abstracts

Cultural capital exists in both tangible and intangible forms, encompassing lifestyle, beliefs, architecture, products, and objects that constitute integral parts of societal fabric. Especially concerning tangible cultural capital like traditional textiles, it conveys economic value. Cultural textiles in Thailand are crafted from silk, cotton, or hemp and are produced ethically, benefiting local communities. The diverse ethnic groups in Thailand create unique textiles using a variety of techniques, patterns, and materials. This research aims to explore the objectives, methodologies, and stylistic approaches used in textile design and production, by three emerging local entrepreneurs in Nan province, a region in northern Thailand renowned for its rich Tai Lue cultural capital. The research method is qualitative research, involving interviews with three selected entrepreneur participants in Nan province. The research uncovered the following insights: (1) The primary objective of textile production is to earn a living, leveraging skills and knowledge inherited from past generations. Faced with the decision of preserving or developing new textiles using cultural capital, all three entrepreneurs preferred to strike a balance between both approaches. (2) All local entrepreneurs draw inspiration from ancient textiles found in households, passed down by relatives, or from mural paintings in temples. They gather and merge these designs with predictions of consumer tastes and fashion trends. (3) The stylistic approach varies depending on the designers' ability to predict market trends or through discussions with made-to-order consumers. Additionally, important design elements still in use include the breakdown of traditional patterns, color schemes, and choices of yarn.

Keywords: Cultural Capital, Nan Province, Tai Lue Textile

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1. Introduction

A key aspect of culture is its function in representing the collective behaviors and belief systems of a group or community through their activities and beliefs. In some cultures, cultural values are embedded in items or practices commonly shared by members of a group. (Throsby, 1999). Each aspect considered as culture, such as architecture, food, clothing, and beliefs, carries its own value. While this value may not align directly with economic value, cultural value can influence how things are interpreted in economic terms. Cultural capital serves as an asset that contributes to this cultural value.

Cultural capital as mentioned by Pierre Bourdieu refers to the symbols, ideas, tastes, and preferences that can be strategically used as resources in social action (Oxford Reference, 2024). An item of cultural capital is defined as an asset embodying cultural value. The concept of cultural capital can be understood in two distinct forms: tangible and intangible. Tangible cultural capital encompasses items like sculptures, buildings, landmarks, and objects. On the other hand, intangible cultural capital refers to practices, beliefs, ideas, and traditions (Throsby, 1999).

As previously mentioned, cultural capital encompasses both cultural and economic value. Tangible cultural capital often aligns more directly with economic value, as it can be traded or priced according to market rates. In contrast, intangible cultural capital exists on a different layer of economic value. Rituals or beliefs may need to be transformed into tangible assets to realize economic value, or they may be converted into services to retain their value.

Cultural products are consumed through acts of interpretation rather than solely for their functional purposes and are typically consumed mentally (Lawrence & Phillips, 2002). Cultural textiles, as cultural products, were originally designed for specific occasions like weddings, funerals, and formal events. Despite this, these textiles exhibit variations, suggesting that consumers select them based on aesthetic preferences like colors, textures, and pattern designs, even when they are meant for the same types of occasions. This suggests that cultural textiles are consumed mentally, going beyond their basic functionality.

A simple test can be applied: If something can go "out of style," it can be classified as a cultural product, and the businesses producing it, along with their competitors, constitute a cultural industry (Ewen, 1988). At this juncture, cultural textiles, rooted in the past and passed down through generations, maintain their original functions. However, societal changes have occurred, affecting the market and consumer preferences. As a result, cultural textiles are often reserved for traditional ceremonies and are seen as traditional attire, making them seem outdated. Nevertheless, there are efforts to incorporate cultural textiles into modern wardrobes for new consumers. This presents an opportunity for cultural textiles to re-emerge in the market as trendy cultural products.

Cultural textiles in Thailand are crafted from silk, cotton, or hemp and are produced ethically, benefiting local communities. Handloom production in Thailand is deeply rooted in local villages and often organized by women-led initiatives (Mangklatanakul, 2022). The diverse ethnic groups in Thailand create unique textiles using a variety of techniques, patterns, and materials. A weaver blends different techniques, motifs, colors, and materials to craft a textile that serves as a symbol of the identity. Cultural textiles in Thailand include fabrics from various minorities like the Tai and Khmer, but do not encompass textiles from other minority groups such as the Hmong, Akha, Karen, Mien, and Lisu (McIntosh, 2000).

Nan is a province located in the upper northern part of Thailand, renowned as the heartland of "Lanna." This picturesque region boasts a rich heritage of arts and culture that has been cherished from ancient times to the present day. To the north and east, Nan shares borders with the Lao People's Democratic Republic, while its western boundary meets Phayao Province. To the south, it connects with Phrae and Uttaradit provinces. Most Nan's terrain is mountainous, adding to its natural beauty.

The Tai Lue are an ethnic group primarily settled in valleys, spanning the regions of northern Thailand, northern Laos, northern Myanmar, and southwestern China (Leepreecha & Jantakad, 2020). During the late 19th century, as modern countries were being established, the Tai Lue people were divided by national borders into different states. In Nan Province, the Tai Lu people predominantly reside in areas such as Tha Wang Pha, Pua, Chiang Klang, Thung Chang, and Chalerm Phra Kiat Districts (the SUPPORT, 2012).

Nan's cultural textiles represent the traditional knowledge of the Tai Lu people. They are woven using the Kan bundle technique, creating striped patterns throughout the textile. The seams are stitched in the Tai Lu style, and plain red, dark red, or brown fabric is used for the top and bottom parts of the Sinh. The Sinh is a tubular skirt with side seams running from top to bottom. The most popular colors for Sinh Kan are purple, blue, black, pink, and magenta. These textiles are crafted from silk, cotton, or a blend of silk and cotton. Silver and gold silk threads are incorporated to create intricate designs that signify the wearer's social rank or status. In the past, weaving a Sinh, which measures approximately 1 meter in length and 1 meter in width, would typically take around 2 weeks. For more intricate patterns, the process could extend to as long as 2 months.

The weaving process begins with preparing the yarn, which is then tie-dyed with intricate designs. These yarns are woven according to pre-designed patterns, using a technique known as Mud Kan. The term "Sinh" denotes a tubular skirt. Sinh Kan textiles are typically crafted from silk or cotton, with the choice of material often reflecting the wearer's social status or luxury, determined by the yarn's rarity. Silk, being more costly than cotton, is commonly used by the elite.

A unique technique involves integrating the Teen Sinh, an additional decorative piece at the Sinh's bottom, with the Khid technique or Jacquard. Among the traditional patterns in Nan's cultural textiles is the Nam Lai design, thought to represent the flow of the Nan River. This zigzag pattern is achieved through a specialized weaving technique. Over time, the Nam Lai pattern has evolved, now featuring a variety of color combinations and scales (the SUPPORT, 2012).

Cultural textiles serve both special occasions and everyday purposes, including items like bed sheets, scarves, Sinh (tubular skirts), blouses, and more. The essence of cultural textiles lies in the careful selection of patterns and colors tailored to specific occasions. Additionally, certain motifs are reserved exclusively for important events. The local community today preserves the textile weaving techniques by passing them down to younger generations through teaching and practice. (Office of the Arts and Culture Promotion, 2012).

At the moment, cultural textiles in Thailand are being promoted with various government supports. One significant department is the Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles, which exhibits and conserves traditional and royal textiles supported by Queen Sirikit since the 1970s (Thai PBS World, 2020). Meanwhile, local entrepreneurs in different parts of Thailand are still

developing and educating new generations of people, leading to the emergence of new textile business models, including weaving, sewing, dyeing, and various new garment designs.

In terms of starting a cultural textile business, there's a choice to be made: whether to replicate the same textile and sell it or develop new textile patterns, color schemes, or use new materials. This choice depends solely on the vision and production capability of the head of the entrepreneur or the business. This includes market foresight and analytical ability, along with the skill in exploring new designs that will then match consumer needs.

2. Objectives

This paper aims to explore the following objectives: (1) the choices between complete preservation or development according to the changing market; (2) methodologies such as the design process and the inspiration or references behind textile design and production; and (3) stylistic approaches used in textile design and production, including how color, material, or textile patterns are utilized. This exploration focuses on three emerging local entrepreneurs in Nan province, a region in northern Thailand renowned for its rich Tai Lue cultural heritage.

3. Methodology

This research involves three local entrepreneurs in Nan province who have over 10 years of experience in textile design and production, and each has at least one retail outlet in the province. The process includes interviews with these three local entrepreneurs in Nan province, Thailand. The sampling selection involved entrepreneurs who possess skills in at least one of the following: traditional weaving, textile pattern design, or natural dyeing.

The research process employed qualitative research methods with three sections of interviews corresponding to the three objectives. Each section took 20 minutes to complete. The researcher conducted the interviews online with the three local entrepreneurs using platforms such as Zoom or voice calls. The researcher took notes and paraphrased them into formal written words to report the results. The sections of the interview questions are as follows:

3.1 The first section of the interviews, focusing on the first objective of the choices between complete preservation or development according to the changing market, includes: (1) The aim of textile development – whether towards preservation or development, and (2) The main target group based on age range and the estimated proportion between tourists and local consumers.

3.2 The second section of the interviews, focusing on methodologies such as the design process and the inspiration or references behind textile design and production, includes: (1) the method of textile design and production process, and (2) the design references and inspiration for most of the products.

3.3 The third section of the interviews, focusing on stylistic approaches, includes: (1) the origin of fibers and yarns, (2) the use of color combinations, and (3) the development style of textile pattern design.

4. Results

4.1 Results for the first section, which focuses on the first objective of choosing between complete preservation or development according to the changing market.

Table 1: Results for the First Section

Item	Answer
Local entrepreneur 1	(1) I work on both sides since they cater to completely different target groups. Those who want traditional and preserved textiles are generally older, while those who prefer the developed versions are typically younger consumers. However, it is important to target both groups since there is a market for each, and there are still craftsmen who can produce both types of goods. (2) The main consumers are tourists. However, their spending varies according to their age group. Some prefer very traditional textiles because they understand the heritage and value of craftsmanship, while others might prefer cheaper versions based on their budget and everyday usage.
Local entrepreneur 2	(1) There should be a balance between preservation and development in textile design. However, we cannot deny that nowadays, customers come to us in two ways: those who are looking for something unique and traditional, and those who want us to use our craftsmanship to create textiles based on their designs so they can develop other products, such as bags, scarves, and so on. (2) The main consumers are tourists, which vary depending on the season. However, locals are able to find certain types of textiles on their own through their connections and long-standing preferences with local weavers.
Local entrepreneur 3	(1) We prefer the traditional version as we use traditional dyeing and weaving processes. Our consumers are those who appreciate our products, as they have distinctive textures, colors, and finishes. Due to our production capacity, we need to focus on those who prefer traditional textiles. Additionally, we continue to be a source of textiles used in various product categories, such as bed sheets, pillowcases, and more. (2) Since our village is far from the city center, we need to send our products to locals in the city or rely on potential buyers who discover us through social media. These buyers contact us to have our products sent to them at wholesale or retail prices.

4.2 Results for the second section, which focuses on methodologies like the design process and the inspiration or references behind textile design and production.

Table 2: Results for the Second Section

No	Analysis
Local entrepreneur 1	(1) Using traditional textile production processes such as dyeing and weaving. (2) Inspiration and design references are from the archives that the owner has collected over 20 years.
Local entrepreneur 2	(1) Using traditional textile production processes such as dyeing and weaving. (2) Inspiration comes from traditional textiles used in everyday life and the creative patterns found on pottery from the area near the community.
Local entrepreneur 3	(1) using traditional textile production process such as natural color dyeing and weaving. (2) Inspiration comes from local craftsmanship and local wisdom experts.

4.3 Results for the third section, which focuses on stylistic approaches in textile design and production.

Table 3: Results for the Third Section

No	Analysis
Local entrepreneur 1	(1) Fibers and yarns are sourced from local producers within Nan province. (2) The use of color combinations is based on archives collected over the past 20 years. (3) The development of textile pattern designs is based on customer orders and preferences.
Local entrepreneur 2	(1) Fibers and yarns are sourced from local producers or suppliers within the province. (2) The use of color combinations is based on the inspiration of the weavers and consumer preferences. (3) The development of textile pattern designs comes from both the inspiration of the weavers and customer orders.
Local entrepreneur 3	(1) Fibers and yarns are sourced from local producers, especially within the local community. (2) The use of color combinations is based on the collection of plants and dyeing substances, as well as orders from consumers. (3) The development of textile pattern designs is based on customer orders and preferences.

5. Conclusion

The exploration of the textile practices among the three local entrepreneurs reveals significant insights aligned with the three objectives: the balance between preservation and development, methodologies in design and production, and stylistic approaches to textile creation.

5.1 Choices Between Preservation and Development: The entrepreneurs demonstrate a strategic balance between complete preservation of traditional techniques and the development of contemporary designs to cater to changing market demands. They acknowledge the distinct preferences of their consumer base—older consumers often favor traditional textiles for their craftsmanship, while younger consumers gravitate towards

modern interpretations. This dual approach allows them to capture diverse market segments, ensuring that both heritage and innovation coexist in their offerings.

5.2 Methodologies in Design and Production: Each entrepreneur employs traditional textile production processes, including dyeing and weaving, while also drawing inspiration from various sources such as personal archives, local craftsmanship, and community heritage. This blend of methodologies underscores the importance of authenticity and quality in their products. By valuing both traditional techniques and contemporary influences, the entrepreneurs create textiles that reflect a rich cultural narrative while remaining relevant to current consumer preferences.

5.3 Stylistic Approaches: The entrepreneurs utilize a thoughtful approach to color, materials, and patterns in their textile designs. They source fibers and yarns locally, which fosters community ties and supports sustainable practices. The use of color combinations is guided by both natural dyeing processes and consumer preferences, allowing for flexibility and responsiveness in their designs. The development of textile patterns is influenced by customer orders and inspiration from traditional motifs, highlighting a collaborative approach to design that respects both consumer desires and cultural heritage.

In summary, the local entrepreneurs effectively navigate the intricate landscape of textile production by harmonizing preservation with innovation. Their methodologies and stylistic choices reflect a deep commitment to cultural authenticity while adapting to the evolving market, ultimately positioning them for sustainable growth and continued relevance in the textile industry.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Enhance Collaboration Between Artisans and Designers: To further bridge the gap between traditional craftsmanship and modern design, local entrepreneurs should facilitate collaborative initiatives between artisans and contemporary designers. This can include workshops, joint projects, or mentorship programs that encourage the exchange of ideas and techniques. Such collaborations can lead to innovative textile products that appeal to a broader audience while preserving the integrity of traditional practices.

6.2 Develop a Comprehensive Marketing Strategy: Entrepreneurs should consider developing a comprehensive marketing strategy that highlights the unique story and cultural significance of their textiles. This could involve creating engaging content that showcases the production process, the artisans' skills, and the inspiration behind each piece. Utilizing social media and e-commerce platforms effectively can help reach diverse consumer groups, particularly younger audiences, and increase awareness and appreciation for both traditional and contemporary textile offerings.

7. Additional Experiments

The researcher conducted the experiment as part of the research by collaborating with the Baan Sao Luang community enterprise in Nan province to develop textile patterns. Discussions with the local craftsman, Mr. Korakot Pangjai, led to the creation of a modern pattern design derived from traditional geometric textile patterns.

The researcher then purchased five pieces of fabric and brought them back to Bangkok to develop garments using modern pattern cutting and design strategies. This process resulted in five garments, including a blouse, vest, pants, skirt, and dress, to demonstrate the possibilities of bridging the approaches of artisans and designers in enhancing garment development for the local community. Since local entrepreneurs usually produce textiles in pieces for tubular skirts, this type of development will expand the possibilities for locals to design their textiles and market them to a broader audience.

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Exploring Undergraduate Attitudes Toward Study Abroad:
Insights From a Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract

This cross-sectional study conducted in 2023 explores the attitudes of 94 undergraduate students in Vietnam toward studying abroad. The investigation focuses on the perceived importance of studying abroad, particularly in Japan, and the preferences guiding the selection of study abroad destinations. Utilizing a five-level Likert scale, the questionnaire measured participants' attitudes, revealing that 6.4% had undergone short-term study experiences in Japan, and 12.8% expressed plans for post-graduation study abroad. The results underscore participants' perceptions of the importance of study abroad for developing communication skills (Mean [M]=4.52) and cross-cultural competency (M=4.39), rather than prospect of higher income. Concerning preferred study abroad locations, participants favored areas with potential long-term job opportunities (M=4.09) and beautiful, clean environments (M=4.03). Factors such as part-time job availability, local festivals, and a low cost of living in suburban areas were also identified as significant. Notably, respondents believed that foreign degrees are popular in their home country (M=3.71), while not perceiving home country education as lacking choices (M=2.49). The participants prioritized financial support, cultural experiences, and practical assistance when choosing a study abroad institution. These findings provide insights into undergraduate attitudes toward studying abroad, emphasizing the need for tailored approaches to address the needs for studying abroad.

Keywords: Attitude, Japanese Language Proficiency, Cross-Cultural Competency, Study Abroad Preferences

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Introduction

The globalization of education has increasingly highlighted the significance of studying abroad as a pivotal element of higher education (Altbach et al., 2019; Salisbury et al., 2009). This trend is particularly evident in developing countries, where students often seek international experiences to enhance their academic and professional prospects (Abbott & Silles, 2016). Vietnam, with its rapidly expanding economy and growing emphasis on educational attainment, is no exception. The allure of studying abroad, especially in countries renowned for their educational excellence, presents Vietnamese students with opportunities to acquire new skills, gain cultural insights, and enhance their employability in a competitive global market (Tran et al., 2024; Tran & Jin, 2021).

Japan has emerged as a popular destination for Vietnamese students due to its reputation for academic rigor, advanced technological environment, and rich cultural heritage (Tran & Jin, 2022b, 2022a). Despite the growing interest, there is limited empirical research focusing on undergraduates' attitudes toward studying abroad, particularly in Japan. Understanding these attitudes is crucial for educators, policymakers, and institutions aiming to support and guide students in their international educational pursuits.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework proposed by the authors based on literature and previous research. Short-term study abroad during college is reported to contribute to changing multicultural attitude (Carlson & Widaman, 1988). Students chosen long-term study abroad for a graduate degree tend to find work abroad (Baruch et al., 2007).
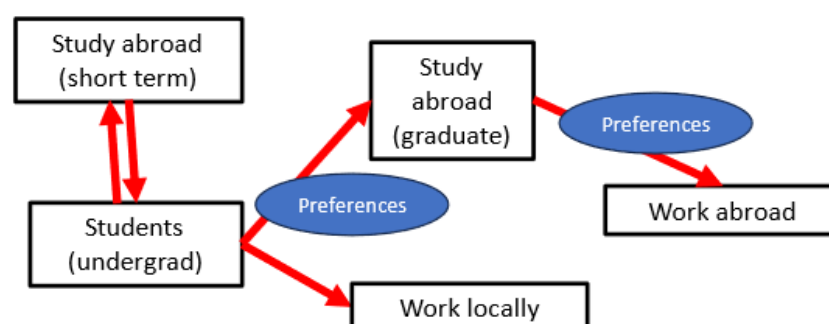
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (by the authors)

The primary objectives of this study are to assess the attitudes of Vietnamese undergraduate students toward studying abroad and to identify the specific factors influencing their choice of study abroad destinations, with a particular emphasis on Japan. Additionally, the study aims to evaluate the perceived benefits of studying abroad, particularly in terms of skill development, cultural competency, and career prospects. It also seeks to understand the preferences and priorities of students when selecting study abroad institutions. By achieving these objectives, the study aims to provide an understanding of the motivations and considerations that shape Vietnamese students' decisions to pursue education abroad.

Methodology

This study employed a cross-sectional research design. The target population consisted of undergraduate students in Vietnam. Data was collected in the second semester of the 2022-2023 academic year through a web-survey questionnaire. The web-survey questionnaire was structured to obtain information in several key areas: (a) Demographic information: age,

gender, academic year, etc.; (b) Attitudes towards study and work abroad: general attitudes towards studying and working abroad, including desired duration of staying abroad; (c) Preferred destination attributes. The questionnaire used five-level Likert-style questions from 1 to 5, where 1 stands for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for neutral, 4 for agree, and 5 for strongly agree. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Participants were provided with information about the study's purpose, their voluntary participation, and the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The study was approved by the IRB of the Graduate School of Science and Technology, Tokushima University (No. 20008).

Results

All participants were undergraduate students enrolled in a university in Vietnam, majoring in Japanese studies. The data in Table 1 provides a comprehensive profile of the participants. The majority of participants are female (88.3%) with a mean age of 22.2 years, and most are single (91.5%). In terms of living arrangements, a significant number live in rental accommodations (46.8%), with nearly half co-living with roommates (50.0%). Academically, the predominant sub-major is Business Japanese (56.4%), and most students are in their third year (75.5%), with English proficiency generally at a basic level (70.2%). Family background data shows that the majority of students' parents have a high school education (68.1%), and 72.3% of students report no family members with study abroad experience. Socioeconomically, the perceived family income is predominantly average (80.9%), with a small minority indicating high income (1.1%). These data highlight a predominantly female, young, and single student body, mostly from average-income families with limited exposure to study abroad through family members.

Table 1: Characteristics (N=94)

Variable	Value	Total	
		n	%
Age	M = 22.2; SD = 3.2; Median=21.0		
Gender	Female	83	88.3
	Male	11	11.7
Marital status	Single	86	91.5
	Married	8	8.5
Lodging	Dormitory	16	17.0
	Rental	44	46.8
	Home	34	36.2
Co-living with	Alone	8	8.5
	Roommate	47	50.0
	Family	39	41.5
Sub-major	Business Japanese	53	56.4
	Translation/Interpretation	21	22.3
	Japanese teaching	20	21.3
Grade	1st year	0	0
	2nd year	0	0
	3rd year	71	75.5
	4th year	23	24.5

Years studying Japanese	1 years and less	0	0
	2 years	11	11.7
	3 years	57	60.6
	4 years	13	13.8
	5 years	7	7.4
	6 years and more	6	6.4
Parents' highest education level	High school	64	68.1
	College	26	27.7
	Graduate degree	4	4.3
Study abroad experience of family members	None	68	72.3
	Other than Japan	12	12.8
	Japan	14	14.9
Hometown	Other	21	22.3
	Provincial city	35	37.2
	Metropolitan	38	40.4
Perceived family income	Low	17	18.1
	Average	76	80.9
	High	1	1.1

Figure 2 shows the percentage of participants who have had study abroad experiences. Particularly, there were 6 students (6.4%) have had a study abroad experience in Japan. This data shows that the majority of students have not studied abroad, only a small proportion of students have experience studying in Japan.
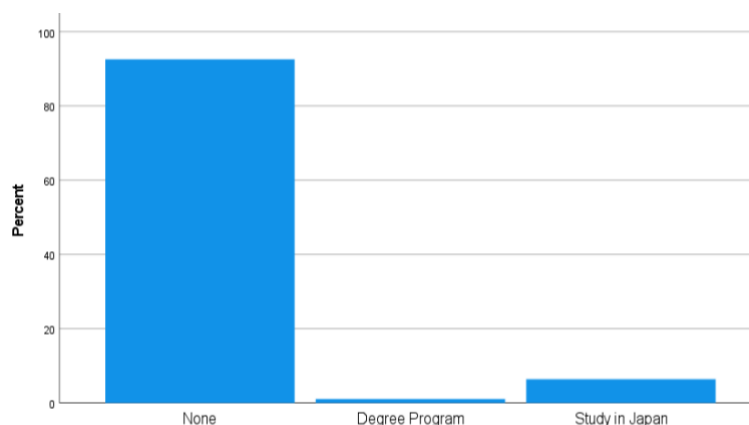
Figure 2: Study Abroad Experience (N=94)

Figure 3 presents the percentage of participants who have specific plans for their future, among which get a job (75.5%), study abroad (12.8%), and not decided (11.7%). This data indicates that a small portion are looking to continue their education overseas.
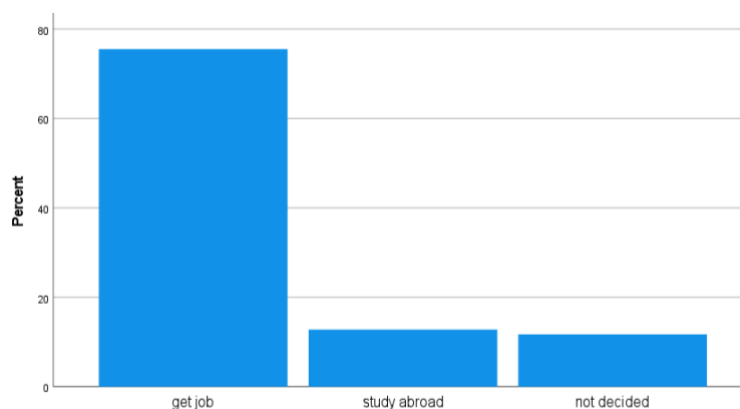
Figure 3: Future Study Abroad Plan (N=94)

The data presented in Table 2 reflects participants' perceptions of the importance of studying abroad for various aspects of their development and future prospects. Students generally perceive study abroad as highly important for developing communication skills, cross-cultural competency, and personal development. It is seen as moderately important for future income and career prospects, with somewhat more varied opinions.

Table 2: Perceived Importance of Study Abroad

Important for	Mean	Median	SD
Communication skills	4.52	5.00	.562
Cross-cultural competency	4.39	4.00	.610
Personal development	4.33	4.00	.629
Future income	3.65	4.00	.851
Future career	3.56	3.00	.837

Table 3 explores the factors associated with attitudes about the importance of studying abroad and plan for pursuing a graduate degree abroad. Notably, a significant correlation was found between Japanese levels and the perceived importance of studying abroad ($r = 0.226$, $p = 0.029$). Additionally, parents' education level showed a significant positive correlation with the importance placed on studying abroad ($r = 0.240$, $p = 0.020$). Other variables, such as English proficiency, years studied Japanese, study abroad experience, age, sex, sub-major, grade, marital status, dormitory status, co-living status, hometown, family's study abroad experience, and family income, did not show significant correlations with either the importance of studying abroad or study abroad plans.

Table 3: Factors Associated With Attitude Towards Study Abroad

		Importance Study Abroad	Study abroad plan
Japanese level (JLPT)	r	.226*	.035
	p	.029	.740
English level	r	.013	-.046
	p	.897	.657
Years studied Japanese	r	-.016	-.069
	p	.881	.509
Study abroad experience	r	.168	.006
	p	.106	.951
Age	r	.014	-.069
	p	.891	.508
Sex	r	.023	-.139
	p	.828	.181
Sub-major	r	-.165	-.122
	p	.112	.243
Grade	r	-.103	.005
	p	.321	.964
Marital status	r	-.067	.002
	p	.519	.981
Dormitory status	r	.040	-.027
	p	.700	.797
Co-living status	r	.029	.002
	p	.778	.985
Parents' education	r	.240*	.025
	p	.020	.814
Hometown	r	-.076	-.112
	p	.467	.282
Family's study abroad experience	r	-.202	-.091
	p	.051	.383
Family income	r	-.137	-.005
	p	.189	.961

*$p<0.05$, r: Spearman's correlation coefficient.

In Table 4, participants perceived a bias towards foreign degrees and have moderate concerns about immigration opportunities, research capabilities, and part-time job availability. There were also some issues with the number of university seats, the difficulty of entrance exams, the range of study fields, and the quality of universities.

Table 4: Attitude Towards Domestic Education

	Mean	Median	SD
Foreign degrees are preferred	3.71	4.00	.832
Low possibility of immigration	3.10	3.00	.868
Research capabilities are low	2.85	3.00	.816
Few part-time job opportunities	2.84	3.00	.919
Not enough university seats	2.82	3.00	.775
Easy to fail entrance exams	2.55	2.50	.825
Short of fields that I want to study	2.49	2.00	.813
Quality of universities is not high	2.45	2.00	.697
Instability	2.41	2.00	.966

According to Table 5, participants placed the highest value on the clean environment, the recognition of Japanese degrees, and the high quality of education in Japan. Interest in

Japanese culture and the availability of part-time jobs were also significant factors. While practical considerations like simplicity of admission and visa procedures were positively viewed, they were less critical compared to other aspects like employment prospects, lifestyle, and safety.

Table 5: Attitude Towards Japan's Education

	Mean	Median	SD
Clean environment	4.34	4	0.632
Japanese degrees are valued	4.12	4	0.620
High quality education	4.06	4	0.601
Interested in Japan culture, nature, language	3.71	4	0.850
Plenty of part-time jobs	3.62	4	0.735
prospects for employment and stay in Japan	3.53	4	0.772
I love the Japanese lifestyle	3.26	3	1.047
Near my country	3.21	3	0.853
Japan is stable and safe.	3.2	3	0.968
Tuition cheaper than English countries	3.13	3	0.845
Admission is simple	2.9	3	0.588
Visa procedure is simple	2.86	3	0.712

According to Table 6, participants prioritized financial aid, cultural events, affordability, international exchange, job support, language classes, and counseling services when selecting a university. While academic prestige and accolades were considered, they were less critical than practical support and opportunities for personal and professional development.

Table 6: Preferences for a University

	Mean	Median	SD
Have scholarship	4.29	4	0.633
Have Japanese culture event	4.28	4	0.678
Have tuition exemption	4.24	4	0.758
Exchange with foreign students	4.19	4	0.627
Job hunting support	4.14	4	0.697
Japanese class	4.13	4	0.722
Counseling	4.12	4	0.716
Exchange with Japanese students	4.12	4	0.760
Modern facility	4.09	4	0.599
Disaster preventions	4.05	4	0.709
High employment rate	3.99	4	0.823
Dormitory	3.96	4	0.828
Have desired programs	3.95	4	0.753
Have student clubs	3.77	4	0.897
High-ranking	3.70	4	0.716
English environment	3.67	4	0.847
National university	3.51	3	0.813
EMI program	3.47	4	0.851
Have Nobel winner	2.91	3	0.825

In Table 7, participants prioritized practical aspects like job opportunities and cultural aspects such as landscape and festivals when choosing a study abroad location. They also considered factors like city size and the presence of social connections, while countryside locations were less favored. These preferences reflect a blend of academic, cultural, and practical considerations in selecting a study abroad destination.

Table 7: Preferences for Locality

	Mean	Median	SD
Get employment easy	4.09	4	0.676
Beautiful landscape	4.03	4	0.613
Festivals	3.97	4	0.695
Part-time jobs	3.96	4	0.638
Small city	3.70	4	0.787
Tourism place	3.68	4	0.806
Have relatives or friends	3.45	3.5	1.001
Have compatriots	3.41	3	1.062
Countryside	3.33	3	0.872

Figure 4 indicates that in case of study abroad, students would primarily rely on part-time jobs for financial support. Parents' support would be also a significant source of funding. Scholarships and loans were moderately important. This suggests that while students may utilize a combination of these sources to fund their education abroad, they may consider part-time employment and parental assistance seem to be the most crucial.
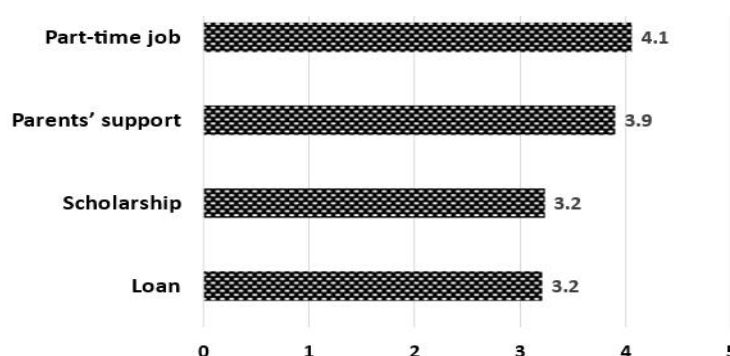
Figure 4: Future Study Abroad Plan (N=94)

Discussion

The findings of this cross-sectional study offer valuable insights into the attitudes and preferences of Vietnamese undergraduate students regarding studying abroad, with a particular focus on Japan. Participants in the study demonstrated a strong belief in the significance of studying abroad for personal and professional development. Key motivations included enhancing communication skills and cross-cultural competency, which were rated highly on the Likert scale. This aligns with global trends where students increasingly view international experiences as essential for broadening their perspectives and improving their career prospects. These findings, which are in line with previous studies (Schenker, 2019), indicate that students acknowledge the benefits of international education in improving their abilities and qualifications, thus enhancing their competitiveness in the global employment landscape.

The current study has found the influence of parents' education into the attitude towards study abroad. According to previous research, parent's education has influenced the choice and intent to study abroad (Salisbury et al., 2009) and parents reported to play an important role in study abroad decision making (Bodycott, 2009). However, in our previous investigation we have not found such a relationship (Tran, 2023a). Interestingly, the participants perceived foreign degrees as highly valued in Vietnam, indicating a recognition of the competitive advantage conferred by international education. Preference of foreign degrees also has been reported to be common in some developing countries (Ahsan-ul-haq & Dar, 2014). In contrast,

there was indication of satisfaction with the educational choices available domestically, suggesting a nuanced perspective on the perceived strengths of both local and international educational offerings.

The study identified specific students' preferences for study abroad destinations. Areas offering potential long-term job opportunities and featuring beautiful and clean environments were highly favored. Moreover, the availability of part-time jobs, local festivals, and a low cost of living in suburban areas emerged as significant considerations. These preferences reflect a blend of career aspirations, lifestyle choices, and cultural interests among the participants. This is somehow consistent with our previous results found among international students in Japan (Tran, 2023a). One notable finding is that students prioritize destinations offering natural resources and cultural festivities when selecting where to study or work abroad. This preference for comprehensive experiences suggests a desire for more than just career prospects or academic learning; students seek a well-rounded international journey that includes cultural immersion and exposure to diverse environments (Tran, 2023b). Non-metropolitan educational institutions can capitalize on this insight by customizing their marketing strategies to emphasize unique cultural experiences and job opportunities available in their locations, thereby enhancing competitiveness.

The strong preference for universities providing scholarship, tuition waivers, job hunting support and modern facilities reflects students' practical considerations. These preferences underscore the importance of robust support services that ease students' transition into international academic environments and enrich their overall educational experience. Institutions addressing these needs effectively are likely to attract more students and foster positive study abroad experiences (Inai, 2012). Other intriguing findings from this study include the relatively low percentage of respondents considering permanent relocation abroad, highlighting a tendency among Vietnamese individuals to prioritize family ties compared to other ethnic groups (Sato, 2023). Our previous work has explored how factors such as age, gender, academic year, living arrangements, and familial influences may shape attitudes and preferences towards studying abroad (Tran, 2023b; Tran et al., 2023), though these factors have not been found associated in this data set. The fact that the participants shows strong preference for universities providing scholarship, tuition waivers, job hunting support (Table 6) and strong preference for places with plenty of part-time job (Table 7) is consistent with the reliance on part-time job to finance the study. This finding support the premise that financial factors are found important for study abroad (Whatley, 2017).

This study is not without limitations. The sample size was relatively small, and the study's cross-sectional design limits causal inference. Future research could employ longitudinal approaches or qualitative methods to further explore the evolving attitudes and experiences of students. Additionally, investigating the outcomes and experiences of students who have studied abroad, particularly in Japan, would enrich our understanding of the broader impacts of international education.

Conclusion

The current study contributes to the growing body of literature on student mobility and international education by highlighting the specific attitudes, preferences, and perceptions of Vietnamese undergraduate students towards studying abroad, particularly in Japan. By addressing these insights, stakeholders in higher education can better support and promote

meaningful study abroad experiences that align with the aspirations and goals of Vietnamese students.

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Self-Confidence in Theater Acting: The Role of Self-Concept in Campus Theater

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Abstract

Self-confidence is a crucial factor for theater actors to perform well on stage. This study aims to analyze the influence of self-concept on the self-confidence of actors. The study specifically focuses on actors from the Campus Theater Institute of the Faculty of Arts and Design, Makassar State University (Terkam FSD UNM) who have experience as actors. It is hypothesized that a positive self-concept will enhance self-confidence and reduce anxiety or worry, allowing actors to perform to their full potential. This research employs a descriptive correlational design to investigate the relationship between two or more variables. Data collection utilizes questionnaires, and data analysis is conducted using quantitative or statistical methods to test the established hypotheses. The study involves 27 participants, using total sampling as the sampling technique. The findings of the study on "Self-Confidence in Theater Performance: The Role of Self-Concept in Actors at the Campus Theater Institute" reveal a correlation coefficient of 0.639 and a significance level (p) of 0.000, indicating a significant positive correlation between self-concept and self-confidence among TERKAM FSD UNM members who have experience as actors. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 41% suggests that 41% of the positive and significant relationship between self-concept and self-confidence can be attributed to self-concept, while the remaining 59% is influenced by other factors.

Keywords: Self-Concept, Self-Confidence, Theater Actors, Campus Theater

Introduction

Self-confidence is a crucial element for theater actors to perform optimally in every theater performance as a performing art that is full of expression and communication. Theater requires the presence of actors who are able to bring characters to life and convey messages with confidence. In this realm. The success of an actor is not only determined by his technical proficiency, but also by the extent to which he has confidence in portraying a role. Self-confidence as one of the human psychological behaviors has an important influence on emergency management decision-making (Liu et al., 2019). Self-confidence starts from the belief that grows within a person to be able to successfully carry out tasks, affecting the field of participation in seeking goals (Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020). One thing that can be done is to instill positive things such as self-concept in a person. Self-concept has a very important role in supporting a person's self-confidence (Harris et al., 2021; Kawser et al., 2021; Lukman & Nirwana, 2020; Sholiha & Aulia, 2020; Wofford, 2021). This underlies this study, which takes a focus on self-concept factors and their impact on self-confidence levels.

The literature that includes self-confidence and self-concept is that previous theater has not been so complex covering three scopes, namely two variables and the topic to the elements that influence. In Mitchell et al. (2020) through qualitative data on the research he collected showed that participation in theater arts can affect a person's attitude towards learning, increase engagement and increase self-confidence. In another study also explained by Rahman et al (2020) that events that occur during the theater process, show an increase in self-confidence and active interaction with a person. Further explained by memorizing the text of the play and acting out several scenes at the theater performance automatically proves cognitive improvement.

The growth of self-confidence is what researchers will do by linking it to self-concept, especially in Actors in the context of Campus Theater. Self-concept has such an important role in shaping self-confidence, especially in increasing self-confidence in a campus theater member, because with them having a positive perspective on their abilities, it will make themselves more confident, a sense of anxiety or worry will not arise with the abilities they already have. Likewise, on the contrary, a negative perspective on the abilities he has will appear inferior, anxious, worried about himself. Self-concept is formed due to interactions with surrounding people. According to Ghufron & Risnawati (2012) the formation of self-confidence in a person begins with the development of a self-concept obtained in his association in a group. The Campus Theater Institute is the right environment to understand the dynamics between self-concept and self-confidence in actors. Its existence in a higher education institution, such as the Faculty of Arts and Design, Makassar State University (FSD UNM), provides a unique context due to its high creative freedom and performance pressure. Therefore, this study will detail the self-concept of Teater Kampus FSD UNM actors and how this relates to their confidence levels during role-playing.

Through this research, it is hoped that significant findings can be found about the correlation of self-concept affecting the confidence of Teater Kampus FSD UNM actors. Researchers also made preliminary observations on students who participated in TERKAM FSD UNM, besides there are students who have the enthusiasm and motivation to make themselves into people who have something to be admired and become people who have abilities, there are also members of the Teater Kampus FSD UNM who carry out the acting process often experiencing obstacles both in dialogue, expression or moving and moving the body. This is closely related to self-concept and self-confidence. Various things exist in fostering self-

confidence, then determined by the self-concept. Thus this research leads to the relationship between self-confidence and self-concept as acting capital. Ghufron et al. (2016) state that self-concept consists of three aspects, namely knowledge, expectations and judgment. These three aspects are the basis for later researchers who will influence the self-confidence of members of the Teater Kampus FSD UNM, especially specifically in the research subjects of members who have carried out the previous acting process.

Literature Review

A. Campus Theater

Campus theatre is a theatre group that is located within the scope of the campus both organizationally and in the process of other activities. Before discussing campus theater, researchers share perceptions about theater in this study and what it relates to research. Theater is a performance presented before the public, including elements of drama, life stories, and human realities that are shown on stage. This performance involves various media such as conversation, movement, and behavior directed by a script. Suyoto (2006) defines drama as a story of human life performed on stage based on a script, involving conversation, movement, and elements such as stage settings, witnessed by the audience. Waluyo (2006) states that drama is an imitative representation of human life projected on stage. Sahid (2016) adds that in theater, the human body becomes a representation of the human being displayed on stage, making theater an art form capable of exploring "icon identity." Campus Theater further refers to the complex activities of the arts that involve diverse activities of individual students who participate in academia. According to Yudiaryani (1996), Campus Theater is a theater within a higher education institution that is a forum for student expression.

Campus Theater is different from theater education at arts institutions. Campus Theatre is not bound by curricular goals. In other words, Campus Theater is not required to adhere to a form, or it can be said that Campus Theater is non-formal theater. The purpose of theater on campus is to serve as theater appreciators who have a tendency to enjoy, appreciate and value theater art. Theater can also be an instrument for students to convey. Affectively, introducing and providing students with acting skills for performance is seen as important. Therefore, in learning, the development of both intrinsic and extrinsic acting from drama scripts needs to be done. Providing this ability at the same time encourages the emergence of the creative process of theater acting while also covering substantially the content contained in the theater. Furthermore, learning is developed towards the cognitive domain.When playing a role, when students perform, they are required to play the character and try to perform optimally according to what the director or script expects so that the audience enters the story and feels what the character feels in the role (Dewojati, 2012). Harymawan in Kurniawan, T. U. (2016). The director's job is to help actors and actresses express themselves in the script, and actors and actresses are free to develop their individual conceptions in order to perform their roles to the best of their ability. Waluyo (2001) mentions that there are seven steps in practicing drama or acting, namely as follows:body exercises, voice exercises, observation and imagination, concentration exercises, technique exercises, acting system exercises, and exercises to flex skills.These exercises are done gradually and continuously.

B. Self-Concept

Self-concept is a person's image of themselves, which is a combination of beliefs about their physical, psychological, emotional, aspirations, and achievements. The description of the self-concept is a person's self-image of physical and psychological. Self-concept is also interpreted as an individual's belief in himself according to the opinion of Surna et al., (2014) self-concept will determine who a person is in his mind, who a person is in his statement and will determine what a person will become according to his own mind. According to Ghufron and Risnawati (2016) self-concept as a mental picture of oneself and one's picture of oneself which is a combination of psychological, physical, social, emotional aspirational beliefs, and the achievements they have made. This is what causes the self-concept to always change every time the self-concept goes according to one's experience and also changes and affects one's life goals. Hurlock (1990) describes that self-concept is divided into two parts, the actual self-concept, which is a person's concept of the role he plays and the conditions of others that influence him and his own perceptions of others. And the ideal self-concept, which is a person's picture of personality and skills in psychological and physical aspects.

The self-concept aspect is important in this study, by making it a sub-variable of self-concept. Grufron and Risnawati (2016) state that self-concept consists of three dimensions or aspects, namely:
    a. Knowledge, knowledge is what individuals know about themselves. Individuals have in their minds a list that describes themselves, physical completeness or lack thereof, age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, occupation, religion and others. The knowledge of considering himself perfect because he has an awareness of his complete physical self, the self also comes from a social group that is individually identified. The nickname of the self also changes every time as long as there is a process of self-identification in the social group, then the group influences the mental portrait of the individual.
    b. Expectations, expectations at a certain time a person also has an aspect of judgment about himself. A person also has an assessment of what he will be in the future in this case long term. in short, a person wants himself to be someone according to the ideal self. Each individual's ideal self is different from one another. There are those who consider themselves ideal if they lead a large number of members with their speeches that ignite the enthusiasm of their followers. There are also individuals who are ideal by winning prestigious competitions.
    c. Assessment, assessment in this aspect, a person acts as an assessor of himself. Whether the assessment contradicts his ideal with the reality at that time, this is what is called self-esteem. The higher the match between the ideal and the standard self, the lower one's self-esteem will be.

C. Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is something that makes a person feel able to channel everything we know and everything we do. This means that someone who has self-confidence is someone who has the ability to channel what he knows and what he does. According to Sieler (in Wardani, 2015) self-confidence is an individual characteristic (a self-build) that allows a person to have a positive or realistic view of themselves or in the situations they experience. Meanwhile, Hakim (2002) also revealed that self-confidence is a person's belief in all aspects of his advantages and this belief makes him feel able to achieve goals in his life. Furthermore, Fatimah (2006) also reveals some advice for someone who lacks self-confidence in order to

increase their self-confidence, namely by evaluating themselves objectively, giving honest appreciation to themselves, positive thinking, using self-affirmation, and taking risks. From some of the experts above, we can conclude that self-confidence is a belief in his ability to be able to do what he does and what he thinks and believes in all the positive aspects he has and makes it an advantage and is realistic about himself.

The aspect of self-confidence is important in this study, by making it a sub-variable of self-confidence The aspect of self-confidence according to Angelis (2000) includes 3 aspects, as follows:

a. Behavioral Aspect, is a sense of confidence in terms of doing something and completing it, ranging from easy to complex tasks in order to achieve what is desired. in this aspect there are 4 (four) important selves, namely Confidence in one's own ability to do something, confidence in the ability to follow up on all personal initiatives consequently, confidence in one's own ability to overcome all obstacles, and confidence in the ability to obtain support.

b. Emotional aspect, is the aspect of self-confidence in convincing oneself to be able to control all sides of feelings or emotions. This aspect has specific characteristics, namely confidence in the ability to know one's own feelings, confidence in the ability to express feelings, confidence in the ability to integrate oneself with the lives of others in a positive and understanding association, confidence in the ability to obtain affection, understanding and attention in everything, especially in the face of difficulties, and confidence in the ability to know what benefits others provide.

c. Spiritual aspect, is an aspect of self-confidence about belief in a god or creator who has control over everything on earth in a positive way. This aspect has characteristics, namely, the belief that the universe is a mystery that continues to change and every change that occurs is part of a greater change, belief in the nature of nature, so that everything that happens is natural, belief in oneself and the existence of an almighty and omnipotent god and omniscient of any human spiritual expression to him.

Research Method

The research method used is quantitative with the type of research, namely descriptive correlation to find out about the relationship between self-confidence and self-concept of Teater Kampus FSD UNM members in the acting process as a form of capacity building. The population in this study amounted to 27 people with the identification of members of the Teater Kampus FSD UNM who were active as well as having carried out the theater training process with a focus on acting. The validity test used is product moment correlation, the reliability test of the measuring instrument used uses the alpha coefficient equation, and the normality test on the distribution was studied with the "one sample kolmogorovsmirnov" test approach.

The benchmark used is, if $p > 0.05$ then it is considered a normal thing, but if $p < 0.05$ then it is considered an abnormal thing. Meanwhile, the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable was tested for linearity. This can be understood by the statement, "whether the self-concept possessed by members of the Teater Kampus FSD UNM can explain the relationship between the emergence of self-confidence, namely the increase or decrease in the value of the Y axis (self-confidence) along with the increase or decrease in the value of the X axis (self-concept)". For criteria if p is different <0.05, it will be interpreted as having a linear relationship.

The analysis that researchers use in this problem is the "product moment" correlation technique, which is a technique for analyzing data in the form of statistics that is useful in proving hypotheses about the relationship between self-concept which is categorized as "independent variable X" with self-confidence of members of the Teater Kampus FSD UNM.

Research Finding

The Relationship Between Self-Concept and Self-Confidence

Whether self-concept influences self-confidence or not, the first step is to conduct a Linearity Test, which serves to determine the linearity or non-linearity of a data distribution in research between two variables. Here are the results of the linearity test:

Table 1 & 2: Results of the Linearity Test

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Kepercayaan Diri * Konsep Diri	Between Groups	(Combined)	1145.019	15	76.335	5.243	.004
		Linearity	533.192	1	533.192	36.619	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	611.826	14	43.702	3.001	.037
	Within Groups		160.167	11	14.561		
	Total		1305.185	26			

Measures of Association

	R	R Squared	Eta	Eta Squared
Kepercayaan Diri * Konsep Diri	.639	.409	.937	.877

The tables above show the results of the linearity test for self-esteem and self-confidence. The significance score obtained is 0.037, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be said that there is a linear relationship between the self-concept variable and the self-confidence variable.

Pearson correlation analysis, conducted to determine the extent of the relationship between two variables using the IBM SPSS program, yielded the following results:

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Results

		Self-Concept	Self-Confidence
Self-Concept	Pearson Correlation	1	.639**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	27	27
Self-Confidence	Pearson Correlation	.639**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	27	27

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the Pearson correlation analysis conducted through the IBM SPSS program, a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.639 and a significance level (p) of 0.000 were obtained, using a 2-tailed test. Based on these results, it can be concluded that self-concept and self-confidence have a positive correlation, indicating a significant relationship between self-concept and self-confidence in the members of TERKAM FSD UNM.

After knowing that the correlation coefficient is 0.639, to determine the extent of the influence of variable X on variable Y using the coefficient of determination (r2), expressed as a percentage, the results are as follows:

$$KD = (0,639)2 \text{ x } 100\%$$
$$= 0,408321 \text{ x } 100\%$$
$$= 40,8321\% \text{ (rounded to 41\%)}$$

From the calculations above, it can also be concluded that there is an influence of variable X on variable Y, or vice versa, to the extent of 41%, with the remaining influenced by other factors.

The significant relationship between self-concept and self-confidence in members of the Teater Kampus FSD UNM is confirmed by the statistical test results using the Pearson correlation technique, with a significance level (p) = 0.000 and a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.639. This leads to the conclusion that there is a significant relationship between self-concept and self-confidence in members of the Teater Kampus FSD UNM, with a coefficient of determination of 41%, meaning that 41% of the influence of variables X and Y is accounted for, and the remaining is influenced by other factors.

Discussion

A. Self-Concept Variabrl

In this research, the results analyzed for the self-concept variable among TERKAM FSD UNM members show that: 18.5% or 5 respondents fall into the category of very positive self-concept. 59.3% or 16 respondents have a positive self-concept. 22.2% or 6 respondents have a negative self-concept. There are no respondents with a very negative self-concept. This means that the majority of members in the Teater Kampus FSD UNM have a positive self-concept, or it can be described as good.

The self-concept variable used in this research consists of three aspects: knowledge, expectation, and evaluation. Based on the analysis conducted, it is found that the most dominant aspect of self-concept is expectation, accounting for 42.2%. This indicates that an individual's level of self-concept is greatly influenced by their expectations of who they will become in the future. This means that someone with a high self-concept, or at least a good self-concept, must have positive ideals about themselves, a strong drive to achieve their goals, and the ability to manage themselves and others effectively. However, knowledge and self-evaluation are also important in building a positive self-concept.

There are so many factors that affect the level of positive negative self-concept of an individual, according to Yulius (2010) suggests there are at least 4 factors that affect the development of self-concept, namely (1) The role of physical image, . A person will strive to reach a standard where he can be said to have an ideal physical condition in order to get a positive response from others. (2) Gender roles, there are still many societies that consider

women's roles only limited to family matters. This causes women to still encounter obstacles in developing themselves according to their potential. While on the other hand, men have a greater opportunity to develop their potential. (3) The role of parental behavior, One of the things related to the role of parents in the formation of children's self-concept is the way parents meet the physical and psychological needs of children. (4) The role of social factors, a person when interacting with others and a person's environment and social status become the basis for others in looking at the person.

In this case, the level of self-concept possessed by members of the Teater Kampus FSD UNM can be said to be good or positive because the role of social factors in this organization tends to everything that trains the level of self-concept of an individual. As the organization has clear principles and directions, its members who have the confidence to continue to achieve high achievements and motivate each other, as well as attention between members, both experienced and those who still lack experience in theater, are well accommodated. From this, the values of the Teater Kampus FSD UNM culture, whether consciously or unconsciously, have been internalized influencing the level of self-concept of each member based on 3 aspects.

B. Self-Confidence Variables

In this study after an analysis was carried out on the variables of self-confidence possessed by members of the Teater Kampus FSD UNM. So the results were obtained 18.5% or 5 people with the very high category, 74.1% or 20 people with the high category and only 7.4% with the low category. This shows that the majority of members of the Teater Kampus FSD UNM have a high level of confidence.

The self-confidence variable has 3 aspects, namely behavior, emotion, and spirituality. Based on the results of the analysis that has been done, it can be seen that each aspect of self-confidence has a high level. The most dominant aspect in shaping the confidence level of Teater Kampus FSD UNM members is the behavioral aspect with a percentage of 39.6%, followed by the emotional aspect with a percentage of 33.1% and the spiritual aspect of 27.3%. From these results, it can be said that to gain a good level of self-confidence, confidence is needed to do something and complete it well in oneself, trust, and optimism with a sense of enthusiasm both from within and outside oneself, especially when the theater process in the organization or dynamic surrounding environment. Not only that, the ability to convince yourself to be able to control feelings or emotions is also something that deserves attention in the process of forming self-confidence, then the spiritual condition becomes a support to facilitate each process of forming self-confidence according to the conditions of the spiritual level of each individual.

The level of individual self-confidence is influenced by various factors, according to Lauster (in Hakim, 2002) explained that there are 3 main factors that affect individual self-confidence, including: (1) Personal Ability, which is an ability that comes from within oneself that encourages a person to develop themselves without having excessive anxiety in every action they take, (2) Social interaction, which is how individuals can adjust to their environment, tolerate and respect others. and (3) Self-Concept, i.e. the individual's view of himself whether positively or negatively. This also deserves special attention if an individual wants to have high self-confidence.

The Teater Kampus FSD UNM itself has provided training to each member who is a member in order to improve the ability to play in theater as well as the confidence of each individual. This is known by a structured training pattern based on the regeneration guidelines contained in AD / ART contained in it. So that in addition to being proficient and daring to carry out roles on stage, members are prepared to be able to implement courage, ethical and moral values in daily activities with good self-confidence that has been trained while in the organization.

C. The Influence of Self-Concept on Self-Confidence

A significant relationship between self-concept and self-confidence in members of the Teater Kampus FSD UNM is proven by the results of statistical tests using the Pearson correlation technique, a level of significance (p) = 0.000 and a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.639 have been obtained with the conclusion that there is a significant relationship between self-concept and self-confidence in members of the Teater Kampus FSD UNM with a coefficient of determination of 41% which means the influence of X and Y variables of 41% and The rest is influenced by other factors.

In line with the results of this study, the role of self-concept is very important in influencing the self-confidence of Teater Kampus FSD UNM members. As revealed by Pujijogjanti (in Ghufron & Risnawati, 2016) individuals who have a self-concept are able to play a role in maintaining inner harmony, determining the best attitude and getting high appreciation in their field in this case is to appear as theater actors. Thus, as a result of the courage to learn and perform competently, the level of confidence in an individual will also increase directly proportional to the level of self-concept possessed by an individual that he has formed while in the Teater Kampus FSD UNM.

Conclusion

An important finding from this study is that self-confidence, especially in playing a role in theater, can be influenced by self-concept. Theater Casting Self-Confidence Capital: Self-Concept Function in Actors at Teater Kampus FSD UNM, there is a positive and significant relationship between self-concept and self-confidence by 41% and the rest is influenced by other factors. The Teater Kampus FSD UNM has a majority of members who have a positive level of self-concept or can be said to be good. The aspect of self-concept in this study is knowledge, expectations, and assessment, it is known that the most dominant aspect is hope, which is an assessment of what he will become in the future. This suggests that the aspect of expectation on self-concept is significant for influencing self-confidence.

This study also answers previous research underlying changes in self-confidence levels after playing theater. This research shows that to gain a good level of self-confidence it requires confidence to do something and complete it well in oneself, trust, and optimism with a sense of enthusiasm both from within and outside oneself, especially when in the process of theater in organizations or dynamic surrounding environments.

The limitations of this study which only examined the influence of self-concept as much as 41%, then the object of research totaling 27 people made this study limited to looking for other factors that affect self-confidence other than self-concept. More case studies are needed to derive other influencing factors about the confidence process of both theatre and others

among many community groups, by examining, comparing, and discussing activities involving theatre or self-confidence.

Acknowledgments

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"Transfigured Reminiscence": A Vintage Porcelain Figurine Reborn Through 3D Virtualization and Kintsugi Art

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Abstract

Pottery and porcelain are inherently delicate and easily damaged, particularly during transportation or through inadvertent handling. Such damage diminishes their value. While traditional restoration methods may not fully recover the original value of these objects, the co-creation of new artifacts that fuse two distinct cultural traditions produces a new object with unique value. Our current project specifically addresses the process of recreation of fine porcelain objects, by harnessing advanced 3D modeling technology paired with the traditional Japanese art of Kintsugi adapted to the contemporary adhesive materials but still infused with precious metals. This innovative approach combines contemporary 3D modeling technology and ancient craftmanship, a melding of modernity with antiquity. To demonstrate our approach, we use the "Pantalettes" (HN1412), a precious but significantly damaged figurine designed by Leslie Harradine and produced by Royal Doulton between 1930 and 1949. The core phases of restoration process involve high-precision 3D scanning to accurately capture the figurine's intricate details, 3D modeling enabling the reconstruction of the damaged elements and ensuring precision through repair validation, 3D printing of missing fragments, which can be then assembled and finished using traditional Kintsugi techniques. Additionally, VR rendering helps integrate reconstructed art in virtual environments. Such a synthesis strengthens the story of sharing English porcelain traditions with Japan since the beginning of 20th century.

Keywords: 3D Scanning, Computer 3D Modeling, VR, Decorative Art, Kintsugi, Wabi-Sabi, Restoration, Inter-cultural Exchange

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Introduction: "The Artist's Statement"

The broken beautiful ceramic decoration… Almost purposeless… But how profound the disappointment can be for a collector or simply for anyone to whom the true value of the object is not necessarily derived from its artistic allure or antique worth, but deeply rooted in personal connections, family stories, or memorable experiences. In these cases, simply replacing it with a new purchase is hardly the preferred solution.

This project presents the personal story of the first author's organization and curation of a small exhibition showcasing the Royal Doulton's vintage figurines from the famous "Pretty Ladies" series collected in the mid-20th. In the process of preparations as illustrated by Figure 1, we were disheartened to discover that one of the figurines designed by Leslie Harradine and produced between 1930 to 1949, perhaps the most precious and sophisticated in the whole collection, had been severely damaged during transportation.

Then the idea came up to transform the case to a personal artistic experience reflecting the human memories and relationships. For the team, it was indeed a step towards a *terra incognita*: to recreate this "fragmentary hidden" beauty by drawing on the expertise in 3D modeling and virtual reality within the school of computer science; thus, connecting the professional experience in computer science, software development, and digital humanities with the passion to the immanent virtue of the arts.

Figure 1: Exhibition Preparation and the Broken Figurine

Background

Royal Doulton Company and the Decorative Ceramics. In 1815, John Doulton, Martha Jones, and John Watts created the company known today as *Royal Doulton* to produce high quality ceramic collectibles and tableware, though later the business was expanded to manufacture not only a wider range of luxury ceramics, but also glassware, home accessories, jewellery, architectural ceramics, and even drainage pipes (Eley, 2019). Half a century later, in 1871, John Doulton's son Henry launched a studio at the Lambeth pottery and initiated successful collaboration with artists mostly from the nearby *Lambeth School of Arts*. Since that time, wonderful authored designs started to appear as significant component of company's wares; thus, contributing to *Doulton & Co.* reputation as one of the acknowledged British makers of art ceramics.

Doulton also manufactured architectural terracotta (Nicholson, 2022). In this connection, a noteworthy event occurred in 1887, when Doulton produced and then donated an amazing

altarpiece, a pulpit, and a beautiful baptismal water font to Anglican St. Alban Church in Copenhagen, Denmark. Alexandra, Princess of Wales, the wife of the future king Edward VII, was one of the driving forces of this project, so there was no wonder that in 1901, Edward VII granted a royal warrant to the company, and therefore, its wares were subsequently branded as *Royal Doulton*.

The production of the legendary figurines began in the early 20th century. In 1913, the company launched its first line called the *HN Series*, named after Mr. Harry Nixon, a key designer with Royal Doulton, by introducing the first statuette *Darling* (HN 1). The success of the *Pretty Ladies* series featuring elegant and graceful female figurines in various outfits and with intricate detailing was largely due to the involvement of renowned artists such as Leslie Harradine and Peggy Davies. Examples of popular *Pretty Ladies* figurines (displayed in Figure 2) include such poetically named creations as *Fragrance*, *Enchantment*, *Day Dreams*, *Top O' The Hill*, *Southern Belle*, and *My Fair Lady*.

| Dinky Do, Enchantment, Melanie | Top O'er the Hill and My Fair Lady | Southern Belle and Daphne | Ballet Shoes and Day Dreams | Fragrance |

Figure 2: "Pictures From the Exhibition": Examples of Figurines' Concept Names

Kintsugi and Cross-Cultural Links. Kintsugi is a traditional Japanese technique of transformative (Keulemans, 2016) repair of broken ceramics using *urushi* lacquer infused with precious metals such as silver, gold, or platinum known since not later than 15th century as an art, a craft and a way of life. In broader sense, Kintsugi can be considered as one of the remarkable manifestations of *Wabi-sabi* principles: (1) Nothing is perfect; (2) Nothing is finished; and (3) Nothing lasts forever (Suzuki, 2021).

The concept of applying this Japanese pottery restoration technique to an object of English fine porcelain traditions presents an interesting way to fuse two distinct cultural traditions, especially, in the context of the existing links between these traditions. Thus, the idea has been grounded not only on a straightforward attempt at cross-cultural interaction, but also on the long-ago inter-influential contacts between English and Japanese pottery makers, mutual discovery and interchange of the art language idioms (Barasch, 1997; Morton, 2000), a trend existing in various domains of arts (Pyshkin, 2021).

Such a cross-cultural synthesis strengthens the story of English porcelain traditions brought to Japan in the beginning of the 20th century. For example, the story includes the iconic willow pattern which became one of the flagship designs of Nikko Ceramics (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Famous Willow Pattern in the Designs of Nikko Porcelain Factory

According to the various sources (Syme, 2014; Jeffries, 2022), the origins of the willow pattern can be traced back to 1780s in Staffordshire, England, when the famous English potter Thomas Minton, at that time engraver, designed and later popularized this chinoiserie landscape pattern, which includes willow trees in foreground but actually depicting a Chinese *Romeo and Juliet*-like tragic love story (see also [O'Hara, 1993]).

It also deserves mentioning the founding of the first British pottery studios in Mashiko town, now a noted pottery region in Tochigi prefecture (Odundo, Matsuzaki, & Suzuki, 2020; Peterson, 2023). Figure 4 shows that nowadays, the dialog continues in various forms, for example, the 2024 exhibition of British London School in the Mashiko Museum of Ceramic Art, and the exquisite designs of Mashiko master Tada Misa, which are on a par with the best examples of contemporary bone China porcelain objects.

Figure 4: Cross-Cultural Dialog: Fragment of the British School Pottery Exhibition Poster and the Examples of the Exquisite Designs of Tada Misa in Mashiko Town

The Figurine Recreation Workflow

The technology process involving the 3D modeling and 3D fabrication tools and techniques, as well as a concept of virtualized Kintsugi experience is detailed in a separate publication. In this paper, we present the major project milestones and the designed artifacts, which are visualized in Figure 5.

Furthermore, Table 1 lists all the project activities, products, and artifacts shown in Figure 5.
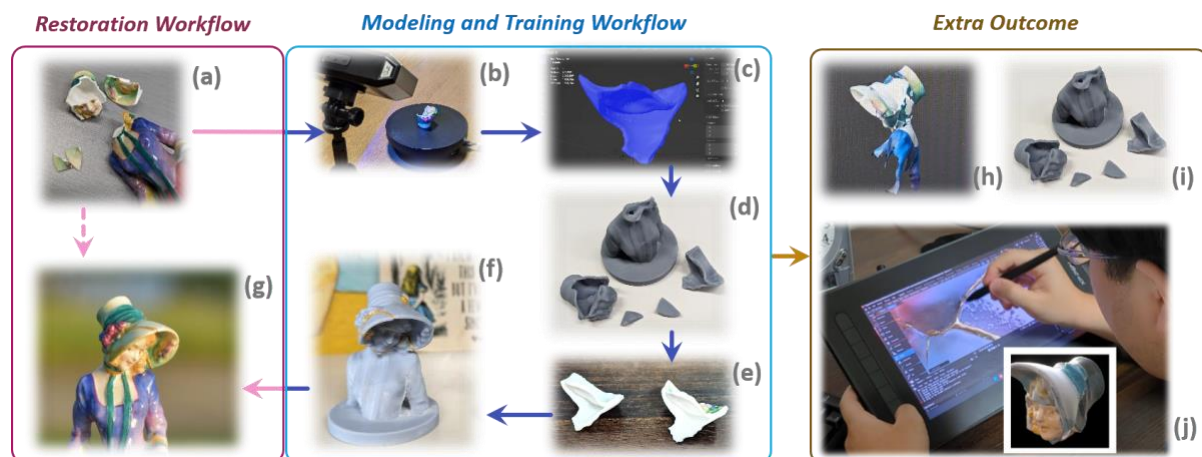
Figure 5: Kintsugi Art With 3D Modeling: Workflow and Extra Outcome

Table 1: Activities, Products, and Artifacts Mentioned in the Project Workflow

Ref. in Figure 5	Type	Description
(a)	Artifact	Damaged figurine
(b)	Activity	High precision 3D scanning
(c)	Activity	Post-processing and 3D modeling
(d)	Activity	3D printing
(e)	Activity	Verification
(f)	Digitally fabricated artifact	Trial kintsugi model made from the 3D printed parts
(g)	Artifact	Recreated figurine
(h)	Digital artifact	Virtual models of scanned elements
(i)	Digitally fabricated artifact	Reproducible kit for Kintsugi trials and education
(j)	Product	Kintsugi simulation in 3D modeling environment

Figure 6 shows the *Transfigured Reminiscence*, the final porcelain figurine recreated using Kintsugi technique supported by the range of cutting-edge tools and algorithms for 3D modeling, virtualization, and digital fabrication.

On the one hand, this technology support enables the trial sessions as necessary preparation steps before handling the fragile fine porcelain fragments. On the other hand, the technology brings a number of new interesting possibilities for immersive experience, training, and education. These implications are briefly examined in the *Discussion* section of this paper.

Figure 6: The Kyoto Photo Session for the Precious Figurine Reborn Through Kintsugi Art Supported by the Modeling, Virtualization, and Digital Fabrication Technology

Discussion

Digitalization, computer modeling, and 3D fabrication bring a wealth of new possibilities for the arts, crafts, and design. In contrast to the art objects, which are assumed to be unique and individual (Meager, 1958) (thus, the possibility of reproduction is naturally not a primary property of an art object), the digitally designed artifacts are intrinsically reproducible (Zoran, 2013). This is an important bias referring to both technology and ethical aspects. The ways to resolve this bias can be different. In the project presented by Zoran (2013), the authors used 3D printed reconstruction of an intentionally broken crafted artifact with the motivation to transform the original work it into a new object rather than to restore the original work. Though in our case, the focus is on restoration, but this restoration is in fact kind of re-creation of the new single irreproducible artifact preserving and exposing the golden traces of this recreation, in chime with Kintsugi philosophy of visible repair (Saito, 2022) aimed at making the object even more beautiful, resilient, precious and even "more present" as so expressively described by Céline Santini in her book *"Kintsugi: Finding Strength in Imperfection"* (Santini, 2019). Thus, the new object is unique again. However, the presented technological solution may be incorporated into a reproducible restoration workflow.

In a broader sense, digital techniques are revolutionizing the way cultural heritage is preserved and experienced (Georgopoulos, 2018). Particularly, the technologies of 3D modeling, 3D reconstruction, extended, virtual, and augmented reality not only support the conservation and safety of precious physical artifacts but also enable the digital recreation of cultural assets for archival, educational, and exhibition purposes (Reaver, 2019). This allows for a broader dissemination of cultural knowledge and the potential for future generations to experience cultural heritage in immersive and interactive ways and fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of traditional practices through a prism of contemporary art and technology.

From the broader and future perspectives, the insights into the challenges and opportunities of merging traditional crafts with digital technologies address the issues of authenticity, sustainability, education, and cultural preservation along with ethical considerations surrounding the use of modern technology in traditional art forms. With the attention to the possibilities in the fields such as archaeology, museum conservation, or digital art creation,

the approach might evolve with advancements in 3D modeling, digital fabrication, and virtuality, the latter being conceptually suggested as an implementation Heidegger's holistic interplay of past, present, and future (Pellizzer, 2024).

Conclusion

Transfigured Reminiscence metaphorically recalls the transformation of a broken vintage porcelain doll, the *Royal Doulton*'s *Pantalettes*, reborn through the use of computer 3D modeling and virtualization before its conversion is completed using the traditional Japanese art of Kintsugi to meld the delicate fragments of fine porcelain into a new creation. As a result of this challenging process, which required exactitude, passion, and certain elements of philosophy on both technology and craftsmanship stages, the initial figurine name given by its designer Leslie Harradine in 1930 has undergone a metamorphosis. This transformation to a new concept name seeks to capture the subtle dynamics and fragility of human memories and relationships.

The project weaved together several insightful strands of cultural and technological innovation. The first strand is to fuse the two distinct cultural traditions – English decorative pottery making and Japanese Kintsugi technique of recreating broken precious ceramics, which can be understood as art, craftsmanship, and a philosophy in equal parts. The second strand is to harness the cutting-edge 3D modeling technology to develop the reconstructed virtual and 3D printed physical models so that to ensure final artifact's restoration precision through validation based on virtual Kintsugi simulation and recreation of the model using 3D printed parts. Such a cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural synthesis forges a third, and surely not final, strand which is to strengthen the stories of the interinfluence between English and Japanese pottery making through the melding of technology-focused modernity with time-honored techniques.

Project Roles

E.P.: Kintsugi making, research, cultural studies, 3D scanning, paper writing, music, screenplay, filming, photography, project coordination; R.S.: 3D modeling and design, video production; A.N: 3D scanning, VR engineering, cultural studies, paper writing; J.B.: research, paper and technical writing, exhibition organization. All photos are by Evgeny Pyshkin.

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"Warming Rock" of Japanese Cuisine

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Abstract

In contemporary Japanese, the word "kaiseki" is written with characters for "gathering" (KAI/AU) and "seat, occasion, place" (SEKI) and commonly refers to an exquisite Japanese banquet cuisine. Kaiseki is characterized by its delicious, refined, seasonal, local, and expensive nature. A kaiseki meal typically consists of a succession of about a dozen courses, masterfully prepared from micro-seasonal local ingredients and served on spacious dishes. The presentation is an essential part of the overall experience, with dishes reflecting the season, style, and locale. With Japanese cuisine expanding into many parts of the world, the Japanese taste and style have significantly influenced the global culinary scene. Not only is sushi available practically everywhere, but we can also find "French kaiseki," where traditional Japanese forms are adapted to create a completely different banquet experience. However, few remember that the term "kaiseki" originally derives from "chakaiseki," a meal that precedes partaking of tea in a formal tea gathering. Historically, "kaiseki" referred to a warm stone that Zen monks placed inside the overlap of their meditation robes to ease hunger during meditation sessions and prevent stomach growling. This paper will trace the evolution of the kaiseki meal from the tradition of shojin ryori (vegetarian meals at Zen monasteries) to its role in a full tea gathering (chaji) and its broader influence on Japanese cuisine, transforming from a "warming rock" to a "gathering place." Additionally, the study will explore kaiseki as a culinary style and its impact on global cuisine.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Culture, Chanoyu, Mindfulness, Contemplation, Intercultural Studies, Washoku, Culinary Studies

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Introduction

In December 2013 UNESCO recognized washoku (traditional Japanese cuisine) as an "Intangible Cultural Heritage". While it is the fifth culinary intangible cultural heritage, it is only the second after French cuisine as whole that has been recognized at this level. According to UNESCO, the "intangible cultural heritage" means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO).

Japanese cuisine is called washoku. Shoku being "food" and Wa meaning "harmonious" and everything Japanese, such as clothing, rooms, objects etc. Food has always played an important role not only in daily lives as a mere sustenance, but it has also been an invaluable source of learning about people's culinary habits, rituals, manners as well as a source to study people's diets, supplies, trade, and agricultural practices. Besides the food itself we learn about how it was/is served, combined, presented, and partaken. Culinary aesthetics offer multiple bridges to art, craft, and ritual, becoming an important part of culture.

Washoku

Japanese cuisine is based on cooking with seasonal ingredients at their peak flavour and freshness. It inspires minimal interference with natural taste to preserve the naturalness of flavours by using simple cooking techniques. It is served in a small amount spaciously placed on specially selected dishes. They say that Japanese food is primarily enjoyed with one's eyes. Presentation is just as important as the food itself. Tastes, colours, and methods are all part of washoku culture. All five senses of sight, hearing, smell, feel and taste are activated and involved in the process. Lacquer, ceramic or wooden dishes are chosen for their seasonality and suitability for a particular dish. They are filled about halfway, leaving plenty of space to enjoy the design or decoration, or just a background of a dish.

Especially formal kaiseki meals also require a particular way of partaking such a meal. There is an order and a way to enjoy each course. There are particular chopsticks that are used both for serving and for eating. They ensure gentle handling of food and can sometimes be used from either side.

Chaji

Chanoyu, commonly known as the Japanese tea ceremony provides context for many different arts and crafts as well as cuisine and culinary arts. At the heart of tea practice lies the form to which all the elements lead and to which they connect. This form is called Chaji in Japanese and is often translated as a "formal tea gathering". Sasaki Sanmi categorizes seven basic forms of chaji and mentions fifteen other variations. (Sasaki, 1996) Given that tea can be performed on any occasion in human life or a seasonal natural phenomenon or without any reason whatsoever, there is a possibility of a tremendous number of variations. However, all chaji will follow the same basic structure. There will be two parts with an interval in between. The guests will arrive through the roji – tea garden – and enter a waiting room, where they

will gather, look at a pictorial scroll depicting particular season, and have a taste of water, which has been drawn from a well or a spring that morning and will be used for tea, garden, and cooking. There are two charcoal laying procedures, two different teas and about one hour of eating. The teas used are powdered green tea, matcha. For thick tea that is kneaded and shared between the guests from the same teabowl that is purified between the guests with a white linen cloth and reminds honey or sour cream by consistency, only the very top leaves are picked from the tea bush in May. They are picked, steamed and dried immediately to protect their bright green colour. For thin tea that is later whisked for each guest individually next down leaves are picked. Since tea is strong and quite intense, it is preceded by a freshly made okashi usually made of beans paste cooked with sugar and shaped to convey a seasonal image. These okashi are given a poetic name connected to a particular season and are not only a prelude to thick tea but also an important part of an overall narrative. Before the okashi guests are offered a meal that consists of about a dozen courses very carefully and thoughtfully prepared and served by the host. Chaji is the essence of the Chanoyu practice and kaiseki meal individually served and partaken in a particular way, is its intrinsic element that sets it aside from all the other Chanoyu forms.

Kaiseki

Kaiseki literally means rock in an overlap of one's kimono. It reminds of a warm rock that Zen monks would keep in their jacket during meditation to alleviate hunger as they only had one meal during the day. Sen Rikyu, an important chajin ("person of tea") of the 16th century, who also was a layman Zen practitioner at Daitokuji monastery in Kyoto, modified the protocols for eating in the Zen temples for use in the tearoom. Just enough of the freshest ingredients from the garden, served simply and eaten quietly. "One soup and one dish" or "one soup and three dishes" encouraged being "eighty percent full" rather than very full.

In a chaji today the host will first bring a black square lacquer tray with two black lidded bowls, carefully warmed and filled with rice and miso soup and a ceramic dish with a few slices of fresh fish. Rice takes precedence, it will be freshly cooked and will continue to be cooked for the whole hour and will be served at different stages. It will be pressed and cut in a shape reminiscent of the character for "one" (ichi) and carefully inverted into a larger black lacquer bowl on the left. It will be still steaming when the lid is opened. In a bowl on the right there will be an unseparated miso soup with a slice of a root vegetable in the middle with a touch of hot mustard on top. In a warmer part of the year lacquer bowls lids will be sprinkled with a fine "dew". Freshly moistened cedar chopsticks will be placed on the tray. The guests will partake in unison in a particular order starting with tasting the rice. After a first service of sake, they will taste raw fish with a little sauce. Rice is served three times, miso soup – twice. There are three services of sake. The main course of Japanese kaiseki is nimono or clear soup. Served in a different bowl nimono is based on dashi – stock made of a very fresh water, kombu sea kelp, and bonito flakes. Inside the bowl there will be a piece of fish, green vegetable, a mushroom, and a fragrant element – often a piece of citron rind. Guests will carefully lift the lid of the bowl to first smell the soup. Then they will taste the broth before having other elements. After that grilled dish is served and seasonal vegetables may be offered. The host will "join" the guests in a preparation room before offering a peculiar course called "washing the chopsticks". It is a digestive aimed to "calm" and purify the palette. After that a square cedar tray with a delicacy from the ocean and a delicacy from the mountain is brought in and the host will offer each one to each guest individually and accompany it with more sake, which in due course will be offered to the host by the guests.

At the very end hot water with rice kettle crust and pickles are offered. All these courses and okashi aim to help to prepare the stomach for partaking of the thick tea.

Kaiseki meal is an important element of a formal tea gathering Chaji, its presence sets it aside from all other Chanoyu forms.

Conclusions

Whether consciously or not, aesthetics in Japan often takes precedence over other cultural elements. Culinary studies are an important part of culture that allows us to better understand everyday culture as well as complex and intricate rituals still in use. Kaiseki as a system of multiple elements is a live and active source of cultural wisdom. Japanese cuisine can teach how to live a healthier and happier life and move towards a more balanced, aesthetically beautiful and mindful way of preparing, serving and partaking the food and enjoy every moment bringing beauty and mindfulness into seemingly mundane corners of every day. Main principles, culinary etiquette, and aesthetics of kaiseki are applicable to other cuisines and practices. French kaiseki is a good example of this. Cultural and culinary globalization are becoming ever more important as the world is becoming increasingly technologically developed, and mostly connected through technology. Chanoyu is preserving Kaiseki not only as a culinary form but also as an important cultural element able to transform the way we live our lives.

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Authenticity and Monetization Practices of Thai Influencers on Instagram and TikTok

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Abstract

The rise of social media culture has empowered internet-famous individuals, commonly referred to as influencers, to generate commercialized media content across various social media platforms. In particular, the emergence of social media culture is growing significantly, especially within the realm of online commerce. Using a social semiotic multimodal approach, this paper investigates the strategies employed by Thai social media influencers to curate engaging and transaction-oriented content on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, presenting an image of authenticity and realness online. Additionally, this paper examines the practices of three prominent Thai influencers and how they collaborate with sponsored brands to balance promotional materials with their self-representation on social media. It aims to provide insights into understanding influencer practices and the conditions for managing business outcomes while maintaining audience engagement in Thailand's digital economy.

Keywords: Authenticity, Influencers, Instagram, TikTok

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Introduction

In recent years, social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok have enabled individuals to emerge as influencers, fundamentally transforming the digital economy by blending personal content with commercialized media (Abidin, 2016; Senft, 2013). This hybrid identity, where influencers merge authentic elements of their personal lives with paid endorsements, has become critical to building trust and engaging audiences (e.g., Abidin, 2016; Abidin, 2018b; Reade, 2020). The concept of authenticity, however, becomes more complex as influencers must navigate the fine line between authentic self-presentation and meeting business objectives (Khamis et al., 2017). Previous studies have examined the notion of authenticity in relation to the practices of taking selfies (e.g. Gannon & Prothero, 2016), sharing unfiltered images, showcasing behind-the-scenes moments, and narrating personal stories (e.g. Duffy & Wissinger 2017)—practices that cultivate a sense of "familiarity" and relatability between influencers and their followers (Abidin, 2017, p.7).

A growing body of research highlights concerns regarding the effectiveness of high-profile influencers in retaining this trust. For instance, Wies et al. (2023) found that some advertisers observed that highly popular influencers often struggle to sustain meaningful influence over their followers. This can be attributed to the perceived lack of authenticity as influencers become more commercialized, potentially distancing themselves from the relatable personas that initially attracted their audiences. This points to an emerging challenge within the influencer marketing industry—whether the pursuit of large followings and brand partnerships dilutes the authenticity that initially attracted audiences.

In Thailand, influencers have become pivotal in the online commerce space, drawing on local culture and personal narratives to engage followers. With the rapid expansion of social media, Thailand now ranks among the top for market penetration on platforms like TikTok, where over 49.3% of users are actively engaged (LexiconThai, 2023). Similarly, Instagram has seen significant growth in the country, with 19.1 million users, accounting for over 27% of the population (NapoleonCat, 2024).

 The total number of users in the country has risen to over 40.28 million, reflecting the scale of influence and engagement influencers have in Thailand (LexiconThai, 2023). Their ability to preserve a sense of authenticity while promoting products encompasses various uses of strategies such as promoting sponsored content of influencer partnerships with brands, affiliate marketing and highly curated influencer-generated content which are central to their success. This hybrid representation—where authenticity is both genuine and strategic— creates a blurred boundary between personal and commercial spheres, contributing to their nuanced online identities where transparency and relatability are important in maintaining busiesses on social media.

Despite the growing influence of social media on consumer behavior, significant gaps remain in understanding how influencers, particularly in Thailand navigate the complexities of their hybrid identities across social media platforms. This issue is particularly relevant considering that influencer marketing ad spending in Thailand is projected to reach US$68.78 million by 2024 (Taslaud, 2024). Additionally, recent data revealed that Thai influencers with 5,000 to 10,000 followers tend to achieve higher engagement rate, at around 4.3%, while those with larger followings have lower engagement rates, at 2.9% (Statista, 2023). Previous scholars, such as Abidin (2016) and Khamis et al. (2017), have investigated the tension between authenticity and monetization in influencer culture. More recently, Hofstetter and Gollnhofer

(2024) examined how content creators balance authentic self-representation with the demands of monetization, particularly on social media platforms. Given the increasing opportunities for monetization on social media, this paper aims to explore the strategies Thai influencers use to manage their dual roles as both authentic individuals and commercial entities. By employing a social semiotic multimodal approach, this study will analyze how influencers curate engaging content that balances personal narratives of authenticity with transactional objectives. By focusing on the hybrid nature of their online identities, this research seeks to provide new insights into the evolving dynamics of influencer culture within Thailand's rapidly expanding digital economy.

Literature Review

Understanding the Influencer Industry

The influencer industry in Thailand can be traced back to the emergence of Internet idols, especially among young Thai women, who gained popularity through early Internet forums and discussion boards in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Abidin & Limkangvanmongkol, 2018). These early influencers used platforms such as Pantip.com and Dek-D.com to build followings by sharing personal stories, beauty advice, and lifestyle content. Over time, the rise of social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and more recently, TikTok, allowed influencers to expand their reach and influence through visually appealing content consisting of various styles of posts such as still images, stories, short-form videos, and reels that attract people's attention online.

In this vein, Instagram has played a crucial role in the growth of the influencer industry, primarily due to its visual-centric design, which allows influencers to showcase their personalities through images and videos creatively. This platform has enabled influencers to present aesthetically appealing content, enabling them to engage with followers and build personal brands online (i.e. Hurley, 2019). Hund and McGuigan (2019) analyzed this dynamic by introducing the concept of "shoppability," where influencers utilize self-branding techniques to turn social media into an interactive marketplace. They argue that these practices create a unique form of economic capital on social media, where influencers construct branded personas using digital technology to connect with their audiences and market products (Hund & McGuigan, 2019).

Similarly, TikTok has emerged as a dominant platform by offering customizable, short-form videos that have become central to influencer culture. Its appeal lies in its user-friendly features, such as music, text overlays, filters, and transition effects, which allow influencers and content creators to produce engaging and viral content. Barta et al. (2023) stated that TikTok differentiates itself from other social media platforms by encouraging a more casual and spontaneous environment. They describe TikTok as a platform where everyday activities are more commonly shared, fostering a sense of closeness and informality between content creators and their audiences. This dynamic strengthens TikTok's role in the digital economy, where users enjoy humor and entertainment which enhance user engagement and create overall positive emotional experiences among users. They also highlighted that humorous media content serves as a persuasive tool in helping influencers to build credibility and capture their followers' attention more effectively than other platforms online (Barta et al., 2023).

In examining influencer marketing on TikTok, the platform has become a dominant player in Thailand's digital marketing landscape, particularly with its personalized content aimed at capturing the younger demographic, primarily between the ages of 18 to 24 (TBS Marketing, 2023). Findings indicated that TikTok especially attracts Gen Z and millennials (Influencer House, 2023), who are drawn to its unique combination of short-form videos and creative storytelling techniques that are seemingly fun and engaging. This focus on personalization and engaging content has enabled brands to build stronger connections with their target audiences which, in turns, facilitates positive relationships and fostering trust between brands and younger consumers. In addition, TikTok has introduced a range of business features that expand the platform's commercial potential. These include a shop tab, product showcases, and advertising options, which allow influencers and content creators to directly monetize their content through e-commerce (TikTok, 2024). These features enhance influencers' ability to engage in self-branding, promoting products and services while building personal brands. Putri et al. (2023) have noted how influencers on platforms like TikTok integrate business strategies with content creation, resulting in a more seamless blending of commerce and personal expression.

Authenticity Within Influencer Culture

In recent years, the representation of authenticity in influencer marketing has garnered significant scholarly attention, particularly on platforms like Instagram, TikTok and YouTube (García-Rapp, 2017; Hurley, 2019; Reade, 2020; Wies et al., 2023). Reade (2020), for instance, explored how young Australian fitness influencers cultivate an image of "raw" authenticity on Instagram by posting unedited images, sharing personal stories, and engaging in "real talk" on sensitive topics. The emphasis on unfiltered content, such as displaying loose skin or cellulite, is seen as a way to challenge societal beauty norms and signal truthfulness to their followers. Reade's study also highlighted how influencers use Instagram stories to document everyday activities, like spending time with family and friends, to create a sense of relatability and everydayness that enhance the perception of authenticity on social media (Reade, 2020).

This focus on "realness" is further developed through influencers' engagement in intimate and informal content, fostering a sense of closeness with their followers. Abidin (2018b) similarly argued that cultivating relatability is essential for influencers to maintain authenticity, given that all self-presentation on digital platforms is curated. Influencers often engage in direct messaging, sharing behind-the-scenes moments, or responding to comments as part of their strategy to appear "unmediated" and "unfiltered" (Abidin, 2018b). Scolere et al. (2018) expanded on this notion by examining how influencers construct different versions of themselves on social media, influenced by platform affordances, audience expectations, and their self-concept. This multifaceted approach to self-branding is central to how influencers build long-term relationships with their audiences.

The concept of authenticity on social media is further complicated by the increasing influence of platforms like TikTok. In exploring how influencers balance the pressures of monetization while maintaining authenticity, Hoffstetter and Gollnhofer (2024) highlight three critical strategies which included a) "transitioning from paid advertising to co-creation with brands"; b) "favoring improvised content over staged presentations"; c) "focusing on the growth of one's creator brand rather than being focused too much on their content" (Hoffstetter and Gollnhofer, 2024 p.434). These strategies reveal how content creators/influencers can balance monetization while maintaining credibility with their audiences.

In extending our understanding of influencer and internet celebrity culture, Sandel and Wang (2022) examined China's social media landscape by analyzing how wanghong (internet celebrities) engage with their audience and sell products across platforms like Weibo, Douyin, and Bilibili. Their study revealed that wanghong develop a sense of intimacy with their followers through three primary strategies: (1) crafting a distinctive personal narrative, (2) incorporating personal stories into sales pitches, and (3) using the specific affordances of the platforms to engage and interact with their followers. These methods allow wanghong to establish a perception of authenticity and build long term positive relationships with their audiences. Thus, reinforcing their influence and commercial success (Sandel and Wang, 2022).

This paper will further unpack how prominent Thai social media influencers balance and manage online personas that drive commercial success and generate positive responses on social media. The analysis focuses on three popular influencers: @TaraP, @NinaK, and @MayyaT, each known for curating unique social media content and monetizing their fame by sharing aspects of their lifestyles and promoting products on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. In doing so, this paper examines the construction of their practices and the techniques each influencer uses to manage and balance authenticity with commercial interests. Through this analysis, the paper aims to understand how they navigate the tensions between maintaining a genuine persona and negotiating commercial objectives, offering insights into the broader dynamics of influencer culture in Thailand.

Methodology

This study employs a social semiotic multimodal analysis to investigate how Thai influencers utilize Instagram and TikTok to balance authenticity with commercial content, focusing on @TaraP, @NinaK, and @MayyaT. This selection criteria were based on their recognized extensive reach and substantial online presence where all of the selected influencers have a significant number of followers ranging from 140k to 6m on Instagram. In this analysis, both Instagram and TikTok are regarded as semiotic resources, following social semiotic theory, which interprets language and visual modes as tools for "social exchange of meanings" (Halliday, 1985 p.11). In understanding semiotic approach, as defined by Van Leeuwen (2005), are material, social, cultural, or technological tools that enable people to convey meaning, each offering distinct communicative affordances. Viewing Instagram and TikTok as semiotic resources allows this study to explore how these platforms' designs and features support influencers in communicating messages of authenticity and commerciality, emphasizing their potential for "making meaning" through curated content.

In this context, data was gathered from a purposive sample of influencers' posts over six months (January to June 2024), encompassing a range of content types, such as snapped shot images and short videos. This sample included content from both Instagram and TikTok, specifically focusing on posts that combined personal narratives with commercial promotions, particularly during high-sales periods. Metrics such as likes, comments, shares, and view counts were recorded to assess how the audience perceives and engages with authentic versus commercial content on each platform. TikTok, with its short-form video structure and creative editing options, allows influencers to create dynamic, relatable content that conveys spontaneity. Its unique algorithm and the use of features like trending sounds and challenges amplify engagement, presenting TikTok as a platform with high potential for fostering authenticity through informal, interactive content.

Using a social semiotic framework, this analysis centers on three areas: (1) visual representation of authenticity—examining how unfiltered images, casual settings, and raw video content on both Instagram and TikTok contribute to a sense of realness; (2) language and interaction strategies—where influencers connect with audiences using humor, personal anecdotes, trending audio, and direct replies to comments to foster relatability; and (3) integration of commercial content—analyzing how influencers use storytelling, co-creation with brands, and soft-selling techniques to present promotional materials without sacrificing authenticity. Posts were coded for authenticity cues, audience interaction patterns, and commercial strategies to understand how these influencers navigate their dual personas within a commercial landscape.

Following Van Leeuwen's (2005) approach, the study also considers the visual grammar of Instagram and TikTok—those aesthetic and interaction patterns subtly reinforced by each platform, which shape user expectations of "authentic" content. Although limited to three influencers, this study provides insights into how Thai influencers utilize platforms such as Instagram and TikTok to balance self-presentation with commercial objectives, offering a nuanced understanding of authenticity management in Thailand's digital economy. To maintain participant anonymity, pseudonyms are used throughout this article, and both Instagram and TikTok usernames of influencers have been concealed.

Analysis

Understanding Influencers' Approach to Capturing Authenticity

Each of the three influencers examined in this study plays a role in shaping our understanding of authenticity on social media, particularly through a semiotic approach that considers how meaning is constructed through their content. The first part of the analysis focuses on how each influencer uses unfiltered images and raw video content, together with the narratives of their storytelling and the commercial messaging to convey authenticity. By combining personal and promotional content, these influencers strategically employ "real" and relatable visuals, which enabled them to appeale to audiences while meeting commercial objectives. Through this lens, the analysis explores how their approaches shape our perceptions of genuine self-representation within the highly commercialized environment of social media.

The semiotic approach reveals that the construction of authenticity in influencers' Instagram and TikTok posts often involves showcasing aspects of their lifestyles that capture followers' attention. For example, influencer @NinaK presents herself as an entrepreneur on her Instagram profile, tagging her clothing brands directly on her profile page. Alongside these tags, she includes descriptors like "lifestyle," "travel blogger," "business," and "beauty," which signals her multifaceted online persona. This profile arrangement suggests that she projects a professional yet approachable identity, creating clear pathways for brand partnerships and potential customers. This highlights how influencers like @NinaK use semiotic resources to balance self-representation with commercial promotion, inviting followers to engage with both their personal and business endeavors. Semiotically, her Instagram profile serves as a curated "front page" where her professional aspirations blend with glimpses of her personal life. This aligns with the concept of "shoppability," where influencers utilize self-branding techniques to turn social media into an interactive marketplace for their followers and fans (Hund and McGuigan, 2019).

Similarly, on her TikTok profile, @NinaK uses the same branding as her Instagram, with 777.7k followers and over 32.9 million likes. She includes a Linktree that directs potential business contacts to her personal Line, Facebook, and Shopee page, where she sells her clothing products. Her TikTok content, which focuses on daily activities such as dining out, traveling, shopping, and participating in fun activities, allows her to build stronger connections with both brands and followers through personalized, engaging content. Notably, her videos often feature her housekeeper, P'Nun, adding a unique dynamic that extends beyond the usual influencer-friend interactions. This distinct choice invites viewers into a different layer of her life, portraying her as relatable and down-to-earth, as viewers frequently comment on her kindness and warmth—qualities that enhance her authentic appeal. Despite the inherently curated nature of self-representation on digital platforms, as noted by Abidin (2018b), @NinaK's approach demonstrates how carefully constructed content can maintain a sense of genuine connection and relatability across social media platforms.

The second influencer analyzed in this study is @TaraP, a well-known lifestyle and fashion icon in Thailand who frequently promotes various clothing brands. @TaraP's content largely centers on her personal relationships, daily routines, and lifestyle with her partner, capturing a significant following on social media. On Instagram, she has posted over 1,500 times, boasts 3 million followers, and follows over 1,000 accounts. Her profile includes personal details such as "Mother of Cyan" and provides a contact number and link to reach her manager for professional inquiries. This profile layout immediately communicates both her personal and professional identities, creating an approachable yet business-ready persona.

On TikTok, @TaraP has accumulated a large following with 2.9 million followers and over 104.2 million likes. Her TikTok profile mirrors her Instagram with the same personal tagline, "Mother of Cyan," which highlights her role as a mother and enhances her relatability. Both her Instagram and TikTok profiles provide links for brands to contact her, which solidifies her presence as a prominent influencer available for brand collaborations.

The content on @TaraP's TikTok focuses on her everyday life and outgoing persona, featuring lighthearted and fun moments with her husband and son. Through these playful, engaging interactions, often characterized by teasing and humor, she invites her followers into her family life, creating a warm, personal narrative that resonates with her audience. By sharing her daily routines and family updates in a storytelling format, @TaraP not only promotes authenticity but also fosters a sense of familiarity and closeness with her followers. Her approach effectively combines personal narratives with a strategic online presence, allowing her to maintain high engagement and popularity across platforms.

The third influencer examined is @MayyaT, a prominent Thai content creator who first gained fame as a YouTuber, amassing over 16 million subscribers. Since then, @MayyaT has established herself as a leading influencer and content creator in Thailand. Her Instagram profile reflects her substantial online presence, with over 6.1 million followers, more than 1,500 posts, and following over 600 accounts. Her profile includes her name, her manager's contact number, and a Line ID for professional inquiries, along with a link to her YouTube channel, where she has further expanded her reach with over 17.1 million subscribers.

On TikTok, @MayyaT continues to maintain a significant following with 11.3 million followers and over 169.9 million likes. While she doesn't provide a direct contact link for her manager on TikTok, she includes links to her Instagram profile and YouTube channel, directing followers and potential brand partners to her content across multiple platforms. This

cross-platform linkage not only strengthens her online presence but also offers her audience seamless access to her varied content, which reinforces her brand and maximizing engagement across her channels.

In this lens, @MayyaT's use of profile links and multi-platform connectivity functions as a strategic sign system, guiding her followers through a curated digital identity that emphasizes accessibility and interconnectedness. Her Instagram and TikTok profiles serve as gateways in leading to her other content, such as her YouTube channel, thus creating a cohesive, layered identity across social media. This interconnectedness signifies her role not just as a content creator but as an accessible public figure whose content spans various aspects of entertainment and lifestyle. By embedding links that direct her audience across platforms, @MayyaT reinforces her professional image while maintaining a sense of approachability, making her an attractive partner for brands seeking high engagement and influence across Thailand's digital landscape.

Balancing Perceived Authenticity With Brand Collaborations on Instagram and TikTok

In examining @NinaK' TikTok and Instagram content, it's evident that she constructs a sense of perceived authenticity while fostering engagement. In one instance, her 1.37-minute TikTok video, which she also cross-posted to Instagram, invites viewers into a playful, personal interaction with her housekeeper, P'Nun. The video opens with @NinaK asking P'Nun to help her dress up as a rockstar, inspired by Blackpink's Lisa. P'Nun responds casually, saying, "I'll help you look like a rockstar," setting a lighthearted tone that resonates with followers. The video garnered significant engagement on TikTok, with comments like "you are so kind" and "a sincere rockstar," underscoring her appeal as both genuine and relatable.

At one point in the video, the phrase "เป็นทุกอย่างให้เธอแล้ว" (meaning "I can be everything for you") is used, symbolizing loyalty and warmth within their relationship. This phrase enhances the semiotic depth of the video, representing a close, multifaceted connection that draws viewers in and invites them to feel part of this shared bond. Through such interactions, @NinaK combines glimpses of her daily life with relatable, lighthearted moments, presenting her lifestyle as both aspirational and accessible.

Throughout her content, @NinaK effectively balances luxury with relatability. While her posts frequently showcase a glamorous lifestyle—highlighting travel, fine dining, and high-end products—she consistently incorporates personal relationships with her housekeeper and close friends, grounding her persona and creating a sense of familiarity. This dual approach aligns with Sandel and Wang's (2022) observation that influencers often integrate personal stories into their online personas to cultivate authenticity. By embedding cues of loyalty, friendship, and everyday interactions, @NinaK skillfully merges aspirational content with personal narratives, which fosters a relatable image that resonates with her followers across Instagram and TikTok.

In addition to cultivating a consistent online persona across Instagram and TikTok, influencer like @TaraP exemplifies the successful integration of personal branding with promotional content. She presents herself as an independent and successful woman who promotes a wide array of products, from clothing and beauty items to food and personal care products. Each of her TikTok videos garners significant viewership, with numbers ranging from 400,000 to over 10 million views per video. In one example, she engages in a product review for the

L'Oreal brand, in which she opens her narrative by introducing the latest L'Oreal lipstick shades, then proceeds to demonstrate the colors while sharing her preferences. This approach underscores TikTok's unique platform dynamics, which Barta et al. (2023) describe as fostering casual, spontaneous content that distinguishes it from other social media platforms.

In another TikTok video, @TaraP similarly promotes a beauty product, in which she incorporates an affiliate link for followers to make direct purchases. Here, she blends personal anecdotes about using the product with a casual call to action, creating a relatable and engaging narrative. Her strategy reflects how influencers use personal storytelling to connect with followers, making the promotional content feel less commercialized and more authentic. Through these narratives, she establishes a sense of connection with her audience that is both entertaining and engaging. In another video, @TaraP promotes the Dutchie yoghurt brand in which she begins by introducing the product and discussing the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Appearing alongside her son, she speaks about the product's benefits and integrates the commercial content naturally into her narrative. Although the video is similar to other promotional content in its structure, her consistent and authentic online persona allows her to come across as genuine. By openly sharing her experience and including a personal touch, she conveys a sense of realness that resonates with her followers, thus, enhancing the perceived authenticity of her collaboration with brand partnership.

In examining the third influencer, @MayyaT stands out with the highest follower count and viewership among the selected influencers. Her content on both Instagram and TikTok reveals a preference for producing high-quality, curated videos that go beyond the typical unfiltered or unedited aesthetic often associated with authenticity. For instance, in one of the analyzed videos promoting Nescafe, she opens with large text reading "Nescafe Limited Edition," in which she immediately highlights the brand and emphasizing the new product. Throughout the video, she maintains focus on the product, narrating, "Here it is, Nescafe Honey Lemon Limited Edition, with only 1,000,000 units produced across the country." She further mentions the product's exclusive availability at 7-Eleven stores in Thailand, which integrated branded messaging throughout the video.

In contrast, her Instagram profile showcases aspects of her lifestyle, such as travel, work, and leisure activities, capturing images of herself on vacations or outings without a strong focus on promotional content. While previous scholars have emphasized the importance of unfiltered content in creating authenticity, @MayyaT approach demonstrates how influencers can also capture attention with highly polished, visually engaging content. This approach likely aligns with her ability to build and maintain close relationships with fans and followers, which fosters long-term engagement and loyalty through a consistent and visually appealing online persona (Scolere et al., 2018).

Conclusion

This analysis highlights the ways in which each influencer—@NinaK, @TaraP, and @MayyaT—navigates the interplay between authenticity and brand collaborations on social media, particularly on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. In using a semiotic approach, the study reveals that authenticity is crafted through a combination of unfiltered personal moments and curated commercial content, each element functioning as a semiotic resource to communicate a multifaceted online identity.

For @NinaK, authenticity is conveyed by integrating casual, relatable interactions, such as her friendly exchanges with her housekeeper, that underscore loyalty and intimacy, which allows her to build a sense of realness amidst aspirational content. @TaraP achieves a similar balance by blending brand promotions with lifestyle content, creating narratives that incorporate her son and everyday experiences, thereby fostering an approachable yet aspirational image. In contrast, @MayyaT adopts a more polished aesthetic with high-quality visuals, demonstrating that authenticity on social media can also encompass professionally produced, visually engaging content that maintains follower interest and loyalty.

These findings highlight the evolving nature of authenticity on digital platforms, where influencers use various strategies to balance personal storytelling with brand partnerships. While traditional views of authenticity emphasize raw, unfiltered content, this study shows that a diverse approach—including polished, curated posts—can still foster perceived authenticity if it aligns with the influencer's established persona. By consistently intertwining personal and commercial elements, these influencers successfully maintain follower engagement, trust, and relatability within Thailand's digital landscape. This nuanced understanding of authenticity suggests that social media users value the cohesive portrayal of an influencer's identity over the rawness of each individual post, broadening our perspective on what constitutes genuine self-representation in highly commercialized spaces in Thailand.

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Eavesdropping: Its Significance to Narrative in "Abhijñānaśākuntala"

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Abstract

Although eavesdropping normally is considered inappropriate, in classical literature like Sanskrit it is interestingly acceptable, which leads to the very objective of this article, i.e. to study the function of eavesdropping in Sanskrit literature, *Abhijñānaśākuntala* or *Śakuntalā* the well-known Sanskrit play as the case study and the narratology as research methodology. The research question is why the author adds the eavesdropping in the play. The findings are as follows: the play *Śakuntalā* has been narrated in many versions. Eavesdropping, which is absent in the former ones, is added in the play by Kālidāsa in many facets. Eavesdropping scenes undeniably play a pivotal role in the play. It introduces the main characters in the first act, builds the rising action in the third, which makes the audience feel superior to the play because they know the solution of the problem before the characters. Furthermore, in the sixth act eavesdropping by the nymph who is the friend of Śakuntalā's mother is not only emotionally effective, but also reminds the audience be aware of the divine situation of the play and not to forget that there is something beyond the human sense above.

Keywords: Eavesdropping, Sanskrit Drama, Hinduism

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Introduction

Normally eavesdropping is regarded inappropriate because it is the communication that is mostly not allowed to happen directly in the present time. However, the behavior is interestingly acceptable in many stories and it undeniably functions. In my opinion eavesdropping could be divided into intentionally and unintentionally. It doesn't mean that we can evaluate this behavior to be good or bad. Some eavesdropping might possibly happen with good intention. Anyway, it breaks the boundary of communication by the unknown third party.

Abhijñānaśākuntala, normally known in the name *Śakuntalā*, is the well-known Sanskrit drama in the world because of the stream of Orientalism after India was under colonialism. It is composed by Kālidāsa, an Indian poet who lived in the 4th or 5th century in the Gupta era. Actually, he is not the first who creates *Śakuntalā* himself but brings the original plot from *Mahābhārata,* the great Indian epic. In *Mahābhārata* Duṣyanta goes hunting and get lost with his retinue. He goes into the deep wood and finally meets with Śakuntalā who is alone at the time in front of the Kanva's hermitage. Kanva, the great hermit who is her stepfather, is absent. Duṣyanta cannot help falling for her and finally having intercourse with her. In the day of his returning to the city, Duṣyanta tells that if she gives birth to a son, he will be coronated as an emperor and continues his dynasty. After that when a son was born, she raised him until he is three years old and took him to the palace. Unfortunately, the king refuses her and her child in the first place. After the long debate between her and the king, finally there is a voice resounding from the sky confirming that this is the real son of the king and Śakuntalā is right. The king then accepts her and her son by telling that actually he knows the truth but has to refuse at first in order to protect his son from being blamed as a bastard. This tale is to be found and narrated in the first book of *Mahābhārata* or Ādiparvan because this story tells the birth of Bharata, the important forefather of the characters in the *Mahābhārata*, and nowadays Bharata is also believed as a legendary king of the present India, as we can see in the news a few years ago that according to Indian nationalism there was an attempt nationwide in some time to be back to the name *Bharata* instead of *India*.

If we look at the version of Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā*, some differences that are understood to be acceptable and friendly enough to be performed in the royal court are to be found, because Kālidāsa is under the patronage of a king in the Gupta dynasty. For example, in the play the interpolation of the curse by the sage Durvāsas causes Duṣyanta forget Śakuntalā until the ring that he gave to her once in the past is found, he recognizes her and follows her back to his place, while in *Mahābhārata* he forgets her intentionally and admits her later. The debate between Śakuntalā and the king shows that Śakuntalā in *Mahābhārata* has a strong personality because she is brave enough to argue the king directly at that time, whereas in Kālidāsa's version she appears innocently through the story.

It is interesting to note that in this masterpiece eavesdropping appears in many times almost throughout the play. This leads to the research question about the significance and function of eavesdropping in the play, which is one of the important literatures in the world. This could make us be aware of eavesdropping as a literary technic applied in classical world literature.

Eavesdropping in Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā*

Eavesdropping is interpolated by Kālidāsa and absent in Mahabharata. It appears from the beginning of the play in the act one. The important incident at the moment is Duṣyanta

meeting with Śakuntalā. When Duṣyanta is approaching the area of hermitage alone, he unintentionally meets with Śakuntalā watering the trees with her friends. He hides himself behind the bush and observes what is happening. While eavesdropping he has a doubt about her birth how it is possible for the sage to have a daughter like her because she is very beautiful and born from the military caste while the sage Kanva is born from Lord Brahma so he is made to be a Brahmin by birth.

> King: Can it be that she is born in a caste different from the patriach's?
>
> (Vasudeva, 2006, p. 75)

Later when Duṣyanta reveals himself there, he has a chance to have a conversation to Śakuntalā's friends except for Śakuntalā who does not say anything but body language due to her innocence. At the time he finally knows that actually she is just a stepdaughter of the sage. Actually, she was born from the same caste or varṇa as the king; that is the military one, before was adopted by Kanva. This comforts Duṣyanta worry from the prohibited marriage that is wrong. According to Hinduism, there are four castes by birth; i.e. Brahmin (the priest), Kshatriya (the military), Vaiśya (the merchant), and Śūdra (the slaves). Traditionally speaking, the marriage across the castes is not accepted among the Hindu. Eavesdropping shows his doubt to the audience before he is relieved later.

In act three Duṣyanta decided to see Śakuntalā again. While he is walking to the garden in the area of hermitage, by eavesdropping he finds her having conversation with her friends about her love at first sight. After knowing their heart, each other, she and the king decide to marry willingly without consent of parent.

> King:　　　　I will peer through the branches. (*does so, joyfully*) Ah! My eyes have received their alms. My darling, the ground of my love lies upon a flower-strewn stone slab, together with her two friends. Good, concealed by vines I will eavesdrop on their private conversation. (*Watches.*)

Before act four that is about Śakuntalā 's departure from the forest, there is a short incident interpolated. Durvāsas, an angry sage, has come to the hermitage to see Kanva. He did not see anybody but Śakuntalā sitting hopelessly near the window because her lover went back to the palace while she is pregnant. Because of her sadness she did not welcome Durvāsas. That makes him terribly angry and curse her not to be remembered by her lover whom she is thinking of. Her two friends, Anasuya as well as Pruyamvada, who are eavesdropping unintentionally and see all the incident ask him to forgive her. Therefore, he tells that if Duṣyanta sees what he gave to her, he will recognize her eventually.

> Behind the Scenes:　　Ah! Derider of guests!
> He on whom you mused so single-mindedly,
> wherefore you did not perceive me, come as a guest,
> he will not remember you even if reminded,
> just as a drunkard does not recall what was just said.
>
> Both:　　　　(*listening, dejected*) Alas! It has already happened! Our empty-hearted friend has offended someone worthy of respect.
>
> Anasuya:　　(*looking*) Oh no! Not just anyone-it is the great seer Durvāsas. Quick to lose his temper, he is making off with unfaltering strides like a fire.

Priyamvada:	Who other than fire himself has power to burn? Anasuya! Throw yourself at his feet to calm him while I prepare the welcome-water.
Anasuya:	(*Exit*.)
Priyamvada:	(*takes a step and stumbles*) Oh no! Stumbling in my haste, the flower basket has slipped through my fingers. I will have to gather them again. (*does so.*)
(*enter*) Anasuya:	My dear, he is like an incarnation of wrath: Whose apologies will he accept? But he showed some mercy.
Priyamvada:	For him that is quite a lot. Tell me, how did it happen?
Anasuya:	When he did not want to come back I said to him: "Your holiness! Consider her former devotion, forgive this now this offence of your daughter whose worthiness you can perceive by your powers."
Priyamvada:	What then?
Anasuya:	Then, saying, "What I have said cannot but come true; my cursed will be lifted by the sight of a token of recognition", he vanished.
Priyamvada:	We can breathe now. There is a ring that the departing royal sage himself put on Śakuntalā's hand as a momento. As long as it stays with her this remedy will work. (*Walk about.*)

(Vasudeva, 2006, pp. 179-181)

Unfortunately, after she departs from the forest, she loses the ring in the river. In act five before the king meets with Śakuntalā there is a little scene of eavesdropping again. The king and the buffoon are eavesdropping a song sung by Hamsapadikā, one of Duṣyanta's concubines. The song is as follows:

> After you kissed the mango-blossoms,
> the way you did, lusting for fresh honey;
> how have you forgotten it, O bee,
> contented to just linger on the lotus?

(Vasudeva, 2006, p. 223)

In the play the king understands he is now reproached by the concubine because he cares another woman than her. But the audience will understand that the song hints the later incident; that is Duṣyanta forgets Śakuntalā when she appears in the front of him in the act five.

Besides, in act six the audience is going to see a long scene of eavesdropping by a nymph named Sānumatī, or Aksamālā in another recension. She is a friend of Śakuntalā and is sent by her to observe her lover secretly. While the nymph is hiding herself in the proximity of the royal garden, the king, after having remembered Śakuntalā already, is lamenting in the same place. By her magical power she is considered the powerful eavesdropper because she becomes invisible and makes herself know everything that is happening there and will relate the king's sorrow to Śakuntalā in the heaven later without the awareness of the king. The appearance of the nymph in the scene, therefore, is important as being the linkage of the character and story. It makes act seven, which is the last act, ending completely. All the character has nothing left in their minds because they know everything in the end.

Overall, we can see that the last eavesdropping by the nymph is intentional because she was sent to do that by Śakuntalā herself while the rest are unintentional. Why the eavesdropping? It is clear that it introduces the characters into the scenes, as could be seen in the first and

third act. It makes Duṣyanta see and get to know something about Śakuntalā before he meets with her later. It gives the king a little time to think about her and avoid the encounter frankly and also make the audience prepare themselves sentimentally because they know for sure that what is happening next. The eavesdropping therefore is regarded communicable to something as well.

More importantly, it gives the way out to the story, as could be seen in the act three. Eavesdropping forms the rising action, which also makes the audience feel superior to the play because they know the solution of the problem before the characters. If Śakuntalā 's friends were not eavesdropping and decided to ask forgiveness for Śakuntalā without her knowing, the story would be tragedy and there would be no solution of the play. But traditionally there is a condition in Sanskrit drama not to end the story with tragedy because it is inauspicious. So, eavesdropping is the key factor that allows the poet to add the motif of the ring that is the recognition of the king, or '*abhijñāna*' according to the name of the play '*Abhijñānasākuntala.*'

Lastly eavesdropping might happen by the supernatural being. In act six the nymph uses her magical power to hide herself from being seen by the king and the buffoon. It shows another role of eavesdropping to connect the world of human being and the heaven together. The world in the perception of ancient people is surrounded by the invisible things who are able to witness or eavesdrop our lives in good or bad time in every minute. This concept actually could be traced back to the Vedic period or approximately 3000 years ago in the concept of *ṛta*, which means divine law (Monier-Williams, 2008: 223). The divine being who is in charge of this type of law is the god Varuna who can spy on human deeds (Monier-Williams, 2008: 921). It is understandable to be the way to socialize people in the Aryan society.

The role of eavesdropping in the play is the way to make the audience feel superior to the characters because when the eavesdropping occurs, there would be at least a character who has no way to know what is happening at that time, while the audience know everything. It is to be considered the eavesdropping is the way to create the story to be more likable to some extent.

Conclusion

All in all, the eavesdropping that appears many times in the play is able to be considered as one of literary technic in the composition of classical literature, which makes the play different from the original version of *Mahābhārata*. It links everything in the play interestingly and communicates to the audience at the very moment. Moreover, it is undeniable to see the eavesdropping in some contemporary literatures such as Indian or even Thai melodrama. Hence, it is possible to continue the study about the concept of eavesdropping comparatively in order to understand the eavesdropping more widely.

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Breaking Boundaries: How Design Transforms Social Roles and Gender Stereotypes

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Abstract

Considering design as a discipline capable of initiating transformative processes in society unveils a scenario rich with potential evolutions. Social norms contribute to defining identities when investigated through perspectives encompassing gender, culture and ethnicity. The constant presence of design in people's lives brings an unquestionable social mandate, and Maldonado (2019) expresses the necessity of contemplating this aspect. Never denied in Europe (Walker, 1989) this is crucially pivotal elsewhere (Ford, 2023). Identifying the responsibilities and consequences of disciplinary applications is central, within theoretical literature discussing ontological design: design itself designs and influences our lives (Willis, 2006). By engaging with a critical perspective through the lenses of gender studies, it is becoming evident that existing "norms" no longer align with evolving social models. What can design learn from its past and how re-assessing behaviours and practices can bring benefits, bridging the past towards a fluid future? The paper wishes to open a theoretical debate by participating in a mandatory will, involving expressions and statements. Speculative Design incorporating key concepts of Anticipatory Thinking imagines possible futures, particularly in backcasting (Poli, 2017): through a process that breaks the timeline, starting from past observations moving into the future, and returning to reason about the present, this evolution must resonate with society's dynamics. Not fashion, communication or product design will be the focus within this paper, but a wider discourse about behaviours and belongings that in all these realms reveal how design is unfairly gender oriented: the discipline's evolution requires a multidisciplinary imperative.

Keywords: Contemporary Design Culture, Gender Studies, Sustainability, Design History, Social Mandate

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Introduction: What Is Design and What Can It Do for Our Society?

Walter Gropius believed that the arts should address the needs of a mass demand: for this democratic design to be realized, it was essential to create a training tool capable of producing a technician who could reshape the environment using the most advanced technologies (Bonsiepe, 1975, p. 138; Maldonado, 2019, pp. 68-9). The proposal was certainly innovative, but not entirely new. Indeed, foundations had long been laid to align design education with technical innovations as well as societal shifts and structural changes. In response to the need for innovation in processes and suitable products, Henry Cole had already contributed in mid-19th century Victorian Britain by structuring Schools of Design that aimed to produce aesthetically qualified products that were also more accessible to a now-diverse public (Pasca & Pietroni, 2001, p. 140). Modern design draws from various disciplines, with objectives that range from solving practical problems to creating meaningful experiences. Nigel Cross (2001) describes design thinking as a "natural" human capability, enabling people to approach complex problems with an empathetic and creative approach. This concept was expanded by Richard Buchanan (1992), who sees design as a response to "wicked problems," that is, complex and multifaceted issues that cannot easily be solved through logic or science alone. Buchanan, eventually, argues that design provides a framework for addressing social, environmental, and cultural issues. Through activating this critical thinking, design for social innovation becomes a catalyst for positive community change, fostering interaction and cooperation among individuals and creating solutions that take into account local culture and context (Manzini, 2015). Ezio Manzini believes that design should "humanize" technology and promote sustainable and inclusive practices. Clive Dilnot (1982) argues that design possesses an ethical potential, with each act of design carrying consequences beyond the physical object. According to Dilnot, design defines what is possible, desirable, and just, and invites a responsible approach to design practice. This view is expanded by Victor Papanek, who, in his book *Design for the Real World,* published in 1971, critiques commercial design and advocates for a design approach that meets real needs, especially in disadvantaged social contexts. For Papanek, designers must consider themselves accountable for their projects and the social and ecological consequences. Tony Fry (2009) and Anne Marie Willis (2006) also emphasize the importance of ethics in design, encouraging designers to consider not only the final product but also its lifecycle and social impact. Design, a longstanding key actor within project disciplines, shapes and defines roles and opportunities: at the same time, through the inevitable process of choice - whether intentional or not - it also generates stereotypes and oppressions. The constant, pervasive, and cross-cutting presence of multiple aspects of the discipline and its applications in people's lives brings an unavoidable social mandate. Social sustainability considers the impact of design not only on the environment but also on human and cultural levels. This theme is central to the work of Alastair Fuad-Luke (2009), who promotes ecologically and socially inclusive design, encouraging designers to adopt a participatory approach, directly involving communities to respond to their specific needs. An example is the concept of "design for resilience", which proposes designing objects and systems capable of adapting to change. The responsibilities and social awareness of future designers must be fostered and stimulated during their training, and a critical retrospective evaluation that identifies biases and shortcomings observed in those who practice and disseminate the discipline can greatly assist in this direction. These responsibilities include, among other things, the ability to integrate various aspects related to the fluidity of society and its needs: aspects that interact in close interconnection and evolve symbiotically, enabling the design discipline to adapt smoothly in the face of increasingly rapid transformations. In this sense, the intersectional approach demonstrates its potential to produce excellent results for the discipline.

A more correct world requires struggle and debate. Over time, the protection of some people's rights has led to the exclusion of others. Graphic designers produce representations of society and contribute to facilitating access to information and ideas. But who is represented and who can access this representation? The Eurocentric principles of modern design were conceived as egalitarian tools of the social process, but they have suppressed differences among people worldwide. However, alternative perspectives and methodologies are spreading that move beyond the framework of Western design theory. Inclusive design is now being realized by people with diverse identities, backgrounds, and abilities. (Lupton, 2021, p. 13)

How Does Design Affect Gender Identity Stereotypes?

The concepts of gender and design are the focus of a growing debate, especially regarding how design can influence and reflect social gender norms. Judith Butler, an American post-structuralist philosopher, in her 1990 text *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, views gender as a socially constructed "performance": this concept inevitably influences design choices. Caroline Criado Perez's 2019 work *Invisible Women* further highlights how design is often based on a "male paradigm", overlooking women's needs in areas such as health, mobility and work. Criado Perez argues that design disregarding gender risks reinforces inequalities. Design is often taught as a neutral and apolitical subject, yet it is evident - particularly in contemporary society - that this is not accurate: design inherently carries political connotations. In *The Politics of Design: A (not so) Global Manual for Visual Communication*, Ruben Pater contends that design can never be universal and objective, as designers - and also those who benefit from design projects - possess cultural biases. This reflection, considering design as a discipline capable of enacting transformative processes in society - by defining roles and opportunities, as well as stereotypes and forms of oppression - provides an inspiring perspective on the subject. Indeed, design is a leading discipline in shaping society, establishing roles and possibilities, and also stereotypes and forms of oppression. The concept of social norm can be analyzed from diverse perspectives, such as gender and identity, culture, ethnicity, and many other aspects that contribute to the definition of identities (Lorber, 2021).

Every design artifact, methodology, narrative, and meaning adopts a distinct stance, shaped by the identity and perspective of the acting subject, as well as by the social and economic context in which it is placed. Inevitably and unambiguously, the political and social positioning of the artifact/method/narrative and its cultural/economic/social significance is produced. On this topic, poet and activist Audre Lorde defines a "mythical norm" as what a given society generically intends with the term "human". To reach this conclusion, Lorde observed - from her perspective as a black lesbian woman - the norm in the United States as "white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially well-off" (Lorde, 2022, p. 119). This concept, applicable in a professional context, is equally identifiable in the academic classroom environment: what is conveyed in university courses often follows a framework rooted in archaic - now obsolete - models (Walker, 1989, p. 200), dictated by a social reality far removed from what now defines the contemporary. Design, as an open and ever-evolving discipline that continuously redefines itself, must establish its foundations on the composite nature of its cultural space. Let us examine the theoretical frameworks of teaching, starting from the history (of design):

During the formative phase of the discipline, design schools of the twentieth century excluded history from curricula; it re-emerged in the cultural debate only from the

1980s. Now that design has become, in addition to a discipline, also a culture, history reclaims its role. (Riccini, 2013, p. 40)

Gender stereotypes are commonly understood as a relatively fixed set of culturally held beliefs that shape many dimensions of individuals' lives, including attributes and activities traditionally assigned to male or female identities (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Each stereotype, while defining both possibilities and restrictions, emerges through individual and collective processes that simplify or categorize social reality, embedding these dynamics into societal structures (Wagner et al., 2009). Design, in actively shaping social realities, plays a key role in reinforcing these stereotypes. Within this open discourse, we intend to examine the various factors that lead to gendered interpretations of design artifacts, focusing on the primary question of whether a gender-neutral approach in design is essential. To address this, the research will proceed on several levels, including a literature review and analysis of representative case studies. The literature component of this research is based on a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating insights from fields such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, and pedagogy. While the dialogue around design and gender studies is becoming more prominent, this intersection remains relatively unexplored in design fields beyond communication design (Almeida, et al., 2020). Nevertheless, given that design is a realm bridging technical and theoretical dimensions, integrating humanistic perspectives can certainly advance this ongoing discourse.

Speculative Design: Reflections on Ontological Design and Anticipatory Thinking

In theoretical literature, at the center of the contribution, the concept of ontological design is addressed, affirming that design shapes and influences our lives: we design our world, while our world acts back on us and designs us. Ontological design is based on the idea that design not only shapes the environment but also impacts who we are as individuals. Tony Fry (1999) developed the concept of "defuturing," describing how certain design practices, if unethical and unsustainable, can jeopardize humanity's future. For Fry, design should not merely shape objects but contribute to building a "sustainable future" that considers the impact on future generations. This idea is further explored by Anne-Marie Willis in *Ontological Design* (2006), which sees design as an ontological process influencing our way of living and perceiving reality, rendering design a practice of existential responsibility.

According to Anne Marie Willis (2006), ontological design characterizes the relationship between human beings and the lifeworld they inhabit.

As a theory, according to ontological design, design itself is far more pervasive and profound than is generally acknowledged by designers, cultural theorists, philosophers, or the lay public; moreover, design is fundamental to the human being, as we design, and, in turn, we are designed by our designing and by what we have designed (i.e., through our interactions with the structural and material specificities of our environments); besides, all of this translates into a dual movement: we design our world, while our world acts upon us and designs us.

Willis (2006) delves deeper into ontological design, describing it as a circular and dynamic process wherein we design and are simultaneously designed by our artifacts. This cycle of mutual influence suggests that design is not merely a technical activity but an act that affects collective and individual identity. Willis urges designers to reflect on the power of their projects to shape users' identities and perceptions, underscoring the importance of ethical and

critical awareness. Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby (2013) explore speculative design as a means to interrogate the future and generate ethical discussions on what design can achieve. Their approach, which involves creating hypothetical future scenarios, anticipates potential social and ethical impacts of new technologies. This method aligns with anticipatory thinking, which explores the long-term consequences of design choices, promoting sustainability and ethics. Within the evolution of the discipline, *Speculative Design* adopts key concepts from *Anticipatory Thinking* originating from the social sciences. Imagining possible futures is certainly a functional practice within the pedagogical domain, particularly in *backcasting* (Poli, 2017, p. 76): this process involves breaking the timeline, beginning with an examination of the past and then moving into the future. Once this first step is implemented, a subsequent reflection on the present is required. Poli notes that a necessary prerequisite for activating community-based anticipatory processes is to choose a theme that all participants in the process have a basic knowledge of; otherwise, there is a risk of generating superficial reflections influenced by bias (Poli, 2023, p. 76-77).

From a completely contemporary perspective, responsive to the evolution of a constantly changing society, a review of sources through a reverse historical-chronological digression, tracing back to the origins of design history, clearly suggests the need to include neglected, multidirectional, and multidisciplinary voices in the narrative. The movements, objects, and innovations of the discipline of Design resonate according to a matrix of domination (Collins [1990], 2002, p. 23). In the design phase, the designer makes choices about the nature of their work and the resulting behaviour of the users. Thus, design is never a neutral act. To produce artifacts rooted in ethical and socially sustainable design, it is necessary to work in respect of the rights of all human experiences.

This premise inevitably leads to a recognition of the need to revise the educational models inherent to design disciplines, particularly regarding the theoretical and critical assumptions: the tangible outcome of these reflections is inseparably linked to the cultural context in which it is situated. Therefore, a critical recovery of the literature is required, as well as a reconstruction of the historical narrative that can support decolonization, along with a deeper consideration of gender and intersectional issues as a *real* problem applied to design. This contributes to structuring a more equitable account to be offered to future generations of designers. Gui Bonsiepe introduces the concept of decolonization as early as 1975, offering interesting perspectives in his text that historically connects the Bauhaus school to Ulm, and finally reflect on the role of design in non-central countries (Bonsiepe, 1975, p. 65).

Actually, as design is a discipline based on project and at the same time the creation of meaning, it has too often become a vehicle for imaginaries that have led to the perpetuation of dominant forms of power and privilege, consolidating the most diverse structures of oppression that in gender studies are conceived as intersected, under the term "intersectionality". The theme, not new - evidently - but of absolute topicality, has recently been the object, in certain and circumscribed aspects, of observation and criticism by Alice Rawsthorn, Londa Schiebinge, Sasha Costanza-Chock. According to the latter, in fact, «design is the key to our collective liberation, but many of the design processes today reproduce structured inequalities [...]. Intersectional inequalities are evident at all levels of the design process»; therefore, the need for principles of justice in design, also as:

> A growing social movement that aims to ensure a more equitable distribution of the
> benefits and burdens of design; equal and meaningful participation in design

decisions; and recognition of community-based design traditions, knowledge, and practices. (Costanza-Chock, 2018, p. 1)

Conclusions

It is clear that the discipline of design, today, has reached a turning point, increasingly directed towards critical reflection from a design point of view but also with respect to the teaching of the subject: in the contexts of theory, methodology and pedagogy of design, we are questioning how the introduction of critical thinking can foster the evolution of an idea and a design development that goes beyond the simple provision of services parameterized on the existing.

We all think about design as a discipline capable of universally dialoguing in the same way, a shared and comprehensive language: this is unreal and utopian. It would mean aspiring to a flattened reality, devoid of cultural diversity and nuances. The educational context is a place that, using the words of the feminist educator and writer Bell Hooks, can lead to freedom.

The objectives of theoretical courses, therefore - even that of the design history, although this may seem like an oxymoron - is the *enviosioning* of future developments, the acquisition and enhancement of critical and analytical tools, pivotal to understand - and reshape - the complexity of an evolving design culture, in which the discipline has always played a primary role as director and collaborated with different other disciplines.

Observing design through this perspective, it appears to be a privileged context of action in which the dichotomies between different realms and arenas can find moments of fruitful encounter and exchange, activating new contemporary visions.

> Through design we can experiment with the possibility, if not of resolving, at least of making the intertwining between knowledge and know-how, between specialism and generalism, between theory and practice, between pure and applied, between concreteness and abstraction, which are some of the peculiar traits in contemporary sciences, act positively. (Riccini, 2013, p. 41)

Focusing on the dimension of social and environmental sustainability, design is called to take action for the conservation, implementation and improvement of the living conditions of all of us. All this, in 1850 or so as today, comes from a thought: this thought must have a free cultural space in the classrooms, where it can be stimulated, developed and take shape.

All the theoretical and cultural activities within the training phase, alongside the necessary design activities, are unparalleled and irreplaceable opportunities for comparison, aimed at stimulating discussions but also research skills, and activating the critical views of students, future designers and professionals of tomorrow: aware, informed, critical, sustainable, social.

The design discipline has never lost its inescapable social role and indeed it is constantly and increasingly called upon to give form and meaning, material and immaterial, to the aforementioned freedoms and the invoked desirability. In this sense, gender studies reveal in contemporaneity together with the concept of intersectionality the urgency, first of all intellectual, to decolonize, democratize, truly deconstruct the intellectual panorama of design, highlighting any oppressions and possible inequalities perpetuated.

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The Capitalocene and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract

A debate rages over earth's entry into the geologic epoch referred to as the Anthropocene which acknowledges the negative impact that humans have had on the evolution of the earth, especially its impact on air quality and life on the planet. Responses to the Anthropocene assume a collective global responsibility for the degraded state of planet Earth. Many scholars have suggested predatory capitalism as the driving force behind the emergence of the Anthropocene, electing to rename it the Capitalocene. Within this context, this piece is an opening gesture to a larger examination of the notion of Sovereignty, Indigenization, and Cultural Representation on a comparative global scale. This essay examines an array of historical documents from Papal Encyclicals (1452 to present), explicit UN Sustainable Development Goals (especially SDG 13 – Climate Action), and statements from various global political figures. These are read in tension with the history of colonial development. To conclude, the essay overlays these historical geopolitical developments onto the current Capitalocene cultural moment to discuss how these impact the positivist efforts of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as the world approaches The Paris Agreement target year of 2030.

Keywords: Capitalocene, Racism, Plunder, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

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Introduction

> Capitalism proves over and over again that its aim is its own preservation at any price, including the destruction of life on earth. The predatory use of natural and human resources isn't new, what's new is the knowledge that both these resources are limited: women and people of color cannot systematically be abused and exploited, nature cannot provide for an insane rhythm of consumption. It's very simple: we are all having to reconnect with our human nature outside of the semiotics of capitalism. And we don't even have much time left to do so. — Claire Fontaine (Oralkan, 2024)

Capitalocene | Indigenous Loss Perfected

The Doctrine of Discovery achieved perfection in the United States of America in the 1823 U.S. Supreme Court case of Johnson v. M'Intosh, when Chief Justice John Marshall used the doctrine to assert that the United States, as the successor of Great Britain, had inherited authority over all lands within their boundaries. This ethno-supremacist decision allowed the U.S. government to ignore or invalidate all indigenous claims to property rights. This legal position was grandly implemented seven years later by the Indian Removal Act of 1830 (Library of Congress). The recent Louisiana Purchase (Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 1803) provided vacant land in Oklahoma to which the dispossessed Indigenous peoples of the American South could be forced to relocate. To this day, courts continue to cite this doctrine of discovery as a legal precedent for courts to decide property rights cases brought by Indigenous/Native Americans against the U.S. and non-Natives.

The racist ethnic cleansing of the 1830 Indian Removal Act provided large tracts of land for the propagation of cotton, which further required continued importation of African slave labour (Library of Congress, 1830). White privilege and imperial arrogance facilitated the kind of ethno-supremacist social engineering that served to maintain power, control, and profit. The emerging predatory corporate tendencies for the growing industrial capitalism required access to and control of inexpensive mineral resources, cheap labor, overt restraint of competitive development, and securing substantial markets for its goods.

Whilst the earlier Christian colonial project had the pretense of religious conversion of indigenous peoples (Pope Paul III, 1537), the new goals of 19th century's capitalism pursued unrestrained profit. The impact of this emphasis was immediate and far-ranging. The West, having agreed that all non-Europeans were less than human, spread out across Africa, Latin America, and Asia to colonize, control, and plunder raw materials to feed new national industrial capitalist engines. Programmed under-development of labor in the colonized lands provided convenient free or low-cost workers. Furthermore, in 1823, the USA asserted its authority over all Central and South America through President James Monroe's declaration of his Monroe Doctrine (Monroe, 1823).

Social Darwinism, with its scientific notions of natural selection and the survival of the fittest, constructed all non-Europeans as inferior and, therefore, free to be exploited (Claeys, 2000). In 1877, industrial capitalist Cecil Rhodes said: "I contend that we are the finest race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race …. It is our duty to seize every opportunity of acquiring more territory and we should keep this one idea steadily before our eyes that more territory simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race more of the best the most human, most honorable race the world possesses" (Rhodes, 1877).

Herbert Spencer, a British philosopher and sociologist, not Darwin, gave us the phrase "survival of the fittest," though Darwin would later also use it in his writing (Spencer, 1864). Now armed with scientific justification, Spencer believed that the strong must flourish as societies evolve, and the weak will eventually die out, become extinct. He felt that the government should not aid the impoverished poor because that would get in the way of this natural evolutionary process. In the late 1800s, Spencer traveled to the U.S. and argued that those in poverty were poor because they were unfit. Moreover, to feed and help people experiencing poverty was wrong because to do so was to oppose the natural order.

Cecil Rhodes continued to exhort the West to act: "We know the size of the world we know the total extent. Africa is still lying ready for us … it is our duty to take it. It is our duty to seize every opportunity of acquiring more territory" (Rhodes, 1877). Indeed, in 1884-85, this Euro-American racist colonial arrogance was clearly in place as the Berlin Conference convened to determine how the continent of Africa was to be divided and plundered in the service of industrial capitalism. African peoples were not present at this Berlin meeting (Gathara, 2019).

Between Spencer and Rhodes, the racist capitalist intent behind the Berlin Conference becomes clear. The collective West must take and plunder the resources of Africa, enslave, or otherwise maltreat the unfit indigenous peoples to help nature take its course on their way to extinction. Through the trajectory of political, military, labor-related, and economic exploitation, this ethno-supremacist apartheid mindset justified the absolute plunder and cultural domination of the colonized. Following the Berlin conference, African lands were colonized, and natural resources plundered, all to support the genius of western predatory capitalism (Fischer, 2015; Gross, 2023). Indigenous and non-western populations who resisted colonial orders were persecuted, attacked, plundered, murdered, and manipulated into states of perpetual impoverishment and under-development: all on their path to enforced extinction. This fraught imperialist process contributed to the destruction and deaths exceeding hundreds of millions through various genocidal practices (Sullivan & Hickel, 2022). Extreme measures were taken to guarantee the subservience of the colonized. This established a powerful culture of fear in which the oppressed learned to acquiesce and be thankful for what they were allowed to have: do anything to avoid further torture, punishment, sanction, or death. Those survivors that did not suffer these punishments worked doubly hard to avoid them. Belgium King Leopold killed over 10 million Africans in his control of the Congo Free State (1885-1908). "Whippings, torture, rape, and casual murder were also widely documented" (Alyson, 2021). Comprador agents kept the population divided, confused, and disorganized, whilst exquisite mechanisms were implemented to keep Congo as an economically impoverished region forever and its workers stripped of cultural and social identity (Alyson, 2021). Human labour, then, was just another commodity for exploitation to be used and discarded once they were no longer useful. In this manner, Chinese workers imported into the USA were used to construct the transcontinental railroad and discarded. And, some later emerged as objects of derision or curiosity in public displays, especially in World Fairs (Moy, 1993).

Indigenous Sovereignty Denied, Again | Rentier Capitalism

On 30 March 2023, Pope Francis renounced the early 15th and 16th century Papal Bulls: "The Vatican on Thursday responded to Indigenous demands and formally repudiated the "Doctrine of Discovery," the theories backed by 15th-century "Papal Bulls" that legitimized the colonial-era seizure of Native lands and form the basis of some property laws today. A

Vatican statement said the Papal Bulls, or decrees, "did not adequately reflect the equal dignity and rights of Indigenous peoples" and have never been considered expressions of the Catholic faith" (Winfield, 2023). The Vatican further noted that: "the documents had been "manipulated" for political purposes by colonial powers "to justify immoral acts against Indigenous peoples that were carried out, at times, without opposition from ecclesial authorities" (Winfield, 2023). In 2007, the UN issued the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Unfortunately, these acknowledgements came far too late, the damage was already done. The collective West had already transitioned into its hegemonic rentier economic trajectory with the United States Petro dollar central to the credit-based world. Between the SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications) system and its US Dollar based transactions, the USA became the hegemon banker to the world. Moreover the SWIFT system's surveillance of all transactions, now gave the USA the ability to weaponize aspects of global finance. Following the collapse of USSR in 1991, America would now deploy economy destroying sanctions against nations who disagreed with the unipolar rule of the collective West (Fukuyama, 1992; Mearsheimer, 2011; Powell, 1992). Further, now many new rapidly developing economies served to accelerate demands on the world's mineral resources (Ndung'u, 2020; Gross, 2023).

Welcome to the Anthropocene or Capitalocene

> In a single lifetime we have grown into a phenomenal global force. We move more sediment and rock annually than all natural processes such as erosion and rivers…. Greenhouse gas levels this high have not been seen for over one million years. Temperatures are increasing. We have made a hole in the ozone layer. We are losing biodiversity. Many of the world's deltas are sinking due to damming, mining, and other causes. Sea level is rising. Ocean acidification is a real threat. We are altering Earth's natural cycles. We have entered the Anthropocene …. (Globaïa, 2012)

The Anthropocene acknowledges the grave impact that humans have inflicted on planet Earth, whilst the notion of the Capitalocene asserts that the driving force behind this was the explicit plunder and exploitation of earth's natural resources in support of the industrial capitalist pursuit of profit without restraint. This, then, is the Capitalocene context that challenges the positivist enterprise of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The initial United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) entered into force on 21 March 1994: "preventing 'dangerous' human interference with the climate system is the ultimate aim of the UNFCCC." The 198 countries that ratified the Convention are called Parties to the Convention. An annual Conference of the Parties (COP) rotates amongst the ratifying countries. On 11 December 1997, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted the Kyoto Protocol, a non-binding understanding, this Kyoto Protocol operationalized the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by committing industrialized countries and economies in transition to limit and reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions in accordance with agreed individual targets. The Convention itself only asked those countries to adopt policies and measures on mitigation and to report periodically. One important element of the Kyoto Protocol was the establishment of flexible market mechanisms, based on the trade of emissions permits. Under the Protocol, countries must meet their targets primarily through national measures. However, the Protocol also offers the parties additional means to comply (United Nations. *Kyoto Protocol*, 1997). In Doha, Qatar, on 8 December 2012, the *Doha Amendment* extended the Kyoto Protocol until 2020 (United Nations. *Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol*, 2012).

Three years later, in 2015, The Kyoto Protocol was superseded by The Paris Agreement, a legally binding international treaty on climate change (United Nations, 2015). It entered into force on 4 November 2016 with a targeted completion date in 2030. Its overarching goal is to limit "the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels" and further pursue efforts "to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels." In recent years, world leaders have stressed the need to limit global warming to 1.5°C by the end of this century. That's because the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPPC) indicated that crossing the 1.5°C threshold risks unleashing far more severe climate change impacts, including more frequent and severe droughts, heatwaves and rainfall. To limit global warming to 1.5°C, greenhouse gas emissions must peak before 2025 at the latest and decline 43% by 2030 *(Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany*, 2022).

Taken together, the adoption of the Paris Agreement (United Nations. *Paris Agreement*, 2015; United Nations. *Framework ...,* 2015) and the enthusiastically embraced 1 January 2016 launch of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations. *Transforming…,* 2015), 2016 promised much in terms of positive global climate action.

The global climate change challenges created by carbon consuming industrial revolution are central to the 27 Articles of the Paris Agreement (COP21). Focused on "integrated, holistic and balanced non-market approaches" to address global environmental challenges, governments and institutions are to be encouraged to engage innovation, technological development and tech transfers of resources to benefit all (United Nations. *Paris Agreement*, 2015). The seventeen United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) seek to address virtually all aspects of life on planet Earth (United Nations. *The Sustainable Development Goals – THE 17 GOALS*). Beyond this, the UN's SDGs served to attach experiential human sensibilities to the climate change objectives that often appear as almost abstract statistically articulated targets.

Further, on 24 May 2015, some six months before the launch of the Paris Agreement, Pope Francis issued an encyclical, *Laudato si'* stating: "Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it" (Pope Francis, 2015, 23). Whilst Article 23 of Pope Francis's Encyclical letter clearly addressed global warming as discussed in the Paris Agreement (COP21), subsequent parts of the letter explicitly focused on the lives of impoverished populations consigned to the margins of society. Clearly, Pope Francis's encyclical places an ecclesial trajectory to both climate change and the sustainable development goals. Again, published some seven months before the launch of the Paris Agreement and the UN's SDG, Pope Francis's encyclical letter, suggests agreement and some likely prior influence on the two 2016 climate change initiatives. Significantly, the last word in Article 27 is the word "poverty" and the first unit in the UN's list of sustainable development goals addresses the issue of Poverty.

The Paris Agreement and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Because of the IPPC's compelling assertion that we must limit global warming to less than +1.5°C of pre-industrial levels, greenhouse gas emissions must peak before 2025 at the latest and further decline 43% by 2030, concerted efforts were made to "promote climate and SDG synergy as the linchpin for addressing our current challenges and realizing an equitable future." The Paris Agreement and SDG 13 - Climate Action, then. have evolved into a focused initiative: "Since 2019, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the United

Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have been leading efforts to promote climate and SDG synergy as the linchpin for addressing our current challenges and realizing an equitable future" (United Nations. "Bridging the Ambition Gap…," 2024).

USA President Biden Claims Global Leadership

On 27 January 2021, USA president Biden released his self-proclaimed Historic Climate Agenda: "This is a case where conscience and convenience cross paths, where dealing with this existential threat to the planet and increasing our economic growth and prosperity are one and the same. When I think of climate change … I think of jobs" (The White House, Jan. 27, 2021). Indeed, later that year at the 2021 Glascow COP 26 meeting of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), USA boasted a "Clean Energy and Climate Investments of US \$555B" and claimed a global leadership role for itself:

> President Biden Renews U.S. Leadership on World Stage at U.N. Climate Conference (COP26). The White House: Heading into COP26, President Biden announced – the largest effort to combat climate change in American history …. The Build Back Better Framework will cut greenhouse gas pollution by well over one gigaton in 2030, reduce clean energy costs for working families, give our kids cleaner air and water, create hundreds of thousands of good-paying, union jobs, and advance environmental justice while investing in a 21st century clean energy economy. President Biden's bold agenda, along with his robust executive and regulatory actions to date, represents the U.S. intention to capture the economic opportunity that addressing climate change presents. (The White House, 2021)

With the robust endorsement of President Biden of the USA, self-proclaimed leader of his unipolar world, significant forward progress seemed assured. This seemed especially so because China, the second largest economy in the world had already demonstrated significant progress in deploying innovative low-carbon emission protocols and contributing to addressing climate change, SDG 13 (Myllyvirta, 2023).

Within a year of Biden's claim to global leadership, two documents appeared that suggested a failure in global leadership. An analysis in *The State of Nationally Determined Contributions: 2022* noted "that the Paris Agreement is enhancing global climate ambition—but not at a pace or scale consistent with achieving its goals. The latest NDCs aim to reduce 2030 emissions by an estimated 5.5 gigatons of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO2e) more than the initial NDCs. This represents a 7 percent reduction from 2019 levels. According to the IPCC, however, emissions must decline by at least 43 percent from 2019 levels to keep the 1.5°C goal within reach" (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany, 2022). The United Nations Emissions Gap Report of 2022*: The Closing Window* offered a similarly sobering assessment of progress made (Guterres, 2022; United Nations. *Emissions Gap Report*, 2022):

> As growing climate change impacts are experienced across the globe, the message that greenhouse gas emissions must fall is unambiguous. …. Droughts, floods, storms and wildfires are devastating lives and livelihoods across the globe. Loss and damage from the climate emergency is getting worse by the day. And global and national climate commitments are falling pitifully short. The window to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees is closing fast. Greenhouse gas emissions must be cut

by 45 per cent this decade. Under current policies, the world is headed for 2.8 degrees of global heating by the end of the century. … In other words, we are headed for a global catastrophe. (Guterres, 2022)

The recent COP28, Dubai (30 November to 13 December 2023), was the "biggest UN Climate Change Conference ever, bringing together 85,000 participants [!] representing nearly 200 countries. Simon Stiell, UN Climate Change Executive Secretary – stated his optimistic belief that "this is clearly the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era" (United Nations. *COP28 Agreement Signals…,* 2023).

The world acknowledged the need for cooperation between the two great global powers. John Kerry, U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, noted in advance of COP 28: "The U.S. and China agreed to back a new global renewables target and work together on methane and plastic pollution, though differences remain on fossil fuels, among other issues." … "We intend to work hard to see if there's further collaboration that could advance the cause for all of us "…. "Without China and the United States aggressively moving forward to reduce emissions, we don't win this battle" (Cornwell, 2023). Despite the promised cooperation between the great world powers, António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, closed COP28 by noting disappointing reports: "We can't keep kicking the can down the road. We are out of road -- and almost out of time" (Guterres, 2023).

Conclusion – Approaching the Necrocene

Despite Guterres's challenge, it appears that "kicking the can down the road" continues to this day. Significantly, just one day earlier on 12 Dec 2023, NY Times announced that America's "Ford Motor Company Will Cut Planned Electric F-150 [Pickup Truck] Production as Demand Slows":

> Slower-than-expected growth in sales of electric vehicles has forced several automakers to scale back once-ambitious production plans. Ford Motor has become the latest company to join that pullback. …. At the end of 2021, Ford had accepted reservations for more than 200,000 F-150 Lightnings. … But strong early interest has not always resulted in booming sales. Cost is a big culprit. The price of batteries remains high, which has made some electric vehicles much more expensive than comparable gasoline-powered models at a time when consumers have been struggling with inflation. (Boudette, 2023)

U.S. automakers' decisions to end the production of electric vehicles flies in the face of President Biden's alleged altruistic national priority to lead the world in efforts to end the fossil fuel era. Ultimately, it appears to have been merely a business decision, US auto makers simply couldn't match the lower price-point of Asia made EVs. Clearly, capitalist US manufacturers remain biased toward maximizing profits instead of dealing with global environmental issues (Furchtgott-Roth, 2024). America's manufacturing failures were compounded by delays in providing infrastructure for EVs: "Biden's $7.5 billion investment in EV charging has only produced 7 stations in two years" (Osaka, 2024).

A few weeks after the conclusion of COP 28, it was announced that BYD, a China EV auto maker had out-sold industry leader Tesla. And, shortly thereafter BYD announced a new series of EVs that would sell for under US$ 10K: "With the benefit of economies of scale, industry expertise, control over its supply chain, global production capability, and a wide

range of models catering to more types of consumers, plus unbeatable prices, it seems the road ahead is clear for BYD to race even further ahead…. What is good news from a sustainability perspective is the direction of travel when it comes to EV adoption, and increased competition and lower cost of ownership can only tip more consumers to ditch ….” (Birch, 2024). Simply put, it appears American auto makers are non-competitive, both in product quality and price (Nicola, 2024).

Not surprisingly, the U.S. government immediately moved to protect America's non-competitive production. It placed tariffs and sanctions on importation of Chinese Electric Vehicles and other manufactured goods that undercut high-priced American goods, including:

- 100% on electric vehicles, up from 25%
- 50% on solar cells, up from 25%
- 50% on syringes and needles, up from zero
- 25% on lithium-ion batteries for electric vehicles, and battery parts, up from 7.5%
- 25% on certain critical minerals, up from zero
- 25% on steel and aluminum products, up from a range of zero to 7.5%
- 25% on respirators and face masks, up from zero to 7.5%
- 25% on cranes used to unload container ships, up from 0%
- 50% on semiconductors, up from 25%, by 2025
- 25% on other lithium-ion batteries, by 2026
- 25% on natural graphite and permanent magnets, up from zero, by 2026
- 25% on rubber medical and surgical gloves, up from 7.5%, by 2026 (Khalid, 2024)

"In addition to the tariff rises, the USTR also recommends establishing an 'exclusion process' for machinery used in domestic manufacturing, targeting in particular solar manufacturing equipment" (The White House, May 14, 2024). Moreover, within days, countries of the collective West were coerced to follow America's lead. U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen encouraged European partners "to respond to China's industrial overcapacity in a strategic and united way to keep manufacturers viable on both sides of the Atlantic" (Lawder, 2024; Busch and Lipsky, 2024). Clearly, climate action remains secondary to profitability on both sides of the Atlantic. So much for the collective West's alleged altruistic contributions to positively impact global Climate Action (SDG13). Sadly, items on President Biden's tariff list targeted many of the UN's SDGs. Included on the tariffs list are Chinese products that have proven positive impact on global climate change issues including SDG 3-Health and Well-Being; SDG 7-Affordble and Clean Energy; SDG 8-Decent Work and Economic Growth; SDG 13-Climate Action.

President Biden said "When I think of climate change … I think of jobs," but it is clear he was only thinking of American jobs (The White House, Jan. 27, 2021). Further, one cannot help but recall President Joe Biden's 2016 speech in which he declared: "We are America - second to none, and we own the finish line" (Biden, 2016). Regarding SDG8 - Decent work and Economic Growth (SDG8) only matters for American workers whilst human extinction seems not a consideration. It appears boss of the world President Biden's Capitalocene brain cannot tolerate products better made than American, and his claims to global leadership on climate action appear to be little more than a green-washing exercise. "Capitalism leaves in its wake the disappearance of species, languages, cultures, and peoples. It seeks the planned obsolescence of all life. Extinction lies at the heart of capitalist accumulation" (McBrien, 2016, p. 116).

As the faux collaborative spirit of the west evaporates, the legacy of industrial capitalism becomes clear, again. Indeed, in hindsight, virtually all of the SDG challenges result from the history of capitalism's pursuit of profit without limit, the predatory industrial practices of the colonial west. Neocolonial oppressors continue to require the suppression of development to keep indigenous peoples under heel, perpetually impoverished. "The UN's Sustainable Development Goals aim to drastically reduce poverty, gender inequality and environmental degradation in the next 10 years – but without challenging capitalism, it's all just a pipe dream" (Walton, 2021). "The core of the SDG program for development and poverty reduction relies precisely on the old model of industrial growth — ever-increasing levels of extraction, production, and consumption" (Sharland, 2023).

Deeply imbedded within the Capitalocene is the problematic history that gave rise to the racist ethno-supremacist devaluation of peoples of colour. In turn, these racist mindsets provided justification for predatory colonization, plunder, genocide, and the programmed unequal development of the world. Winston Churchill said of the Palestinians:

> I do not agree that the dog in a manger has the final right to the manger even though he may have lain there for a very long time. I do not admit that right. I do not admit for instance, that a great wrong has been done to the Red Indians of America or the black people of Australia. I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher-grade race, a more worldly wise race to put it that way, has come in and taken their place. (Arundhati Roy, 2002)

Worldly wise, indeed: "The weak crumble, are slaughtered and are erased from history while the strong … survive. The strong are respected, and alliances are made with the strong, and in the end, peace is made with the strong (Netanyahu, 2018; Brennan, 2018). That same year, during a January 2018 White House discussion of Immigration policy regarding Haiti, El Salvador, and African countries, President Trump asked why America would want immigrants from "all these 'shithole countries' and that the U.S. should have more people coming in from places like Norway" (Kirby, 2018). Such racist statements from these powerful "worldly-wise" western leaders suggest a desire to rehearse the nineteenth century ethno-supremacist apartheid regimes' notion that poverty ridden "unfit" peoples of colour should be hurried on their path to extinction so the west can continue its plunder of their resources. This was certainly the intent behind the US genocide of the indigenous peoples of America, and the current genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. Given such racist biases, it's not clear how countries of the advanced collective West could ever hope to save the world by working equitably with the global majority, with people whom they consider inferior, unfit.

Governments of the collective West and their institutions continue to pursue power and profit over the common good. They remain focused on their singularly hegemonic protectionist issues: economic dominance, foreign overproduction, European jobs, dumping of foreign manufactured goods, national security, defending democracy, etc. It doesn't take much to realize that the SDGs are just a restatement of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). To even attempt a positive global collaboration, we "must dismantle the underlying heteropatriarchal and white supremacist structures that shape … current configurations and conversations" (Todd, 2015). Sharan Burrow, General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation reminds: "The world needs to reorient economic priorities towards a new prosperity for all that respects the human rights of all people and the planet's critical natural resource boundaries. This must be the basis for action on sustainable development and setting Sustainable Development Goals" (Burrow, 2012).

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, observed that "only 17 per cent of the SDG targets are on track. Progress on over one-third has stalled or even regressed…. we need action for peace. From Gaza to Sudan, Ukraine and beyond, it's time to silence the guns, to support the displaced, and to pivot from spending on destruction and war to investing in people and peace….. we need action on finance…. Many developing countries lack the financial resources and the fiscal space to invest in their futures and the future of their people" (United Nations. *Bridging the Ambition Gap,* 2024). A nightmarish anxiety characterizes the view of the future: "Almost 60 percent of the 10,000 young people surveyed across 10 countries said their national governments… were "betraying" them and future generations through their inaction. Fifty-six percent of people surveyed said they agreed with the statement that humanity is doomed, while 75 percent said they believed the future was frightening" (Galer, 2021).

On 18 November 2023, whilst sending thousands of 2,000-pound bombs to Israel in support of that apartheid state's genocidal bombing campaign in Gaza, US President Biden asserted his deluded view of the US leadership of the world: "The United States is the essential nation. We rally allies and partners to stand up to aggressors and make progress toward a brighter, more peaceful future. The world looks to us to solve the problems of our time. That is the duty of leadership, and America will lead" (Biden, 2023). With over 100,000 Palestinians murdered, it is evident that Biden's racist notion of leadership requires the provision of 2,000-pound bombs to further the Zionist apartheid enterprise in Palestine and now Lebanon. It remains unclear how this supports any of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Given the highly dysfunctional unipolar leadership of the United States and the collective West, perhaps another trajectory of engagement regarding the Climate Crisis might prove productive. The impending global climate failure certainly suggests the need to interrogate just how the world moved from the pre-industrial era to the current global moment of unipolar failure. Perhaps, it is time to jettison the unipolar notion of world capitalism enforced by the United States in favor of a new inclusive, equitable multipolar community consensus (Barabanov et. al., 2022).

"We all know that it is not possible to sustain the present level of consumption in developed countries and wealthier sectors of society, where the habit of wasting and discarding has reached unprecedented levels. The exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits and we still have not solved the problem of poverty (Pope Francis. *Laudato si'*, 2015, 27). And, Sharan Burrow reminds us that "There are "no jobs on a dead planet" (Burrow, 2012).

Still, despite these dire warnings, it is likely that the earth will fail to meet the Net Zero, +1.5 target of COP28. Accordingly, we must begin to determine a way forward, a way to accommodate a lowered order of existence in an increasingly toxic global environment of our own making. Some acknowledge that the quality of life on Earth has been in decline since the beginning of the 21st century. And, that humans should just learn to adapt to the forthcoming total social collapse (Bendell, 2024). "The Anthropocene says 'humanity' put the earth under its power, that it could either save or destroy it—yet it also says the unintended consequences of this power only accelerate our powerlessness over earth's inevitable revenge" (McBrien, 2016, p. 119). It appears inevitable, and in a sense the forthcoming rupture into the extinction of the Necrocene may be merely a sort of transitional action in the natural evolutionary process wrought by the world's Capitalocene trajectory (Batalla, 2020).

Not the end, no closure, rather just a necessary step in the natural process of planetary evolution by which nature undertakes to eliminate the predatory capitalist-human virus that has infected and so damaged our sweet planet Earth. Alternatively, to deny, thwart this natural process, our Capitalocene leadership could choose to once again assert its absolute authority to continue the plunder, to invoke a final nuclear winter which would dramatically lower global temperatures whilst hastening the extinction of our unfit humanity (Jacobsen, 2024).

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Modern Japanese Youth's Ideologies As Seen in Vocaloid Music – Focusing on the Period From 2007 to 2011

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Abstract

VOCALOID is a voice synthesizer developed by Yamaha Corp. Following the development of VOCALOID, a new genre of music called Vocaloid music was born, and has gained significant popularity among young Japanese audiences. Given the dominance of young listeners and creators within this genre, Vocaloid music is said to greatly influent young Japanese people. Therefore, it is hypothesized that the analysis of thematic contents within Vocaloid songs can provide valuable insights into the ideologies and values of contemporary Japanese youth. In this article, the author examines the dominant themes of Vocaloid music from 2007 to 2011 through contextual analysis of popular song lyrics. The results show that the two most dominant themes are love and "Ikidurasa" (the pain of living). After going deeper into the contents of these songs, this article comes to three conclusions. Firstly, character songs were popular for a short period, however, songs written to express the ideology of the producers became more popular in the later stages of Vocaloid music. Secondly, the themes of Vocaloid music in 2007 – 2011 were quite abundant and contained some topics that are hardly found in other Japanese popular music. Lastly, the majority of popular Vocaloid songs in this period have negative lyrics. It reflects the picture of a society where the youth are feeling disconnected and anxious in human relationship.

Keywords: Vocaloid Music, Japanese Youth, Song Lyrics Analysis

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Introduction

According to a recent report by the Japan Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare in 2023, the suicide rate of children and young people in Japan has risen quickly for the past few years. The high pressure level in Japanese society is said to put a tremendous amount of stress on the youth. On the other hand, it is alarming how more and more youth feel that there is no other way out of their problems other than ending their lives. In Japanese, there is a specific term to call the situation that these youths with suicidal tendencies are facing, that is "Ikidurasa.". "Ikidurasa" is a Japanese term that can be translated as "the pain of living" and is used frequently in newspapers and research to describe the hardship and burden of the Japanese in modern society. Along with the rising suicide rate, the frequency of this word appearing in Japanese media is also rising (Fujikawa, 2021, p. 361).

In my opinion, to find a solution for suicidal issues among Japanese youth, it is necessary to look into the youth's view of society and their own feelings about "Ikidurasa".

In this article, the author's approach is cultural research. In other words, the author tries to find out about Japanese youth's ideologies, especially about "Ikidurasa", by analyzing a cultural phenomenon, Vocaloid music.

VOCALOID is the name for a series of voice synthesizer software launched by Yamaha Corp., made to provide artificial singing voices for digital music. They were also generally regarded as virtual singers by fans and music producers.

Along with the release of VOCALOID, especially Hatsune Miku, a new genre of music created using these voice synthesizers, Vocaloid music, was also born in Japan. In Japan, Vocaloid music is a youth culture that is very popular among the youth. Not only does Vocaloid music attract a lot of young audiences, but the majority of Vocaloid producers also started making Vocaloid music from a young age. On the other hand, Vocaloid music is famous for having quite a number of popular songs with negative, "dark" lyrics that talk about death, suicide, and mental health problems.

The author believes the messages of Vocaloid songs reflect and resonate with the thoughts and feelings of the Japanese youth, and that is why they become popular. For that reason, in this research, the author aims to analyze the ideologies expressed in Vocaloid music, and through that, examine this hypothesis.

The Scope of Study and Research Method

To research about Japanese youth ideologies expressed in Vocaloid music, the author chooses the Vocaloid songs that were released from 2007 to 2022 as the target for analysis. The year 2007 is considered the beginning of Vocaloid music, marked by the release of Hatsune Miku, while the year 2022 is when the author started this research. In previous research, the author has based on the changes in the dominant themes used in Vocaloid songs each year from its founding year to divide the history of Vocaloid music into three periods: from 2007 to 2011, from 2012 to 2015, and from 2016 to 2022 (Pham, 2024). In this article, the author only focuses on the period of 2007–2011.

The period from 2007 to 2011 is said to be the golden era of Vocaloid music, and also when Hachi and wowaka, two famous Vocaloid producers who are said to define the style of

Vocaloid music, were most active in. That is why, it is also considered the period for Vocaloid to form its base and find its unique style, and has significant influence on later periods.

Through the analysis of quantitative data with the help of KH Coder[1], the author speculated that the popular songs in this period were mostly heart-break love songs and character songs[2] (Pham, 2024). And though there are songs about suicide and death, it still has not become a dominant theme in Vocaloid music as compared to later periods (Pham, 2024). In this article, based on Nico Nico Douga[3]'s ranking, 100 top-ranked Vocaloid songs from this period are chosen to be the target of analysis. Then, the author conducts a deeper contextual analysis of the lyrics of these songs to find out whether this speculation is true and to survey the ideology hidden behind the lyrics of these popular songs.

The songs used as target for analysis in this article are shown as below.

Table 1: Top 100 Vocaloid Songs From 2007 to 2011 Ranked by My List Number
(According to Nico Nico Douga)[4]

No.	Title	Vocaloid Producer	Released year
1	Senbonzakura	KuroUsaP	2011
2	Melt	ryo	2007
3	Matryoshka	Hachi	2010
4	Miku miki ni shite ageru	ika	2007
5	Mosaik Role	DECO*27	2014
6	World is mine	ryo	2008
7	World End's Dancehall	wowaka	2010
8	The disappearance of Hatsune Miku	cosMo	2008
9	A born coward	164	2011
10	Two-faced Lovers	wowaka	2009
11	Rolling girl	wowaka	2010
12	Nuclear Meltdown	iroha(sasaki)	2009
13	Romeo and Cinderella	doriko	2009
14	Double Lariat	AgoAniki	2009
15	FREELY TOMORROW	Mitchie M	2011
16	Black Rock Shooter	ryo	2008
17	Kagerou Daze	Jin	2011
18	Happy Synthesizer	EasyPop	2010
19	Panda Hero	Hachi	2011
20	Hold, Release; Rakshasa and Carcasses	Hachi	2009

[1] A computer software for quantitative content analysis and text mining.
[2] Song where Vocaloid characters sing about themselves and their identity as virtual singers.
[3] A Japanese video sharing website, considered the founding place of Vocaloid music.
[4] The English names of the songs in the ranking was cited exactly as in the English version of Nico Nico Douga.

21	Coward Montblanc	DECO*27	2010
22	Melancholic	Junky	2010
23	Just Be Friends	Dixie Flatline	2009
24	Karakuri Pierrot	40mP	2011
25	＊Hello、Planet.	sasakure.UK	2009
26	Paradichlorobenzene	OwataP	2009
27	Deep Sea Girl	Yuuyu	2010
28	Once Upon A Me	DECO*27	2010
29	Invisible	kemu	2011
30	Unhappy Refrain	wowaka	2011
31	Tokyo Teddy Bear	Neru	2011
32	Though My Song Has No Shape	doriko	2008
33	Luka Luka　Night Fever	samfree	2009
34	1925	T-POCKET	2009
35	Alice in Musicland	Fuwacina	2011
36	Servant of Evil	mothy	2008
37	First Sound (Full version)	malo	2007
38	Calc.	JimmythumbP	2010
39	Love is War	ryo	2008
40	Life Reset Button	kemu	2011
41	When the First Love Ends	ryo	2008
42	Rain of Cherry Blossom Petals	halyosy	2008
43	magnet	minato	2009
44	Eye Examination	40mP	2011
45	Kagamine Len Original Song 「Butterfly on your Right Shoulder」	NoriP	2009
46	RIP=RELEASE	minato	2009
47	from Y to Y	JimmythumbP	2009
48	Ten-faced	YM	2011
49	clock lock works	Hachi	2009
50	Eh? Ah, Sou.	ChouchouP	2010
51	Torinoko City	40mP	2010
52	Iroha Song	Ginsaku	2009
53	Saihate	Kobayashi Onyx	2008
54	Time-Warped After Chopping My Stag Beetle	UraManboP	2011
55	Heart	Travolta	2008
56	Fire◎Flower	halyosy	2008

57	Antichlorobenzene	OwataP	2010
58	Two Breaths Walking	DECO*27	2009
59	ONLINE GAME ADDICTS SPRECHCHOR	Satsuki ga Tenkomori	2010
60	Cendrillon	SignalP, orange	2008
61	Hello/How are you	Nanou	2010
62	Cut-off Line	40mP	2011
63	Remote Control	JesusP	2011
64	Chain Girl	Noboru↑	2009
65	Cyber Thunder Cider	EZFG	2011
66	Headphone Actor	Jin	2011
67	A Single Red Leaf	KuroUsaP	2008
68	Ah, It's a Wonderful Cat Life	Nem	2011
69	Rotten Heresy and Chocolayte	PinocchioP	2011
70	Heaven's Song	Yuuyu	2009
71	Rin-chan now!	OwataP	2011
72	Poker Face	Yucha	2010
73	White Snow Princess	Noboru↑	2010
74	Our 16bit Wars	sasakure.UK	2009
75	glow	keeno	2010
76	Daughter of Evil	mothy	2008
77	Monochrome ∞ Blue Sky	Noboru↑	2010
78	LOL - lots of laugh	KeN	2009
79	Miracle Paint	Fuwacina	2007
80	Heart Rate♯0822	ChouchouP	2010
81	Time Machine	40mP	2010
82	Stardust Utopia	otetsu	2009
83	Last Night, Good Night	kz	2008
84	Electric・Angel	Yasuo	2007
85	Wanderlast	sasakure.UK	2009
86	Thousand-Year Solo	yanagiP	2008
87	Packaged (Full Ver.)	kz	2007
88	Humorous Dream of Mrs. Pumpkin	Hachi	2009
89	SPiCa	TokuP, kentax	2009
90	Dear	19 iku	2008
91	The Lunacy of Duke Venomania	mothy	2010
92	Aitai	SignalP, Deadman	2010
93	Sweet Float Apartment	UraManboP	2011
94	Love Words	DECO*27	2009

95	No Logic	JimmythumbP	2009
96	Envy Catwalk	Tohma	2011
97	IMITATION BLACK	natsuP	2009
98	Cantarella	KuroUsaP	2008
99	Alluring Secret ~Black Vow~	HitoshizukuP	2010
100	My Time	Kuchibashi	2007

Result of Analysis

After looking into the lyrics and assessing the possible themes and messages expressed in the songs, the results are as below. Firstly, the most dominant theme of this period was romantic love, with 41 songs talking about romantic love as the main theme. Secondly, 29 out of 100 songs were songs about suicide, mental health problems, and death, or in this research, it was regarded generally as songs about "Ikidurasa". Lastly, aside from these two themes, there are also character songs, funny nonsense songs, etc., which occupy only a small proportion. In this research, to go into the details of how these themes are handled in each song and how they are used to express the ideology behind the songs, based on the above results, the author divides the analysis result of song lyrics into three types: (a) songs about romantic love; (b) songs about "Ikidurasa"; and (c) other songs.

Songs About Romantic Love

First of all, the author is going to talk about songs about romantic love, or love songs.

After reading into the meaning of each song, the author has found out that the love songs in this period mostly have a negative nuance to them, with only 10 songs with positive messages, which mention love as something to encourage and lift up the human spirit. The others consist of songs about heart-break, songs that doubt the existence of love, or songs about forbidden, toxic love.

Among the negative love songs, the most dominant theme is sad love, with 16 songs talking about break-up, heart-break, and the longing for another that one feels are out of one's league. This result is the same as the author's previous speculation based on the analyzed result from KH Coder.

Aside from the emotional side of love, Vocaloid love songs also mention the physical side of it, which is sexual attraction. Similar to songs about the emotional side of love, most of these songs talk about the negative side of sexual attraction, like toxic, possessive love, or superficial love that is only based on physical attraction, or even minor sexual abuse. For example, "Mosaik Role" (DECO*27, 2010) doubts the existence of love and wonders if the desire to possess somebody physically is love or just lust. On the other hand, some of these songs regard love as not just the story between two people but a mental phenomenon with its own causes and consequences, such as "White Snow Princess" (Noboru↑, 2010), a song that talks about the unwanted jealousy that came from unwanted affection from others. Another example is "Two-Faced Lovers" (wowaka, 2009). It is a song that mentions love as something foreign to the human mind and body that they cannot control, and doubts if love is just an emotion that exists only to aid the reproduction process of humanity.

Romantic love has always been a topic used largely in music. In Japan, most of the songs ranked on Oricon Chart are songs about love. Nabae even stated in his book that the percentage of love songs in popular music in Japan has risen from 7% in the Meiji era[5] to 97% in the 1990s, meaning that modern Japanese popular music, namely J-Pop, mostly consists of songs about commercialized romance (Nabae, 2004). Therefore, it can be said that love songs occupying the largest proportion of Vocaloid music ranking is a phenomenon that follows the normal pattern in the modern Japanese music world. However, according to Ayukawa, in Vocaloid music, there's a genre called "anti-love song" or "anti-sexual song"[6] that talks about love differently from other types of popular music. Ayukawa claimed that anti-love songs "include not only songs that are clearly against love, but also songs that treat love as something different from its pre-existent definition[7] or something that is not clearly defined" (Ayukawa, 2022, p.58). All of these "anti-love songs" in this period belong to the above-mentioned sub-theme, love songs that mention love in relation to sexual attraction, like "Mosaik Role" and "Two-faced Lovers", which doubt the existence of true love in the traditional sense and compare it to sexual attraction.

Additionally, there are also a number of songs in this period that talk about LGBT love, like "magnet" (minato, 2009) or "Alluring Secret ~Black Vow~" (HitoshizukuP, 2010). In this period, LGBT love was quite a rare theme in the Japanese music world, especially in mainstream popular music like J-Pop; however, as we can see from the result, there are still songs about LGBT relationships that could make it into high-ranking Vocaloid music. This is probably because the Vocaloid music world is closely associated with the manga-anime otaku world, which has always been open to this genre of story. But from this, it can be said that the theme of Vocaloid music is more broad and inclusive compared to other popular Japanese music.

Songs About Ikidurasa (The Pain of Living)

Moving onto the next section, we have songs about Ikidurasa (or the pain of living). From the author's previous analysis, it is speculated that the topic of Ikidurasa was not as popular a theme in this period as it would become in later periods of Vocaloid music. However, in my opinion, Ikidurasa being the second most popular theme in this period means that it has always been a big theme in the Vocaloid music world ever since the beginning.

There are a variety of sub-themes in Ikidurasa, from self-hate, depression, loneliness; to addiction; bullying; or grief and mourning.

The reason that leads to Ikidurasa can vary, but mostly it is because of the feeling of loneliness coming from being disconnected from other people or being unable to fit in with normal social standards. Even songs about things like game addiction also hint about the reason that led to the addiction as being unable to connect with the real world. Among these songs, "Invisible" (kemu, 2011) depicts a story that can summarize the ideology about human relationships in many songs of the same theme. It is a song about a girl who was happy finding herself turning invisible one day, but then slowly realized that not being able to

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[5] From October 23, 1868, to July 30, 1912.

[6] Although Ayukawa stated in his book that anti-love songs cannot be counted as love songs, since their main theme are still about love, in this research, the author has sorted these songs in the category song about love.

[7] When Ayukawa Pate mentions pre-existent love, it is most likely that he talks about the emotional side of heterosexual love, the desire that drive a person to want to connect emotionally with a person of the opposite sex in a romantic relationship – a theme that has been dominant in Japanese love songs.

connect with others was scarier than being hated. In other words, it can be seen that human relationships are something that Japanese youth are scared of but yearn for at the same time. On the other hand, there are also some songs that criticize the cold, rotten society that drives people into madness, like "Rotten Heresy and Chocolayte" (PinocchioP, 2011), which talks about the bad consequences coming from gossiping, or "Hold, Release; Rakshasa and Carcasses" (Hachi, 2009), which condemn the cold-heartedness of humans and the cruelty of children hidden behind the mask of innocence and ignorance.

In reality, songs about Ikidurasa, about sadness that is not related to love, are not entirely non-existent in other Japanese popular music like J-Pop; for example, Mika Nakashima's "Boku ga Shinou to Omotta no wa" (2014) or Hirai Ken's "Hitomi o Tojite" (2004). Nevertheless, the majority of the time, they are made to encourage and often end with a hopeful ending, where the protagonist at least tries to reach out for help or has somebody else reach out to help them. In contrast, a noticeable feature of Vocaloid songs about Ikidurasa is that the majority of songs belonging to this genre do not have a happy ending. Among them, there are songs like "Tokyo Teddy Bear" (Neru, 2011) or "Life Reset Button" (kemu, 2011), etc., where the protagonist feels absolute isolation and ends with a possible act of suicide. Others, such as "ONLINE GAME ADDICTS SPRECHCHOR" (Satsuki ga Tenkomori, 2010) or "LOL—lots of laugh" (Ken, Endcape, 2009), end with the protagonist just waiting to rot away in the real world or forever drown in their own fantasy world. This can be related to the tendency of trying to bottle up every negative emotion inside, trying to solve the pain by themselves without bothering others of the modern Japanese youth. Moreover, the negative endings to these songs paint a picture of a Japanese society where young people are stuck in a vicious circle of sadness without the means to get free.

From the above, it can be speculated that these Vocaloid songs do not seem to seek to encourage people to live positively, but rather try to expose the pain of living in the truest way possible. Nonetheless, in my opinion, being able to describe the pain without feeling the need to make it positive is also the reason why Vocaloid music is so popular among the youth, especially in the modern world, where people can easily become the victims of "toxic positivity". Goodman (2022) mentioned that toxic positivity forces people into a shame spiral of feeling ashamed of their negative emotions, trying to shut it down forcefully so as to not bother other people, and that is why being genuine and authentic in moments of crisis or pain is important. And Vocaloid songs about Ikidurasa give the audience exactly that kind of genuine and authentic depiction of emotion. In this way, Vocaloid music provides the youth who have not found a way to get out of their negative emotion, who are struggling to find their connection with positivity, a place where they can find sympathy and understanding.

Others

Aside from the two dominant themes of this period, there are also songs of other themes such as character songs, funny nonsense songs, happy and encouraging songs, etc. that make up the smaller proportion of the ranking.

The first thing the author wants to focus on in this section is character song. When it comes to Vocaloid music, many people have the impression that they are all about the characters, like Hatsune Miku. 2007 – 2011 is said to be the period of booming for Vocaloid music, started by Miku's release. Therefore, it is often associated with character songs that are written about Miku and other Vocaloid characters. The result of the author's previous analysis also pointed out that there are more character songs in the first period of Vocaloid music than in the two

later periods (Pham, 2024). However, as seen in this analysis, the number of character songs in this period, though higher than in later periods, was still lower than songs of other themes with only nine songs, and most of them were made in 2007 – 2008, when Miku was first released, which means that even though character songs were popular in the earlier stage of Vocaloid music, this trend quickly died down and gave way to other songs that focus more on the ideology of the producers rather than the characters.

On the other hand, happy and encouraging songs were also seen in Vocaloid music ranking, but only with 11 out of 100 songs, making up just about 10% of the ranking.

Conclusions

After the above analysis, the author has come to three conclusions.

Firstly, the themes of Vocaloid music in 2007 – 2011 were quite abundant and contained some topics that were hardly found anywhere else such as LGBT love, anti-love, suicide, etc. Regarding love, it seems that rather than the fixed image of heterosexual love often seen in other Japanese popular music, Vocaloid music talks about love in various manners: love between the same sex, lust without love, or even doubting the very existence of love, etc.

Secondly, whether it is songs about heart-break, toxic love, or songs about death and suicide, the majority of popular Vocaloid songs in this period have negative lyrics. It reflects the picture of a society where the youth was feeling disconnected and anxious in human relationships. Furthermore, it seems that they had the tendency to bottle their pain inside rather than express it outside, or in Japanese, this tendency was called "uchimuki", and sometimes can lead to the suicidal tendency seen in Japanese youth nowadays.

Lastly, though Vocaloid music is often associated with characters like Hatsune Miku, rather than character songs written for the characters themselves, songs written to express the ideology of the producers were more popular in later stages.

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Audiophilia in the Age of Streaming: Preserving Aesthetics, Ritual, and Identity

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Abstract

Before the new millennium, the word "audiophile" evoked imagery of shrine-like stacks of componentry, shelves of vinyl or compact discs, and ritualistic actions towards the summoning of sound. Listening to music was often a communal experience, centered around systems in a shared space. But is that conception slowly disappearing? "Legacy" audiophiles are aging, and younger entrants to the world of hi-fi are eschewing the larger-scale hardware and spaces common in the past. The first part of this work seeks to find canonical definitions and discourses of audiophilia through a comprehensive literature review. The second part examines whether these definitions and discourses hold up in an age of portable playback and streaming services. In other words, are the users of these newer technologies still audiophiles? To answer these questions, we explore the personalization of cultural consumption, the relationship between identity and meaning, the creation and expression of communities, and other related concepts to offer a new definition of audiophilia.

Keywords: Audiophilia, Identity, Listening Cultures, Audio Technology

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Introduction − Canonical Definitions of Legacy Audiophilia

While a love of beautiful sound cannot be dated, a permissive definition of "legacy" audiophilia can include striving for the first audio quality improvements in phonograph technology at the beginning of the 20th century. The term "audiophile" itself was coined in the 1950s and used in niche circles, but for the purpose of understanding its commonly construed meanings, we will focus on the period from the 1970s to the early 2000s – the golden age of speaker-based audiophilia. Speaker shops were common then, the collection of physical media was part of cultural zeitgeists worldwide, and listening spaces allowed for the sharing of sound and the creation of audiophile communities.

While legacy audiophilia is still alive and well, many music listeners have turned towards the use of portable audio, including wireless earphones, small Bluetooth speakers, soundbars, smartphones, and streaming. On its face, the popularity of these new technologies might be considered a sacrifice of sound quality for convenience and portability, but are characteristics of legacy audiophilia still found in these more modern uses? To answer this, we must first understand what it meant to be an "audiophile" in that earlier era.

Through a literature review, five common themes around legacy audiophilia emerged. The first is the pursuit of quality in sound, sometimes bordering on the obsessive (Hales, 2017). Second, tweaking and modification is one way to pursue one's ideal sound (Castanheira, 2024; Hosokawa & Matsuoka, 2017; Perlman, 2014). Third is the consumption of or aspiration towards "halo" and high-end products (Baaske et al., 2024). Fourth is religious and ritualistic elements in the consumption of sound (Barry 2010; Dotto, 2019). Fifth is one's own sense of identity as an audiophile (Harris, 2015; Ng et al., 2016; O'Neill, 2004).

Appreciating Audio Today – Can Current Trends Be Considered Audiophilia?

The early-to mid-2000s signaled a shift in how listeners engaged with sound. CD sales reached a peak in 2000 and faced a precipitous decline in the ensuing years. While higher-end SACDs found an audience in audiophiles, particularly those interested in classical music, it was the beginning of the end (or at least a lull in popularity) for physical media, and speaker and record shops began to close their doors. With the decline of physical media came two shifts in music consumption, each arguably a step backward in terms of sound quality and engagement with the physical. The first was to digital music on MP3 players or other portable digital audio players (such as the iPod), with music often ripped from CDs or downloaded from pirate sites and online storefronts (iTunes, RealPlayer, etc.) or pirate sites. Many early MP3 players did not provide very much in the way of audio quality, and earphones in those days rarely provided high-quality sound. This period was very roughly from 2000 to 2010. The second shift was to streaming audio, where an internet connection was necessary and files were streamed in real time, usually from a central server. Rather than navigating through one's own personal library of digital music, one would navigate through near-limitless online offerings. In fact, the estimated revenue of music streaming providers rocketed from under a half-billion USD a year in 2010 to around 20 billion USD in 2023 (Statista, 2024). This period began around 2010 and has continued to the present. In the following section, we will look at changes to listeners' relationships with audio bought about by these two shifts and if any participants in those shifts can be considered audiophiles in the same sense as their speaker-wielding progenitors.

Pursuit of Quality in the Reproduction of Sound

While there has been little scholarly work that deals with the definition of an audiophile, a common conception is someone wishing for "sound approaching the neutral or 'transparent'" (Harmon, 2009). Hales (2017) states that "the aesthetic aim of high fidelity is to achieve maximum transparency - the degree to which the listening experience is qualitatively identical to hearing the live instrument." However, Hales also states that audiophilia can be a "broadly pluralist artistic endeavor that aims at an idealized generation of a musical event."

In other words, transparency is not a necessity. Given the large number of audiophiles today who listen to sub-optimal vinyl records or even cassettes, there must be something more than just accuracy. This research argues that audiophilia can be considered the meticulous pursuit of sound quality, with *quality* being a subjective ideal that is not constant. Some audiophiles aim for a certain sound profile, like having a "British" sound, and others prefer the warm analog tones of tube amplifiers and records. Of course, many audiophiles still follow the first definition outlined by Hales, aiming for the most accurate and transparent sound.

Part of this push by audiophiles for quality sound has been the selection of physical media, an integral part of legacy audiophile culture. Audiophiles traditionally preferred physical media for its sound quality. While a massive turntable for vinyl records is most closely aligned with the image of an audiophile, another example is the introduction of the SACD (Super Audio CD) format in the early 2000s, which, at least on paper, greatly improved on CDs in terms of bitrate and accuracy. Even cassettes were embraced by some audiophiles, who bought chrome or metal tapes and used very expensive precision decks to ensure high-quality recordings.

However, the use of technology for accurate sound is still found in modern audio consumption. Audiophiles have the choice of using high-bitrate or lossless streaming formats like MQA and FLAC instead of MP3 files. In addition, portable players have been marketed that focus on sound quality, with advertising materials targeted at audiophiles and providing information on bitrates, DAC chips, and noise reduction. While this was seen in previous decades as well, the linking of headphones, earphones, and portable players with audiophile enjoyment only reached more widespread recognition in the early 2000s, which will be explained in more detail in the section on audiophile identity.

In addition, sound quality can be examined through frequency response graphs and distortion measures of portable audio devices, particularly headphones and earphones. Affectionately called "squiggles," these graphs represent the sonic signatures of headphones and earphones. Given the closed nature of portable audio, they provide much more information on how an earphone or headphone would sound compared to the frequency response graphs of speakers, which are dependent on placement, wall location, and many other factors. The uptake of this sort of data analysis by modern portable audio listeners, as seen in the plethora and popularity of online frequency response comparison tools, could be considered an objectivist pursuit of sound quality.

Tweaking, Modification, and DIY

Legacy audiophiles have endless options when it comes to tweaking, modification, and DIY. Tweaking, or making small, non-substantial changes to a system or listening setup in pursuit of better sound, can be accomplished by moving speakers, changing cables or components,

changing sources, or even fiddling with equalization settings. Modifications are also easy with the simplicity of amplifier and speaker technology – capacitor replacements, installing aftermarket drivers, and port drilling are all par for the course. DIY is popular as well, with speaker kits and solder-it-yourself amplifiers finding a small but dedicated base.

It may seem that the relatively closed systems of portable audio, at least hardware-wise, preclude modification and tweaking by audiophiles. But, in practice, that has not been the case. It could be argued that audiophile modification began to reach larger audiences with the introduction of the iPod. With millions of users having the same equipment and able to communicate in online spaces, modification became easier, and cottage industries also sprang up to meet demand. Perhaps the most well-known early example of modification is the "iMod" from Red Wine Audio, for which part of the iPod's internal amplification circuitry is bypassed, leaving an ostensibly cleaner line-out source. Other examples of physical modification include adding sticky tac around headphone driver enclosures or covering an earphone bass port with tape and poking a hole in the tape with a needle.

In terms of tweaking, some audiophile-focused IEMs (in-ear monitors) even have changeable components from the factory, such as swappable filters that control frequency response, different types of eartips (not just sizes, but selectable materials and shapes), and removable cables that use MMCX or proprietary connectors.

Figure 1: Miniaturization

In addition, tweaking on the "software" side has become more popular, particularly with equalization. While in the past, equalization was accomplished with a large, rack-mounted box with physical sliding tabs to control frequency response at particular ranges, now it can all be done through software on a portable amplifier the size of a lighter, or even on a smartphone app or through the internal circuitry of wireless earphones/headphones.

For DIY, handmade speakers and amplifiers have long been a mainstay of legacy audiophilia, due to their relative simplicity and ease of construction. While handmade headphones or earphones are far less popular, handmade portable amplifiers became vogue in audiophile circles starting in the early 2000s, particularly with "CMoy" amps made out of off-the-shelf components and assembled inside an "Altoids" tin, a small metal case originally for mint candies.

"Halo" and High-end Products

According to Shaw (1993), "an audiophile committed to putting together the best stereo system possible can easily spend over $100,000. The components will typically come from manufacturers whose names are completely unfamiliar to those who buy their stereos at local discount stores…"

One example of a "halo" brand with its roots in legacy audiophilia is Wilson Audio, founded in the 1970s and gaining popularity through the 80s and 90s. While audiophiles in the US were the majority of consumers, it was popular worldwide as well. In Japan, an entry-level Wilson Audio system could run around 3 million yen in the 90s, when an ordinary high-end system ran at less than one tenth of that cost.

In contrast, halo and high-end consumer-oriented headphones were few and far between during the golden age of audiophilia, with one outlier being the Sennheiser Orpheus HE-90 ($12,000 USD in 1996). They have been gaining popularity in the past two decades. The modern equivalent of the HE-90, the Sennheiser Orpheus HE-1, is over $50,000 and currently the most expensive headphone system in the world (not including statement headphones made with precious gemstones or large amounts of precious metals), a cost jump beyond that of inflation. But even though high-end portable audio has continued to flourish, it does not come close to the sky-high prices of legacy audiophile products: the Wilson Audio Chronosonic speaker is over $800,000 USD as of 2024.

For portable audio, the turning point towards high-end audiophilia could be considered the rise of the "kilobuck" headphone in the early 2010s. More and more equipment producers realized that audiophiles would be willing to pay a premium for exclusive and high-end products, beyond what traditionally professional-oriented equipment offered. Kilobuck headphones were released by titans such as Audio-Technica, Sony, AKG, Yamaha, and Sennheiser.

However, there has also been a rise in budget-oriented offerings targeted at audiophiles, particularly hi-fi brands from China such as Moondrop, HiFiMan, and Edifier for headphones/earphones, and SMSL and Topping for components. Del Collano (2022) writes in Future Audiophile: "If you've got a Power Ball winner budget, that is Kool and The Gang with us. For the rest of us who want to enjoy the hell out of our music without having to sell a kidney, or those of us who want to help others get involved in the hobby, the concept of Chi-Fi is simply wonderful . . . Often, with the value and performance of some of these products, you might just be blown away."

This points to an additional bifurcation: are listeners with less discretionary income for audio products and buying budget equipment, but still maintaining many traditional audiophile characteristics, still considered audiophiles, or more casual listeners? This is one case where modern audiophilia veers away from the legacy characteristics. While a $40 dollar headphone in 1985, adjusted for inflation, would not even be close to the fidelity required for audiophile examination, a $40 dollar headphone today can often trade blows with high-end products.

Religious/Ritualistic Elements

Perlman (2004) states that "'audiophiles' construct their own universe of meaning around their equipment; they cultivate a distinctive vocabulary and set of attitudes … they also

engage in controversy to defend themselves against knowledge-claims that would delegitimize their universe of meaning." For some audiophiles, personal experience trumps scientific methodologies or the collection of supposedly "objective" data. There has also been friction among audiophiles between evidence-based, "objective" audiophilia and personal-experience-based, "subjective" audiophilia, with the former focusing on analog reproduction and the latter digital, though there is a surprising amount of overlap. Dotto (2020) states that some critics have created an "evangelical lexicon" around the consumption of analog audio.

In addition, as seen in Fig.1, the ritual of using complex equipment, talisman-like accessories, and physical media can hearken to rites at an altar or shrine, a space to bask in the transcendental or spiritual.
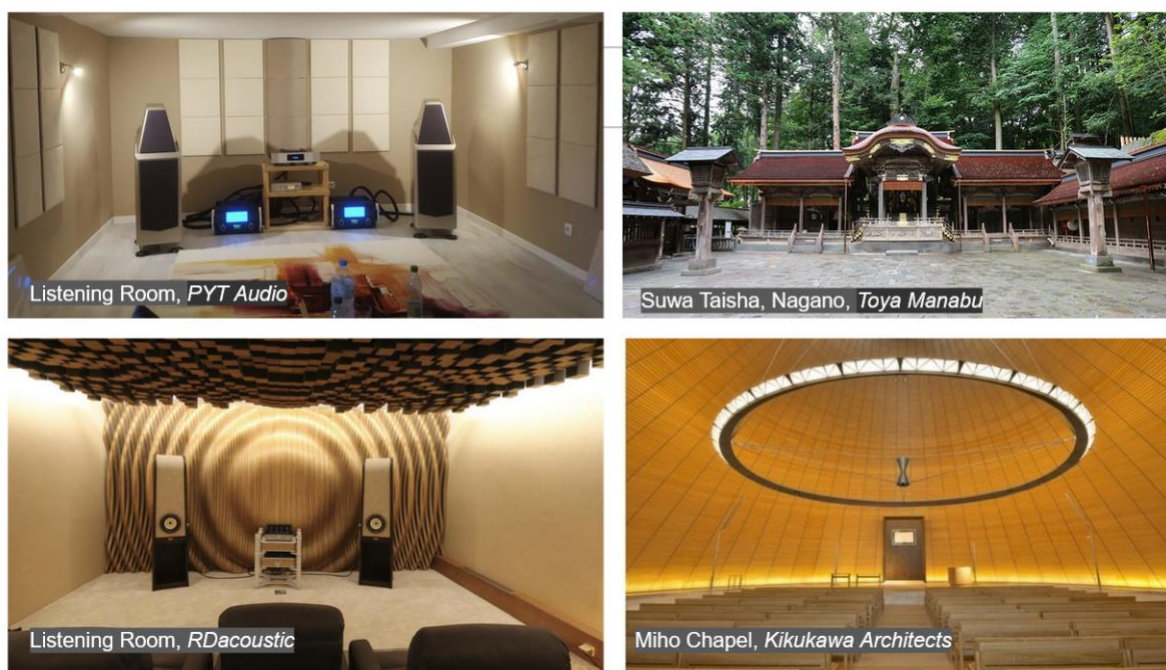
Figure 2: Spaces of Worship

Modern audio has not eschewed this. Portable digital audio players have made a resurgence in the audiophile world, with brands like Astell&Kern creating obelisk-like offerings, and headphone listening desks can have stacks of audio components that mirror the hi-fi listening rooms of yore, just on a smaller scale, as seen in Fig. 3 below.

Figure 3: Altars of Worship

Even hand-carried portable audio equipment can be carried in stacks (for example, a digital player, a DAC, and an amp held together by bands) has similar shrine-like properties, something like the *mikoshi* but with less of an emphasis on the impermanence of transit.

Identity

While the details depend on the country. Audiophile-oriented magazines such as Stereophile (founded in 1962, with monthly publication beginning in the 1980s) and The Absolute Sound (founded in 1973) were definers of audiophile identities. Alongside that was an often community-oriented experience where audiophiles would hold listening parties or just casually listen to others' systems. Audio stores were an important fixture. "Manufacturers … sell their wares at high-end audio stores, many of which have the air of specialized boutiques and serve as gathering places for a community's audiophiles" (Shaw, 1994).

Portable audio and streaming, however, only began to gain traction in the internet age, and online forums like HeadWize and HeadFi spearheaded the conception of portable audio as an audiophile endeavor, and supplanted earlier stores and magazines. Even though there were higher-quality headphones available before, they had not quite spread to audiophile circles. Tyll Hertsens (2023), writer for InnerFidelity and ostensibly one of the earliest proponents of portable audiophilia, stated, "By the time the headphone hobby started with Chu Moy and the Headwize forum in 1998, the HD 580 was well established, and HD 600 was just becoming available. They were the de-facto standard to which all other headphones were measured...but because they pre-dated the hobby, they were never the flavor of the month, they never received a love of their own." Such audio forums are still active today, but now the audiophile spaces have grown to YouTube, and "influencer" reviewers, such as Crinacle (who originally became well-known through a personal headphone measurement and review site) command large audiences. Perhaps most importantly, these groups refer to themselves as audiophiles, and adopt much of the lexicon used in legacy audiophilia.

Interestingly, in a return to roots, we have seen a worldwide blossoming of stores dedicated to the experience of listening to headphones, earphones, and portable audio, though they are still few in number. Examples include E-Earphone in Tokyo (est. 2011), the Headphone Bar in Vancouver (est. 2010), Headfoneshop in Toronto (est. 2011), Audio46 in New York (est. 2013), and Audio Sanctuary in London (est. 2009). Portable audio get-togethers and events are increasing in popularity as well. The largest and most well-known, such as CanJam, began in the mid-2000s. (The predecessor to CanJam, the National Head-Fi Meet, began in 2006, and the first CanJam was held in 2008.)

Conclusion

Characteristics of legacy audiophilia are still applicable in an age of portable audio and streaming, though the smaller scales and relative youth of the hobby preclude it from the same extent of cultural impact. However, the lower barriers to entry for high-sound-quality, from costs to accessibility of equipment and software, mean that that modern audiophilia is available to those lacking space or on a budget as well. In addition, communities of portable audio aficionados consider themselves audiophiles and interact to discuss and pursue quality sound in its many forms. Rather than not consider users of modern, streamlined technologies as audiophiles, this paper considers extending one's conception of what it means to be an audiophile.

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Analysis of Language Use in the Discourse of Buying and Selling Interactions at Sungguminasa Traditional Market, South Sulawesi

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Abstract

This study delves into the intricate use of language variation in buying and selling interactions at Sungguminasa Traditional Market, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Through observations involving 5 sellers and 5 buyers conversing in Indonesian with Makassar dialect, Makassarese with Konjo dialect, English, and Arab, the research uncovers how different languages and dialects are employed to create a welcoming and friendly atmosphere, enhancing the market experience.t, with sellers and buyers employing words like "*ki*" and "*ta'*" in the Makassar language. This dialectal usage fosters a relaxed and familiar conversational atmosphere. Additionally, the study uncovers the sellers' adept use of various expressions, such as "*iya pale*" and the vocative "*dek*," to cultivate a casual and welcoming ambiance. The study's significance lies in its revelation of register usage in seller-buyer interactions. Terms like "*renda prancis*" (French lace) and "*Monalisa*" are strategically employed to capture buyers' attention and convey an air of exclusivity. Similarly, the use of "*tie dye*" highlights register usage in the context of fashion, appealing to younger generations and fashion enthusiasts. Overall, the research unveils the intricate interplay of dialect, variation, and register in trading conversations at Sungguminasa Traditional Market, South Sulawesi. The findings of this research contribute to the broader field of linguistic and cultural studies by illustrating how language functions as a reflection of social and cultural dynamics within traditional market settings.

Keywords: Language Variations, Register, Seller, Buyer

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Introduction

The city of Makassar, as a strategic urban center in Eastern Indonesia, has attracted immigrants, enriching the region with cultural and social diversity. This cultural wealth is evident in the diverse population of Makassar, comprising various ethnic groups such as Bugis, Makassar, Javanese, among others, contributing to the complexity of its social structure. The interaction among these diverse cultures creates strong intercultural dynamics, leading to language contact phenomena that play a crucial role in shaping the linguistic landscape of the region. The resulting language contact, often involving exchange and adaptation, is reflected in the language variations used by the Makassar community, adding to the city's cultural richness (Rochet & Tirole, 2006).

The use of language variations is commonly observed among speakers and interlocutors with different backgrounds and communication contexts. Factors influencing language variation include the selection of a particular language variation based on the communicative needs of the speaker or writer in a given situation (Rochet & Tirole, 2006). Language plays a pivotal role in various societal functions such as trade, governance, religion, health, education, as well as expression and art. It serves not only as a means of communication but also as a reflection of the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which the language is used (Portes & Rey, 2005). Social interactions within a community significantly influence language use, considering factors like social status, gender, economic status, age, and education level. The linguistic context of speech involves interaction patterns such as who is speaking, which language is used, to whom, where, and what is being discussed.

Social interactions also impact the emergence of language variations, with linguistic diversity being influenced by the cultural differences within the community (Amīn, 2020). This perspective acknowledges that language variations are products of diverse social participants and their cultural backgrounds, language styles, dialects, and speech communities. The market environment often serves as a prominent setting where language variations are prominently displayed. Markets, as emphasized by Polanyi, play a crucial role in facilitating the distribution of goods and services, as well as in forming social relationships and networks (Ubaid et al., 2022). Market interactions involving sellers and buyers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds provide a rich stage for observing language variations. In market transactions, the communication strategies chosen by sellers and buyers not only reflect practical communication needs but also the overlapping and mutually influential cultural dynamics.

In the context of the Sungguminasa traditional market in South Sulawesi, this research aims to investigate the role of language variations in price negotiation processes, sales strategies, and interpersonal communication. By actively involving sellers and buyers in daily interactions, the study seeks to identify how language variations are used to create social identities and strengthen community networks in the market. Through the analysis of language variations, factors such as social context, interpersonal relationships, and cultural norms can be revealed, providing a deeper understanding of the social aspects embedded in traditional markets (Rochet & Tirole, 2006).

From the background description provided, the research problem formulated for this study focuses on "how language variations used by sellers and buyers in the Sungguminasa traditional market in South Sulawesi contribute to social identities and community networks?" This research aims to delve into the intricate linguistic landscape of the local

culture and the complexity of social interactions within the traditional market context in South Sulawesi.

Literature Review

Sociolinguistics, as an interdisciplinary field, utilizes theories and methodologies from sociology and linguistics to investigate the relationship between language and society. This discipline examines how language is used in different social contexts, how language varies among different social groups, and how language is influenced by social factors such as class, gender, ethnicity, and age (Mooney & Evans, 2018). This interdisciplinary approach enables sociolinguistics to provide insights into the nature of complex and dynamic language use and its role in shaping and reflecting social structures and relationships within a community.

The main function of language is communication. It is on this basis that linguistic variations emerge. Language variations occur through social interactions among different linguistic subjects. Linguistic variation is understood as a type of language variation where its usage is adapted to function and situation without the emergence of overarching rules governing that language (Suwito, 1985). Variations in language related to usage, purpose, or function are referred to as functional variations or registers. These variations are typically discussed based on the extent of stylistic usage, formality levels, and manner of use. In the study of language variations from the speaker's perspective, various forms of language emerge that reflect the uniqueness of each individual or group in a particular area. This concept, as explained by Chaer and Agustina (2004), encompasses various types of language variations such as idiolects, dialects, and sociolects. Gender-based variations depict differences in language usage between men and women. Meanwhile, variations based on profession or occupation encompass language differences related to specific job types or tasks.

Noble and economic factors also influence language variations, creating a rich and complex spectrum of human language expression. Variations in language usage based on profession or occupation have been extensively studied in sociolinguistics. Trudgill & Peter (1983) observed different linguistic features associated with specific occupational groups, such as the use of technical jargon and specialized terminology in professions like medicine, law, and engineering. These language differences result from specialized knowledge and communication requirements in different work contexts. In addition to gender and profession, noble and economic factors also play a significant role in influencing language variations. Historical studies indicate that language use is often linked to social class and economic status, with nobility and the upper class using different forms of language to distinguish themselves from the lower class (Labov, 1966). Economic factors can also influence language variations, as individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds may use language differently to reflect their social and economic circumstances.

Chaer and Agustina (2004) refer to language variations based on usage, application, or function as varieties and registers. These variations are related to the language used in various fields or specific purposes, such as journalism, military, agriculture, shipping, trade, education, and other scientific activities. In field-based language variations, the most striking differences lie in vocabulary, where each activity has specific vocabulary that is unique.

A study with a similar topic was also conducted by Hasanah, N, and Hudiyono, Y, (2020) titled "Analysis of Language Variations in Communities on the WhatsApp Social Network: A Sociolinguistic Study." This research examines language variations in the WhatsApp

community using sociolinguistics to understand the reflection of social and cultural identities and interactions. The results show that language variations are influenced by the speaker's background, conversation topics, level of familiarity, and unique features of WhatsApp such as emojis and stickers. This study illustrates the dynamics of online language, demonstrating how language variations are used to build identities, foster relationships, and communicate effectively.

Method

The type of research is descriptive qualitative, which describes research findings using linguistic data or facts. The selection of this type of research is based on the aim to provide an objective description of language variations that emerge in interactions between sellers and buyers at the Sungguminasa Traditional Market. The data for this research consist of utterances from sellers and buyers during interactions in the buying and selling context at the Sungguminasa Market, focusing on the use of language variations. Data collection was conducted using recording techniques to obtain verbal communication recordings that utilize language variations, and observation techniques were used to observe social phenomena and occurrences during interactions, both recorded and unrecorded. Data analysis was carried out in four stages, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification.

Discussion

The communication patterns between sellers and buyers at the Sungguminasa Traditional Market are formed through interaction processes that support transactions between both parties. Buyers consist of local residents from Gowa village and surrounding villages. Meanwhile, sellers are categorized based on their merchandise, including fabric sellers, clothing sellers, kitchenware sellers, shoe sellers, cake sellers, vegetable sellers, fish sellers, and fruit sellers. Additionally, sellers and buyers have specific ways of communicating.

Mix Code and Switch Code

Table 1: Mix Code and Switch Code Data

Data	Code	Form	Function
All size ini, dek.	Mix Code	English-Indonesian	Clarify Statements
Alhamdulillah. Tabe'	Mix Code	Arabic-Makassarese	Avoid Harsh Forms
bisa kurang? 100 ribu ji kodong	Mix Code	Indonesian-Makassarese	Clarify Negotiations
Model baru ini, Daster motif tie dye	Mix Code	Indonesian-English	Clarify Statements
Teai renda biasa. Ada harga ada kualitas	Switch Code	Makassarese-Indonesian	Clarify Statements
anne iya kammaya? Model baru ini	Switch Code	Makassarese-Indonesian	Clarify Negotiations

The results of the study found several functions of code-switching and code-mixing in market transaction interactions, including: (a) emphasizing and clarifying statements, (b) quoting others' speech, and (c) avoiding harsh and refined forms. The dominant function is to

emphasize and clarify statements. The data above show the use of four languages: Arabic, Indonesian, English, and Makassarese.

Dialects

Extract 1
Seller: *"Cari apaki tawwa? Blus-blus, celana panjang, mukena?"*
       "What are you looking for? Blouses, pants, prayer garments?"
Buyer: *"Ada kulot ta'?"*
       "Do you have culottes?"

Extract 2
Buyer: *"Alhamdulillah. Tabe', ukuran apa itu?"*
       "Alhamdulillah. Excuse me, what size is that?"
Seller: *"All size ini, dek. Cocok ji di kita'."*
       "This is all size, Sister. It fits you."

Extract 3
Buyer: *"Bisa kurang? 100 ribu ji kodong saya punya."*
       "Can you lower the price? I only have Rp. 100,000.00."
Seller: *"Iye pale dek, kita ambilmi."*
       "Alright sister, you can take it."

Extract 4
Buyer: *"Tabe' bu, abbaluki sawi sawi*?"
       "Excuse me, do you sell green mustard?"
Seller: *"Iyye niaja bu. Erokki sikura sikko*?"
       "Yes, how much green mustard do you want?"

In Extract 1, there is a language variation that can be identified as a dialect or variation in language use. The seller uses a language variation that mixes Indonesian with the Makassar regional dialect in their question, such as *"apaki"* which is a form of the word *"apa"* and *"ki"* in Indonesian. The use of regional dialect variations like this can reflect a relaxed conversational context that fits the atmosphere of a traditional market. From the buyer's perspective, there is the use of a regional dialect or language variation in the question *"Ada kulot ta'?"* where *"ta'"* is a variant form of the word *"kita'"* which means "you" in Indonesian. The use of such language variations can indicate familiarity and closeness between the seller and the buyer, or reflect the habit of informal communication in buying and selling situations.

In Extract 2, the use of the word *"tabe"* which means *"excuse me"* and the word *"ji"* in the phrase *"cocok ji"* provides linguistic characteristics of eastern Indonesia, especially the Makassar language. In this context, these utterances reflect the richness of regional languages and local cultures recognized by Makassar language speakers. The word *"tabe"* as a form of *"excuse me"* shows the politeness reflected in the Makassar language and culture. Its use highlights attention to social etiquette in communication, which can differ from the communication norms in standard Indonesian. Meanwhile, the use of the word *"ji"* in the phrase *"cocok ji"* which is equivalent to *"cocok kok"* in standard Indonesian, provides a different language variation. Through the use of variations like *"tabe"* and *"ji,"* the conversation becomes more lively and gives a distinctive local flavor. This enriches the

communication experience and builds closeness between the speaker and the listener who come from the same community or have a deep understanding of the Makassar language.

In Extract 3, there is the use of language variations or Makassar dialects that create a sense of familiarity. The buyer uses the word *"kodong"* which is intended to evoke sympathy, a variation or dialect of the word *"kasian"* in Indonesian. The use of this word creates a conversational atmosphere intended for the seller to give a discount. The seller also uses words like *"iye"* and *"dek"* which are variations or dialects of the words *"iya"* and *"adik."* The use of such language shows a level of familiarity and camaraderie between the seller and the buyer.

In Extract 4, the seller and buyer interact using the Makassar language with a dialect from the Jeneponto area, also known as the Konjo dialect. The word *"sikura"* is a variation of the word *"siapa"* which is Makassar or *"berapa"* in Indonesian. Sellers in this market are required to be able to use this dialect to integrate with other buyers. Analyzing the dialect of this conversation shows that the interaction does not only contain Indonesian but also mixes elements of dialect or informal language variations, giving a local and familiar nuance to the communication context of buying and selling in the market. Overall, these conversations reflect the use of informal language variations or dialects commonly used in daily interactions in a familiar or relaxed environment.

Variations

Extract 5
Seller: *"iye pale dek, kita ambilmi."*
          "Alright, Ma'am. You can take it."
Buyer: *"Makasih banyak."*
          "Thank you very much."

Extract 6
Seller: "*850, harga pas mi anjo. Kajjala mentongi kaeng kammaya anne. Bisaki Naung maki`ri Monalisa, kajjalak kangngangi poeng tabana*."
          "850 thousand, the price is fixed, Ma'am. This kind of item is expensive. You can try going to Monalisa, the price is higher there."
Buyer: "*ok baba. Kuambil saja itu*"
          "Alright, Sir. I'll take that one."

Extract 7
Seller: "*Singgahki sambalu. Sepatu anak-anak tawwa, sandal cewek? Masuk maki sini pilih, bu."*
          "Please come in, Ma'am. We have children's shoes, ladies' sandals? Just come in to browse, Ma'am."
Buyer: "*nia sapatu tali-tali warna pink ta*?"
          "Do you have shoes with pink laces?"

Extract 5 shows the familiarity variety in the phrase *"iye pale dek, kita ambilmi."* from the seller, which indicates the use of casual and familiar language in the context of buying and selling transactions. The phrase *"iye pale"* is a variation of "yes already" or "okay," and is used to express agreement or consent to the buyer's request or action. This language variation creates a more relaxed atmosphere and brings the buyer closer to the seller. The words *"kita*

ambilmi dek" show the seller's friendly attitude and familiarity with the buyer by using the term *"dek"* as a variation of "adik." The use of such terms reflects a relaxed and familiar communication attitude and is often used in informal settings or interactions between people who have a close or familiar relationship. The seller shows familiarity by giving informal permission or consent to the buyer's actions, creating a friendly and non-rigid transaction atmosphere.

The analysis of language variation in **Extract 6** in the phrase *"ok baba, Kuambil saja itu"* shows the use of familiar and casual language in the context of transactions or informal interactions. The word *"ok"* is used as a form of agreement or acceptance of the buyer's actions, indicating an informal and friendly atmosphere. The use of the word *"baba"* is a variation or familiar term used by the buyer to refer to a Chinese seller. Such terms often reflect a level of familiarity or a closer relationship between the buyer and seller. The phrase *"kuambil"* shows the buyer's firm decision to take the item. The use of the word *"kuambil"* as a variation of "I take" adds an element of familiarity and closeness to the communication. Overall, this phrase creates an impression of friendliness, freedom, and familiarity in an informal transaction situation.

In Extract 7, *"Singgahki sambalu. Sepatu anak, sendal cewek? Masuk maki sini pilih-pilih, bu."* reflects the use of casual variations commonly found in everyday conversations, especially in markets. Through words like *"Singgahki"* which means to visit, and *"tawwa"* which is slang in the Makassar language, this phrase gives an informal and familiar nuance. Slang words like *"tawwa"* reflect the relaxed and easygoing nature of the conversation. The phrase *"masukki sini, pilih-pilih"* provides a friendly invitation to choose items in a less serious atmosphere. Overall, this phrase creates a relaxed and familiar atmosphere while showing more casual word choices in everyday communication.

Registers

Extract 8
Buyer: "*kajjalak kamma, tenamo na kurang?"*
        "This is too expensive, can you lower the price?"
Seller: "*Renda Prancis anne, teai renda biasa. Ada harga ada kualitas"*
        "This is French lace, not ordinary lace. You get what you pay for"

Extract 9
Seller: "*850, harga pas mi anjo. Kajjala mentongi kaeng kammaya anne. Bisaki Naung maki ri Monalisa, kajjalak kangngangi poeng tabana."*
        "850 thousand, the price is fixed. This kind of item is expensive. You can try going to Monalisa, their prices are higher."
Buyer: "*iye paeng baba, ki sareang ma ini.*"
        "Alright, sir. Just give it to me"

Extract 10
Buyer: "*tena model maraeng?"*
        "Is there no other model?"
Seller: "*anne iya kammaya? Model baru ini. Daster motif tie dye"*
        "How about this one? This is a new model, a tie-dye patterned dress"

In extract 8, the analysis of the register in the utterance *"Renda Prancis anne, teai renda biasa. Ada harga ada kualitas."* shows a high level of specificity related to the product. The use of the term *"Prancis"* here not only implies the origin of the product but also gives an impression of exclusivity and higher quality, thus indicating a careful choice of words to attract the buyer's attention. The statement *"Ada harga ada kualitas"* is often used to emphasize that a higher price reflects better quality. These word choices indicate an effort to convince the buyer of the value and quality of the product.

In extract 9, the use of the word *"Monalisa"* in the utterance shows the presence of a register or term commonly known by a certain group, especially those involved in tailoring, fabric sales, or mothers actively engaged in sewing and fabric shopping. The word *"Monalisa"* is considered a specific term with special meaning within that community. In this context, *"Monalisa"* refers to a fabric shopping place in Makassar. For those familiar with the world of tailoring and fabric sales, this word can evoke the image of a well-known or popular fabric store in the area. Thus, the use of the word *"Monalisa"* can only be understood by those with a deep understanding of these activities and environments. The importance of using terms like *"Monalisa"* in this utterance can create a sense of familiarity and identification among community members who have an interest or involvement in sewing. On the other hand, for those rarely involved in such activities, the word *"Monalisa"* may be less meaningful or even not well understood. Thus, we can see that the use of specific words like *"Monalisa"* in the utterance creates a register that distinguishes between groups with specific knowledge and experience, and this can help strengthen identity and communication within a more limited community or environment.

In extract 10, the use of the word *"tie dye"* shows a register or term commonly known by young people and clothing sellers. This word refers to a dyeing style or technique where various bright colors are used and overlapped, creating a unique effect. Adding the word *"tie dye"* to this utterance can give a more distinctive and appealing impression, especially for those interested in fashion trends and more experimental clothing styles. By adding the use of the word *"tie dye"* in the sentence, the utterance becomes more specific and feels more connected to young people or those active in the fashion world. This word creates the image of an interesting and refreshing color pattern, which can be attractive to those who follow fashion.

Conclusion

This research explores the use of dialect, language variety, and register in verbal transactions at traditional markets, focusing on expressions originating from the Makassar region. These findings reveal language variations identifiable as dialect forms. Sellers and buyers use the regional Makassar dialect, employing expressions like *"ki"* and *"ta',"* creating a relaxed and familiar conversational atmosphere. Words such as *"tabe"* and *"ji"* showcase linguistic features from eastern Indonesia, while terms like *"kodong"* and *"dek"* reflect familiarity and friendship in buying and selling interactions. Sellers use informal phrases by saying *"iya pale"* and using the term *"dek,"* creating a relaxed and familiar atmosphere. On the buyer's side, the use of informal and casual language is seen in expressions like *"ok baba, kuambil saja itu,"* showing the buyer's friendly attitude. The research findings also highlight the use of register by sellers, where terms like *"renda Prancis"* and *"Monalisa"* are used to attract buyers, conveying a nuance of exclusivity. The term *"tie dye"* is used in the fashion context, particularly to attract young consumers and fashion enthusiasts.

In conclusion, this research reveals the complexity of using dialect, language variation, and register in verbal transactions at traditional markets in Makassar. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how informal and relaxed communication develops in this context and how language use reflects identity and familiarity in everyday interactions. Overall, language not only functions as a functional communication tool but also as a means to express cultural identity, strengthen social relationships, and enhance the buying and selling process in the distinctive setting of traditional markets.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

In accordance with the journal's requirements, I hereby disclose the use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies during the preparation of this manuscript. I utilized ChatGPT to assist with language refinement and structural suggestions, while ensuring the originality and integrity of the research content. No AI tools were used for data analysis, interpretation, or critical findings presented in this paper.

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The Language of Desire: Decoding the Aesthetic Experience Through Art Festival's Promotional Materials on Xiaohongshu

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Abstract

Over the past decade, art festivals have become a popular tool for spatial regeneration and cultural innovation. By transforming familiar spaces into new and unknown places, art festivals create a creative atmosphere and give new meaning to day-to-day life. In the pre-exposure stage of event design, promotional materials embody the organisers' creativity and provide room for the spectator's imagination of the place. Recently, new media has given organisers more possibilities to construct the event image. Interpreting visual and textual materials of event design helps to understand how place-making, mediated by arts festivals, shapes the image of the place and conveys values to stakeholders. The study applies a mixed-methods approach to analysing the festival's design patterns and semiotic elements. The collection of promotional materials is based on a keyword search of designs posted by the organisers on Xiaohongshu, one of China's most popular content creation platforms. The materials are first analysed through content analysis to summarise textual formats, meaning units, images, and representational objects. Subsequently, based on Echtner's guidelines (1999), a series of art festivals organised in Kulangsu are selected as typical cases for semiotic analyses of their promotional designs (What's Art Festival and Kopi & Art Festival). Treating promotional materials as design works, the result examines the actualities of lived experience and the creativity of the spectator's imagination to inform effective communication with stakeholders for future placemaking and event design.

Keywords: Aesthetic Experience, Art Festivals, Aesthetic Design, Promotional Materials, Social Media

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1. Introduction

In the long history of human society, arts festivals have been one of the human activities closely related to people's daily lives, culture and economy. Nowadays, art festivals serve not only as a platform for displaying artworks but also as a vital approach to social and cultural exchanges. It attracts visitors from diverse backgrounds and promotes cultural dissemination and exchange through vibrant activities and various art forms. From the perspectives of economics and marketing standpoints, art festivals are seen as an effective strategy for urban recovery and regeneration due to their cost-effective and quick feedback. Numerous cities host art festivals to attract tourists, enhance the city's image and stimulate local economic development. Beyond the economic advantages, the potential of arts festivals to promote community participation and social sustainability has been widely noticed and discussed in recent years. It promotes residents' participation and enhances community cohesion through a range of interactive activities and community projects. It transforms ordinary places into extraordinary ones, offering collective experiences and stimulating a renewed awareness and use of public space.

In contemporary daily life, people are more accustomed to searching for information on mobile apps. Especially after the pandemic, urban life has rapidly embraced online activities and lifestyles. Social platforms such as Instagram, X, Facebook, Weibo, and Xiaohongshu have become the first steps for most art festivals to market themselves and get closer to their potential visitors. Promotional materials for arts festivals also play a crucial role in the pre-exposure phase of a local event. They are an important way to build imagination of the event and destination, shaping initial impressions for potential participants. As art festivals are increasingly focusing on the design of their brand image and curating aesthetic experiences, this study seeks to explore how contemporary art festivals convey values and messages to the public. It aims to achieve this by analysing the online promotional materials design using Xiaohongshu, one of China's most popular social platforms, as a case study. The objectives of the study are as follows:
1) Investigate the general profile of art festivals on Xiaohongshu.
2) Identify the design elements and meanings within art festivals' online promotion.
3) Interpret the thematic meanings embedded in the art festival's aesthetic design.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Art Festivals in a Digital Age

Festivals have long been intertwined with cities. They are often bridges between people and places, connecting individuals to collective experiences and geographies. Art festivals are festivities with a creative and arts theme, usually consisting of exhibitions, performances, and music, renowned for fostering highly aesthetic experiences (Finkel & Platt, 2020). They are regarded as image-makers, tourist attractions, and communities during the long-associated relationship with cities (Quinn, 2020). While the economic dividends of arts festivals may not rival those generated by large-scale sporting events, the significance of arts festivals in place-making and cultural tourism cannot be overstated. Art festival provides an interactive open space for visitors to exchange ideas. This interaction not only enriches the visitor's cultural experience and promotes the artists' works but also promotes the transformation of the insights into life (Pelowski & Akiba, 2011). Festivals are characterised by their temporary and inclusive nature. In terms of form, arts festivals can be comprehensive, large-scale international events, cultural events of a single art form, or small-scale community events

(Finkel & Platt, 2020; Huang et al., 2010). They are usually organised at a specific time and place, shifting the appearance of the space over a period of time and bringing a unique atmosphere of cultural celebration (Comunian, 2017). The inclusiveness of the festival is reflected in its acceptance of different cultures, styles and forms of artistic expression, encouraging innovation and experimentation (Adongo et al., 2019). Through various artworks and activities, the festival creates a celebratory atmosphere that provides a distinctive aesthetic experience for the audience (Akbar & Jachnow, 2022).

Evolving from traditional religious and folklore festivals, arts festivals have gradually become a strategy for urban cultural development and a tool for place-making (Fenwick, 2021). The organisation of arts festivals is also constantly being innovated, from government-led to community-initiated organisations, and the diversity and flexibility of arts festivals are constantly increasing. In the digital age, the promotional strategies and design strategies of arts festivals have also changed due to the rise of social platforms. Social platforms provide a powerful tool for festival promotion and information delivery, enabling festivals to reach a wider audience at a lower cost and with a wider scope. New media has become a potent tool for arts festivals to showcase themselves and engage with prospective participants. Compared to old media, new media are open, demand-driven, and mainly based on images (Kirillova et al., 2014). By featuring event previews, design interpretations, artist interviews and behind-the-scenes footage on the platform, the festival can capture the audience's attention and pique their interest even before the event begins. The internet has revolutionised cultural semiotics, transforming the portrayal of places and experiences into hyperreal simulations. As Baudrillard suggests, individuals now possess the ability to 'control everything remotely' through social media, the internet, and other digital platforms. From this viewpoint, online promotional materials do not merely advertise actions; they create a simulacrum of a destination or append additional layers of meaning to festivals, shaping their image and allure. Through social media platforms, festivals can build a persistent online community, extending the festival's outreach and fostering novel forms of cultural exchange within the digital sphere.

2.2 Construct Aesthetic Experience Through Design

Aesthetic experience is a vague concept. Traditional investigations into aesthetic experiences primarily focused on the epistemology of appreciating fine art (Ingarden, 1961). From Husserl's phenomenology, the concept of 'experience' relates to epistemology; it is a way of confirming self-existence (Casey, 2010). Experience can denote the object of experience and the way that object is being experienced. From the perspective of hermeneutics, experience is searching for and confirming meanings. The process of experience, therefore, can be viewed as an intentional explanation for the living world or text according to specific narratives or history. Dewey maintained that aesthetic experience can also occur in everyday life. His concept broadened this notion to encompass everyday moments and objects as potential sources of aesthetic encounters (Gumbrecht, 2006; Ratiu, 2013). Aesthetic experience, in this perspective, is a self-intention spiritual activity with aesthetic imagination or intuition of conformity to the aim of the life world (Gumbrecht, 2006; Melchionne, 2013).

In this study, aesthetic experience is defined as the combined perceptual, emotional, and cognitive experience that an individual has when exposed to a work of art or an aesthetic object. Various factors influence the construction of an aesthetic experience in an arts festival (Huang et al., 2010). Different audiences may have different perceptions and aesthetic judgments of the same aesthetic object due to their different growing environments,

educational backgrounds and personal experiences (Kirillova et al., 2014). This paper is not intended to be a philosophical enquiry into aesthetic experience but rather an attempt to place aesthetic experience in the context of design to explore the construction of aesthetic symbols and the messages they convey. Regarding design as a means of communication, the online promotional materials for the festival can be seen as a combination of symbols, forms and meanings. The theoretical framework proposed by Folkmann (2010) can be used to analyse the design of aesthetic experiences at art festivals. This framework encompasses two aspects: 'aesthetic function' and 'reflection of ideas.' Based on these two dimensions, the formulation and construction of aesthetic meaning in design can be categorised into four types: 'concept' design, 'lifestyle design', 'natural mapping', and 'anonymous design' (Folkmann, 2010).

When a festival receives attention and popularity on social platforms, it is perhaps closely related to its aesthetic qualities and not solely because of its reputation and scale (Folkmann, 2010). The promotion of the art festival on social media bridges the distance between the aesthetic experience and the daily life of the audience. The festival's atmosphere, which previously had to be experienced in person, can be accessed and appreciated through social media and mobile applications at any time and from any place. This makes the aesthetic experience of the festival part of everyday life at the level of visual perception. Exploring the aesthetic experience of art festivals can build an understanding of the meaning and value conveyed by contemporary art festivals, perhaps informing subsequent research into improving the design of the festival experience and understanding participant motivation.

3. Methodology

The existing studies analysed the aesthetic judgement of art festivals (Kirillova et al., 2014), models of transformative aesthetic experience (Pelowski & Akiba, 2011), and philosophical inquiries about the aesthetic experience (Goldman, 2013; Nedelcu, 2014; Pałęga, 2015). As a highly aesthetics-led activity, the aesthetic construction of art festivals has been mentioned rarely. In the digital age, when posting is readily accessible to all, the expressive form of art festivals has become more diverse, with their embedded social values becoming more prominent. Studying contemporary art festivals' current situation and image construction appears essential and can aid in designing future art festival activities. This study thus endeavours to interpret the construction of aesthetic experience in art festivals through a design-oriented lens.

This study employed a mixed method and selected Xiaoshongshu as the database. Xiaohongshu, also translated as RedNote, is a content-creation platform that has been remarkably popular in China in the past decade. It has more than 200 million active monthly users, with the majority in mainland China, and it also covers users from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and overseas countries. Social media posts on Xiaohongshu revolved around personal experiences and fashion reviews, travel recommendations, lifestyle tips, and interests. While the posts usually emphasise authentic experiences and provide unheard cultural exploration, Xiaohongshu is now reshaping tourism and consumption. The app's influence is not only within the country but also extends to Mandarin-speaking communities worldwide. Given the influence of Xiaohongshu, it has been chosen as the dataset.

In this study, the content analysis aims to identify the representations and design symbols of art festival promotional materials, categorising them into recognisable types. This process offers an initial categorisation of the images and design symbols of contemporary art festivals.

Semiotic analyses are then employed to interpret the meanings and values the symbols convey.

3.1 Sampling

The online keyword searches followed a purposive sampling strategy that involved searching for 'festivals' and 'arts festivals' in Chinese and English and filtering the results (Figure 1). As one of the objectives of the study was to understand how festivals communicate with their audiences, only the posts published by the event organisers were retained, and a screenshot of the homepage of each organiser's account was used as an analytical unit to ensure that the layout of the analysis was broadly consistent.
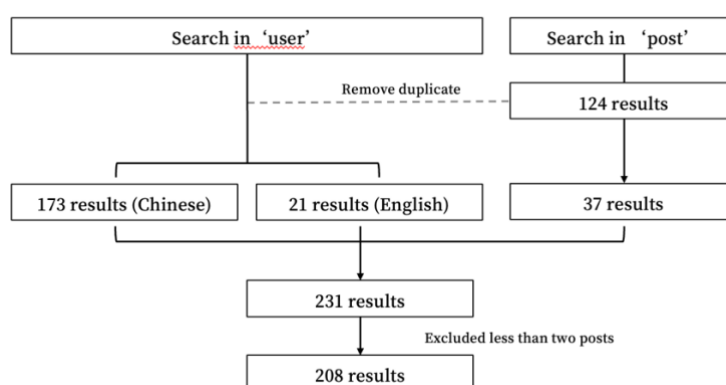
Figure 1: Purposive Sampling Process

The initial search yielded 194 results in the category of 'users', of which 173 originated from Chinese searches and 21 from English. Considering that some festival organisers may not use the word 'festival' in naming their accounts, the sample included another 124 results from the 'posts' category. After de-duplication with the 'users' category, 37 results were retained. Finally, a total of 208 screenshots were used for content analysis after removing accounts with less than two posts and individual accounts that were weakly related to art festivals.

3.2 Content Analysis of Denotative Representations

Content analysis is a method for systematically describing and interpreting the meaning of qualitative materials. It follows a coding frame to classify materials by assigning them successively parts. Coding helps to relate materials to concepts and examine the meanings of materials. It links data and concepts and helps us consider how one concept can relate to another. Describing denotative meaning is usually the first step while conducting semiotic analysis. Conducting a content analysis before semiotic analysis can also make the analysis process systematic.

Two researchers were employed to sort and code the 208 screenshots to prevent micro-analysis and bias (Collier & Collier, 1999). Referring to Hunter's content analysis strategy for Seoul's online destination image, the coding process in this study followed three principles (Hunter, 2016). First, the coded indicative symbols contain elements such as images and words that respond to the characteristics of the art festival. Any number of natural landscapes can be included in the 'natural landscape' symbol. Second, the coding selects the most recognisable and basic types of indicative symbols in the screenshot. Since this study is not meant to be an inductive categorisation of festival images but rather an analysis of design

symbols and compositions, more than one code can be included in each basic unit of analysis. Thirdly, the sorting process is based on mixed-coding. While synthesising the literature on the components and objects of aesthetic experience, along with design aesthetics, the codes were supplemented with additional codes based on the content to form the coding scheme.

Table 1: Denotative Representations of Art Festivals' Aesthetic Design

Category 1. Representations of concepts (290)			
Aesthetics representations directly displaying the idea through orginal designs or creations.	1	Logo	152
	2	Typography	61
	3	Color Scheme	55
	4	Slogan	22
Category 2. Representations of lifestyles (150)			
Aesthetics representations indirectly mediating the idea based on the redesign of object images or elements.	5	Interaction	51
	6	Family and Friendliness	43
	7	Daily Moment	34
	8	Ongoing Daily Life	22
Category 3. Representations of attractions (177)			
Functional representations directly displaying the idea through oringinal designs or texts.	9	Celebrity	52
	10	Performance	50
	11	Artworks	35
	12	IP	26
	13	Food	8
	14	Sports	6
Category 4. Representations of existing views (133)			
Functional representations indirectly mediating the idea based on the ready-made elements and sites.	15	Natural Landscape	59
	16	Cityscape	44
	17	Cultural and History	30

This category resulted in 17 non-mutually exclusive types of design symbols (Table 1). From a design perspective and in association with previous research on analysing aesthetics in design (Folkmann, 2010), these 17 types of signs were theoretically categorised into four thematic categories as follows:

1) Representations of concepts: Aesthetic representations directly display the idea through original designs or creations.
2) Representations of lifestyles: Aesthetic representations indirectly mediate the idea based on the redesign of object images or elements.
3) Representations of attractions: Functional representations directly display the idea through original designs or texts.
4) Representations of existing views: Functional representations indirectly mediate the idea based on the ready-exist elements and sites.

3.3 Semiotic Analysis of Connotative Representations

Semiotic analysis and content analysis share the same goal of describing denotative meaning. While content analysis aims to analyse and categorise the materials from a specific respect, semiotic analysis focuses more on individual cases and can provide an in-depth description of meanings. It is concerned with uncovering the underlying structure of meanings and identifying the code and patterns in a sign system (Echtner, 1999). The connotative signs

complement the denotative signs. The interpretation of the connotative signs provides a deeper understanding of the message art festivals wish to convey to the audience.

Following Echtner's guidelines (1999), this study selected Kulangsu, a small island in Southern China, as a system of signs for semiotic analysis. Kulangsu serves as a prime example of utilising art festivals as placemaking tools to activate the local place. It has initiated a series of combined art festivals in the past three years (2021-2024), and it is still ongoing to this day. These combined art festivals usually include creative markets, performances, lectures, exhibitions, and co-creation with the local residents.

4. Interpretive Analysis and Results

Each festival organiser displays roughly the same form and content elements on the homepage of their Xiaohongshu accounts. The basic information about the organisers and the post showcasing the art festival's activities each comprise about fifty per cent of the screen size. Most of the account's avatars are branded with the festival's logo. The account profile is below the avatar and username. Some organisers also customise the background image to enrich their brand image. The consistent identity of the visual appearance and communication is one of the vital points for the success of the process in an event design. Nearly seventy per cent of the festivals have their own brand logo, and some have designed typography, colour schemes, and slogans. These representations of concept reflect the self-reflexive 'aesthetic function' adding to the appearance of art festivals (Folkmann, 2010). The physical construction of landmarks, heritage sites, and nature landscapes becomes secondary and subordinate to their online presentation.

Traditionally, it was thought that aesthetic experience was incompatible with everyday life, as it was seen as transcending the everyday. However, the Arts and Crafts movement in 19th-century socialism, John Dewey, and the avant-garde movement of the early 20th century all attempted to integrate art and life, aesthetic experience and everyday experience (Ingarden, 1961). It cannot be argued that the idea of such efforts to bring art and life closer together has a certain utopian flavour (Gumbrecht, 2006). The everyday aesthetic can refer to acknowledging daily moments, such as the morning coffee, the evening sunset, the play with pets, or the scrawl on the street corner (Melchionne, 2013). From this perspective, we can see the linkage between the festival's themes and daily life. 'Interaction' is one of the most prominently expressed symbols in the images and texts of festivals, especially small, community-based local festivals. Leveraging casual elements as signifiers, these festivals attract visitors seeking respite from routine existence, offering a glimpse into an idyllic world through themes like "weekend outdoor play," "vacation," "where to go," "pet," "relax," and more.

Figure 2: Promotional Materials of 1st and 3rd What's Art Festival in Kulangsu
(Source: https://www.xiaohongshu.com/user/profile/638998240000000023028998)

According to the profiles provided by the organisers, apart from the Guangzhou Illustration Art Festival and the Shanghai International Art Festival, which are large-scale comprehensive art events, about a quarter of the festivals are either local place-making activities in locations or bottom-up platforms for artists' networking. The organisers of the latter are mainly artists, designers and art amateurs. They are adventurous, interested in art and cultural narratives, and passionate about revitalising local culture (Cameron & Coaffee, 2005). They want to uncover overlooked cultural nuances, use their expertise to promote artistic change and embrace innovation and collaboration. Take Kulangsu Island (Gulangyu in Mandarin), a small island in Fujian Province in southeastern China, for example. Over the past two years, a series of place-making experiments have been carried out on this small island in the form of art festivals, including What's Arts Festival, Happy Together Kopi & Arts Festival, Back to Kulangsu, Gulangyu Poetry Festival, and more. All of these events were held at Kulangsu Art Park. The upcoming third What's Art Festival at the end of 2024 consists of six units (Figure 2). According to the event's poster, each unit is illustrated with objects from everyday life, which reflects the blending of art with aesthetics and everyday life. Like the words used in the titles of these events, "What is", "back", "together", this series of events attempts to create a sense of accessibility, familiarity, and common sense for the audience. This differs from the elite artistic taste that comprehensive festivals try to present.

5. Conclusion

As global urban environments increasingly embrace festivities, there arises a need for a more comprehensive exploration of contemporary festivals, their mechanisms, outcomes, and impacts (Finkel & Platt, 2020). The image of the art festival provides hybrid aesthetic imagery of everyday experiences, daily moments, and pleasant experiences. In contrast to top-down art festivals primarily serving as city branding initiatives, community-centric arts festivals emphasise elements of everyday life. The theme and identity of art festivals are

starting to focus on the everyday aesthetic experience, including ordinary, daily life, domestic, and routine (Nedelcu, 2014).

By titling this study "Language of Desire," This study draws inspiration from Forty's seminal work "Objects of Desire" in design history. Art festivals nowadays embody multifaceted expectations—building local brand identity, showcasing exquisite artworks, promoting creative works, revitalising public spaces, and offering temporary respite from the mundane.

The limitation of this study is that it does not analyse aesthetic experience as an ongoing process. Within the aesthetic experience, experience flow consists of temporal and spatial perspectives. The sense of other feelings, such as touch, smell, and taste, also should be included in the analysis of aesthetic experience. Future research needs to explore the process by which the festival experience flows from online to offline, as well as investigate and compare participants' perceptions to add additional perspectives in order to develop models of inclusive festival design.

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Social Media Dynamics in Indonesian Politics:
Social Media Political Marketing and Branding in the 2024 Presidential Elections

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Abstract

Following the conclusion of Indonesia's 2024 presidential election, social media's role as a crucial tool in political marketing has become even clearer. With Indonesia's vast online population, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, who comprised over half of the electorate, social media platform especially Instagram served as essential channel for candidate engagement and voter influence. This study investigates how presidential and vice-presidential candidates utilized this platform to shape political branding and connect with diverse demographics. Applying a framework focused on emotional, experiential, and personal branding, this research examines the effectiveness of each candidate's digital strategies in cultivating voter loyalty and engagement. Analysis of post-engagement metrics reveals that candidates who leveraged emotional appeal, interactive experiences, and relatable storytelling saw the highest levels of engagement, which likely contributed to their influence on younger, digitally-active voters. The findings offer insights into the role of social media in the final outcomes of the 2024 election, demonstrating how digital communication strategies shaped voter perceptions and reinforced political identities. This study contributes to the field of political social media marketing by highlighting social media's expanded role in electoral influence within Indonesia's digital era.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Political Branding, Elections

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Introduction

In recent years, social media has become a transformative force in the political arena, providing an influential platform for political marketing and branding. Indonesia, with its vast and active social media user base, exemplifies this shift. Approximately 185.3 million Indonesians are connected to the internet, with nearly 139 million actively engaging on social media platforms. This expansive online audience has spurred political candidates to adopt social media as a primary campaign tool, especially as the nation approaches the pivotal 2024 presidential election.

The 2024 Indonesian presidential race represents a strategic shift in campaign approaches, as candidates increasingly depend on digital platforms to engage a diverse electorate, especially Millennials and Gen Z, who make up over half of the voter base. These platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok, enable political figures to directly communicate with potential supporters, shape public opinion, and foster a politically active online community. Scholars have noted that political social media marketing, also described as political marketing on social media, involves the strategic use of digital platforms to create, convey, and deliver advantages for stakeholders (Tuten & Solomon, 2014). This approach aligns with previous studies by Bolde and Dalrymple (2016) and Hultman et al. (2019), who emphasize the influence of political social media marketing on shaping voters' attitudes and behaviors through targeted messaging and brand-building strategies.

Through effective political social media marketing, candidates can go beyond traditional campaign methods, as social media offers not only a space for sharing information but also for constructing compelling political identities and brand images. According to Tuten & Solomon's framework, political social media marketing enables candidates to create brand resonance and emotional connections, which are critical to cultivating voter loyalty. Building on these insights and the theoretical foundation provided by Tafesse & Wien (2017), this study investigates the content and engagement strategies employed by Indonesian presidential and vice-presidential candidates. By analyzing categories such as emotional, experiential, and personal branding, this research explores how these strategies shape public perceptions and align with the values and aspirations of Indonesia's younger electorate.

The objective of this study is to examine the digital branding techniques of each presidential candidate, with a focus on engagement metrics and the effectiveness of specific content types in influencing public opinion. This research aims to illuminate the broader role of social media in contemporary political marketing, particularly its influence on voter behavior and electoral outcomes in Indonesia.

Method

This paper seeks to demonstrate how all candidates utilize social media as tools for political marketing, with a particular emphasis on platform usage, user engagement, and a content analysis categorized by brand post types. Social media activity from the accounts of all three presidential and three vice-presidential candidates was monitored and collected using Fanpage Karma, a web-based social media analytics tool that identifies key topics and trends across industries by analyzing social media data. The data collection period began from the official announcement of each candidate's run until the end of the campaign on February 13, 2024.

This study utilizes a social media content analysis approach, guided by the branding framework developed by Tafesse and Wien (2017), to assess the digital strategies employed by the 2024 Indonesian presidential and vice-presidential candidates. Tafesse and Wien's framework categorizes social media content into 12 brand post categories: emotional brand posts, functional brand posts, educational brand posts, brand resonance, experiential brand posts, current events, personal brand posts, employee brand posts, brand community, customer relationship, cause-related brand posts, and sales promotions. Each category offers insight into distinct aspects of political branding that candidates use to shape their public image and connect with voters.

The analysis specifically targets posts with the highest Engagement Rate (ER) across major social media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube. Engagement Rate, a metric capturing total interactions (likes, shares, comments) in relation to audience size, serves as a vital indicator of the effectiveness of each branding strategy in engaging voters and building loyalty. From a dataset of 11,886 posts across all platforms, the top 10 posts from each platform, ranked by Engagement Rate, were selected for detailed analysis. This approach enables a focused examination of the content that generated the strongest voter response, providing insights into the strategies most effective in driving engagement and resonance.

Each selected post is analyzed and coded according to the branding category it most closely aligns with, providing a comprehensive view of the strategies that drive high engagement. By categorizing posts based on Engagement Rate (ER) and branding type, the study assesses the impact of each strategy on voter engagement and brand loyalty. This categorization provides insights into the specific types of messages and approaches that resonate most effectively with the Indonesian electorate, especially among the digitally active Millennial and Gen Z demographics.

This framework enables a nuanced understanding of how candidates utilize social media not only as a communication platform but also as a tool for building a distinct and engaging political brand. By examining the strategic deployment of each branding type and its impact on engagement, this study contributes valuable insights into the role of social media in modern political campaigns.

Findings

1. Engagement Rate Data Analysis

Millennials and Generation Z represent a significant portion of the electorate for the 2024 election, collectively constituting 56.45% of the total voter population. Specifically, Millennials account for 33.60% (approximately 66.8 million individuals), while Generation Z comprises 22.85% (around 46.8 million individuals). Consequently, this study will primarily examine the engagement and feedback of social media users, particularly those from the Millennial and Gen Z cohorts, regarding the content disseminated by the three pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates. The analysis of the feedback will aim to identify the types of content that are most favored by voters during the political contestation associated with the presidential election and its candidates.

To achieve this, researchers conducted an analysis of the social media presence of presidential and vice presidential candidates. The findings revealed that each candidate

maintains a minimum of five social media platforms, specifically Instagram, Facebook, X, YouTube, and TikTok. Furthermore, it was observed that all candidates not only possess social media accounts but also actively generate content and utilize these platforms as a means of campaigning. The following is the social media account data owned by each candidate:

Table 1: Social Media Account of the Candidates

No.	Candidates	Instagram	Facebook	X	Youtube	TikTok
1	Anies & Muhaimin	@aniesbaswedan & @cakimininow	Anies Baswedan A Muhaimin Iskandar	@aniesbaswedan @MuhaiminIskandar	Anies baswedan Muhaimin iskandar	@aniesbaswedan @MuhaiminIskandar
2	Prabowo & Gibran	@prabowo & @gibran_rakabuming	Prabowo Subianto Gibran Rakabuming	@prabowo @gibran_tweet	Prabowo subianto gibran rakabuming	@prabowosubianto08 @gibran_rakabuming
3	Ganjar & Mahfud	@ganjar_pranowo & @mohmahfudmd	Ganjar Pranowo Mahfud MD	@ganjarpranowo @mohmahfud	Ganjar pranowo MahfudMDofficial	@ganjarpranowo @mohmahfudofficial

Table 2 (a): Engagement Rate Data of All Candidate Social Media Accounts

Social Media	Instagram					X					Tiktok				
	F	R	N	R/F	R/N	F	R	N	R/F	R/N	F	R	N	R/F	R/N
Anies Baswedan	7.336.109	53.872.936	566	7,34	9518 2	5.189.910	8.703.892	787	1.6 8	110 60	2.400.000	32.155.981	457	13	70363.2
M. Muhaimin Iskandar	2.761.171	19.854.179	856	7,190492367	23194	450.238	6.216.116	1.441	1.381	4314	407.900	5.201.639	385	13	13510.8
Prabowo Subianto	0	0	0	0	0	4.770.617	169.237	31	0.04	5459	0	114.123	3	0	38041.0
Gibran Rakabuming	3.726.171	36.884.536	236	9,90	156290	1.397.315	1.950.698	189	1.40	10321	2.900.000	32.202.600	72	11	4472583
Ganjar Pranowo	6.733.082	104.302.139	468	15,490949491	222868	3.589.404	4.809.529	1.116	1.34	4310	7.800.000	19.699.862	308	3	63960.6
Mahfud MD	1.449.070	20.945.049	340	14,45	61603	4.478.277	884.627	45	0.20	19658	274.600	3.249.093	133	12	24429.3
Total	22.005.603	235.858.839	2.466	54	559.137	19.875.761	22.734.099	3.609	18	55.122	13.782.500	92.623.298	1.358	52	657.563
Average	3.667.601	39.309.807	411	9	93.190	3.312.627	3.789.017	602	3	9.187	2.297.083	15.437.216	226	9	109.594
Minimum	0	0	0	0	0	450.238	169.237	31	0	4.310	0	114.123	3	0	13.511
Maximum	7.336.109	104.302.139	856	15	222.868	5.189.910	8.703.892	1.441	14	19.658	7.800.000	32.202.600	457	13	447.258
Std Deviation	2.900.115	36.614.250	293	6	84.123	1.946.636	3.346.818	602	5	5.931	2.952.702	14.607.395	183	6	166.879

F=follower/subscriber, R= total reactions (likes, comments, shares)

N=total number of posts, R/F= Reaction per followers, R/N= Reaction per posts

Table 2 (b): Engagement Rate Data of All Candidate Social Media Accounts

Social Media	Facebook					Youtube				
	F	R	N	R/F	R/N	F	R	N	R/F	R/N
Anies Baswedan	2.096.434	5.368.822	1.250	3	4295	928.000	3.809.908	993	4,11	3837
M. Muhaimin Iskandar	1.126.649	1.334.214	680	1	1962,079412	99.500	236.015	73	2,37	3233
Prabowo Subianto	10.878.768	13.724.881	248	1	55342	47.500	216.745	36	4,56	6021
Gibran Rakabuming	202.598	62.520	25	0	2501	62.300	69.477	8	1,12	8685
Ganjar Pranowo	2.382.246	4.227.544	454	2	9312	2.490.000	1.574.721	287,00	0,63	5487
Mahfud MD	117.486	935.367	285	8	3282	5.780	12.587	114	2,18	110
Total	16.804.181	25.653.348	2.942	15	76.694	3.633.080	5.919.453	1.511	15	27.372
Average	2.800.697	4.275.558	490	3	12.782	605.513	986.576	252	2	4.562
Minimum	117.486	62.520	25	0	1.962	5.780	12.587	8	1	110
Maximum	10.878.768	13.724.881	1.250	8	55.342	2.490.000	3.809.908	993	5	8.685
Std Deviation	4.066.411	5.060.540	432	3	21.017	987.672	1.500.855	376	2	2901

F=follower/subscriber, R= total reactions (likes, comments, shares)
N=total number of posts, R/F= Reaction per followers, R/N= Reaction per posts

Table 2 indicates that all presidential and vice-presidential candidates actively manage their social media presence. The researchers examined five key platforms: Instagram, Facebook, X, YouTube, and TikTok. Across a total of 10 accounts, 11,886 posts were identified as the data population for analysis. The data was subsequently categorized, and the 10 posts with the highest engagement rate from each account on each platform were selected as the sample. This sample was then analyzed using a brand post framework to examine the strategies of political branding and marketing employed by each candidate pair on social media. However, the data collection faced certain limitations; specifically, data from Prabowo's Instagram and TikTok accounts could not be retrieved, likely due to account privacy restrictions.

The available data reveals that each candidate commands a substantial follower base across social media platforms. Among the candidates, Ganjar and Mahfud have the most popular accounts, boasting the highest number of followers or subscribers on YouTube, TikTok, and X. Anies and Muhaimin lead in follower numbers on Instagram, while Prabowo and Gibran hold the highest follower count on Facebook. Despite follower counts exceeding one million on average, this does not consistently translate to high engagement levels. For instance, while Ganjar and Mahfud lead in followers on YouTube, TikTok, and X, they do not receive the

highest total engagement. This suggests a significant relationship between engagement and post frequency. The data shows a linear trend: higher reaction counts—likes, comments, saves, and shares—are correlated with a higher volume of content posted. Thus, while a large follower base is advantageous, active and consistent posting is crucial for achieving strong engagement rates. As this study aims to examine the influence of millennials and Gen Z, who will constitute the majority of voters in the 2024 election, the researcher will concentrate on Instagram for content analysis and brand post categorization. This focus is based on Instagram's popularity as the primary social media platform among the target demographic.

2. Content Analysis and Category Brand Posts Each Candidates

a) Anies Baswedan & M. Muhaimin Iskandar on Instagram
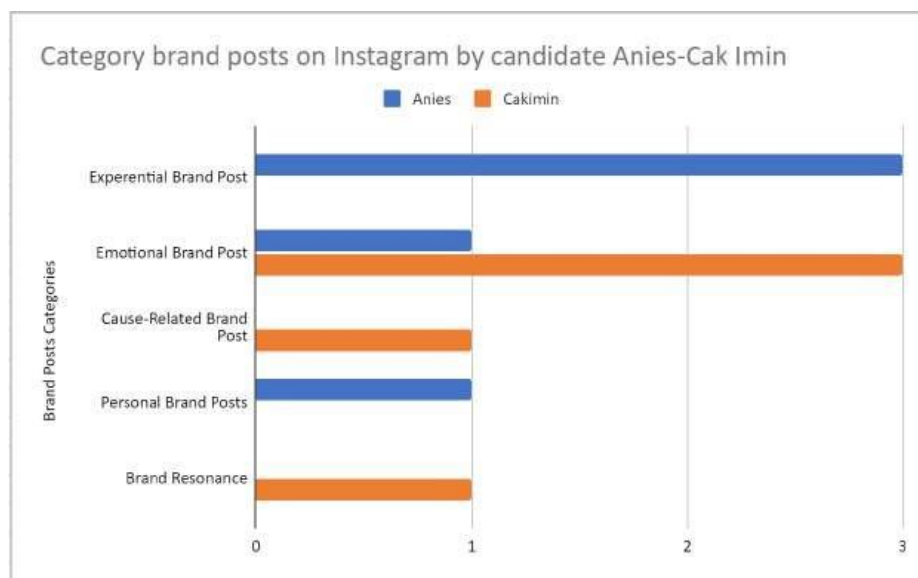
Chart 1: Category Brand Posts on Instagram by Candidate Anies & M. Muhaimin Iskandar

In analyzing the brand posts classification data from presidential and vice presidential candidates Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar (Cak Imin) in the 2024 Indonesian election on the Instagram platform, we can see a variety of strategies implemented through a carefully structured communication approach. Using a framework from Tafesse & Wien (2017), the content uploaded by both partners is divided into categories that reflect various branding elements.
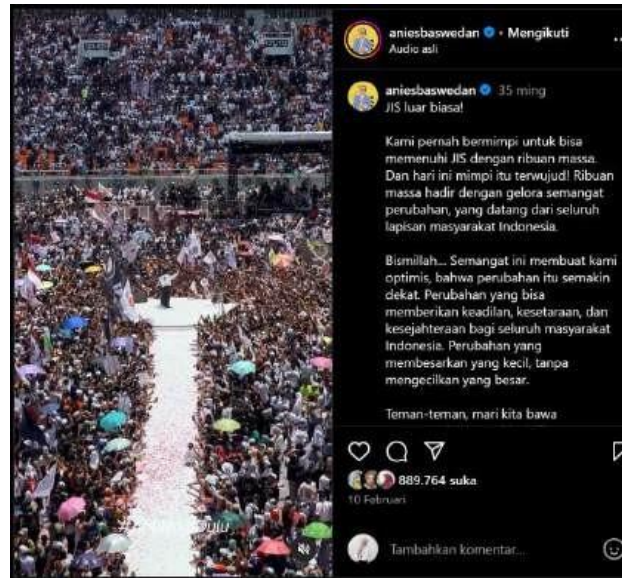
Figure 1: Instagram Posts by Anies Baswedan With the Highest Engagement Rate

In the Experiential Brand category, Anies Baswedan used video reels to show the crowd and enthusiasm of supporters at various campaign events, creating a positive association between the direct experience experienced by the masses and his image as a potential leader. For example, a video showing supporters gathered at The Jakarta International Stadium (JIS) gives the impression of high community involvement, creating an energetic feel that invites further participation. Through this strategy, Anies seeks to instill the idea that his presence in the midst of society reflects a responsive leadership and closeness to the people. The use of hashtags such as #AMINAjaDulu and #KumpulAkbarJIS01 reinforces the message, establishing a collective identity among its supporters.

Meanwhile, in the Personal Brand Post category, Anies uses a personal narrative to connect herself with the audience. For example, a video showing a moment of preparation with the family before voting not only serves to show the humanist side of a presidential candidate, but also awakens a sense of emotional connection with his followers. By emphasizing the values of togetherness and spirituality in her captions, Anies creates a deeper connection with voters, who often value relevant personal stories.

On the other hand, Cak Imin also shows the diversity of strategies in branding, especially with the approach of Emotional Brand Post and Brand Resonance. The content that features his interactions with supporters, as well as emotional moments when meeting other public figures, shows the warm and friendly side of his personality. This is important in building an image of a leader that can be accepted by the wider community. In the context of brand resonance theory, it is closely related to how audiences connect emotionally and cognitively with a brand, in this case a political candidate as a brand.

Figure 2: Instagram Posts by Muhaimin With the Highest Engagement Rate

One of the uploads that attracted attention was when Cak Imin received a LEGO gift from the fans, which was filled with humor and joy, reinforcing the emotional storytelling element and showing the good relationship between them. Cak Imin also adopted the Cause- Related Brand Post, which invites supporters to oversee the election process in a fair and honest manner. This approach not only shows concern for the integrity of democracy, but also encourages active participation from the public. By emphasizing the importance of monitoring the popular vote, Cak Imin succeeded in instilling a sense of social responsibility among his supporters, making them an integral part of the electoral process.

Overall, both aspiring couples successfully leveraged a variety of experience-and emotion-oriented branding strategies, creating a strong bond with their audience through relatable and evocative content. They not only focus on delivering information, but also invite followers to get emotionally involved, making them not just voters, but part of a larger community in an electoral context. Through this analysis, it can be concluded that the utilization of appropriate communication strategies can have a significant impact on public involvement and support for candidates in upcoming elections.

b)   Prabowo Subianto & Gibran Rakabuming on Instagram
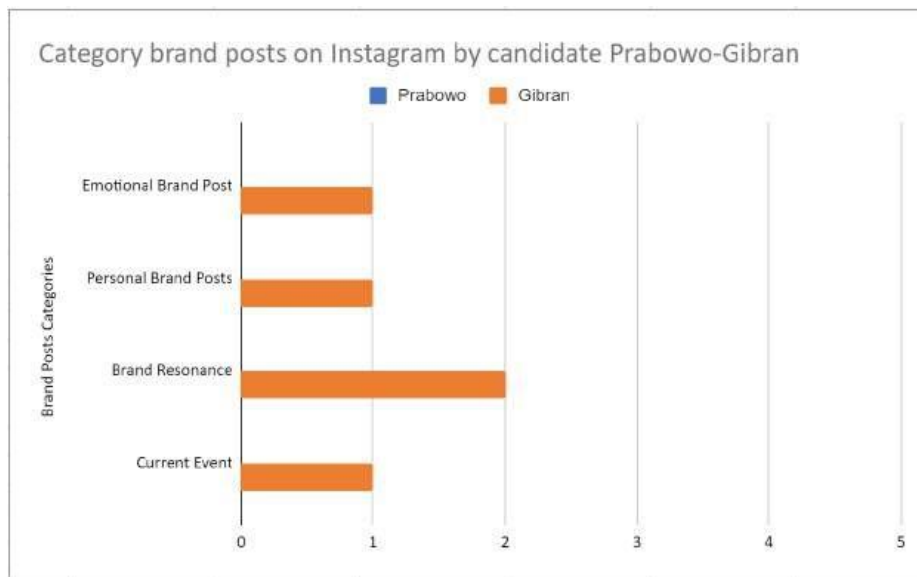
Chart 2: Category Brand Posts on Instagram by Candidate
Prabowo Subianto & Gibran Rakabuming

Analysis of brand posts classification data on Prabowo-Gibran candidate pairs on the Instagram platform shows a diverse approach in utilizing content to reach audiences through Gibran's account.

Figure 3: Instagram Posts by Gibran With the Highest Engagement Rate

The first post was an Emotional Brand Post which showed Gibran being carried by one of his teams. Captions that include elements of humor and emoji aim to trigger an emotional response from the audience. It shows an attempt to create closeness with voters through an entertaining approach, utilizing humor as a tool to attract attention and trigger interaction. This is in line with Tafesse & Wien's explanation that emotions can be an important factor in influencing consumer attitudes and behavior towards brands.

Furthermore, Personal Branding is shown through Gibran's posts interacting with Prabowo. The act of shaking hands and hugging creates an image of a strong and respectful relationship. This content has a deep meaning in the context of leadership, where emotional closeness and interpersonal connections are important. According to Tafesse & Wien, creating a strong relationship between leaders and voters can increase positive perceptions of political brands.

Figure 4: Instagram Posts by Gibran With the Highest Engagement Rate

In the Brand Resonance category, there are two posts featuring Gibran and Prabowo with the theme of patriotism. This post highlights their political brand identity with national symbols, such as the red and white flag and Garuda Pancasila, as well as the slogan "Indonesia Maju."The use of this visual element reinforces their message of vision and commitment to the progress of the nation. This reflects how brand resonance can be achieved by emphasizing common values and aspirations between leaders and voters, as outlined in the theory.

Posts related to the Current Event show Gibran and his wife about to vote, indicating active involvement in the election. Captions that invite interaction about voter participation demonstrate the relevance of the content to the current social context, which is an important element in political marketing. This content creates a space for dialogue and participation, inviting audiences to engage directly in the election process, in line with the idea that content relevance can increase engagement with voters.

Finally, this analysis indicates that Gibran utilizes a variety of communication strategies, ranging from emotions, personal branding, to involvement in current issues, to build a positive image and get closer to voters. In the context of limited data on Prabowo, the focus on Gibran's content still provides a clear picture of how the use of effective marketing strategies can impact the strengthening of political brands in the 2024 elections in Indonesia.

c) Ganjar Pranowo & Mahfud MD on Instagram
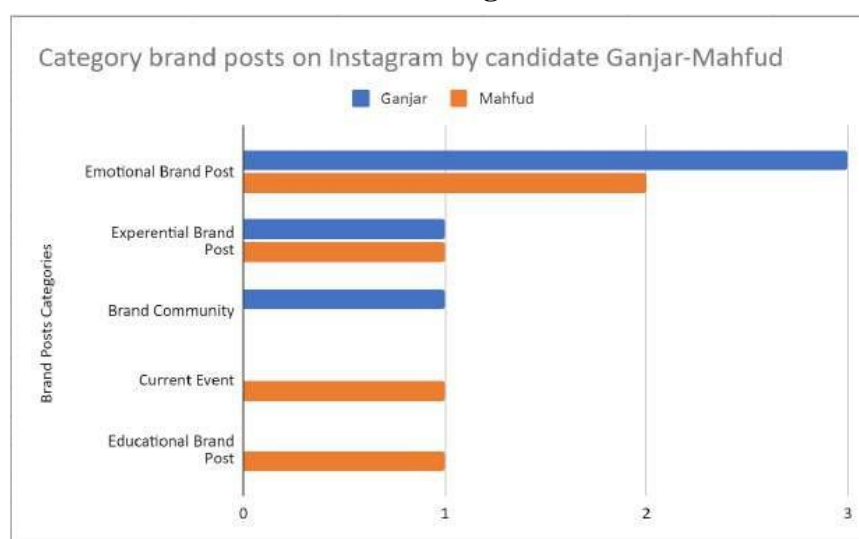
Chart 3: Category Brand Posts on Instagram by Candidate Ganjar Pranowo & Mahfud MD

Analysis of data on brand posts classification on Ganjar-Mahfud's Instagram partner shows a variety of communication strategies that are effective in reaching audiences and creating emotional attachment. Referring to the theory of Tafesse & Wien (2017), we can see that the posts uploaded include the categories Emotional Brand, Community Brand, and Experiential Brand. In this context, posts featuring interactions with influencers, fans and the community serve to strengthen emotional ties as well as create a solid community around the Ganjar-Mahfud brand.

Figure 5: Instagram Posts by Ganjar With the Highest Engagement Rate

One striking example is Ganjar's first post that received the highest engagement, which is a reels video that shows humorous interactions with influencers. This content not only conveys the message of the campaign in an entertaining way, but also creates an intimate and friendly atmosphere. With the use of upbeat dangdut music, this post managed to attract the attention of the audience and evoke positive emotions, in accordance with the brand's Emotional approach.

Figure 6: Instagram Posts by Ganjar With the Highest Engagement Rate

Something similar can be seen in the content that shows Ganjar's relaxing moments with the legendary band, Slank, where a warm and cheerful atmosphere is presented to increase engagement from music fans. Ganjar's interactions with the Slank Music Group in other content demonstrate his success in establishing deep emotional connections, with an emphasis on friendliness and togetherness, which can lead to admiration and affiliation among fans of the band. In this context, captions that emphasize the atmosphere of a" rock and roll lunch " add a relaxed feel, thus inviting more audience engagement.

The use of the Community Brand is also seen in Ganjar's content which focuses on listening to people's aspirations. Through these efforts, Ganjar managed to present himself as a leader who cares about the needs of the community, fostering a sense of ownership and solidarity among his supporters. The use of influencers as messengers is also an effective strategy to strengthen the community around the brand that is built, where social interaction becomes the core of building the brand community itself.

On the other hand, Mahfud MD took the Current Event approach by utilizing the moment of his resignation from the position of Menkopolhukam. The content highlights a significant political transition and communicates its commitment to neutral action, a strategic move to build public confidence ahead of the election. In this case, the communication strategy adopted not only revolves around the emotional message, but also provides relevant and important information for the audience, which indicates consistency and transparency in the campaign.

In another analysis of Mahfud's content, we see Educational Brand Posts that convey wise messages in arguing, arouse the interest of the audience to understand how to communicate well. This shows Mahfud's commitment to not only being a politician, but also as an educator among the public. This approach reinforces Mahfud's image as a figure who emphasizes the values of education and manners in interacting, which can attract voters who value wisdom and Ethics in politics.

Overall, the combination of emotional, informative, and educative political marketing strategies by the Ganjar-Mahfud couple creates a strong foundation for building a positive image in the eyes of the public. By promoting warm interactions, humor, and closeness to the community, they managed to create high engagement and strengthen connections with various segments of voters. This is in line with Tafesse & Wien's theory which emphasizes that emotional attachment in branding can encourage loyalty and support from the audience, which is very important in the context of elections.

Discussion

Analysis of Brand Posts Categories on Instagram
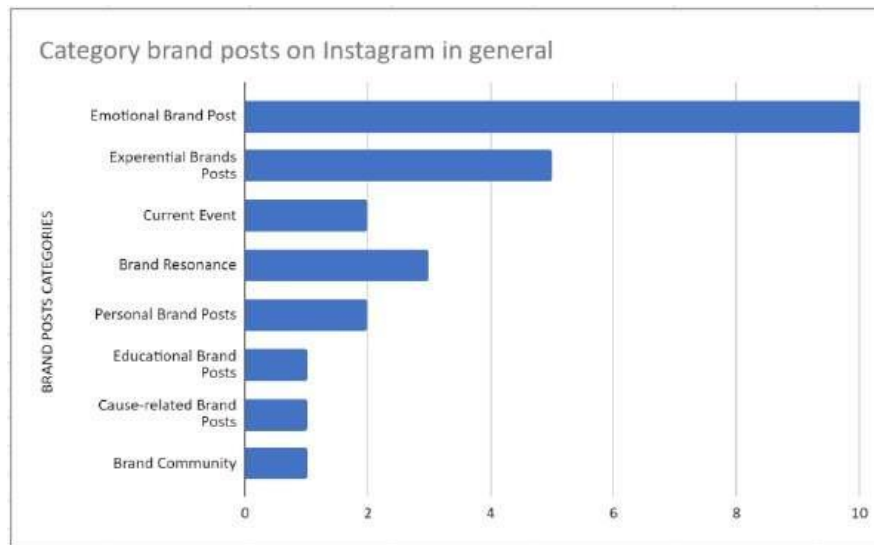
Chart 4: Category Brand Posts on Instagram by All Candidates

Based on the analysis of available data, the social media content of each Indonesian presidential and vice presidential candidate showed different usage patterns in various post categories, according to the concept classification from Tafesse & Wien (2017). The content is taken from each candidate's personal Instagram post, except for Prabowo, whose data cannot be accessed due to limitations of tools and account privacy policies.

In the Emotional Brand Post category, the majority of candidates focus on building emotional connectedness with their audience, highlighting aspects of feelings such as pride, love and hope. A total of 10 of the 25 Posts analyzed fall into this category, where candidates such as Ganjar, Cak Imin, Gibran, and Mahfud use content that emphasizes emotions to strengthen relationships with supporters.

Meanwhile, the Experiential Brand Post category provides direct experience to followers through powerful visuals. Anies and Ganjar utilize these categories to create interactive experiences, such as sharing moments of meeting with a particular group. Candidates also use the Brand Resonance category, which emphasizes the identity relationship between the brand and the audience. Cak Imin and Gibran often display identity symbols to build long-term trust with the audience.

On the other hand, the category Personal Brand Post shows the personal side of the candidate, such as daily life and personal experiences, which Anies and Gibran use to show that they are individuals with experiences that voters can relate to. Mahfud tends to stand out in the Current Event and Educational Brand Post categories, using an informative approach to educate audiences and respond to actual issues, which adds to his credibility.

From the results of this classification, it can be concluded that most candidates rely on Emotional Brand Post as a way to build emotional closeness, but each candidate has a varied additional focus: Anies and Ganjar on Experiential Brand Post, Cak Imin and Gibran on Brand Resonance, and Mahfud on more educational and informative content. Uniquely, although the majority of candidates use Emotional Brand Post as the main strategy, variations in the use of

other categories indicate the uniqueness of each candidate. For example, all of Anies ' top uploads are reels, indicating a focus on dynamic video content, while Gibran's top uploads are dominated by more static photos. Ganjar, Cak Imin, and Mahfud have a mix of video reels and photos, reflecting a balanced strategy in the use of various media formats. Overall, this classification shows that despite the similarities in basic strategy, each candidate has a unique approach to utilizing content categories to strengthen political image and audience engagement.

Further analysis in terms of post types, video reels dominated as the most popular format among all candidates, including Anies, Ganjar, Cak Imin, and Gibran. Video formats, especially those that include emotional moments or are related to important events in a campaign, tend to generate higher engagement. For example, Anies ' campaign reels with captions on the theme of experience (experiential brand) achieved 13% engagement, while Ganjar's slide photos depicting moments of togetherness with the people had slightly lower engagement, at 15.7%. Entertaining short Reels, such as rewarding collaborations with celebrities, can generate up to 23.12% engagement. This indicates that dynamic and memorable content is more attractive to Instagram users. Second, the use of captions also affects engagement. Captions that are narrative and personal tend to increase closeness with the audience, as seen in Anies ' post about preparing for the vote with her family, which achieved 10% engagement. On the other hand, although short captions like Gibran's (only with emojis) seem simple, the combination with strong images, such as a photo of him shaking hands with Prabowo, was able to generate high engagement (50.75%).

The use of hashtags plays a role in building brand awareness. Consistent hashtags such as #AMINAjaDulu and #indonesiamaju are quite effective in increasing engagement, although the number of hashtags does not always determine success. In Anies ' post about the campaign on JIS, despite the many hashtags used, engagement remained high due to the strong main message and quality of the content. The use of catchy or provocative video titles, such as" Wakanda no more, Indonesia forever "by Anies or" rock and roll lunch " by Ganjar, managed to attract the attention of the audience, thereby increasing engagement. Conversely, more formal titles, such as the one Mahfud used for his resignation, tend to generate lower engagement, even if the content is relevant. Furthermore, the strategies that each candidate uses can be differentiated. Anies prioritizes an emotional approach and direct experience with the public. Ganjar often uses collaborations with celebrities to create entertaining content. Cak Imin relied on religious messages, while Gibran maximized the use of strong symbolic and visual images. Overall, a combination of strong visual content, personal narratives, and emotional or entertaining moments proved to be key in increasing engagement in candidates ' social media campaigns on the instagram platform.

Conclusion

This study reveals the pivotal role of emotional branding in the social media strategies of Indonesian presidential and vice-presidential candidates during the 2024 election. Among the analyzed posts, the Emotional Brand Post category emerged as a dominant approach, with the majority of candidates, including Ganjar, Muhaimin, Gibran, and Mahfud, focusing on fostering emotional connections with their audiences. By leveraging themes of pride, love, and hope, candidates successfully built a sense of closeness and loyalty, demonstrating the effectiveness of emotionally resonant content in political branding. This emphasis on emotional appeal underscores the value that candidates place on connecting with voters on a personal level, reinforcing shared values and aspirations.

Further analysis of content types revealed that video reels were the most popular and engaging format across all candidates. Candidates such as Anies, Ganjar, Muhaimin, and Gibran frequently used video reels, particularly those featuring emotionally charged moments or significant campaign events, to capture the attention of their audiences. This preference for dynamic video content highlights the format's ability to generate higher engagement, likely due to its capacity to convey emotions vividly and provide an immersive experience for viewers. Such insights underscore the importance of video content in digital political campaigns, especially as candidates seek to stand out in a crowded social media landscape.

However, this study faced several limitations. Data access restrictions posed by the tools used and the account privacy settings limited the scope of data collection, impacting the comprehensiveness of the analysis. Additionally, the study was confined to a specific time frame, which may not fully capture the evolution of branding strategies throughout the entire campaign period. These limitations suggest that the findings may only reflect a snapshot of the candidates' social media strategies.

Recommendations for future research include expanding the scope of analysis to cover not only the personal accounts of candidates but also the accounts of campaign teams and affiliated influencers. Analyzing these additional accounts would provide a more holistic view of the political branding ecosystem and reveal the broader network of digital actors involved in campaign efforts. Such an approach could offer deeper insights into the collaborative dynamics between candidates, their teams, and third-party supporters in shaping public perception and voter engagement.

In sum, this study highlights the strategic use of emotional content and video formats in digital political marketing, underscoring the potential of social media to enhance voter engagement and build enduring political brands. As social media continues to shape the political landscape, understanding these branding techniques becomes essential for comprehending modern electoral campaigns and the evolving relationship between candidates and the electorate.

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The Evolution of Visual Representation of the Body: From Mirrors to Digital Image

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Abstract

This paper argues that as the mediums for observing our bodies evolve from mirrors to analog photography and eventually to digital images, the increasing roughness of these mediums and images leads to a shift in the relationship between individuals and their self-images. This relationship moves from identification to gradual separation, ultimately resulting in rupture and unrooting. With the advancement of media technologies, the visual representation of the human body has undergone significant transformations. This study first explores the development from traditional mirrors to digital images, examining how each medium has shaped our self-perception and influenced cultural and social interactions. Historically, mirrors provided the first medium for self-reflection, profoundly impacting self-awareness and societal norms during the Renaissance. The advent of photography in the 19th century added new dimensions to body representation. The shift to digital images in the late 20th century marked a revolutionary change, characterized by pixelation and computational processes, further distancing the representation from physical reality. This paper focuses on "real-time self-captured images of one's body image" in the digital age, embodying characteristics of both mirrors and digital images. By discussing the medium, image, and body, the study introduces the concept of the "Gray Zone," where boundaries between the body and digital media blur, fostering complex human-machine interactions. Building on Hito Steyerl's "poor image" and "mean image" concepts, this research proposes "Rough Composite Images" to describe modern digital representations' hybrid nature.

Keywords: Visual Representation, Digital Body Image, Gray Zone, Rough Composite Images, Identity

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Introduction

This paaper examines the evolution of visual media under the influence of historical and technological advancements, and assesses how these transformations have molded our perceptions and expressions of body image. Tracing the development from ancient mirrors to contemporary digital technologies, the section aborates on the evolution of mirrors, photography, and digital imagery. It explores the characteristics of these technologies and their impacts on individual self-awareness and social interactions. By investigating these visual tools not only as instruments for self-observation but also as conduits for social and cultural exchanges, the analysis seeks to unveil the role of technology in shaping our visual and self-perceptions. This provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the complexities of body image within visual culture.

Mirror: Fundamental Analogue for Digital Lenses in Representation

As a visual tool for human self-perception, the emergence of the mirror significantly influenced both art and visual concepts. Following the periods characterized by mirrors made of less reflective metal and those used exclusively by the nobility due to their high cost, mirrors became popular among the general populace in the 15th century. This was a time when Europe had perfected the manufacture of flat glass mirrors coated with a tin-mercury amalgam, and glasswork became widespread in German factories (Pendergrast, 2009). During this era, the predominant production was still of small handheld mirrors that enabled individuals to see their own bodies, particularly their faces (Bonnet, 2001, p. 2). This period coincided with the Renaissance, a time marked by the discovery of the human and the rise of humanism. In other words, the Renaissance, characterized by an exploration of humanism and a renaissance of personal identity, coincided with the widespread emergence of mirrors. During this period, individuals began to discover themselves and form their identities through their reflections in mirrors, signifying a significant cultural turn. This turn bore a fundamental similarity to the contemporary digital turn, as both is both involved changes in self-identity through image of self; however, the later tends to move in an opposite direction.

Mirrors were employed to ensure adherence to social norms, and the body was shaped according to these societal expectations. The importance of appearance, the body, and mirrors was consistent, as evidenced by the dandies of the late 18th and early 19th centuries who spent hours before mirrors, refining every aspect of their appearance, where mirrors "defended an art of living that was delicate and free from the social contingencies of work" (Bonnet, 2001, p. 178). From the 17th to the 18th centuries, mirrors transitioned from symbols of aristocratic society to tools for broader societal self-awareness and democratization. The proliferation of mirrors heralded the arrival of the bourgeoisie and a democratic world, while also igniting a deeper pursuit of identity and image. The evolving conditions of sociability and exchange, in turn, fostered a desire for recognition and an overinvestment in the mirror image. Mastery over the reflection was the first phase of a cultural revolution that influenced the relationship between man and image.

Mirrors, as basic devices, have served as visual mediators for an extended period. The way they process images depends solely on their physical surfaces, which must preserve the real world's uniformity in reflections. To achieve this, mirrors need to be both smooth and perfectly flat. Smoothness ensures maximum reflection of light while minimizing absorption and transmission. When light strikes an object, it is partly reflected, absorbed, and transmitted. A mirror-like surface, therefore, should maximize light reflection and minimize

its absorption and transmission. Furthermore, flatness is essential to reduce scattering and slow emissions, which are responsible for distorting reflections into funhouse mirror[1] effects (Encyclopædia Britannica, 1911, pp. 575-577). These physical attributes of mirrors have also become symbols or metaphors in visual culture for mimetic and representational theories, which aim to reflect reality faithfully, objectively, and realistically. From the Renaissance through to Modernism, this fidelity to reality has been a fundamental tenet in painting. Leonardo da Vinci (2012) once stated that a painter's mind should act like a mirror, clear and transparent, accurately reflecting everything before it. In a visual culture dominated by theories of similitude and correspondence, "the fundamental principle of mirror reflection involves the relative consistency between the object, its image, and the viewer's gaze upon that image" (Zhou, 2008), incorporating both appearance and time. Consequently, the connection between individuals and their self-images in mirrors is one of profound identification, or even total confluence, further validated by Lacan's (2014) theory of the Mirror Stage.

Lacan's Mirror Stage theory explores the psychological development of self-recognition, occurring typically between six to eighteen months. In this phase, infants first identify with their mirror image, forming an idealized self (Ideal-I) that fosters self-awareness and autonomy. However, this process also introduces alienation, as individuals misidentify the "Other" in the mirror as themselves. This duality—seeing oneself as both subject and object—splits identity and initiates a lifelong negotiation of self-image. While later scholars have critiqued Lacan, his work remains crucial in understanding the complex relationship between self and image in identity formation.

Analogue Photography

The camera's ability to "see" in an unnatural and variable manner provides a new mode of thinking, distinctly different from mirror. Yet, one challenge persists across both mediums: it remains seemingly impossible to truly see oneself as others see us.

Since the debut of photography in France in 1839, the public's initial enthusiasm centered predominantly on capturing their own portraits, rather than landscapes, still lifes, or animals. For ordinary or impoverished individuals, if granted a singular, cherished opportunity for a photograph, it invariably focused on personal or family portraits—whether full-body images or mere facial close-ups. Having become accustomed to and familiar with their mirrored selves, the mania for seeing their own image through new paths is reignited again. Unlike mirror reflections, which offer a real-time view, photography captures and preserves one's visage from past moments, allowing for the repeated viewing of one's likeness across different times and locations.

Following the camera's invention, Feuerbach (2004) presciently outlined the defining traits of modern and postmodern visual cultures: a pronounced focus on the symbol rather than its referent, a preference for copies over originals, and a belief that representations and phenomena transcend reality and essence. He observed that in this epoch, only illusions were deemed sacred, relegating reality to the mundane. This elevation of illusions and the

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[1] Funhouse mirror, also known as a magic mirror or distorting mirror, refers to a type of mirror designed to produce distorted images. These mirrors are typically curved or shaped in such a way that they manipulate light reflection to create humorous or bizarre visual effects. Such mirrors are commonly found in amusement parks and carnival attractions, where they are used to entertain visitors by transforming their reflections in unexpected ways.

demotion of reality amplified mundanity, making supreme illusions the most overt displays of the mundane.

The digital era's onset has further highlighted these phenomena.

Digital Image

"Smooth curves and continuous gradients are approximated by discrete pixels"
(Mitchell, 1998, p. 5)

In the mid-1950s, led by Russell A. Kirsch, a scientific team from the National Bureau of Standards utilized a basic mechanical drum scanner to transform photomultiplier signals into a 176x176 binary array, subsequently processed by a computer and displayed on an oscilloscope. This marked the beginning of digital information's integration into image composition (Mitchell, 1998, p. 3). Defining traditional photography as images produced through light-induced chemical reactions, by the 1980s, the digital imaging epoch had fully emerged, steadily supplanting traditional photography. Visual culture scholars predominantly recommend distinguishing traditional from digital photography. For instance, Mitchell declared that 1989 heralded the post-photographic era, with digital processes supplanting photography, suggesting that "Images in the post-photographic era can no longer be guaranteed as visual truth—or even as signifiers with stable meaning and value" (1992, p. 57). Digital photography is thus considered a distinct category, not merely an extension of traditional methods (Rodowick, 2007). Comparing this shift to the misnomer of automobiles as "horseless carriages," Mitchell argued that such analogies obscure the significance of this novel informational format. The divergence between analog and digital imagery primarily stems from digital's loss of direct correspondence with depicted objects. Initially, digital photography projects light onto separated photosensitive elements, leaving unfillable gaps (Cubitt, 2006). Subsequently, captured light is fragmented into binary data or symbols, then reconstituted on the screen into images. Mitchell characterized this shift as a move from smooth, continuous representations to discrete ones, employing analogies such as ramps versus stairs and analog versus digital timekeeping devices. Analog photography, viewed under magnification, is esteemed for its fidelity to the depicted objects, including smooth transitions of light and shadow, retaining pristine reality and continuity. In contrast, digital images, composed of finite pixels, reveal their cellular structure when enlarged. Each pixel's color, dictated by limited numerical ranges like 0-255 RGB values, means that digital images possess fixed information, constrained by resolution; enlarging them to pixel level reveals no further details (Mitchell, 1998, pp. 5-6).

Consequently, we transitioned into the era of digital/technological imagery. Beyond the mere surfaces of pixels, digital cameras, computers, and programming have undertaken encoding processes far more complex than those used in mirrors and analog photography, catalyzing a profound shift in both visual concepts and experiences. Technological imagery has emerged as a fundamental means through which we comprehend the world, not only facilitating the transmission of information but also shaping our perception and interpretation of reality (Flusser, 2011). These images are utilized not only as tools for documenting reality but also as mediums through which reality is both created and interpreted. We engage with the world through images on screens, with our own bodies forming the core of our perceptual universe.

The era when cameras frequently met mirrors occurred in the early 21st century, a time when mobile phones lacked front-facing cameras, compelling people to hold their phones in front

of mirrors to capture selfies. This practice led to the iconic phenomenon of flash-induced white light in mirror selfies that became emblematic on the social networking site MySpace between 2003 and 2008 (Mirzoeff, 2016), marking an early public experiment in self-portraiture akin to that of painters. The advent of Apple's iPhone 4 in 2010, equipped with a high-quality front-facing camera, set a trend quickly adopted by other brands, making the mini hand-held digital mirror nearly ubiquitous. Presently, computers/smart phones—devices that reside in our homes, public spaces, pockets, and on our persons—have become pivotal in discussions. They are composed of minute luminous units, pixels, and data, facilitating the observation of our visual self-representation.

Advancements in technology have led to the development of devices equipped with front-facing cameras, computer cameras, and screens that facilitate real-time imaging. These devices amalgamate the characteristics and functionalities previously attributed to separate media used for body representation.

Such devices offer immediate visual feedback analogous to mirrors; they display images that are dynamic and continually updated, thereby appearing more aligned with our perceived reality. They integrate the experiences of "seeing" and "being seen" within the same spatial and temporal framework. Additionally, the adjustability of camera positions allows for viewing oneself from various, often novel, angles.

From the surface of the image, compromised by low-fidelity pixels to ensure rapid transmission, lack the smoothness of mirror reflections, thus embodying the rough texture typical of digital images. As Steyerl (2023) notes, these processed images are imbued with an awareness of "trained technology." Distinct from mirrors, these images not only focus our attention on the immediate physical surroundings but also on how the body relates to its environment, closely resembling photographic representations. They can obscure real environments or employ virtual backgrounds to create unusual spatial perceptions. Furthermore, the digital interface serves as both intermediary and operator, altering images through filters and adjustments.

Regarding temporality, the instances depicted in real-time videos are neither the immediate present nor clearly past; they represent moments slightly delayed, occurring milliseconds to seconds prior. Despite the fluid nature of video images, they can be recorded or captured as screenshots, akin to the functionality of traditional cameras, thus enabling images to be archived and revisited. Observers, while adjusting their appearances, remain cognizant that they are also being observed by others, creating a performative spectacle.

These systems illustrate how visual culture adapts to and integrates technology, transforming the ways in which we interact with and interpret our self-image. The interplay among image, medium, and body has evolved into a complex network of continuous interactions.

Medium, Technical Image and the Roles of Body

With the mediation of technology, the encoding processes carried out by machines increasingly incorporate a "non-human" perspective into the editing of body images, thereby transforming the self's body image into an object that can be observed and manipulated. In this section, I will examine the interplay between the image, media, and body in acts of self-capturing, aligning with Hans Belting's assertion that these three elements constitute the foundation of "every attempt at picture-making" (Belting, 2011, p. 3).

Gray Zone-Medium, and Body as Medium

Vilem Flusser was a pioneer in the field of media theory. His philosophical discourse on media sketches a scenario of human existence within a world configured by media, focusing on pivotal concepts like "tools," "machines," and "programs." Recognized for their foresight, Flusser's theories provide a foundational framework for this section, where I aim to engage with his ideas to foster new reflections, augmentations, and critiques.

In the context of the analog era, mirrors can be considered a "white system" in visual media, as they allow observers to immediately see all manipulations applied to the reflected image. For instance, the yellowing of a copper mirror adds a layer similar to a warm light filter, and distortions like exaggerated shortness or obesity are clearly a result of the mirror's (such as funhouse mirrors) apparent curvature. Conversely, cameras (both film and digital) or imaging systems comprising cameras and computers function as "black boxes"—their image manipulation processes remain hidden. And both, the operator and the machine, are unknown to the viewer of the image.

In *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, Flusser (2000, p. 16) characterizes the 'machine/operator' complex as a black box, and further develops the relationship between the operator and machine in *Into the Universe of Technical Images* (Flusser, 2011, pp. 23-32). According to Flusser, the apparatus can be perceived either as a complex tool or a complex machine. He portrays contemporary society as one dominated by apparatuses, proposing that the inherent programs of cameras or cinematographic devices reflect not only the subjective intentions of the photographer but also the settings and rules of the camera's own programs. This perspective is endorsed here, with an emphasis on the assertion that the outcome of an image is influenced not only by the photographer's intentions but, more significantly, by the design and programs of the camera itself, which determine the possible effects of the images. Additionally, this is particularly apparent in the imaging system comprised of cameras, computers, screens, and software.

The "real-time self-captured images of one's body image" process examined in this study unveils a composite identity: the individual serves not only as the operator—the photographer who manually activates the shutter—but also as an observer of the image, and both the subject and the source of information within the image.

In this particular context, the process reveals a complex identity: the individual is simultaneously the operator—the photographer who presses the shutter, an observer of the image, and the subject and source of the information in the image. This unique context, where the media and subject share a tripartite role, both overlaps with many existing media and digital visual theories and diverges in specific ways. Therefore, it requires further specialized research and analysis.

The first question is, when an individual generates image signals through a series of actions, such as adjusting body posture or device settings, can the operator—oneself—be excluded from the system as a known variable? Alternatively, should the machine solely be regarded as a "black box"? People can adjust image brightness, focus, composition, and even change filters or backgrounds. However, these seemingly subjective adjustments are actually guided by well-trained visual perceptions and consciousness: the "vision" of the machine permeates our eyes, consciousness, and self, thereby influencing our viewing and understanding. Vilém Flusser, when distinguishing the relationships between "human and tool" and "human and

device," noted that in the relationship with devices, the device can perform tasks humans wish to do, whereas humans can only do what the device enables. In this context, humans are merely extensions of the device. I argue that currently, the relationship between humans and devices should not just be seen as an extension of the device but as an interactive network-like system that intricately weaves together the user's operations and the machine's computations.

Thus, even when the operator is oneself, the amalgamation of operator and machine exists in what I would term a "Gray Zone"—simultaneously chaotic and complex. On one hand, the intentions of the operator are partially knowable; on the other hand, the driving forces behind these intentions—shaped by the apparatus's discourse, rules, and broader cultural, historical, and political factors—are exceedingly complex and characterized by unknowability. Meanwhile, within this "Gray Zone," the machine itself acts as a "black box." In other words, within this gray area, participants or observers possess a certain right to know and engage in the process, their actions receiving consent, yet they are unable to discern the entirety of operations or actions.

In the book Evil Media, the term "Gray Zone" is used by media theorists Matthew Fuller and Andrew Goffey (2012) to describe the media conditions of this era. They note that the so-called "gray media," which include databases, collaborative software, and project planning methodologies, are exceedingly common in the world of work and management but are seldom recognized or discussed as media in themselves.

I contend that the "Gray Zone" is also reflected in the blurring of boundaries between the body and media, where the functions and meanings of the body are redefined through technology. The body is no longer a static, passive object but becomes an active participant in information and cultural expression. The body as a medium is evident in three aspects: Firstly, body images transmitted over networks have themselves become a medium, conveying information through visual and symbolic meanings, facilitating communication, and forging social connections. Influenced by technology and media, the body is no longer merely a passive entity that receives external stimuli; it has transformed into an active medium for processing and transmitting information. Secondly, the body serves as a medium for carrying mental images. Hans Belting differentiates between "mental images" and "physical images"—the former being images within the body, the latter being images produced by the body, thus describing the body as a "living medium." Thirdly, to machines, the body acts as a medium because bodily movements and responses can be tracked and transformed into digital data, converting real-world actions into responses in the virtual world.

In the media Gray Zone, comprising operators, machines, and machine designers/program developers, the imaging process becomes a performance of human-machine collaboration. In Flusser's theory, if the presence of machines limits the viewing subject—human viewing—then in "operational images," the viewing subject itself is shifting from human to machine. In this sense, "media" is no longer just an "intermediary" but has become the subject itself.

The traditional concept of visual "representation" aimed at human viewers has undergone a transformation (Shi, 2022). This exemplifies the characteristics of the Gray Zone - it blurs the traditional binary division between subject and object. This division typically defines "media" as an intermediary connecting the "audience subject" with the "image object." I speculate that

the "uncanny" experience arising when confronted with one's own body image is an instinctive negative reaction to being deprived of this "agency."

Rough Composite Image-Technical Image

In Flusser's time, technical images referred to visuals captured through cameras (reproductive optical machines), including photographs and motion pictures, which were distinct from traditional images. With technological advancements, the concept of technical images has expanded to encompass augmented reality and virtual reality technologies (AR/VR), images produced by artificial intelligence, and all automated devices capable of mapping reality, such as X-rays, thermal sensors, and radar. If these categories were once distinctly segregated in the past decade, today, the boundaries between these different types of images have become intertwined within capture and processing equipment. This intermingling has led people to lose the motivation or desire to categorize them, or even the capacity and agency to differentiate them. For instance, without your permission or any action on your part, a smartphone's algorithm might automatically process the data captured by its camera based on accumulated judgments from its database, resulting in an image on your screen that is a blurred mix of past and present realities; or when you enable beauty filters and use virtual backgrounds for video calls or conferences, you do not need to discern which type of technical image is displayed; when you unlock your smartphone using facial recognition technology, although you see no image, the system captures a "hidden image" that includes detailed personal facial information, which you might not recognize even if you could see it. For the most part, we are viewing this new type of roughly mixed "technical image," and the repeatedly revised definitions of "representation" in visual studies seem to lose their significance.

The German artist and theorist Hito Steyerl has had a broad impact on the field of contemporary visual culture through her research on technical images. She has introduced concepts such as the poor image (2009), image spam (2012), subprime image (2023), and mean image (2023). Steyerl employs an essayistic style to describe these concepts, exploring and critiquing how current digital technologies and the data-driven visual culture represented by images shape social cognition, while also revealing underlying ethical and philosophical issues.

The "poor image" is a trade-off where image quality is sacrificed for speed of dissemination and accessibility, yet it has become the norm for the images we view daily. The concept of the "mean image" reveals that images under algorithmic guidance are trending towards homogenization, and behind each image, there are too many intertwined factors that are difficult to isolate. Steyerl notes that contemporary AI-generated images no longer rely on the authenticity of actual objects but are instead created based on probabilities and statistical averages, producing so-called mean images. The term "mean image" is multifaceted, carrying several implications:

The first aspect of the "mean image" relates to statistical averages: these images are generated based on the statistical mean of large data sets, not necessarily corresponding to specific objects or scenes in reality, but representing an abstract, data-driven visual expression. They extract a "mean" image from the data of many individuals, often losing the uniqueness of the individual. Secondly, in a societal context: these images reflect common societal notions or biases. For example, in facial recognition technology, images processed through algorithms may perpetuate stereotypes about certain races or groups. Thirdly, in terms of quality: Steyerl

labels these images as "poor quality," suggesting that they may not have high resolution or visual quality, but stylistically and substantively represent a "mean," or even "mean-spirited," societal viewpoint. Fourthly, in moral or emotional terms: Steyerl criticizes that these images may carry negative moral implications, such as unconsciously conveying discrimination or prejudice against certain social groups. In this context, "mean" also implies a lack of empathy and humanity, as images, through simplification and generalization, overlook the complexity and diversity of individuals. Overall, Steyerl uses the concept of the "mean image" to explore and critique how current digital technologies shape social cognition through universalizing and simplifying means.

"Rough Composite Images" incorporate and embody characteristics of both "poor image" and "mean image," making them suitable descriptors for the majority of contemporary technical images. These images are typically created and disseminated within digital and networked environments and are reconstructed by algorithms. Within this framework, images are no longer direct presentations from a single source, but rather composites of multiple data layers and visual elements. They undergo processes of de-refinement, restructuring, and either active or passive blurring, adapting to the continually evolving technological and aesthetic demands.

The Roles of the Body: Observing and Being Observed

The concept of human subjectivity being diminished under technologically dominated fields was already evident in Heidegger's discourse on technological subjectivity. Paul Virilio (1994), in discussing the relationship between visual machines and humans, begins by quoting painter Paul Klee: "Now it is objects that see me." In the post-human era, the human body has become an object of gaze. Represented by electronic optics, information science, and cybernetics, these "objects" have created a technological field that envelops the human body. The human body cannot exist independently outside this technological field; it is observed, scrutinized, planned, and judged, becoming the "other" within the technological construct. The "foresight" provided by visual machines is central to this dynamic.

Despite the greater editability of digital images compared to analog photography, people's trust in photographic images has already been gradually undermined[2]. Photos no longer represent a true reproduction. Yet, images still easily influence human consciousness—seeing has become more significant than believing. Mirzoeff (2016) cites a notorious example to illustrate this point: in the Simpson case, Time magazine slightly altered Simpson's photo to make his skin appear darker, thereby making him seem more threatening to white readers. This example also shows that body images have consistently been seen as substitutes for identity. From the era of analog photography, when bodily images contained within a few inches of paper represented personal identity—famous nobles were photographed in identity-symbolizing attire with appropriate props; this trend has become even more pronounced in the digital age. On social media, people create initial impressions and engage in social interactions based on the bodily images displayed—these body images have become a substitute for the person themselves, providing information.

According to Husserl (2005), while the bodies in images are not real persons, they have consistently been perceived as substitutes for identity because people still regard them as real

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2 The manipulability of images has always been present; however, compared to the technical challenges and time-consuming nature of fabricating images in traditional photography, digital photography is indeed easier to manipulate—merely involving the reassignment of new numerical values to pixels through a computer.

individuals due to perceptual semblance. It is through this perceptual resemblance that we foster the "phantasy" that the person in the image is the actual person. For humans, "perception is a process in which we acquire visual data, stimuli, and process it for synthesis," rather than "analysis" (Sun, 2019). This is fundamentally different in machine vision, where machines acquire visuals through "recognition" rather than "watching," and the subsequent processing is "analytical"—carried out through binary computations between zeros and ones. When machines then relay these images, obtained in an entirely different manner, back to human sight, friction occurs once again at the site of the body—as the observer.

Conclusion

This paper traces the historical and technological evolution of visual representation, from mirrors to digital images, revealing how each medium has shaped our perception of the self. It argues that as visual mediums advance, the relationship between individuals and their self-images transforms—shifting from a seamless unity to a fragmented and mediated experience, with a trend from identification to a gradual de-identification between people and their represented body images.

Through an analysis of mirrors, photography, and digital images, this study highlights the transition from direct reflection to mediated representation. Each medium contributes uniquely to our understanding of identity, culminating in the digital era where roughness, pixelation, and algorithmic intervention redefine self-representation. The concept of the "Gray Zone" introduces a space where human and machine visions blur, reshaping the dynamics of observing and being observed.

Furthermore, this research builds on theories such as Hito Steyerl's "poor image" and "mean image," proposing "Rough Composite Images" as a framework to describe the hybrid nature of contemporary digital representations. These images, fragmented and reconstituted by algorithms, challenge traditional notions of authenticity and representation.

In exploring these shifts, this work underscores the central role of the human body as both subject and medium. It emphasizes that in a digitally mediated environment, self-representation is not merely a reflection but a complex interplay of observation, manipulation, and perception.

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On the Use of Original Audiovisual Documents and Manuscript to Teach "The Little Prince"

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Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

This article introduces several original documents used to teach French and French Literature to Taiwanese university students. The audiovisual documents were made in cooperation with a female French singer and harp player, a former Taiwanese student who studied French and visual arts, and a Taiwanese teacher. The result of our work is a video with a song, lyrics in French/English/Chinese, and dozens of drawings to illustrate the short movie. The other original documents are manuscripts of *The Little Prince* that were not included in the published version of the novella: two leaves discovered in 2012, notably including a previously unknown character, and a huge manuscript (twice the size of the published version) offered to Silvia Hamilton by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry in New York in April 1943. Silvia Hamilton sold the manuscript to the Morgan Library in 1968. A book including the original leaves and the transcripts was published in 2013. The author of this article studied both manuscripts and published a short journal paper on the 2012 manuscript in 2023; the second paper, on the Morgan Library manuscript, was published in August 2024. Teaching materials are uploaded on a Facebook group ("Creative Teaching"), on the teacher's website, and Moodle. Data is collected from September 2024 to June 2025. Using original documents, such as songs, drawings, short movies, and relatively unknown manuscripts, might increase students' motivation and interest. Moreover, during the class, students will also be invited to write original short stories and make new audiovisual documents.

Keywords: *The Little Prince*, Morgan Library, Manuscript, Saint-Exupéry, Creative Teaching

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Introduction

Facebook was launched 20 years ago, in 2004. While there are numerous academic papers published on the use of learning platforms for language classes (especially English writing and conversation), research on the impact of a Facebook learning group focusing on Western Culture and Literature is scarce. This short article presents some of the posts shared online by the instructor since the beginning of the first semester (September 10, 2024) and notably focuses on creative teaching materials and research concerning *The Little Prince*: a song, drawings, original and little-known manuscripts of the novella. This paper is a preliminary discussion on the impact of Facebook as a tool to provide additional teaching materials outside the classroom in a university in the south of Taiwan. Some data has already been collected and analyzed, but this is a work in progress that will end in June 2025 (two semesters; including Freshmen and Sophomore students from three classes: Children's Literature, French I, and Introduction to Western Literature). The main focus is on *The Little Prince*, but the Facebook group created by the teacher (called "Creative Teaching") also shares posts about Literature in general. Only students from the teacher's classes may join the group. It is not a requirement. As of the end of October 2024, there were 94 members in this group, the instructor included. The data is based on information collected in the Facebook group; the teacher will later ask students to fill out a questionnaire and will analyze his teaching evaluation at the end of each semester. Data also includes a comparison with posts uploaded on LinkedIn and in the teacher's public Facebook group called "Sci-Fi and Fantasy". All the students who joined the "Creative Teaching" group also joined this group. Later, the teacher will also compare the impact of the information shared on the Facebook private learning group with posts uploaded on the E-learning platform Moodle.

Literature Review

Using social media may help measure students' learning progress and have a positive impact on their motivation. Cain and Policastri (2011) note that "while traditional face-to-face instruction offers numerous advantages for learning, it is constrained by time and space." The situation now is much better than during the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, there might be various reasons why classes are canceled: two times since September 2024 in our Adolescent and Children's Literature class because of typhoons and one time due to the celebration of National Day (October 10). Creating a Facebook group to provide additional teaching materials and posts related to Literature may mitigate the loss of several hours of class and keep students motivated. Ocaña et al. (2021) insist on the importance of "a clear presence of a teacher to create an environment where students feel motivated to share knowledge"; there is a "growing need for informal learning opportunities." Alm (2018) proposes that "language educators… should start acknowledging and encouraging the out-of-class language engagements of our students and design learning activities that allow learners to draw on their experiences as language users" (p. 17).

Most studies in this field focus on language learning, notably on English writing or conversation. For example, Andini (2019) analyzes the contribution of a Facebook group on writing in Indonesia. The study shows that students like to use the group to do brainstorming activities and to think critically. Peer feedback increases their motivation and helps them find ideas during the writing process. Rajagopal and Shah (2021) show that "Facebook is an effective and easily accessible tool" that encourages English language learning in ESL classrooms (p. 1345). Ravindran, Ridzuan, and Wong (2022) "investigate the impact of social media in the teaching and learning of speaking skills of EFL students" (p. 1); the study

"points to the positive impact and the benefits of using social media for speaking classes despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic" (p.8). Islam and Sakib (2024) show that students favor Facebook (wall, messenger, groups) more than YouTube for learning and academic activities, such as "attending online classes, communicating with class teachers and classmates, collecting information about the class and exam schedules, uploading, downloading, and sharing academic materials, participating in group discussions…" (p. 95).

The instructor could not find any studies on the impact of a Facebook learning group on courses of Literature, apart from a paper published by the teacher himself: Montoneri (2015) analyzes the impact of a private teaching group in a class of European Literature in Taiwan. The sample was much smaller as only 14 students were selected. By comparison, the present research includes 93 students and shares creative posts and the instructor's publications on *The Little Prince*.

Methodology and Data Collection

The Data Source

This study focuses on Freshmen and Sophomore students is a university in Tainan (the instructor was hired in August 2024). The main data comes from the Facebook private group created by the teacher, which provides feedback (likes, views, comments), beginning September 2024. Data will be collected during the entire academic year (two semesters: September 2024-January 2024 and February-June 2025). Members of the private group are all students. Participation is optional. All the students already have a Facebook account. Students who accepted to join this group also joined the teacher's public group ("Sci-Fi and Fantasy"). All the posts and comments are in English.

Empirical Study

The private Facebook group was created on September 3, 2024, before the beginning of the first semester, which started one week later. This group shares posts on *The Little Prince*, but also on Children and Adolescent Literature, French Language and Culture, and Introduction to Western Literature.

Preliminary Results

By October 31, the group had 94 members (teacher included). The biggest growth occurred at the end of September. There were 87 members on October 4 (graphic 1 below). The teacher told all the students that he was doing research and using data from the group and that results would be anonymized; joining the group was not a requirement. Students could choose to be friends with the teacher on his Facebook page. He would then invite them to join the group. They could still decide to join the group or not. They were also invited to join the teacher's public group called "Sci-Fi and Fantasy" (224 members as of November 03, 2024). This public group shares the instructor's publications and posts on science fiction, time travel, and fantasy in literature and cinema. For example, a post on September 20 introduces Hans Zimmer and his music, (53 views, 9 likes). Anybody may join this group, but more than half of the members are teacher's students.

Graphic 1: Facebook Group, Number of Members Since 2024/09/03

Graphic 2: Facebook Group, Active Members in October

According to the above graphic, 91 members were active in October (3 Oct 2024 - 30 Oct 2024). Activity was at its highest on October 3 and on October 29 (33 each). On October 2, a post on Pinocchio was read by 78 members (11 likes, teacher included). The second most viewed post was on October 5: a post on Marco Polo with 67 views and 11 likes (teacher included). *The Little Prince* song was seen by 42 members and liked by only 2, which is disappointing.
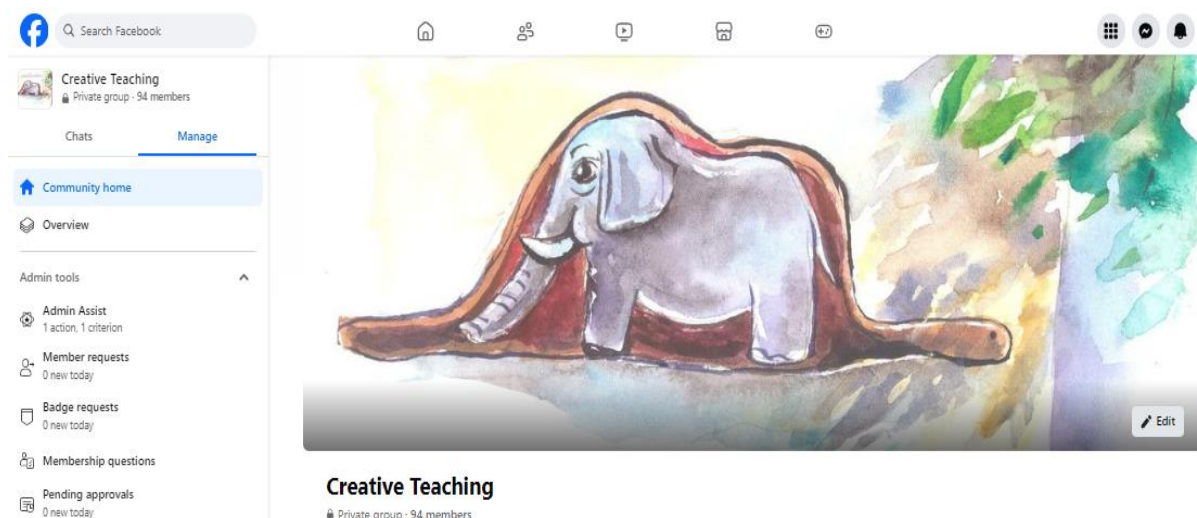
Picture 1: Facebook Creative Teaching Group. 94 Members

The cover picture is a drawing made by Ms. Jessie Chen, the teacher's former student, on *The Little Prince* (a boa swallowed an elephant and has the shape of a hat; reference to chapter 1 of the novella). The drawing was uploaded on September 3.
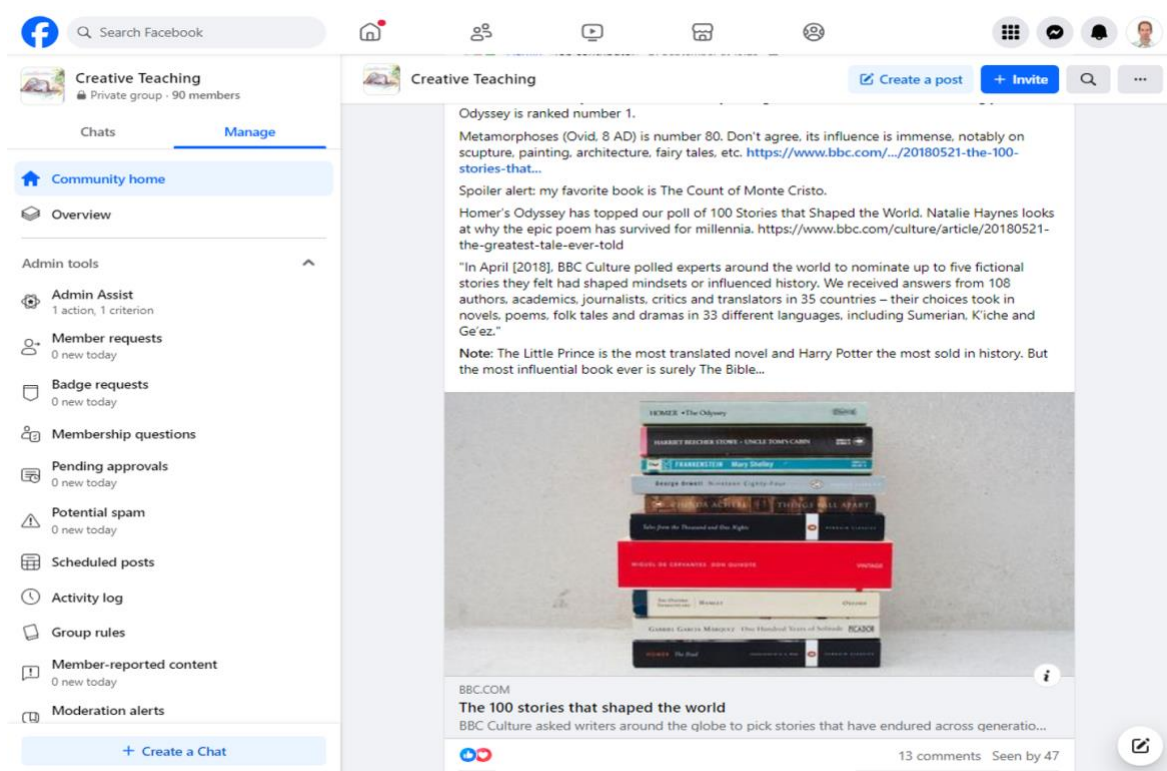
Picture 2: FB Group. Post on "100 Stories That Shaped the World"

So far, this post (picture 2) is the most successful in terms of interaction, with 13 comments (September 21; 47 views, 8 likes). Some students shared their preferences in literature. One student wrote that their favorite book is *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo.
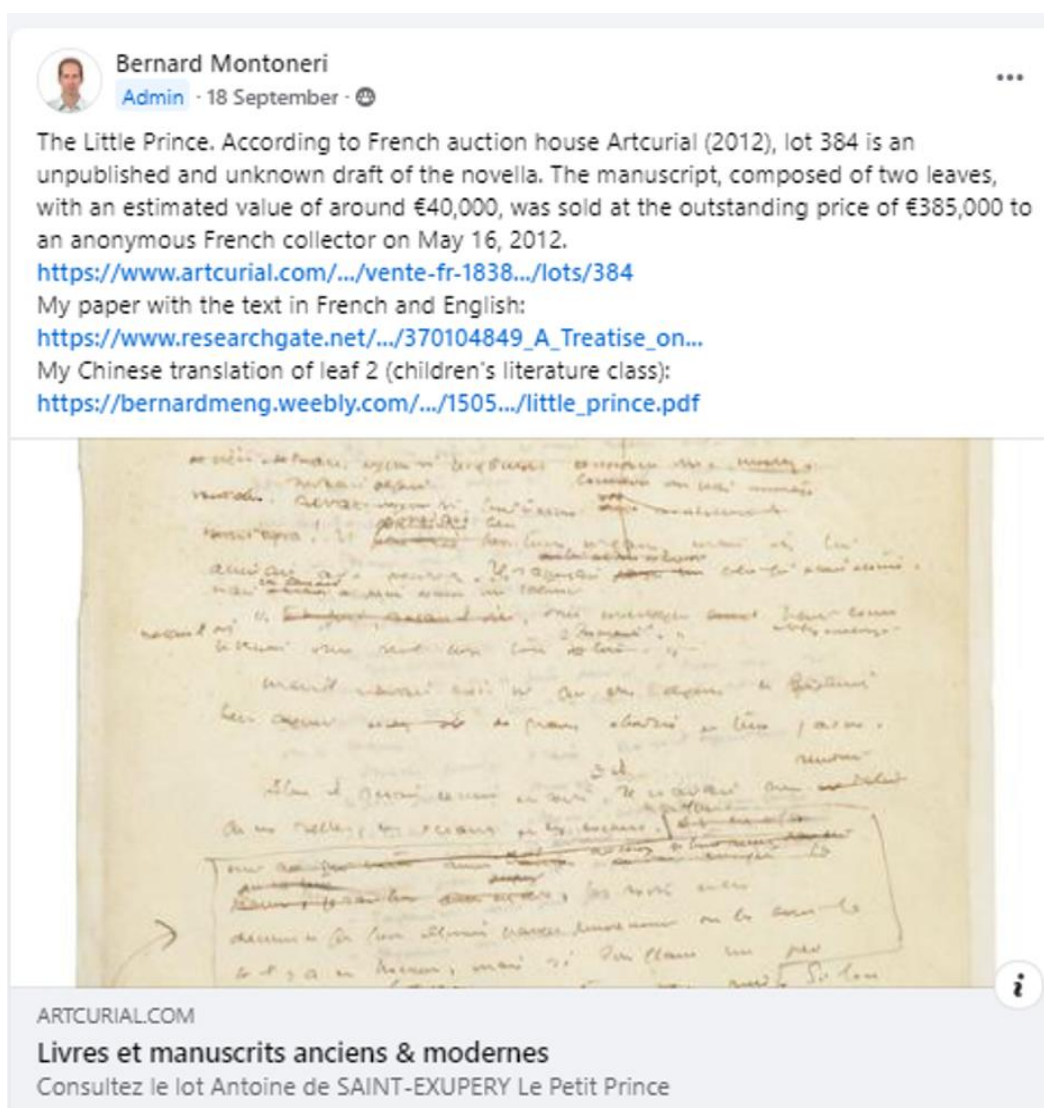
Picture 3: Post in the Facebook Group on September 18, 2024

Picture 3 is a post by the instructor at the beginning of the semester. It was viewed by 36 members of the group. It shares links to two leaves of *The Little Prince* discovered and sold in 2012 to an anonymous French collector. The post also shares the teacher's journal paper (Montoneri, 2023), which analyzes the two leaves. The second leaf is entirely new: it is a dialogue between the little prince and a man who is looking for a six-letter word beginning with a G that means gargling (very probably "guerre", war in English, showing the author's antiwar stance, despite his willingness to fight).
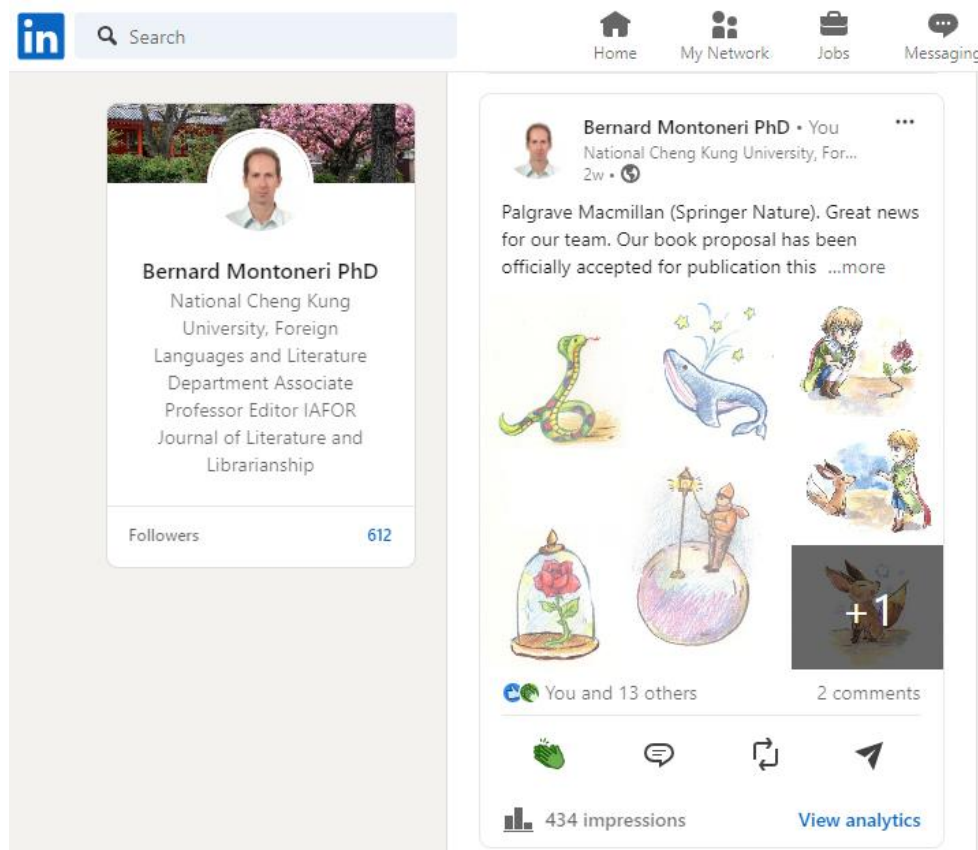
Picture 4: Post on LinkedIn October 16, 2024

The teacher also used LinkedIn to share information and posts about his research and *The Little Prince*: Picture 4 shows that this post was viewed by 434 and liked by 14; two comments. This is much more than in the Facebook group. However, the teacher has 612 followers on LinkedIn versus 94 members in the Facebook group. LinkedIn followers are more likely interested in research and publications: the teacher shared that he signed a contract with Springer Nature to edit a book in 2025 titled "Writing, Retelling, and Critically Reading Children's and Young Adult Tales". The teacher will write one of the chapters that will focus on the Morgan Library (New York) manuscript of *The Little Prince*. The teacher's former student in his French class made the drawings above (uploaded on Facebook and LinkedIn with her permission).
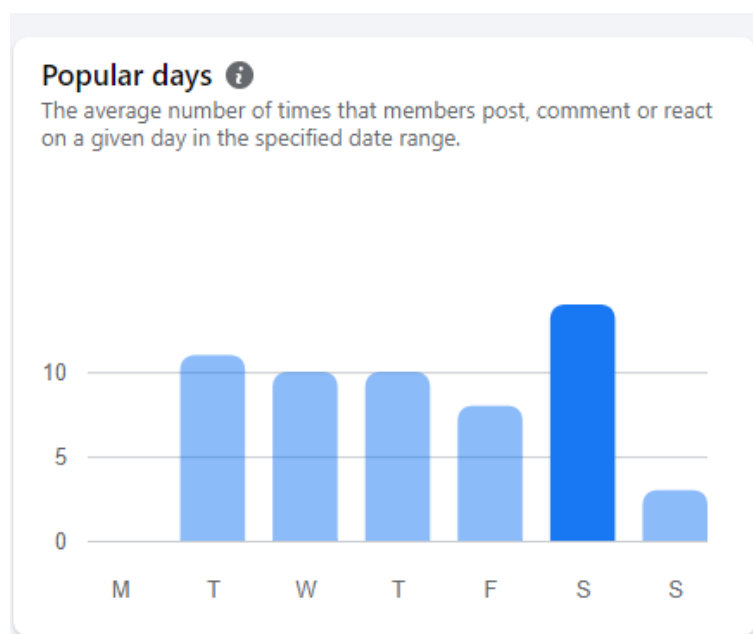
Graphic 3: Facebook Group, the Most Popular Day for Posts, Shares, and Likes

According to the above graphic, it seems wise for the teacher to post more on Saturday. There is more interaction on that day ("The average number of times that members post, comment or react on a given day in the specified date range" for Saturday is 14), but there is almost no interaction on Sunday (three) and Monday (zero).

Conclusion and limitations

There are several differences between this research and Montoneri (2015): first, the size of the sample is bigger than in the previous study conducted almost 10 years ago (93 instead of 14); nevertheless, it is still difficult to generalize the preliminary findings presented in this short article.

Second, many of the posts are original teaching materials created by the teacher, one former student, and a colleague. The instructor also shares his research and publications on *The Little Prince*, notably two studies on original manuscripts of the novella (Montoneri, 2023; Montoneri, 2024). Third, this research not only analyzes interaction in the Facebook private group ("Creative Teaching"), but also compares feedback concerning the instructor's teaching materials posted on his public group ("Sci-Fi and Fantasy"), and on the university E-learning platform Moodle (same students). A comparison with identical posts uploaded on LinkedIn is also presented to evaluate the feedback of the instructor's LinkedIn followers who are mostly teachers and scholars. They appear to be more interested in posts sharing the instructor's research and publications.

So far, the number of students' comments is relatively small. It is a challenge to motivate them to participate more and to express their ideas and opinions online. Surprisingly, Monday is not a good day to make posts, probably because most students in the classes don't have courses on that day and often take transportation to go back to university (long weekend). There is more interaction and feedback on Saturday and Tuesday. Most of the data is yet to come: a webpage is under construction regrouping all the teaching materials, all the publications, and all the creative documents made by the instructor concerning *The Little Prince*. Information about his page will be posted on social media. Moreover, one week after

the submission of this paper, students will pass the mid-term exams. They will also have to submit an essay and pass the finals. Later, they will be invited to answer a questionnaire and at the end of each semester, the instructor will receive his teaching evaluation. All this data will be analyzed during the summer of 2025.

Acknowledgments

Appendix

Update before submission, November 12, 2024

As of November 11, there are 96 members in the Facebook group, the teacher included. The instructor created a webpage on November 11 at the following address: https://bernardmeng.weebly.com/little-prince.html

The webpage shares information about *The Little Prince*, including the instructor's teaching materials, publications, around 40 drawings, songs, PPTs, and links. A post was uploaded on LinkedIn the same day to share the news. The same post was shared on Tuesday in the Facebook group because, as we saw in graphic 3, there is a higher chance to reach the members of the group on that day (even though this is mid-term week). The webpage contains the teacher's publications on *The Little Prince*, notably Montoneri (2024), and shares the link to The Morgan Library & Museum manuscript. On November 12, the same post was also shared in the "Sci-Fi and Fantasy" group. It is too early to know the impact of this webpage. As usual many people read posts, but very few like them.
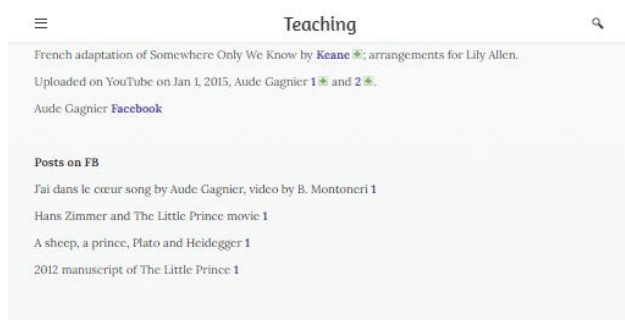
Picture 5: Part of Teacher's Webpage on the Little Prince. November 12, 2024

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Social Media Use and Body-Shaming as Predictors in Possible Development of Muscle Dysmorphia Symptoms Among Filipino Bodybuilders

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Abstract

Muscle Dysmorphia, a sub-type of Body Dysmorphic Disorder, is influenced by biological, psychological, cognitive, and sociological factors. This study explored the predictive effects of social media use and body shaming on muscle dysmorphic symptoms among non-clinical Filipino bodybuilders. It examined the prevalence and relationships between these variables. Using General Linear Model Regression analysis, social media appearance preoccupation had a coefficient of 0.036 ($p = 0.001$). In contrast, body image shaming had a coefficient of 0.037 ($p = 0.004$), both indicating significant effects on the development of muscle dysmorphic symptoms. The intercept was significant (coefficient = 1.012, $p = 0.000$), representing baseline symptom levels. Prevalence analysis revealed that 45 out of 100 respondents scored 3.50 or higher on the Muscle Dysmorphic Disorder Inventory, yielding a 45% prevalence rate of muscle dysmorphic symptoms within the community. Spearman Rank Correlation analysis showed a moderately positive and significant relationship between social media use and muscle dysmorphic symptoms ($rho = 0.400$, $p = 0.000$) and a weak but significant positive relationship between body shaming and muscle dysmorphic symptoms ($rho = 0.387$, $p = 0.000$). Social media use and body shaming also had a weak positive correlation ($rho = 0.356$, $p = 0.000$). These findings support the rejection of the null hypotheses, demonstrating that social media use and body shaming are significantly related to the development of muscle dysmorphic symptoms among Filipino bodybuilders, with both factors contributing to symptom prevalence and relational dynamics. The study highlights the importance of addressing these influences to mitigate adverse psychological outcomes.

Keywords: Muscle Dysmorphia, Body Image, Social Media, Body Dissatisfaction

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Introduction

In recent years, ideal body image and body dissatisfaction have become common issues in the 21st century, especially with the increased use of social media and its heavy influence among its users. A previous study conducted by Manago et al. (2015) found that Facebook usage for both men and women predicted objectified body consciousness, decreased sexual assertiveness, and body shame. However, there is no significant difference in gender found in the association between sexual assertiveness and body shame. On the other hand, Griffiths et al. (2018) suggested that higher usage of photo engagement on social media sites such as Snapchat, Facebook, and Instagram matched more significant body image concerns and muscularity dissatisfaction among men. On the other hand, numerous epidemiological studies have shown consistently that many, if not from most industrialized nations, younger women are at least moderately dissatisfied with their shape or body weight (Mond et al., 2013). Previous studies on body dissatisfaction have focused mainly on the female population and largely unrecognized body dissatisfaction in the male population (Quittkat et al., 2019).

Muscle Dysmorphic Disorder is known as a sub-type of Body Dysmorphic Disorder, which, for many individuals, is not a common psychological disorder, unlike Major Depressive Disorder, Anxiety Disorders, or obsessive-compulsive disorders. However, Muscle Dysmorphia shares the same nosology as obsessive-compulsive disorder. In Clinical Psychology, most studies have investigated Body Dysmorphic Disorders but not Muscle dysmorphia. Unlike Body Dysmorphia, which is only concerned with body parts such as limbs, torso, the color of the skin, or hairs, individuals with Muscle Dysmorphia focus on their muscular build, size, and fat distribution in their bodies. Muscle dysmorphic disorder is influenced by different factors, such as biological, psychological, cognitive, and sociological factors, with much research already being investigated.

Moreover, the risk factors are already identified, such as traumatic childhood experiences and other environmental factors. However, social media and body shaming influences are still unexplored for many researchers as to whether these factors may predict the development of muscle dysmorphia symptoms among Bodybuilders. However, many studies reported that Bodybuilders are at risk of developing muscle dysmorphia due to the nature of their environment. In addition, upon investigating several meta-analyses and peer-reviewed articles from both local and foreign, there are only a few studies conducted on Filipino Bodybuilders with muscle dysmorphia symptomatology. Specifically, there is a lack of studies on muscle dysmorphia in the Philippines. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study that will be conducted about Muscle Dysmorphia in the country.

The prevalence of muscle dysmorphia in the mainstream population is still inconclusive due to the limited number of studies (Bo et al., 2014; Tucker et al., 2011). Due to small sample sizes, researchers still need more data to generalize results to the public. Unlike Body dysmorphic disorder, which already presents an adequate amount of data available for researchers, studies in MD are lacking and limited only to the Western population and less to Eastern countries like the Philippines. Moreover, there is a lack of literature studies on the male population of bodybuilders and whether body shaming and direct social media use can predict the development of Muscle Dysmorphia symptoms in non-clinical samples of Filipino Bodybuilders.

The researcher's interest in this study is due to their relatedness to the phenomena (i.e., working out or going to the gym), except the experience of social media use or body

shaming, but rather the experience of other male bodybuilders. The study argues that social media use, especially in the dimension of appearance-related and online appearance and self-representation on the internet and the dimensions of body shaming experiences such as negative evaluation of other people and negative self-evaluation, are critical in the prediction of the development of muscle dysmorphia symptoms among non-clinical populations of Filipino Bodybuilders.

The study employed a sequential explanatory mixed methodology with quantitative and qualitative elements. For the Quantitative Phase, the study investigated the effects of Social Media Use and Body Shaming as predictors of Muscle Dysmorphic symptoms among Filipino bodybuilders. Specifically, it aims to: a. Identify the demographic profiles of Filipino bodybuilders, including age, gender, training experience, workout type, workout goal, steroid use, and reason for going to the gym; b. To predict the effects of social media use and body shaming on the development of Muscle Dysmorphic symptoms among Filipino bodybuilders, c. Determine the prevalence of Muscle Dysmorphic symptoms within the Filipino bodybuilding community and d. Assess the relationship between social media use, body shaming, and the development of Muscle Dysmorphic symptoms.

In addition, For the Qualitative phase, the study will explore the lived experience of Filipino Bodybuilders with their use of social media and their Body-shaming experience as predictors of possible Muscle Dysmorphia symptoms. Specifically, it aims to answer one central question: a. How do Filipino bodybuilders describe their experiences with body shaming and social media use? I. How do Filipino bodybuilders explore their experiences with social media? II. How do Filipino Bodybuilders describe their challenges in experiences with Body Shaming? III. How do Filipino bodybuilders experience and understand muscle dysmorphia?

Theoretical Framework

Social Comparison Theory

Social Comparison Theory was developed by an American Social Psychologist, Leon Festinger (1954); the SCT states that a person tends to evaluate and compare himself to others by comparing one's abilities, skills, traits, and others. In this manner, a person uses other people's characteristics as a benchmark for one's performance (Festinger, 1954). Hypothesis 1 states that it is a human drive to evaluate his abilities and opinions compared to others. Hypothesis 2 states that a person evaluates his abilities by comparing them with other people's abilities and opinions. Hypothesis 3 states that a person tends to compare oneself with some other specific person, and this decreases the difference between his opinion or ability and one's increases (Festinger, 1954).

This theory explains how a person develops muscle dysmorphia symptomatologies by comparing himself to unrealistic beauty standards in men, for example, below 8% body fat, a v-shaped body, less body fat than average, and more significant muscular proportion. In achieving the ideal body, bodybuilders may adopt the upward comparison by comparing their bodies to other bodybuilders with good physiques they see on social media. However, the more significant the gap, the more a person is motivated to pursue the ideal physique. If left unchecked, a comparison leads to excessive workout and dieting to achieve the physique. Comparison via social media exacerbates the symptoms of MD because of comparing oneself to unrealistic body standards seen online, and these negative self-evaluations can lead to

extremes of dieting and workout. They may end up destroying a person's mental and physical well-being.

Self-Objectification Theory

In addition, the Self-objectification Theory was developed by Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts. The theory states that both genders assume an antagonistic third-person perspective towards oneself, such as men and women putting a significant value on how they see their worth as how they look to other people rather than what they can do or feel. An objectified body is a controllable, malleable, and measurable body. By treating and viewing themselves as sexual objects, it is asserted that both genders act as observers in the prediction of being judged by other people. Therefore, the body becomes a position that needs improvement and attention in keeping track of one's body to manage objectification (Calogero, 2012). In this manner, the view of a person towards himself is critical in that his self-esteem is also at risk of degradation. Self-consciousness is prevalent in an individual when he aims to objectify himself. For instance, self-consciousness is described as vigilance in one's outward body appearance and excessive monitoring. This persistent monitoring of his body is called self-surveillance, also called body surveillance, and it embodies the manifestation of behavior self-objectification (Calogero, 2012).

Self-objectification theory can help explain the phenomenon that male bodybuilders aim to improve their bodies to achieve lean, muscular, and bigger bodies. For instance, this behavior towards their body stems from their poor self-esteem and the tendency to objectify themselves and to impress people on social media by working out and dieting in extreme ways to achieve their ideal bodies. Bodybuilders believe that they have control over their bodies. At the same time, it is contrary that their irrational thinking is in control of their behavioral action to achieve impossible feats of the human bodies that result in dire consequences in physiological and psychological domains such as failure of the endocrine system and the possibility of developing muscle dysmorphic disorder. Bodybuilder places importance on other people's thinking rather than how they value and understand the motivation why they improve their bodies in the first place. What matters to bodybuilders is how they impress people on social media rather than impressing themselves, which leads to more dissatisfaction and a tendency to destroy one's body using substance abuse such as anabolic-androgenic steroids, extreme dieting, and working out.

Methodology

The study employed a mixed methodology with quantitative and qualitative elements. This methodology provides a better analysis of critical data and creates themes. In addition, the researcher posits that mixed methodology is a suitable method to explore and explain the phenomena of the study and the objectives. The methodology utilized the sequential explanatory design. The first phase was the quantitative method, in which the researcher collected and analyzed the data using General Linear Model Regression to predict the relationship of the variables. In the second phase, the qualitative method is utilized. Participants are purposively selected using data from the Quantitative Phase, and strict criteria are used to screen participants for the interview session. Thematic Analysis creates themes based on the participants' lived experiences.

Research Design

General Linear Model Regression Analysis was employed to examine the relationship between social media use, body shaming, and muscle dysmorphic symptoms. This approach models the dependent variable (muscle dysmorphia symptoms) as a linear function of two predictor variables: social media use and body shaming. The method quantifies how much each predictor contributes to the variance in muscle dysmorphia symptoms, using R-squared values to measure this variance. Additionally, interactions between predictor variables were analyzed to understand contextual variations in their influence on muscle dysmorphia.

A Thematic Analysis Approach was used to explore participants' qualitative data. This method identified patterns and constructed themes from transcribed interview data. The Analysis followed a structured process: transcription and data cleaning, coding to generate initial labels, categorization into sub-themes, and final theme identification. Two external auditors reviewed the coding process to ensure reliability. Thematic Analysis provided in-depth insights into participants' experiences, exploring the complex interplay between social media, body shaming, and muscle dysmorphia symptomatology.

Data Gathering Procedures

The study targeted gym populations in Metro Manila, specifically in Quezon City and Manila City, to capture the diversity of social contexts. A survey questionnaire was distributed to selected local gyms in these areas. Publication materials with a QR code were posted in gyms, with permission from gym managers, to invite participation. The materials provided details about the study and outlined participant criteria. Participants accessed the survey by scanning the QR code linked to a Google Form. The questionnaire began with demographic questions (e.g., age, diet, and training history) to ensure eligibility, followed by the Muscle Dysmorphic Disorder Inventory, the Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale (SMAPS), and the Body Image Shame Scale (BISS). At least 100 participants were recruited, which aligns with previous research by Baxter-Cox (2019), which indicated that a sample size of 100 is adequate for meaningful Analysis in gym-based studies. Data collection was optimized by visiting gyms during peak hours to increase engagement and ensure a representative sample within the study's time constraints.

For the qualitative phase, a purposive sampling method was used to select 6-10 participants for in-depth interviews. These semi-structured interviews aimed to gather detailed, rich data about participants' experiences within the gym culture and their perceptions of social media and body image. The sample size was based on recommendations from studies such as Baxter-Cox (2019), which found that a small, homogeneous sample provided sufficient detail for understanding individual experiences, and Brohede et al. (2016), which used a similar approach for studying body dysmorphic disorder experiences. This ensured data saturation while preserving the depth of individual narratives.

Data Measure

The Muscle Dysmorphic Disorder Inventory, developed by Hildebrandt, Lagenbucher, and Schuldnt, is a 13-item self-report scale measuring symptoms of muscle dysmorphia, such as excessive exercise and body image disturbance. It employs a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) to evaluate three factors: Functional Impairment ($\alpha = .80$), Drive for Size ($\alpha = .85$), and Appearance Intolerance ($\alpha = .77$). The

overall internal consistency of the scale is α = .81, with test-retest reliability of r = .87. A cutoff score of 39 points is used to identify significant symptoms.

Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale (SMAPS), developed by Zimmer-Gembeck, Hawes, and Pariz (2021), is an 18-item scale assessing appearance-related social media activities. It has two subscales: Appearance-Related Activity (α = .87) and Online Appearance and Self-Presentation (α = .91). Responses are collected on a 7-point Likert scale, from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree), with scores averaged for each subscale. Example items include statements about engagement with fitness-related content and self-comparisons on social media. The Body Image Shame Scale (BISS), developed by Duarte et al. (2014), is a 14-item self-report scale measuring body image shame. It comprises two dimensions: internalized shame (self-negative evaluations) and externalized shame (concerns about others' judgments). The scale uses a 4-point Likert scale from 0 (Never) to 4 (Almost Always) and demonstrates high internal consistency (α = .92).

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to explore the experiences of participants in-depth. Three experts in psychometrics and language validated the guide to ensure appropriateness. Interviews were conducted in English, Tagalog, or Taglish (a mix of English and Tagalog) to accommodate the linguistic preferences of Filipino participants.

Mode of Analysis

For the Quantitative phase, the study utilized General Linear Model Regression to analyze the relationship between the independent variables (social media influence and body shaming) and the dependent variable (muscle dysmorphic symptomatology). This technique enables the prediction of the outcome based on linear relationships between variables. The Analysis also incorporates the Coefficient of Determination (R-squared) to measure the variance explained by the independent variables. This method provided insights into how much social media use and body shaming contribute to the development of muscle dysmorphia symptoms.

For the Qualitative phase, a systematic coding process was used to analyze qualitative data from transcribed interviews. Responses were organized in an Excel spreadsheet, and the researchers independently generated and validated initial codes. The coding process involved categorizing responses into selective codes and refining these into themes. Any discrepancies were resolved through consensus among researchers, and the final list of themes was reviewed to ensure consistency.

An audit trail was maintained to ensure the transparency and reliability of the research process. This included documenting all methodological decisions and maintaining records such as transcripts, raw data, reflexive journals, and field notes. The audit trail followed a structured six-phase process (Nowell et al., 2017): a. Familiarization with Data: Researchers immersed themselves in various data sources, including transcripts and multimedia, to understand the study's context; b. Generating Initial Codes: Extensive coding knowledge was used to interpret and simplify transcribed data. Codes were organized in an Excel spreadsheet, with two external auditors enhancing credibility and reducing bias, c. Searching for Themes: Finalized codes were collated to develop potential themes. The researchers systematically sorted and formulated these themes, d. Reviewing Themes: Coded data were refined and reviewed for emerging patterns. Any uncoded or irrelevant data were reassessed or discarded, with themes undergoing continuous refinement, e. Defining and Naming Themes: Themes were named and defined clearly to convey their underlying narratives. An

external auditor with expertise in thematic Analysis reviewed the themes to ensure accuracy, e. It was producing the Report: The finalized themes were incorporated into the research report, supported by excerpts from the data and relevant literature. Member checking was conducted to validate interpretations and strengthen the study's credibility.

Ethical Approval

Before conducting the study, the researcher submitted the necessary documentation to the UST Graduate School Review Ethics Committee, including the Form 4 Application for Ethics Review of a New Protocol, the study protocol, and the Informed Consent Form. Approval from the University's Research Ethics Committee (REC) was obtained, allowing data collection.

Confidentiality

Participants received an Informed Consent Form detailing the study's purpose, procedures, confidentiality measures, and potential risks and benefits. This form, included in the manuscript appendices, ensured that participants were fully informed before consenting. Anonymity: After participation, researchers debriefed participants, emphasizing the anonymity of their contributions. Pseudonyms or labels were assigned in place of real names to protect identities. Data Security: Data were safeguarded using secure, password-protected databases stored on personal computers rather than cloud platforms, minimizing the risk of information breaches. During the quantitative phase, electronic survey forms (e.g., Microsoft Forms or Google Drive) prevented paper misplacement and data leakage. Upon data collection completion, all responses were downloaded, stored securely, and deleted from the online forms. Qualitative data, including voice recordings and thematic Analysis, were similarly secured.

Vulnerabilities and Risk Mitigation

The study recognized the potential vulnerabilities of male bodybuilders, particularly those susceptible to muscle dysmorphia. Identified risks included discussions of sensitive topics, such as body image, social comparisons, dietary practices, training intensity, steroid use, setbacks, and overtraining, which could trigger anxiety, self-doubt, or emotional distress.

Empathetic Approach: Researchers maintained a non-judgmental and empathetic attitude when discussing sensitive subjects. Strict confidentiality protocols were followed to reassure participants of their data security. Emotional Support: Participants were referred to professional counseling services if discussions evoked emotional distress. Researchers closely monitored participants' well-being and conducted regular debriefing sessions to address discomfort. Participants had the right to withdraw at any point without negative consequences, and their decisions were respected.

Results and Discussions

Quantitative Findings

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Group	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-25 y/o	79	79.0%
26-33 y/o	9	9.0%
34-41 y/o	9	9.0%
42-49 y/o	3	3.0%
Total	100	100.0%
Sex		
Male	100	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%
Training Experience		
1-3 years	74	74.0%
3-5 years	14	14.0%
5-10 years	5	5.0%
More than 10 years	7	7.0%
Total	100	100.0%
Workout Type		
Bodybuilding	100	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%
Workout Goal		
To lose weight	34	34.0%
To maintain weight	31	31.0%
To gain weight	35	35.0%
Total	100	100.0%
Steroid Use		
Taking Steroids	5	5.0%
Not Taking Steroids	95	95.0%
Planning to take Steroids	5	5.0%
Not Planning to Take Steroids	74	74.0%
May take Steroids	21	21.0%
Primary Reason for Going to Gym		
For Health	46	46.0%
For Aesthetic	44	44.0%
Part of the Training Regime	10	10.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Table 1 shows the demographic profiles of Filipino bodybuilders, including age, gender, training experience, workout type, workout goal, steroid use, and reason for going to the gym. For the age, 79 out of 100 respondents are from 18 to 25 years old, nine respondents are from 26 to 33 years old, nine are from 32 to 41 years old, and three are from 42 to 49 years old. In terms of sex, all 100 respondents are male. Regarding training experience, 74 respondents have only 1 to 3 years of experience. Fourteen respondents have been training for 3 to 5 years, five respondents have 5 to 10 years of experience, and seven respondents

have more than 10 years of training experience. For the workout type, all 100 respondents were training for bodybuilding. In terms of workout goals, 34 respondents are training to lose weight. Thirty-one respondents train to maintain weight, and 35 are to gain weight. When it comes to steroid use, there are only five respondents who are currently taking steroids, and 95 respondents are not. Five respondents are planning to take steroids, 74 respondents have no plan on taking them, and 21 respondents may take them. Lastly, in terms of their primary reason for going to the gym, 46 respondents said it is for their health. Forty-four respondents said it is for aesthetics, and ten respondents said it is part of their training regime.

Table 2: Effects of Social Media Use and Body Shaming on the Development of Muscle Dysmorphic Symptoms Among Filipino Bodybuilders

Variables	B	SE	Wald $\chi2$	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Intercept	1.012	0.0456	492.786	0.000	H0 rejected	Baseline level
Social Media Appearance Preoccupation	0.036	0.0104	12.043	0.001	H0 rejected	Significant
Body Image Shaming Scale	0.037	0.0131	8.084	0.004	H0 rejected	Significant

Table 2 shows the effects of social media use and body shaming on the development of muscle dysmorphic symptoms among Filipino bodybuilders, using General Linear Model Regression analysis. The test resulted in the intercept with a coefficient of 1.012 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a baseline level of muscle dysmorphic symptoms when there is no influence from social media appearance preoccupation or body image shaming. For the Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale, the coefficient is 0.036 and a p-value of 0.001, indicating that increased social media usage significantly increases the development of muscle dysmorphic symptoms. In terms of Body Image Shaming, the coefficient is 0.037 and a p-value of 0.004, indicating that experiencing an increase in body image shaming significantly increases the development of muscle dysmorphic symptoms. Overall, this indicates that both social media use and body shaming have significant effects on the development of muscle dysmorphic symptoms among Filipino bodybuilders.

Table 3: Prevalence of Muscle Dysmorphic Symptoms Within the Filipino Bodybuilding Community

Group	Frequency	N	Prevalence
MDDI Mean Score $\geq$ 3.50	45	100	45%
MDDI Mean Score < 3.50	55		

Table 3 shows the prevalence of muscle dysmorphic symptoms within the Filipino bodybuilding community, using the formula $\left(\frac{Number\ of\ Positive\ Cases}{Sample\ Size} \right) * 100.$ There are 45 respondents with a Muscle Dysmorphic Disorder Inventory mean score of greater than or equal to 3.50, indicating positive cases of muscle dysmorphic symptoms. On the other hand, 55 respondents with Muscle Dysmorphic Disorder Inventory mean score of lower than 3.50. These 45 positive cases out of 100 respondents resulted in a 45% prevalence of muscle dysmorphic symptoms within the Filipino bodybuilding community.

Table 4: Relationship Between Social Media Use, Body Shaming, and the Development of Muscle Dysmorphic Symptoms

Variables	N	Spearman's Rho	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Muscle Dysmorphic Symptoms * Social Media Use	100	0.400 (moderate positive correlation)	0.000	H0 rejected	Significant
Muscle Dysmorphic Symptoms * Body Shaming	100	0.387 (weak positive correlation)	0.000	H0 rejected	Significant
Social Media Use * Body Shaming	100	0.356 (weak positive correlation)	0.000	H0 rejected	Significant

Table 4 shows the relationship between social media use, body shaming, and the development of muscle dysmorphic symptoms using the Spearman Rank Correlation test. The correlation between social media use and the development of muscle dysmorphic symptoms was found to have a moderately positive correlation with a rho value of 0.400 and to be statistically significant with a p-value of 0.000. The correlation between body shaming and the development of muscle dysmorphic symptoms was found to have a weak positive correlation with a rho value of 0.387 and to be statistically significant with a p-value of 0.000. Lastly, the correlation between social media use and body shaming was found to have a weak positive correlation with a rho value of 0.356 and to be statistically significant with a p-value of 0.000.

Discussion

The study investigated the impact of social media use and body shaming on the development of muscle dysmorphic symptoms among Filipino bodybuilders, grounded in Social Comparison Theory and Self-objectification Theory. Results highlighted that young male bodybuilders (ages 18-25) with 1-3 years of training are particularly susceptible to these influences. Despite only 5% reporting steroid use, 26% considered or were unsure about using steroids, pointing out the underlying pressures from social media. A previous study conducted by Nicholson (2020) supported the results that there is a significant positive relationship between body image perception, social media engagement, and social comparison tendencies, which suggest high levels of negative body image perception are due to high rates of unfavorable social comparison. Other studies also supported which suggest there is a relationship between body image concerns between upward social comparisons and unfavorable social comparison (Nicholson, 2020; Fardouly et al., 2015; Mulgrew & Cragg, 2017; Van den Berg et al., 2002; Vartanian & Dey, 2013).

Quantitative Analysis revealed that both social media use and body shaming are significant predictors of muscle dysmorphia symptoms. Social Comparison Theory explains how exposure to idealized physiques on social media drives individuals to compare themselves, potentially leading to dissatisfaction and extreme behaviors. Previous studies displayed a possible harmful mix of unfavorable social media comparisons and body dissatisfactions, which results in a downward spiral of potentially harmful behaviors, negative body image, and social comparisons associated with the drive for muscularity and muscle dysmorphia (Schneider et al., 2017; Agthe et al., 2014). Self-objectification Theory suggests that

bodybuilders internalize these standards, focusing on self-surveillance and the perception of their bodies as objects, which intensifies body image issues.

The study found a 45% prevalence rate of muscle dysmorphic symptoms among participants, emphasizing the pervasive impact of social comparison and self-objectification in the bodybuilding community. Correlation analysis confirmed that higher social media preoccupation and body shaming are linked to more significant muscle dysmorphic symptoms. Additionally, social media use correlated with increased experiences of body shaming, reinforcing a cycle of body dissatisfaction. A related study also aligned with the results suggesting that in men who viewed photographs of muscle men, muscle dysmorphic symptoms increased along with the body shaming; it suggests that men who were exposed to body shaming are more likely to engage in activities and behaviors to reduce their body shaming experiences (Wilson, 2010).

Currently, the qualitative phase of this study is still ongoing to explore the lived experience of Filipino Bodybuilders and to describe their experience with challenges with muscle dysmorphia, body shaming, and social media use.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study investigated the effects of social media use and body shaming on muscle dysmorphia symptoms among Filipino Bodybuilders, grounded in Social Comparison Theory and Self-objectification Theory. The study aimed to investigate bodybuilders' demographics, explore the influence of social media and body shaming on muscle dysmorphic symptoms, identify the prevalence rate, and understand the relationship between the predictors.

Findings revealed that young male bodybuilders, around age 18-25 with 1-3 years of training experience, are vulnerable to the effects of social media and body shaming. However, 5% of the participants used steroids, and 26% remained unsure about using them, displaying underlying pressures from unrealistic body standards seen on social media platforms. Regression analysis also revealed that social media appearance preoccupation and body shaming significantly increase the risk of muscle dysmorphic symptoms. Correlation supplemented the results with a moderate positive relationship between social media use, body shaming, and muscle dysmorphic symptoms.

Social Comparison Theory explains that bodybuilders resort to upward comparison behaviors with extreme behaviors regarding the idealized physique seen online that fuel dissatisfaction. Self-objectification theory explains that excessive self-monitoring and viewing one's own body as an object result in a decline in perceived body image.

Limitation

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the sample size and representation are limited, potentially affecting the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of bodybuilders. Expanding the sample in future research is necessary to strengthen external validity. Second, cross-sectional design restricts the study's ability to establish causal relationships or assess changes over time. Longitudinal research would provide more robust insights into the causal mechanisms and progression of muscle dysmorphia. Third, the exclusive focus on male bodybuilders limits the understanding of gender-specific differences.

Including female participants could uncover critical insights into the gender dynamics of muscle dysmorphia.

Additionally, while relevant, the study's focus on social media use and body shaming excludes other significant predictors such as neuroticism, self-esteem, body mass index (BMI), and peer influence. Future studies should consider these variables to provide a more comprehensive analysis. Finally, the subsample of steroid users was limited, which may not accurately represent the effects of anabolic steroid use. Future research should recruit a larger subsample to explore these effects more reliably.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the process of writing this manuscript, generative AI Technology such as ChatGPT was used only to assist in refining and summarizing the content of the methodology, discussions, and conclusion section to improve readability. The original content was independently written by the author(s), and the AI-assisted modifications were strictly limited to language and clarity enhancement.

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Discursive Representation of Older People in Taiwanese Newspapers on the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

News representation of older people has been observed to stigmatize or stereotype them in ways that raise concerns about the reinforcement of social ageism, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent Western literature (2020-2021) has revealed that, in the context of COVID-19, older people are primarily depicted as a vulnerable, homogeneous, or misbehaving group. Such discourses not only weaken their social status but also naturalize pandemic prevention measures against them. Therefore, it is important to examine news media communication about the pandemic and older people to combat problematic or unfair portrayals. This study collected relevant news articles from a mainstream news archive in Taiwan, targeting the sampling period between April 2020 and February 2023. Using critical discourse analysis (CDA), the study examined discursive representational strategies with a focus on referential strategies, older people as active agents, and passive recipients of actions in the news. The final goal of this research is to decode the ideological implications underlying these representational strategies. Since the epidemic progression in Taiwan differed from that in other countries, the sampling period was divided into three stages to analyze how older people were portrayed in distinct phases. This sampling scheme made this project the first longitudinal study and the first Taiwan-based linguistic study on this research topic among all relevant literature.

Keywords: COVID-19, Critical Discourse Analysis, Discursive Construction, Older People, Ageism

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1. Introduction

News media is a primary channel through which people worldwide receive information and knowledge, significantly influencing societal attitudes, values, and responses (Amundsen, 2022). The media's depiction of various groups can shape or reinforce societal values and stereotypes, reflecting and influencing how these groups are treated within society (Koskinen et al., 2014; Richardson, 2007).

Research has consistently shown that news media often portray older adults negatively (Fealy et al., 2012; Makita et al., 2019). Older people are frequently depicted as vulnerable and dependent (Fealy et al., 2012), and ageist stereotypes commonly portray them as helpless, fragile, and non-contributory (Ayalon, 2021; Meisner, 2021; Rozanova, 2010). These stereotypes persist despite the existence of both active and passive representations of older individuals (Rozanova, 2010; Swift et al., 2017). Negative portrayals of high-risk populations, including older adults, are particularly pronounced during disasters (O'Sullivan et al., 2014; Oostlander et al., 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began spreading globally in late 2019, has had a profound impact on public health, economies, social stability, and human rights (WHO, 2020). Older adults, who face higher risks of infection and mortality (Ergönül et al., 2021; Li et al., 2020), have become a focal point of media coverage, further intensifying negative stereotypes (Ayalon et al., 2021; Previtali et al., 2020).

Age discrimination is a global issue that often goes unrecognized. During the COVID-19 pandemic, older adults have faced not only health risks but also secondary victimization through negative media portrayals. These ageist discourses can impact how older adults are treated and how they perceive themselves (Skoss et al., 2022). Increasing awareness of ageism, particularly in aging societies like Taiwan, is crucial.

This study aims to investigate how Taiwanese news media depict older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing insights into how news reports reinforce stereotypes and prejudices against the elderly. By raising public awareness, this research seeks to reduce media-driven ageism and promote social equality.

The following section reviews related studies on media representations of older adults in various contexts, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, to reveal ageist discourses in news media.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Representation of Older People in News Media

Scholarly inquiries into the representation of older people in news media during the COVID-19 pandemic have predominantly originated from Western countries, with limited research based in Asian contexts such as China.

Morgan et al. (2021) analyzed news coverage in New Zealand during March 2020 using qualitative document analysis (QDA). They identified three main themes: older people at risk, older people as passive, and older people as active. The media predominantly portrayed older individuals as biologically, epidemiologically, psychologically, and socially at risk,

stigmatizing them as inherently vulnerable. This portrayal often lacked recognition of their agency, identity, and individuality. Only a third of the coverage emphasized older people's active response to the pandemic, in line with 'active ageing' principles. This framing risks marginalizing older individuals who do not fit the successful ageing narrative.

Jen et al. (2021), using qualitative document analysis, highlighted how ageism against older people was reinforced in U.S. newspaper coverage during the first month of the pandemic. Ageist bias was evident in the frequent use of the term 'elderly' to describe older adults, often depicting them as vulnerable. While some narratives portrayed older adults as 'survivors', this binary framing of success versus failure placed social pressure on individuals to maintain their health, potentially blaming those who did not meet these expectations.

Zhang and Liu (2021), through content analysis, provided insights into the representation of older people in Chinese media between January and May 2020. They found that older adults were depicted as passive recipients of resources from families, public institutions, and the government. The media's biomedical-centered framing portrayed older people as a homogeneous group and positioned them as a public health threat, highlighting generational tensions.

Ng and Indran (2021) compared age-based and familial role-based framing of older adults in global news articles before (October-December 2019) and after (January-May 2020) the COVID-19 outbreak. They found that age-based framing became more negative during the pandemic, while familial role-based framing grew more positive. Positive age-based stories decreased, whereas positive familial role-based stories increased.

Nygren et al. (2021) conducted a corpus linguistic study to analyze how Swedish news media covered older adults during 2020. They found that older individuals were stereotypically depicted as vulnerable, weak, ill, and easily infected. Described as 'our' or 'the country's' elderly, they were positioned as needing protection within the Swedish welfare framework. This framing, while politically inclusive, legitimized a benevolent form of ageism and normalized older adults as a manageable risk group.

Stross et al. (2022) employed a Foucauldian discourse analysis to explore Australian newspapers from March to May 2020. They identified three subject positions of older adults: vulnerable, recalcitrant, and resilient. Older people were largely portrayed as vulnerable and misbehaving (not following government directives), justifying surveillance and governance actions. Positive portrayals, such as resilient and wise, were rare and mainly derived from letters to the editor from older individuals.

Köttl et al. (2022) used critical discourse analysis and thematic analysis to examine German newspapers from March to November 2020, focusing on older people's use of communication technology. They identified stereotypes that depicted older non-users as incompetent, helpless, and dependent, particularly in care homes where isolation was pronounced due to a lack of technology use. Conversely, older active technology users were portrayed positively as engaged and healthy, leading to a distinction between the third and fourth ages and reinforcing intergenerational ageism.

2.2 Research Gaps and Questions

The aforementioned literature consistently frames older people as vulnerable or at-risk, broadening and normalizing the manifestation of social ageism. Ageist patterns in media representation existed prior to the pandemic, and the urgency of managing COVID-19 has often overshadowed the need to address ageism. This trend necessitates monitoring in all societies, including Taiwan, where such studies are currently lacking.

In Taiwan, the pandemic's progression differed from that of other countries. In 2020, while other regions experienced uncontrollable infection rates and fatalities, Taiwan effectively minimized the outbreak from April to December 2020. Consequently, news reports on COVID-19 and older people in Taiwan during this period may not employ the same framing or rhetoric strategies observed in other studies.

However, as the pandemic evolved globally, including in Taiwan, multiple epidemic peaks and changes in control policies emerged. As of January 2023, the global focus has shifted towards economic growth and coexisting with COVID-19, despite increasing infection rates from new variants. How these shifts impact the ideological framing of older people in news coverage remains unexplored. A longitudinal study examining the representation of older people in the context of the pandemic is absent from existing literature, presenting a gap this research aims to fill.

Cross-cultural comparisons indicate that Taiwan-based studies (e.g., Chen, 2015a) often problematize and stigmatize older age more than Western literature. This highlights the need for continuous monitoring and examination of how older people are represented in Taiwanese news during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given these points, this research addresses the following questions:

RQ1: How were older people represented within the news media context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Taiwan?

RQ2: Are there any changes in news media communication strategies in the representation of older people as the pandemic developed in Taiwan?

3. Methodology

3.1 Sampling: Periods, Schemes, and Criteria

The sampling period for this study was divided into three sections: the first was when Taiwan had no COVID-19 infections (April-June 2020), the second was during Taiwan's first significant peak of infection cases (May-July 2021) without a high vaccination rate, and the last was when Taiwan removed quarantine measures and travel restrictions, aiming to coexist with the virus as before the pandemic (December 2022-February 2023).

The sampling scheme for news reporting was random. Articles from each period were numbered based on their publication dates, and a random number generator was used to select articles for analysis. This longitudinal study aimed to analyze and compile statistics on the randomly sampled articles. Relevant news articles on older people and COVID-19 were searched within the United Daily News (聯合報) archive. Articles were identified using keywords such as 老人 (elderly), 長者 (seniors), 長輩 (elders), 阿公 (grandfather), 阿嬤 (grandmother), 老翁 (old man), 老婦 (old woman), 銀髮族 (silver-haired group), 疫情

(epidemic), 武漢肺炎 (Wuhan pneumonia), 新冠病毒 (COVID-19 virus), 疫苗 (vaccine), 新冠肺炎 (COVID-19), 確診 (confirmed case), and 居家隔離 (home isolation). The news data meeting the search criteria were further analyzed using critical discourse analysis (CDA).

3.2 Analytical Approaches: Critical Discourse Analysis and Frequency Reports

The use of CDA to study media representation of older people is well-established (Allen & Ayalon, 2021; Chen, 2015b; Nygren et al., 2021; Ylänne, 2022). CDA allows researchers to empower marginalized groups misrepresented in media discourses (Fairclough, 1992) and uncover how these groups are 'othered' or marginalized in social practices realized through media language (Köttl et al., 2022). CDA also helps decode ideological assumptions that justify unfair or problematic measures against voiceless groups (Zeb, Zeb, & Yasir, 2021).

To systematically analyze discursive representations of older people in news articles about COVID-19, this study followed the design by Chen (2015b) and Chen & Huang (2022). Van Leeuwen's (2008) CDA framework was employed to examine how older people were positioned as passive recipients of actions, active agents, and how they were referred to or labeled. This analysis provided insights into what older people did to others, what others did to them, who they were associated with, and how they were described. The study aimed to identify the negativity, positivity, or reinforcement of age-related stereotypes.

Frequency reports were generated to compare the coding results across the three sampling periods. These reports enabled easy observation of changes in discursive strategies and differences in the mainstream subject positions or framing preferences in news representation of older people at various stages of the epidemic in Taiwan.

4. Findings

4.1 Role Allocation

4.1.1 Activation

In the sampled news articles, the role allocation concerning activation depicted older individuals as agents in various activities, such as 死亡 (dying), 生病 (being sick), 打疫苗 (getting vaccinated), 退化 (degenerating), 陷入負面情緒 (immersing in negative emotions), 少出門 (rarely going outside), 數位落差 (facing the digital divide), 跌倒 (falling), and 照顧他人 (taking care of others).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, older people were mainly portrayed as agents of medical and health-related processes (N=36). For example, they were often represented as more likely to lose their lives (N=17, associated terms: 相繼猝死 "died one after another suddenly", 致死的機率相對較高 "the likelihood of death is relatively higher", reflecting the fragility of their lives.

Additionally, they were described as suffering from illness (N=12), such as testing positive for COVID-19 (確診新冠肺炎 "diagnosed with COVID-19") and experiencing poor physical health (有病在身 "having an illness").

Older people were also depicted as active agents in getting vaccinated (N=16, see Extract 5), with some articles revealing death as a consequence of the injection (疫苗施打當天或隔日猝死 "Sudden death on the day of or the day after vaccination").

In Taiwanese newspapers, facing degeneration (N=4) was another common theme. For instance, older people were characterized as exhibiting degenerative symptoms (有退化現象 "there are signs of degeneration") or having difficulties getting in and out of a car (上下車有困難 "difficulty getting on and off vehicles").

Older people were frequently represented as immersed in negative emotions (N=19). Among these emotions, worry and fear (c.f. 擔心, 害怕) were the most common. Other expressions included loneliness (寂寞), sorrow (憂傷), struggle (掙扎), and becoming unglued (情緒失控, Extract 14). These depictions showed that older individuals tend to lack emotional support, leading to struggles during the pandemic.

Additionally, older people were portrayed as preferring to stay at home during the pandemic, rarely going outside (N=4, c.f. 不願意走出家裡, 不出門 "unwilling to leave the house, not going out").

The sampled articles also mentioned that many older adults struggled with technology (N=4). This representation, particularly prominent during the COVID-19 outbreak, depicted older people as having difficulty using complex digital technology (c.f. "The elderly are unable to make online appointments for their second vaccine dose due to digital divide issues"), highlighting the digital divide.

Representations of older people as active care providers were very rare during the pandemic (N=2, see "The elderly lady is in her late eighties and has been suffering from dementia for many years. Her daily life and medical care are entirely managed by her 82-year-old husband. Over the years, except when she attends classes or has urgent matters to handle, she never relies on others or harbors resentment."). Instead of being portrayed as caregivers, older people were mostly depicted as fragile, showing decreased activity and rapid deterioration in physical and mental condition.

4.1.2 Passivation

Regarding passivation, the portrayal of older people in newspapers during the pandemic largely centered around their medical care (N=36). They were depicted receiving diagnoses, getting vaccinated, and undergoing training (see the following extract: "Starting May 10th, COVID-19 vaccines were made available to over 3.5 million people aged 65 and above under a subsidized vaccination program" (United Daily News, 2021/05/07).

Additionally, older adults were frequently depicted as recipients of assistance (N=22), including care, companionship, welfare calls, and meal deliveries; for instance, "In New Taipei City, over 100,000 elderly and disabled individuals receive care at home from family members, constituting about 60% of such cases" (United Daily News, 2020/06/29). These reports underscored the vulnerability and dependency associated with aging, portraying older people as unable to maintain a normal life without assistance from others.

Furthermore, older adults were often portrayed as recipients of advice (N=12), such as medical recommendations, advisories to limit outdoor activities, and suggestions for COVID-19 prevention measures. These reports reinforce stereotypes of vulnerability, decline, and susceptibility to illness among older adults, thereby marginalizing them from mainstream society.

Furthermore, passivation is evident in the portrayal of older individuals as objects of concern (N=6). Media representations focus on their physical and mental health concerns and outdoor safety, drawing attention to their problems and challenges while reinforcing stereotypes of vulnerability among older adults.

4.1.3 Referential Strategies

Regarding referential strategies, generalization was more frequently used than specification when referring to older people. News media often referred to individuals over the age of 65 as "seniors" (N=60) and "older people" (N=14). Some articles categorized them into specific demographic groups based on age (N=4). Such generalizations can result in a uniform portrayal of elderly individuals, overlooking diversity and individual differences.

In terms of specification in Taiwan's news reports, family terms were often used to specifically address older individuals, such as "grandma" (N=2), "mother" (N=3), "parents-in-law" (N=1), and so on. These terms used in news reports allow readers to relate to similar situations as if their own family members were experiencing those events.

4.2 Changes in News Media Representations of Older People: Early Pandemic, Peak Pandemic, Post-Pandemic Period

As indicated in Table 1, older adults were positioned as passive recipients of verbal actions, such as receiving medical treatment, help, suggestions, and being objects of concern. As the pandemic progressed to more severe stages, the prevalence of vulnerable imagery also peaked.

Moreover, a similar pattern was observed in the adjective depictions of older people. In the news media, older adults were portrayed as being at high risk of diseases, ill, vulnerable, having impaired mobility, and being alone (see Table 2).

Table 1: Total Frequency of Passivations

Sampling periods	Given medical treatment	Given help	Given suggestions	Be worried
April 2020 - June 2020	7	6	2	3
May 2021 - July 2021	23	13	6	3
December 2022 ~ February 2023	6	2	4	0

Table 2: Adjectives to Depict Older People

	High-risk of diseases	Sick or ill	Vulnerable	Impaired mobility	Alone
April 2020 - June 2020	4	3	2	1	2
May 2021 - July 2021	9	7	1	4	0
December 2022 ~ February 2023	1	1	2	2	0

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated how news media reported on older people during the pandemic. The research methodology selected three pivotal stages of the pandemic: the early stage, the peak period, and the post-pandemic period, employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the analytical framework. Within this research context, two main research questions emerged. The first question examines how older people are defined within the frames of activation and attenuation during different stages of the pandemic. The second question focuses on comparing the reporting across different stages of the pandemic to explore the variations in descriptions of older people.

Throughout the pandemic, older individuals were the focus of news media coverage. The reports tended to excessively emphasize their physical and mental fragility, depicting the COVID-19 virus and vaccines as nightmares that hastened their mortality, especially during the peak of COVID-19. Such portrayals not only had the potential to trigger more anxiety and fear but also deepened people's negative stereotypes of older adults.

In Taiwanese news articles, it was observed that a large number of familial terms were used to address older adults, and this practice was widely accepted by many people. However, such a practice is very rare in Western cultures, indicating cultural differences between Eastern and Western countries. In Chinese culture, Confucian ideology has exerted a profound influence, emphasizing respect for the elderly and valuing strong family and community ties. As a result, people tend to use intimate terms to address unfamiliar older individuals. In the media, such terms foster empathy toward older adults and evoke resonance with the content of related news reports.

Regarding the limitations of this study, due to time constraints, only relevant reports from the United Daily News were utilized. Therefore, future studies are advised to broaden the scope of media resources to achieve a more diversified and comprehensive sample. Moreover, this study focuses solely on how news media represent older individuals, lacking exploration into why reporters choose to report in this manner and whether they are aware of the impacts of these depictions.

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Campus Cinema: University Portrayals in Contemporary Films

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Abstract
This research analyses English-speaking films made from 2014 to 2024 that are primarily set in university environments. The main aim is to investigate the role of universities in these films, focusing on how these institutions are depicted and whether they adhere to stereotypical representations. By examining a diverse selection of movies, this research also seeks to answer questions about the consistency of these portrayals and whether they contribute to or challenge prevailing stereotypes such as elite status of academia, party life of academia, overachieving nerds in the academia, professors in the academia, etc. The findings will provide insights into the cultural impact of university depictions in contemporary cinema.

Keywords: Film, Professor, Stereotypes, Student, University

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Introduction

Various settings in film can have a significant role in shaping characters, themes, plots, etc. For example, museums and galleries spaces can provide great scenic setting but also add to the symbolism. They are associated with culture and education, often depicted as places celebrating identities and collective memories. They serve as sanctuaries for various characters: artists and connoisseurs, tourists seeking exotic experiences, snobs and dandies navigating between high and mass culture, , thieves and spies breaking laws, haunted individuals confronted by mummies, etc. (Jacobs, 2016). Education settings such as school and universities are another very good example of such settings. Universities are represented in research mainly troughs analysis of stereothipical representation of American sororities and fraternities, party life at campus and student characterization like nerds, jocks, etc. For example, Fedorov (2019) in one study confirmed trends in university portrayal in cinema. Internet is the most significant platform to reflect the topic of school and university environment almost twice ahead of its closest rivals – cinema and television. The representation of schools and universities, schoolchildren, students and teachers in such media texts can only be considered as partial, mainly due to excessive stereotyping and simplification of their images.

When it comes to representation of education settings one of the well know examples is Dead Poets Society. It is set in the late 1950s in an East Coast boys' prep school, Welton Academy. Robin Williams plays the school's new English teacher and Welton alumnus, John Keating, who inspired his students in their life. Mr. Keating as the main character is described as unusual English teacher who gives a big influence toward his students' life. This unusual teaching style opposites with academic policy. English teachers have roles as facilitator, personal models or demonstrator, and as delegator. As facilitator, teacher controls the class and creates good environments and activities, stimulates new information, provides opportunities for collaborative work, to be problem solving and offers students a multiplicity of authentic learning tasks (Afifulloh, 2017). Another example is Dangerous Minds. Cristensen (1995) in reviewing the film, illustrated a critical social class analysis. She pointed out how the white, middle class protagonist teacher in a largely Latino and African American context sends the message that students have a choice and can make their lives different. She states that this message ignores the context and material conditions of these students' lives by not acknowledging the role of poverty, bias, and oppression. She also critiqued the teacher's pedagogy, which focused on teaching "the canon," for example her focus on two white male poets, rather than a broader range of authors more relevant to her students' lives. Such well know films can have an impact on viewers in shaping their perception on education.

Theoretical Background

Representation theory is a good base for understanding stereotypical portrays in films as it critically examines how films and other media portray people, groups, and social issues. The theory also explores how cultural meanings are constructed, circulated, and internalized by audiences, influencing public perception and identity formation. In films, the portrayal of race, gender, class, and other social categories often reinforces or challenges existing stereotypes. Encoding and decoding model is particularly relevant to the study of films (Dyer, 2022; O'Shaughnessy et al., 2008). Stuart Hall argued that media texts, including films, are encoded with meanings by their creators and decoded by audiences in different ways depending on their social and cultural contexts. For instance, a film might represent a racial or gender stereotype, but how the audience interprets and responds to that stereotype depends

on their own experiences and background. According to Hall, representations in media do not merely reflect reality but actively shape it. Movies, by repeating certain images or ideas, can normalize these representations and make them appear as natural (Hall, 1997; Hall, 2014).

Academia in Film

Academia life is researched in many different ways, and the focus is usually made on characters like professors, and students. For example on one study using content researchers examined popular films released between 1985 and 2005 that contain professors in either primary or secondary roles. Their findings showed stereotypical depictions beyond glasses, bow ties, and tweed jackets. Specifically, they found stereotypical images of race and gender as well as an emphasis on the importance of research, sometimes at the expense of teaching or ethical behaviour (Dagaz & Harger, 2011). Therefore, contemporary media images of university professors do not show only idealised version of learning and heroes or victims, but also as lazy, incompetent, deceitful, and burned out professors. In modern media, teachers and university professors are increasingly under pressure from politicians, parents, cultural, religious and racial differences, funding cuts and other social problems. Similarly, the image of students has been transformed to ones of laziness, ineptitude, cruelty, violence, careless entertainment, compulsive, out-of-control drug use or alcohol consumption, and other (Bauer, 1998; Beyerbach, 2005). Using data gathered by analyzing films released between 2000 and 2012 Yakaboski, and Donahoo (2015) found that Hollywood's films showed university students trough nudity, sex, or victimized horror scenes. In more recent decades, college women are seen in faux-feminist roles, prioritizing romance and heterosexual relationships over academics. Films have contributed to society's perceptions of what it means to be a university student. Contrary to the images promoted by higher education marketing, Hollywood's portrayals overdramatize negative elements by placing narrow social norms onto characters (Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2015). Fedorov (2019) in one study showed that negative stereotypes of university students' media images include: party animal; student involved with a lot of sexual partners; social butterfly, nerd with no social skills; thin and beautiful student who succeeds, an inexperienced person without strong work ethics. Positive media stereotypes of university students include: happy ticket holder who seeks to get an exemplary education and make a successful career; university student who is career-oriented, servant to new digital technologies and social media, nerd who becomes cool or attractive, and a serious, head-down studious type. Teachers' negative media stereotypes are: victims of professional burnout; representatives of 'the old school', clowns and lazy people; evil, aggressive and authoritarian. Positive stereotypes of teachers include: honest, smart professionals; modern, open-minded teacher. In his critical analysis Papke (2003) in Hollywood films derives portrayal of university professors as crusading hero professors, devoted teachers, and sympathetic failures. On that note, the research that focuses on one specific film or characters also makes a connection with a hero type professor. Yogerst (2014) states that Indiana Jones has two sides. One is a heroic, and another is his ordinary world, that of an archaeology professor. Indy, or Dr. Jones is shy and reserved in his ordinary world. In a more recent study DeSantis (2020) states that fraternity films show recurring and repeated generic tropes. They construct a social reality for viewers that sells Greek life as an important and needed augmentation to the otherwise harsh, friendless, and bland college experience that awaits them. Even if the commitment of joining a fraternity comes at the price of some short-lived, humorous hazing, the ultimate payoff of friendship and never-ending parties is shown to be well worth it. Finally, Wasylkiw and Currie (2012) explored how university-themed comedy films influence students' attitudes towards academics and substance use. In first study the content analysis of 34 university-themed comedies revealed a

focus on risk-taking behaviours, like alcohol consumption, and a minimal emphasis on academics. The majority of characters were white, with male characters more often depicted engaging in risky behaviours. The second study assessed the effects of such films on students' attitudes. Results showed that they led to more favourable views of substance use and more negative views on academics, regardless of students' previous movie-watching habits or substance use.

Methodology

By applying a thematic content analysis, we aimed investigate how universities are depicted in films. This approach allows for a better understanding of the recurring themes and stereotypes associated with university settings in films. Similarly, Dagaz, and Harger (2011) having assembled a list of films, constructed a pilot coding sheet focusing on variables such as type of college or university, department, demographic characteristics, clothing, student interaction, and items stereotypically associated with professors such as glasses, briefcases, pocket protectors, and bow ties. The matrix for our content analysis was designed to evaluate various aspects of the films and includes the following categories: 1. Basic information (title of the film, release year, genre); 2. Type and location of the university (real or fictional university); 3. Description of main characters (students, professors), 4. Stereotypes related to university (student party life, frightened freshman experience, etc.). The procedure included a few steps; watching films, creating excel matrix, inserting data to the excel matrix, and calculating the total number for each category/theme in the matrix. We presented the data in number and percentages.

Sample

A sample of films was collected using an internet search engine. The search focused on films that were released within the last ten years, specifically from 2014 to 2024. The criteria for the selection were as follows. Firstly, the films had to be set in a university or campus environment, real or fictional. Secondly, the films had to be in the English language. The first list of films provided by an internet search engine included films set in high schools, boarding schools, and films that had students as main character but did not include any mention or depiction of the university. These films were excluded. The final list included a total of 49 films. These criteria ensured that the selected films were relevant to the study of universities in films, and that they were accessible to an English-speaking audience. The majority of films were released in 2014 as seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample of Films

Year	N	Title
2023	5	The Other Zoey, Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny, Saltburn, Oppenheimer, Scream VI
2022	3	Master, Emergency
2021	1	College Professor Obsession
2020	3	S#!%house, I Still Believe, Tazmanian Devil
2019	3	After, The Perfect Cheerleader, A Rainy Day in New York
2018	8	The Professor, American Animals, Life of the Party, Step Sisters, Haunting on Fraternity Row, The New Romantic, Spinning Man, Swiped
2017	8	Professor Marston and the Wonder Women, The Man from Earth: Holocene, Deadly Sorority, M.F.A., Burning Sands, Rings, Frat Star, Submission
2016	7	Neighbors 2: Sorority Rising, Everybody Wants Some!!, The Goat, Barry, Friend Request, Mother, May I Sleep with Danger?, Total Frat Movie
2015	3	Mistress America, Irrational Man, The Stanford Prison Experiment
2014	9	Dear White People, Still Alice, Girl House, The Dorm, It Follows, College Musical, 22 Jump Street, Neighbors, Whiplash

Results and Discussion

In this part of the paper we present the results and discussion related to genres of the films in the sample, type of university depicted in the sample, professor and student main characters stereotype, and overall university stereotypes depicted.

Table 2: Genre Distribution

Genre	No	%
Comedy	12	40,83
Thriller	7	14,28
Horror	6	12,24
Drama	6	12,24
Comedy Drama	4	8,16
Romantic Comedy	2	4,08
Romantic Drama	2	4,08
Docudrama	2	4,08
Action Adventure	1	2,04
Comedy Thriller	1	2,04
Biographical Thriller	1	2,04
Slasher	1	2,04
Thriller Comedy	1	2,04
Biographical Drama	1	2,04
Science Fiction Drama	1	2,04
Psychological Drama	1	2,04
Total	49	100

Analysing the genres of university-themed movies provided us with insights into how different aspects of university life are portrayed in film. Comedy is the most common genre

for university-themed films, making up a significant portion of the total (40,83%). Comedy university-themed films reflect the humorous and often chaotic experiences associated with college life. These films focus on the lighter, more entertaining aspects of university, emphasizing friendships, romantic relationships, and the pursuit of fun and parties (Wasylkiw & Currie, 2012). One example from the sample is a film tiled Neighbors 2: Sorority Rising (2016). This films builds a comedy plot around female freshman starting a new sorority in a house near one family.

Thriller is the second most common genre (14,28%). The prominence of thrillers show a darker or more suspenseful aspects of university life. These films explore themes such as academic pressure, secrets, crimes on campus, or psychological tensions. The university setting in thrillers often becomes a setting for intense and suspenseful plots. Horror is also a common genre, tied with drama. The horror genre's presence indicates that the university setting is used as a location for fear and suspense. These films revolve around haunted dorms and sinister professors. The isolation and stress of college life can amplify horror elements, making the setting ideal for such stories. Good example is film titled Master (2022). This film has a more prominent message related to racial issues. The theme of oppression of black people in the film is depicted through the horrifying psychological experiences that terrify the main characters, female student, and female professor. Despite not being clearly depicted as slavery, the characters in the film demonstrate how discrimination and racism still exist (Renata & Mustofa, 2023). Drama is equally common as horror. They seem to focus on serious, emotional narratives involving the personal growth, struggles, and challenges faced by students and professors. These films deal with themes such as identity, social expectations, and the pressures of academia. One example is a film Still Alice (2014). This film is praised for its depiction of Alzheimer's from the perspective of the sufferer, a female professor (Falcus, 2014).

Romantic comedies and romantic drama focus on relationships in the university context, highlighting the romantic experiences, like in the film The Other Zoey (2023). Docudramas explore real events or true stories set within a university environment. They focus on significant, often dramatic, events in academic or student life, providing a blend of documentary-style storytelling with dramatic re-enactments like in a film American Animals (2018) that tells a story of four college students in Kentucky who plot to steal rare books.

Table 3: Real and Fictional Universities Depicted

University depicted	No	%
Real university	18	35,29
Fictional not named university	17	33,33
Fictional named university	16	31,37
Total	51	100

In a sample of 49 films there are 17 real universities depicted in total. USA Ivy League universities showed in films are: Harvard University, Columbia University, and Princeton University. Some other well know are: Oxford (UK), Barkley (USA), and Stanford (USA). Fictional universities are in total 29. Ones with no known name are 14, and also 15 fictional with made up names such as; Braxton University, Adison University, etc. One of the most recent films depicting many of the well-known world universities is Oppenheimer (2023). This film, cantered around Robert Oppenheimer, the American physicist who led the Manhattan Project to develop the first atomic bomb (Stevenson, 2023). In one study Abbas

(2023) employed Marxian literary theory to analyse the film, uncovering power dynamics, class conflicts, and moral dilemmas stemming from destructive technological progress. Oppenheimer is portrayed as both a heroic figure of the atomic age and a tragic victim of political, economic, and military forces. Some universities shown in this film are Barkley (USA) and Princeton University (USA). Another film set at a real university is The Stanford Prison Experiment (2015) centred on controversial experiments of professor Philip Zimbardo at the Stanford University. Harvard University is depicted in film Professor Marston and the Wonder Women (2017) which shows life of psychologist William Moulton Marston.

Table 4: Professor Main Character Portrayal

Demographic	Professor portrayal	No	%
Black female	Mentor professor	1	10
White female	Professor in crisis	1	10
White male	Hero professor	2	20
	Professor in crisis	2	20
	Aggressive and/or unethical professor	4	40
Total		10	100

In our sample of films there are in total 10 professors who are main characters. White female and black female professors are minimally represented in the data. In films, they are depicted as caring mentors, and intellectuals. One black female professor main character is from the film Master (2022), and one white female professor main character is from the film Still Alice (2014). More prominently represented are white male professors. They are often shown as authoritative figures, either inspiring or challenging the main student characters. Professors with heroic attributes are shown in films Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny (2023), and The Man from Earth: Holocene (2017). Heroic type of professor was found in previous research (Yogerst, 2014). White male professors in existential crisis are shown in films The Professor (2018), and Irrational Man (2015). However, male white characters mostly fall in the category of aggressive and/or unethical attributes and behaviour. A good example is The Stanford Prison Experiment (2015). This is in accordance to previous research (Dagaz & Harger, 2011). The data shows a significant underrepresentation of black male professors. It is important to state that this analysis only included main characters. However, the data from the table reflects broader trends in media representation, with white professors being more prominently featured, while minority groups are underrepresented. Therefore, such films do not seem to fully explore the diversity of experiences within the academic setting.

Table 5: Student Main Character Portrayal

Demographic	Student portrayal	No	%
Black female	Nerd or gifted student	1	2,56
	Fighter and hero student	2	5,13
Black male	Nerd or gifted student	1	2,56
	Socially struggling student	2	5,13
White female	Nerd or gifted student	1	2,56
	Fighter and hero student	6	15,39
	Socially struggling student	7	17,94
	Party and troublemaker student	3	7,69
White male	Nerd or gifted student	7	17,94
	Socially struggling student	2	5,13
	Party and troublemaker student	6	15,39
Total		39	100

In our sample of films the majority of main characters are students, a total of 39. White female students are the most represented group. Common stereotypes include the nerd or gifted student, socially struggling student, fighter and hero student, or a party and troublemaker student. Similar results were found in previous research (Fedorov, 2019). White male students are also frequently featured as main characters. They are often depicted in a wide range of roles, from jocks and fraternity members to intellectuals and rebels. Both black female and male students are less represented in the data. In films, this underrepresentation is often mirrored, with these groups being shown in secondary roles or as part of a diverse group of friends rather than as the main character. When present, they are portrayed as overcoming challenges, dealing with issues of race.

Table 6: University Stereotype Depicted

Stereotype depicted	N	%
University is a place of student party life	39	79,59
University is a place of fraternities and sororities life	25	51,02
University is a place of frightened freshman experience	29	59,18
University is a place of nerds, jocks, etc.	42	85,71
University is a place of picturesque scenery	44	89,79

Finally, our last analysis provided us with reoccurring themes in general serotype of universities in film. In total 39 film represent universities as a place of student party life. The high number of films featuring student parties indicates that partying is a significant and popular theme in university movies. Parties are often used to depict the social life and culture associated with college, serving as a backdrop for character development, plot progression, or simply as a source of humour or drama. These scenes likely highlight aspects such as freedom, experimentation, social dynamics, and the contrast between academic responsibilities and social life. Similarly to this theme 25 films represent universities as a place of fraternities and sororities life. The depiction of freshmen experience is represented in 29 films which suggests that a substantial number of university-themed movies focus on the experiences of first-year students. Freshman year is often portrayed as a critical period of transition, adaptation, and self-discovery, making it a relatable and engaging subject for audiences. Common themes include the challenges of leaving home, making new friends, facing academic pressures, and the excitement and anxiety of starting college life. Given that comedy is the most prevalent genre in university films (as noted earlier), it's likely that many of the films featuring student parties and freshmen are comedies. The themes of partying and navigating freshman year lend themselves well to humorous interpretations. Films focusing on freshmen may also fall into the drama or coming-of-age categories, exploring the deeper emotional and psychological aspects of this transition period. The data suggests that social life is crucial to during the early years of college. Another common stereotype is a presence of palate of student characters such as jocks, and nerds. Also, a picturesque visuals of campuses with parks, and embellished architecture is very common. These stereotypes are well documented in previous research (DeSantis, 2020).

The main of this paper was to investigate the role of universities in contemporary films, focusing on how these institutions are depicted and whether they adhere to stereotypical representations. The analysis has provided us with data that shows common stereotypical representations of universities such us stereotypical characters (nerds, party students, etc.), and stereotypical themes explored in films like frightened freshman experience, and fraternities and sororities life. These findings are in accordance with previous research dealing with academia in film (Dagaz & Harger, 2011; Wasylkiw & Currie, 2012). The paper

has examined a diverse selection of films, this to answer questions about the consistency of these portrayals and whether they contribute to or challenge prevailing stereotypes such as elite status of academia, party life of academia, overachieving nerds in the academia, professors in the academia, etc. The data has showed a consistency in stereotypes witch also is in the accordance with the theoretical background of representation theory which states that repeating certain images or ideas, can normalize these representations and make them appear as natural (Hall, 1997; Hall, 2014).

Limitations and Future Research

This research is subject to several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the analysis was based solely on films in English, which naturally skews the focus toward films produced in the USA and UK. As a result, American films dominate the sample, potentially limiting the diversity of cinematic styles, cultural contexts, and thematic elements that could have been captured if non-English films were also included. This focus on English-language films may lead to over-representation of certain cultural norms, values, and stereotypes that are prevalent in American cinema. Also, the study is limited to films released in the last ten years. While this provides a contemporary view of the subject matter, it excludes older films that may have influenced current trends and themes. Furthermore, the analysis was conducted by a single researcher. While efforts were made to ensure objectivity and accuracy, the involvement of just one person introduces bias in the overall analytical approach. A larger team of researchers could have provided a more balanced perspective. Future research should aim to address some of the limitations highlighted in this study. One important area of improvement would be to conduct a more in-depth analysis of both main and supporting characters, as they often serve as key carriers of stereotypes. By examining the portrayal of characters more closely, future studies could provide a more nuanced understanding of how these stereotypes are reinforced. Additionally, future research should broaden the scope of the films being analysed to include a more diverse selection of languages and cultural contexts. This would also help avoid over-reliance on American films, which may overemphasize certain stereotypes or norms specific to that region.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of university-themed films reveals distinct patterns in genre, character stereotypes, and overall depiction of university life. Comedy emerges as the most prominent genre, emphasizing the humorous and chaotic aspects of college, while thriller and horror genres highlight darker, more suspenseful dimensions of university life. The portrayal of universities is often fictional, with both real and fictional institutions serving as backdrops for a wide range of narratives. The representation of professors and students shows clear disparities, with white male professors often depicted as aggressive or unethical, while minority professors, are underrepresented. Similarly, white students dominate the main roles, with stereotypical portrayals as overachievers, partiers, or socially struggling individuals. Stereotypes about university life focus heavily on student parties, fraternity and sorority culture, freshmen experiences, and picturesque campuses. These elements, along with depictions of nerds, jocks, and social conflicts, reinforce familiar tropes that reflect a narrow, view of university life. Ultimately, the data suggests that university-themed films tend to prioritize entertainment, emphasizing social and comedic aspects, while often underrepresenting the diversity and complexity of real academic environments.

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Socioeconomic Status of Bamboo-Based Handicrafts Producers: A Case Study in Handessa Grama Niladhari Division, Kandy, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

In Sri Lanka, the production of bamboo crafts and utensils largely relies on local knowledge specific to the regions where bamboo plantations are situated. The bamboo-based handicraft industry in Sri Lanka comprises semi-skilled, unorganized, disintegrated, and economically disadvantaged workers who face notable social discrimination. However, the industry has the potential to improve the socioeconomic status of underprivileged individuals in Sri Lanka. This study aimed to investigate the current social background and economic potential of bamboo-based handicraft producers to improve their social and economic well-being and identify opportunities to overcome socio-economic challenges. The data collection process involved a household questionnaire survey, key informant discussions, and focus-group discussions. Fifty handicraft makers were selected from the Handessa Grama Niladhari division using the stratified random sampling method. Most secondary data were obtained from the resource profile of the Udunuwara divisional secretariat. The findings revealed that most workers were over 60 years old and had only completed primary education. Furthermore, the lack of product diversification has been considered a major constraint on expanding market opportunities. critical challenges faced by craftsmen including the decline in skilled artisans, inadequate education, poor financial management practices etc. While addressing these issues, it is important to revitalize the industry and empower future generations to engage in and appreciate this traditional craft industry to ensure its sustainability.

Keywords: Bamboo Crafts, Socioeconomic Potential, Local Knowledge, Underprivileged Communities

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Introduction

Background

Bamboo is one of the important non-timber forest products cultivated worldwide. According to the Forest Cover Assessment Survey of 2015, published in 2020 by the Department of Forest Conservation, the estimated total forest cover of the country was 1,865,671 hectares representing 28.4 per cent of the land in Sri Lanka (CBSL, 2020). The forest cover of Sri Lanka is declining due to rapid population growth, leading to land fragmentation, land scarcity, and increasing level of poverty. Considering the total land extension, 2500 ha of bamboo plantations exist in Sri Lanka (UNIDO, 2020). Bamboo is mainly used locally as fuel and low-quality construction material. Approximately 40% of bamboo is used for fuelwood and charcoal globally. Nevertheless, a significant amount is also used for construction, flooring, fodder, and food worldwide. In Sri Lanka, the Bamboo crafts and utensils industry mainly depends on traditional knowledge in some scattered areas with the availability of raw materials. Besides, in countries such as India, and Indonesia bamboo is utilized for various purposes depending upon its properties. It plays an integral role in the daily life of people. Particularly, bamboo craft is one of the oldest traditional cottage industries in India. In addition, bamboo plays a very important role in the socio-economic and cultural lives of Indonesian people as there are bamboo resources available throughout the country in natural as well as plantation forests. There is a potential to develop the bamboo-based craft industry in Sri Lanka. According to that, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has granted USD 600,000 to uplift the industrial bamboo sector in Sri Lanka. In the traditional context, bamboo-based handicraft workers are considered semiskilled, unorganized, disintegrated, and socio-economically backward groups. As a result, handicraft workers are experiencing some notable social discrimination. Therefore, there is a necessity to overcome the limitations of the bamboo-based handicraft industry to upgrade their economic and social values of them. As an account, the bamboo-based handicraft industry can be recognized as one of the key instruments to uplift the socio-economic status of poor and underprivileged people in Sri Lanka.

Research Problem

The majority of rural householders of the Handessa Grama Niladhari (GN) division in Udunuwara Divisional Secretariat Divison (DSD) mainly sustain their livelihood through the bamboo-based handicraft industry. Though they are backward in socio-economic status than the expected level due to lack of government support, inflexible policies, limited innovative skills of producers, unorganized market system, difficulties in accessing the technology, transport issues of raw materials, issues of the supply chain of raw materials, lack of value addition, dissatisfaction of young generation due to low level of reputation for the industry have tended to retard income generation through this industry. Concurrently, these factors lead to demote the living standards of bamboo artisans. This study is conducted to identify the socio-economic status of bamboo-based handicraft producers to overcome issues in developing their livelihood.

Research Objectives

The study was implemented to identify the current social and economic potential of bamboo-based craft makers in the Handessa Grama Niladhari division. Further, it was required to provide recommendations to empower them socio-economically.

Justification

Bamboo is a versatile grass which considered a poor man's timber in the past. Thus, with the drastic changes, it is well known as green gold, merely found in Asia and Africa regions. According to the study, throughout 60 years bamboo-based handicrafts have been produced in Handessa GN division. At present, the manufacturing of winnowing fans is the major production. In addition, craft producers supply sticks for the production of fragrance sticks as an intermediary. Considering the bamboo-based handicraft producers in the Handessa GN division majority of craft producers manufacture around 50 winnowing fans per month solely while a few of them manufacture around 300 winnowing fans per month by using workers on a daily rental basis. Thus, as raw material, bamboo wood has to be transported from Nuwara Eliya district and the cost of transportation is comparatively high. Customarily, Producers have to spend around a thousand rupees per bamboo tree as the cost of transportation and there is an issue of getting permits for transportation. Currently, due to the shortage of raw material availability has merely affected the bamboo-based handicraft industry because it is essential to have at least a one-foot internodal length for manufacturing winnowing fans. Thus, it is hard to find raw materials in Udunuwara DSD to fulfil the above requirements. Therefore, it has become a severe issue for them. As well as the cost of utensils utilized for manufacturing bamboo-based handicrafts is unbearable for producers. Apart from that, issues related to selling bamboo-based handicraft products such as exploitation of producers due to the low farm gate price also adversely affect the industry and socio-economic well-being of them. In addition, due to the lack of reputation, the young generation of most bamboo-based handicraft manufacturing families would not like to sustain their livelihood engaging this industry. Therefore, this study is important for the identification of the contemporary socio-economic status of bamboo-based craft producers to overcome issues for the development of their living standards.

Literature Review

Bamboo is a versatile gift of nature (Jha & Yadava, 2015) and it is one of the vital non-timber forest products (NTFPs) cultivated widely in the world (FAO, 1978). According to Bajracharya et al., n.d., it has intimately been associated with human beings since time unknown. Bamboo is utilized for various purposes depending on its properties (Effah et al., 2014; Selvam, 2016). It has combined with the ordinary lifestyle of people, including activities such as house construction, agricultural tools and implements, food material and weaponry, a convenient source of cellulose for paper manufacturing and rayon etc. (Selvam, 2016).

Sri Lankan Situation of Bamboo-Based Handicraft Industry

Various development strategies have been tested to develop Sri Lanka based on the growth and expansion of industries. However, as a developing country, it is a contemporary requirement to revive the economy by focusing on small-scale industries. Along with that, there is a possibility to empower bamboo-based handicraft production as a small-scale industry to contribute to economic development (Masakorala, 2005).

Bamboo trees occur naturally in all three of its major climatic zones named as wet zone, intermediate zone and dry zone in Sri Lanka (Kariyawasam, 1998). Thus, considering the extent, only 2500 ha of bamboo plantations exist in Sri Lanka and the bamboo is merely used locally as fuel and in low-quality construction (UNIDO, 2020). Sri Lanka has established a

wood plantation and wood processing industry, which can acquire benefits through a bulk supply of raw materials. According to UNIDO, there is a potential for developing the bamboo supply chain and related product industry in Sri Lanka.

The Worldwide Situation of the Bamboo-Based Handicraft Industry

The bamboo craft industry is one of India's oldest traditional cottage industries (Kasemi, 2013; Selvam, 2016). The origin of this rural craft has been traced from the beginning of civilisation. Further, people started making baskets, mats and many other household products using bamboo which was abundantly available in nearby forests. Later, tribal and rural people identified it as a means of livelihood. Therefore, the bamboo craft is spread in all rural areas of India and it feeds millions of traditional workers (Sreekumar, 2009). In addition, bamboo can be found naturally and cultivated with twelve genera and more than fifty-three species in almost all its parts in Nepal (Stapleton, 1994; Karki et al., 1998; Das, 1999; Das, 2004). Therefore, bamboo is an integral part of forestry and the mainstay of the rural culture of Nepal (Das, 2002). Along with this, bamboo cultivation is a vital component of the rural farming system and plays a critical role in supporting the rural economy to sustain the livelihoods of many rural households including socially and economically underprivileged groups (Karki et al., 1998; Das, 1999; Kasemi, 2013). As a result, bamboo has become one of the important renewable natural resources that can uplift people above the poverty line if it is grown and managed on a sustainable basis (Das, 2002; Poudyal & Das, 2002). It is well recognized in the rural economy of Nepal in terms of livelihood upgrade even though the importance of bamboo is predominant in the agricultural economy (Storey, 1990; Karki & Karki, 1996; Karki et al., 1998; Das, 2001; Bista, 2004). Bamboo has a huge demand among rural people for construction purposes and bamboo artisans in rural and urban enterprises make various bamboo products except weaving. For instance, the weaving of bamboo strips is most widespread because 70% of the farmers grow bamboo on their farms and around the homesteads in terms of utilization (Karki, et al., 1998). Bamboo-based craft makers design various bamboo architectures with the assistance of simple basic tools prepared locally under bamboo-based entrepreneurship (Bajracharya et al., n.d.). Besides, it has a direct linkage with the socio-economic and cultural conditions of the Nepalese people (Jha & Yadava, 2015). Around 3.3 million farming families have involved in the bamboo sub-sector either as producers or as users of bamboo-based products in Nepal (Pant, 2006). Further, it can contribute to the regional and national economy (Bajracharya et al., n.d.).

According to Latif, 2008, the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) estimated that there are about 45,000 registered small-scale cottage enterprises located throughout Bangladesh that consume about 46 million bamboo culms annually and about 300,000 people are employed in bamboo cutting and collecting from forests. It emphasizes the way of providing indirect benefits by generating employment opportunities related to the small-scale bamboo-based cottage industries. Employment generation and livelihood upgrading characteristics of the bamboo-based enterprise are vital to the continuing development of the country's economy, specifically in the rural sector (Alamgir et al., 2005, 2007).

Socio-Economic Benefits of Bamboo-Based Handicraft Industry

According to Selvam, 2016, Socioeconomic status means the accessibility, affordability, acceptability and actual utilization of various available common facilities of the people. It elaborates on economic conditions such as the condition of the living house, proprietorship of

house, irrigated land facilities, income, work availability, savings and loans and the social conditions such as legal identity, memberships, participation in public contests, celebrations, accessibility, discrimination, health problems and their habits. In light of socioeconomic status, bamboo-based handicraft workers are still unorganized, noncohesive, socio-economically backward and semi-skilled. As a result, they have been unable to engage in the bamboo-based handicraft industry as regular employment, hard to get meaningful wages and handicraft producers still experience some distinguished social discrimination. Development and encouragement of cottage industries based on bamboo have a very high potential to provide sufficient cash income to locals and contribute to their household economy (Poudyal, 1992; Karki et al., 1995; Sherchan et al., 1996). Bamboo-based enterprises are vital sources of employment generation for both the rural as well as the urban workforce (Jha & Yadava, 2015). Though, the potential of generating employment opportunities has not been utilized yet. For instance, the bamboo-based economy contributes only 1-2% to the national GDP in Nepal due to the lack of conducive policy and support of the government, disorganized market, and limited skills (Karki et al., 1998). Most Farmers grow bamboo in their private farmlands (Das, 2002). Besides, most producers are poor and have less encouragement for commercial production and marketing. For example, some ethnic communities still utilize bamboo for their subsistence. Though, most marginalized ethnic communities in Rautahat District, Nepal involve in the bamboo-based craft industry by making different types of bamboo woven products, handicrafts, and furniture for their income. These locally-produced bamboo products are readily marketable in the local market. Nevertheless, its trade is not satisfactory in the national market due to the lack of transportation channels and a well-established marketing structure (Adhikari, 2008). Marketing of bamboo and bamboo crafts is one of the important sources of income for particularly people who are socially and economically underprivileged (Das, 2002; MDBRPP/DFRS, 2010). However, the majority of bamboo-based traditionally processed products have to face huge competition with substitutes and other international products considering the international market (MDBRPP/DFRS, 2011). There are several factors such as age, education, size and household income as well as knowledge of the uses which affect the socio-economic impact on forest products including bamboo and rattan (Lacuna-Richman, 2007). Several social factors affect the commercialization of non-timber forest products including improvement of social justice, community organizations and the culture of the local community. As well as, production, collection, processing, storage, market and sales affect the process of commercialization of non-timber forest products. Among the above-mentioned factors, marketing and sales are remarkable for the successful commercialization of non-timber forest products (Marshall et al., 2003).

Challenges Faced by the Bamboo-Based Handicraft Industry

In the Sri Lankan context, the bamboo-based handicraft industry is in a primitive stage when compared with other handicraft industries. There are some challenges related to the bamboo-based handicraft industry that affect the industry's growth and expansion. As per the previous studies, major challenging areas have been identified. The scarcity and depletion of natural stocks of raw materials, the timely availability of raw materials and finance, the discontinuity of craft skills, poor social recognition of handicrafts, poor income, migration to other jobs, reluctance to use new technology, inability to afford to buy new technology, competition of imported substitute, high cost of production, the bureaucracy and the lack of extension programs of the institutions and the challenges of middlemen are most important. In addition, lack of marketing information is one of the major problems faced by rural producers in the commercialization of bamboo-based products. Producers do not have sufficient information

about their product prices in the local market or input for processing the desired product demandable in the market, the extent of competition, and the quality of the desired product. This may occur due to insufficient raw materials which leads to a small range of products. High transportation costs and less infrastructure such as roads and public transport services reduce the ability of manufacturers to compete in the market particularly in rural areas (FAO 1987; Datta et al., 2016; Kebede, 2018).

Considering the current nature and the complications of the handicraft industry, in some aspects, it can be a solution to the present development problem nevertheless not a perfect solution. Most of the youths are moving away from the traditional bamboo-based handicraft industry due to the lack of recognition and low reputation as craft workers (Rana, et al., 2009). Therefore, the handicraft industry may not be a solution for the unemployment in rural areas. The handicraft industry can be developed parallel to the growth of the tourist industry. Government intervention is needed to promote the local handicraft market. Some potentials can be utilized to improve the handicraft industry.

Conclusion

Key Findings

This study mainly encompasses the analysis of the current social background and economic potential of bamboo-based craftsmen in Handessa Grama Niladhari Division, Kandy, Sri Lanka. Accordingly, key findings can be illustrated as follows;

Social Background of Bamboo-Based Handicraft Producers

Age Distribution
Considering the age distribution of the bamboo-based handicraft producers, the majority of workers are above 60 years old and the involvement in the industry was less in the young generation particularly those below 40 years old because most young people don't prefer to engage in the craft-producing industry because of the less recognition and reputation. Therefore, it has been confined to the most of the elderly people. According to the prevailing situation, transferring knowledge from generation to generation was a serious issue. As a result, talented craftsmen were rare among the present generation due to the lack of preference for this industry (Figure 1).
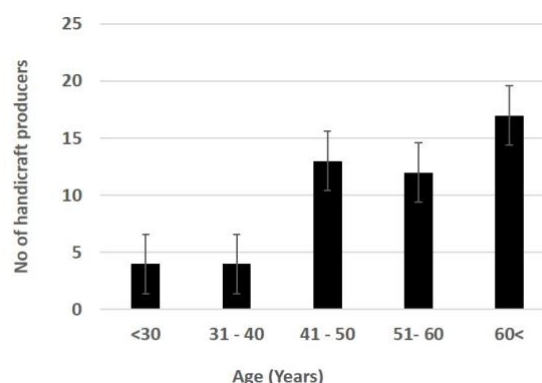
Figure 1: Age Distribution

Gender-Wise Participation

Both males and females have engaged in the craft-producing industry. The majority of them are males compared with females. However, female labour force participation is in a satisfactory position (Figure 2).
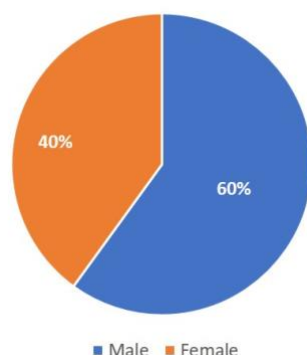
Figure 2: Gender-Wise Participation

Civil Status

70% of the bamboo-based handicraft producers are married and 12% of females are widows. It indicates that widows have engaged in the handicraft industry for their subsistence to sustain their livelihood and the role of this industry as a critical livelihood source in male-headed households (Figure 3).
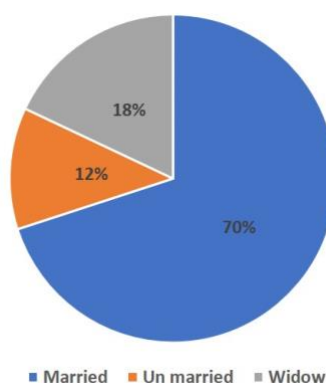
Figure 3: Civil Status

Type of Bamboo-Based Production

The majority of handicraft producers manufacture winnowing fans as they have already created market channels to sell them. However, they have a lack of preference for product diversification and a few handicraft artisans produce ornamentals while manufacturing winnowing fans (Figure 4).
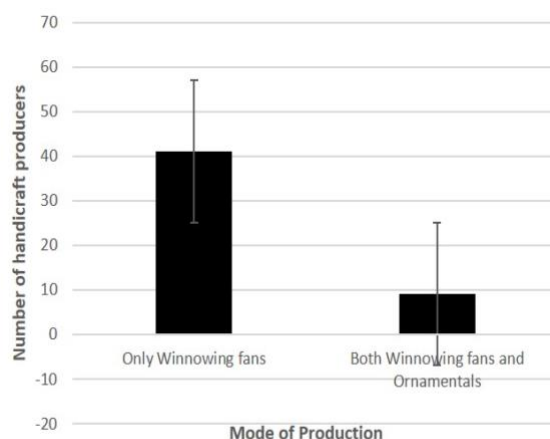
Figure 4: Type of Bamboo-Based Production

Level of Education

The majority of handicraft producers have only primary education (up to grade 05) and most of them have dropped out of school after primary education. Parents rarely encouraged their children to obtain well-organized education due to the lack of financial management, less social mobility inside the community etc. (Figure 5).
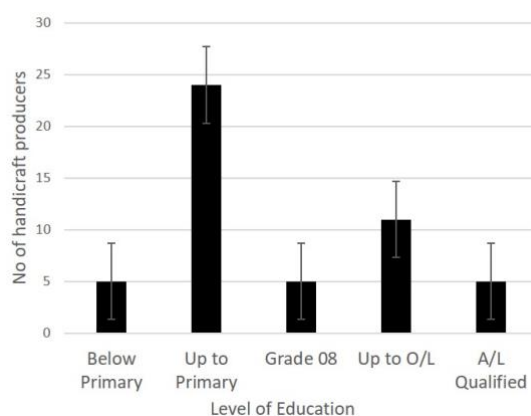
Figure 5: Level of Education

Relationship Between the Involvement of the Number of Family Members and Number of Dependents of the Family

It indicates a significant relationship between the involvement of the number of family members and the number of dependents (F value (0.00028) < 0.05) (Figure 6).
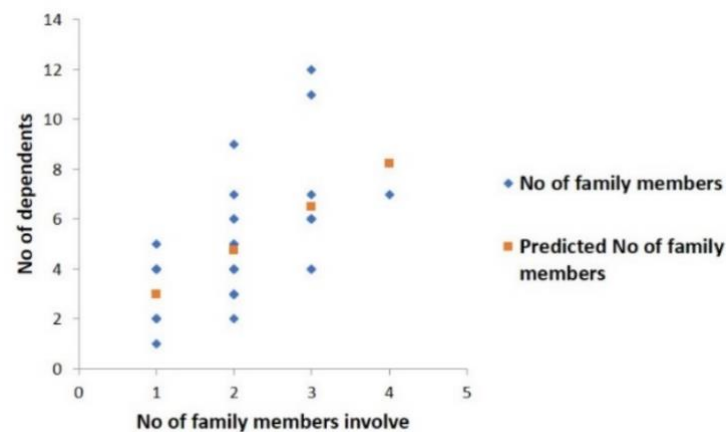
Figure 6: Relationship Between the Involvement of the Number of Family Members and the Number of Dependents

The current landscape of this industry highlights significant challenges and shifts in participation among the younger generation. Many young individuals are reluctant to engage in craft production due to the industry's lack of recognition and reputation, which results in a generational gap where knowledge transfers from older craftsmen to the youth has become increasingly problematic. This has led to a scarcity of skilled artisans, as young individuals are more inclined to pursue careers in public and private sectors.

Economic Potential of Bamboo-Based Handcraft Producers

Relationship Between Monthly Income and Monthly Savings Distribution
It illustrates a significant relationship between monthly income and monthly savings (F value (0.0000) < 0.05) (Figure 7). The bamboo-based handicraft producers are incompetent in managing their savings. For instance, the daily production is around 50 winnowing fans and the selling price of a winnowing fan is around Sri Lankan Rupees (Rs.)150.00. Although, poor financial management practices, coupled with cultural factors such as addiction to alcohol and gambling, hinder their ability to save and invest effectively (Figure 8 and Figure 9).
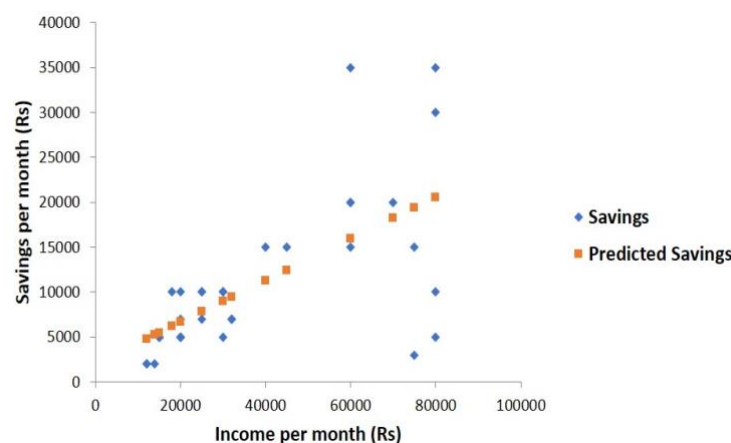
Figure 7: Relationship Between Monthly Income and Monthly Savings Distribution
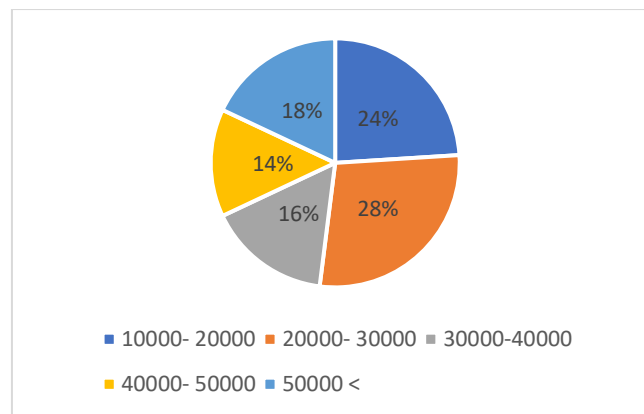
Figure 8: Monthly Income (Rs.)
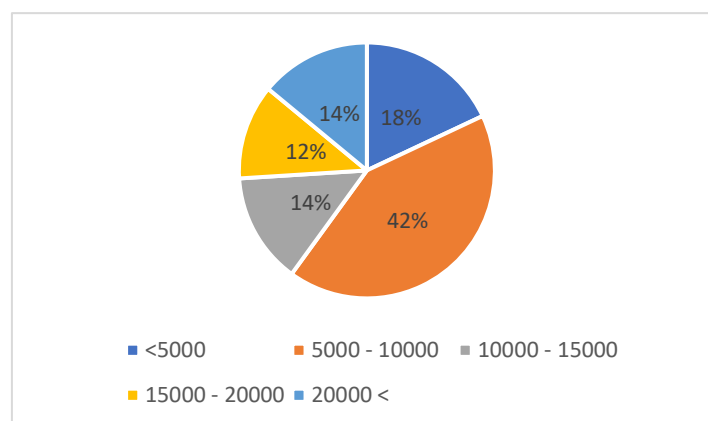
Figure 9: Monthly Savings (Rs.)

Challenges Faced by Bamboo-Based Handicraft Producers

It has become a current requirement to examine opportunities to overcome socioeconomic challenges faced by bamboo-based artisans. Through this study, some challenges have been identified including difficulties in obtaining permits for the transportation of bamboo trees, less requirement for using winnowing fans due to modern technological equipment, lack of social recognition for handicraft producers, less bamboo-based product diversification, lack of knowledge for financial management etc.

In the above context, the bamboo-based handicraft industry faces critical challenges, including a decline in skilled artisans, inadequate education, poor financial practices etc. While addressing these issues, it is important to revitalize the industry and empower future generations to engage in and appreciate this traditional craft industry to ensure its sustainability.

Limitations

Several limitations such as travel restrictions, and imposing contemporary lockdowns to prevent the community spread of the coronavirus due to the covid 19 pandemic situation directly affected primary data collection. Usage of online platforms is also unrealistic in light of the targeted group which had been selected for sampling since they had a lack of knowledge regarding online methods and primary data depended on respondents. Instead of that time limitations for collecting primary data were affected to confine the scope of the

study. The secondary data for this study was limited to the resource profile of the Udunuwara divisional secretariat due to the lack of previous studies.

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Exploring Physics Concepts on the "Fahombo" Stone Jumping Tradition in Nias Tribe, Indonesia

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Abstract

Physics learning in Indonesia is still regarded as a subject that students fear and find boring. One way to address this issue is by integrating local culture with physics concepts. This study investigates the physics concepts embedded in the traditional stone-jumping tradition, "Fahombo," practiced by the Nias tribe in Indonesia. Fahombo is a cultural ceremony where young men, transitioning into adulthood, jump over stones that are 2 to 2.5 meters high. The focus of this research is the physical mechanics of the jump, including the run-up, the jump itself, the airborne phase, and the landing. This article employs a descriptive qualitative method, combining observational analysis, YouTube video recordings, and theoretical physics calculations to identify the relevant physics concepts. The findings reveal several physics concepts within this stone-jumping tradition, including kinematics and dynamics. In kinematics, the concepts of linear and parabolic motion are present. In dynamics, the study explores the forces acting on objects, momentum, impulse, work and energy. Moreover, this study demonstrates that local culture has the potential to be integrated into various branches of science. Moving forward, it is hoped that more scientific disciplines will be linked to local cultures, not only to promote cultural heritage but also to make the learning experience more engaging.

Keywords: Local Culture, *Fahombo* Stone, Physics Concepts

Introduction

Physics learning isn't just about memorizing formulas or doing calculations; it involves truly understanding the concepts that explain the natural world. As a science, physics seeks to uncover the fundamental principles behind natural phenomena (Taurusi et al., 2024). Despite this, many students in Indonesia still find physics to be one of the most difficult subjects. This difficulty is largely due to the low interest in studying physics (Amalissholeh et al., 2023), which makes it harder for students to grasp its concepts and formulas (Sampe Daun et al., 2020). One reason for this is that physics education continues to rely on traditional, often monotonous teaching methods (Winarti et al., 2021) which only provide general examples or even those that are rarely known to students and the learning carried out is only rote, so that it has an impact on students' insensitivity to events that occur in their environment, even though these events are related to physics (Mardana et al., 2022). To overcome this challenge, a tailored strategy is needed. A promising approach could be to integrate physics education with students' everyday experiences and local culture (Yuenyong & Yuenyong, 2012). Incorporating local wisdom, culture, and traditions into physics learning is crucial (Ali & Aprilia, 2024). This is because physics often deals with abstract concepts and complex equations, which can be made more relatable and easier to understand by connecting them to local culture (Mavhunga & Kibirige, 2018). In addition, integrating physics learning with local culture can improve students' skills in examining, interpreting (Wati et al., 2020), and understanding of physics material (Elvianasti et al., 2023).

Indonesia, as a vast archipelago with thousands of islands and diverse ethnic groups, is home to a rich tapestry of cultures, each with its own unique characteristics. From traditional customs and ceremonies to art, music, language, and cuisine, every Indonesian culture offers something distinct and fascinating. There are many local cultures that can be associated with physics, one of which is the "*Fahombo*" stone jumping tradition of the Nias tribe, a tradition that has lived for generations and is strongly attached to the people of Nias Island, North Sumatra, in Indonesia (Siregar & Syamsuddin, 2015). This tradition is intended for teenagers who are approaching adulthood where they have to jump over a 2-2,5 m high stone structure with a stone thickness of 40 cm (Gea & Sazali, 2023). This tradition was born when there was a tribal conflict (between village) in the area and the community had to prepare tough young people to defend their homeland (Saputra & Kuswanto, 2018). According to (Siregar & Syamsuddin, 2015), The tradition of stone jumping also contains positive values such as dexterity, maturity, courage, tenacity, fighting spirit, and heroism.

Integrating the study of physics with cultural traditions offers a novel perspective that enriches our understanding of Nias culture while also demonstrating how scientific principles are embedded in the daily practices of traditional societies. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the physical concepts related to the "*Fahombo*" tradition in the Nias tribe and evaluate the potential of using this tradition as a more diverse and relevant physics learning source.

Methods

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method. This study aims to examine and clarify the existence of a phenomenon that occurs in society (Moleong, 2018). The technique used is combining observational analysis of YouTube video recordings about Fahombo Stone Jumping with theoretical physics calculations to identify relevant physics concepts. The data collected is then analyzed through three stages: first, reducing the data by correlating the

video identifications with the appropriate physics concepts; second, presenting the data in a descriptive textual format; and third, drawing conclusions.

Results and Discussion

"Fahombo" Stone Jumping

Fahombo is a stone-jumping tradition originating from Bawomataluo village in South Nias Regency, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. This tradition is intended for teenagers who are approaching adulthood where they have to jump over a 2-2,5 m high stone structure with a stone thickness of 40 cm (Gea & Sazali, 2023). There is a smaller stone beside the main stone, used as a stepping point before leaping over the main one. Originally, this tradition was carried out to demonstrate that young men who successfully completed the jump were considered physically mature, agile, and courageous. (Kemdikbud, 2023). This is because, there was a tribal conflict (between village) in the area and the community had to prepare tough young people to defend their homeland (Saputra & Kuswanto, 2018).

The physics analysis of the *Fahombo* tradition is conducted using various images and video clips to clearly illustrate the different physics concepts involved in the ritual. This analysis begins with the moment the young man prepares to jump, starting with a slow run, gradually increasing his speed, leaping over the stone, and finally landing on the ground. The sequence of events in the *Fahombo* Stone Jumping process is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: *Fahombo* Stone Jumping

The results of the exploration are divided into two main classical physics themes, including kinematics dan dynamics. The results of the physics concept analysis can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Analysis Physics Concepts in *Fahombo* Stone Jumping

Phenomena in *Fahombo* Stone Jumping	Main Themes	Sub-themes
A man runs toward the stone at a certain speed	Kinematics	Uniform Rectilinear Motion (URM) or Uniformly Accelerated Rectilinear Motion (UARM) n
A man jumps over the stone in a parabolic motion.		Parabolic Motion
A man maintains his balance to avoid falling when landing.		Newton's 1st Law
A man runs toward the stone at a specific speed, taking into account his body mass.		Newton's 2nd Law
An action-reaction force occurs in his legs while running, as his feet push off the stone just before jumping		Newton's 3rd Law
His legs act as a support, propelling him upward during the jump		Momentum and Impulse
A man runs from the starting point, jumps, and lands on the ground		Work and Energy

Source: (Saputra, 2018), with further development

Physics Concepts on "*Fahombo*"

Kinematics

Kinematics in physics is a branch of science that studies the motion of objects without considering the causes (Giancoli, 2014). Kinematics always discusses distance and displacement, speed, acceleration, and time. Subfields within kinematics include Uniform Linear Motion (ULM), Uniformly Accelerated Linear Motion (UALM), Uniform Circular Motion, and Projectile Motion. The forms of kinematics in *Fahombo* Stone Jumping include:

1. Uniform Linear Motion (ULM) and Uniformly Accelerated Linear Motion (UALM)

Uniform linear motion (ULM) is the motion of an object in a straight line with a constant speed. On the other hand, uniformly accelerated linear motion (UALM) is the motion of an object in a straight line with a constant acceleration, meaning its speed is changing at a constant rate. This can be observed when a jumper takes a running start before jumping over a stone. An illustration of this can be seen in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: ULM and UALM in *Fahombo* Stone Jumping

This phenomenon can be attributed to the principles of ULM and UALM, as any object in motion must exhibit velocity and acceleration.

2. *Parabolic Motion*

The application of parabolic motion is evident when a jumper leaps over a stone that is 2-2.5 meters high. If this condition is described in two dimensions, air resistance is neglected (Giancoli, 2014). Parabolic motion is a motion whose trajectory forms a parabola. This motion is a combination of uniform linear motion (horizontal axis) because there is no acceleration or deceleration, and uniformly accelerated linear motion (vertical axis) because it is influenced by gravitational acceleration (Saputra, 2018).

Figure 3: The Parabola Formed When Jumping Over a Stone

An analysis was conducted when the jumper moved freely in the air, influenced by gravity, so the jumper's acceleration was due to the Earth's gravity and directed downwards. The jumper's motion can be understood by analyzing the vertical (y) and horizontal (x) components of their motion, as seen in Figure 4. This is in line with Halliday et al. (2010) who stated that in projectile motion, the horizontal and vertical motions are independent of each other, meaning that one motion does not affect the other.

(Saputra, 2018)

Figure 4: Parabolic Analysis of the Jumper's Motion

Figure 4 illustrates the parabolic trajectory of a jumper leaping over a stone. The initial velocity and velocities at various points along the trajectory, along with their components (horizontal and vertical), are depicted based on the analysis of (Halliday et al., 2010). A key characteristic of this parabolic motion is the constant horizontal component of velocity and the changing vertical component due to the influence of gravity.

Dynamics

The dynamics in physics is a branch of science that studies the causes of an object's motion (Giancoli, 2010). This field delves deeper into what makes an object move, stop, or change direction. Subfields within dynamics include Newton's laws, force, momentum and impulse, work and energy, and many others. The forms of dynamics in *Fahombo* Stone Jumping include:

1.   *Newton's 1ˢᵗ Law*

Newton's First Law is related to the law of inertia, which states that an object at rest tends to stay at rest and an object in motion tends to stay in motion with the same speed and in the same direction unless acted upon by an unbalanced force. This principle is evident in the Nias youth's stone jumping. During the landing phase, the jumper's body tends to continue its forward motion due to inertia. Therefore, the jumper must employ a proper landing technique to dampen the impact force and maintain balance. As seen in Figure 5 the jumper executes a landing technique that keeps their body balanced upon landing.
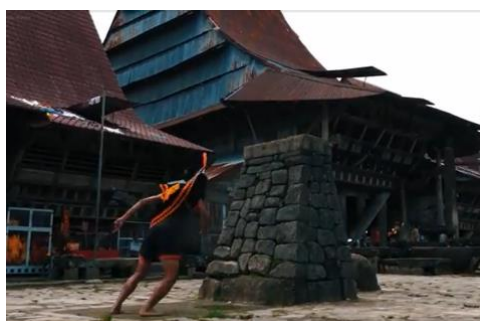
Figure 5: The Landing Moment

2. *Newton's 2ⁿᵈ Law*

Figure 6 demonstrates that before jumping over stone, jumpers must run first to gain acceleration. The change in velocity from the initial condition to an instantaneous velocity at a specific time (t) results in acceleration. One way to increase velocity is by applying force to the process. If the applied force is in the same direction as the object's movement, then the object will accelerate. When the applied force is opposite to the direction of the object, deceleration will occur.

Figure 6: The concept of Newton's 2ⁿᵈ Law in *Fahombo* Stone Jumping

The acceleration of an object is directly proportional to the net force acting on the object. This means that the greater the force applied, the greater the object's acceleration. However, the greater the mass of an object, the smaller the force will be.

3. *Newton's 3ʳᵈ Law*

This law will explain the origin of the force that influences motion. Figure 7 shows that the jumper leaps over the main stone by using the smaller stone as a foothold.

Figure 7: Small Foothold Stone

The question is, how can the jumpers leap over a stone that is more than 2 meters high when explained in the concept of physics?
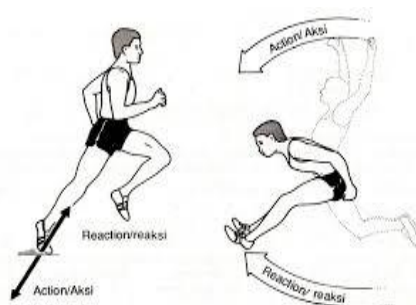
Figure 8: Action-Reaction Forces in Running and Jumping

The small stone utilized as a fulcrum in the *Fahombo* tradition enhances the propulsive force exerted by the jumper. This phenomenon can be explained by Newton's Third Law, which states that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Consequently, when the jumper's foot applies a force to the stone, the stone imparts an equivalent and opposing force onto the jumper's foot. This is in accordance with Newton's Third Law, which states: "When one object exerts a force on a second object, the second object exerts a force of equal magnitude and opposite direction on the first" (Giancoli, 2014).

4. *Momentum and Impulse*

As the jumper runs towards the stone to be jumped over, they possess a significant amount of momentum. It's important to remember that momentum is the product of an object's mass and velocity. Consequently, the greater the jumper's mass and speed, the greater their momentum. The role of momentum becomes apparent when the jumper is running towards the stone.

Figure 9: Momentum Occurs When the Jumper Is Running

Impulse is the change in momentum of an object resulting from a force acting on it over a specific time interval. In the *Fahombo* stone jumping, the impulse generated from the foot's push increases the athlete's upward momentum. A larger impulse leads to a greater change in momentum, enabling the athlete to jump higher. The role of impulse in this case is to provide the necessary upward force from the foot to successfully jump over the stone.

5. *Work and Energy*

The discussion of work and energy encompasses four inseparable components: work, energy, kinetic energy, and potential energy. In the context of *Fahombo* stone jumping, the entire process of jumping constitutes work. This is because a fundamental component of work is the displacement of an object due to a force. In this tradition, displacement occurs during both the running and jumping phases.

The concept of kinetic energy is applicable throughout the entire activity. This is because kinetic energy is influenced by mass and velocity. The faster the jumper runs, the greater their kinetic energy becomes during the jump.

Potential energy is at its maximum when the jumper reaches the peak of their jump, as a significant portion of the kinetic energy from the run has been converted into potential energy. This is because potential energy is influenced by height.

Figure 10: Potential Energy at the Highest Point of the Jump

Conclusion

Based on the research and discussion above, it can be concluded that there are two main physics concepts in the stone jumping tradition: kinematics and dynamics. In kinematics, the concepts of linear and projectile motion are present. In dynamics, the study explores the forces acting on objects, momentum, impulse, work and energy.

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Facilitating Students for an English Course: A Teacher's Journey

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Abstract

Internationalization and globalization enable positive returns in a wide range of human activities. The affected sectors include education and industry. English language is critical to Malaysia's ability to become a global player in education and encourage the internationalization of higher education. As a result, there has been a greater emphasis on improving graduates' language proficiency. One of these focuses takes the shape of a nationwide test. Since its inception in 1999, the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) has been one of the requirements for school leavers to enroll in any undergraduate programs at Malaysia's public universities. The MUET assigns candidates bands to demonstrate their English language proficiency; it mentions nine bands, with Band 1 (equal to CEFR level A2) representing the weakest and Band 5+ (corresponding to CEFR level C1+) representing the most competent. The purpose of this pilot research is to chronicle the author's quest to identify suitable teaching methods for Bands 1, 2, and 2.5 (CEFR level A2) in a specific course. The Language Dean Council proposed the development of such a course, citing the need to address this lack of English language competency swiftly and consistently. This research used a descriptive research design, employing qualitative approach, which included class observations of seven weeks for two short semesters and semi-structured interviews with four students enrolled in these two short semesters. The preliminary data suggests that extensive drilling and practice before, during, and after face-to-face sessions enhances the skills of students in this specific course.

Keywords: Behaviorism, Communicative Language Teaching, Drill-and-Practice, Grammar, MUET

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Introduction

Malaysia is adamant on becoming an international educational hub (Loo, 2022). Many efforts have been made by the government and other relevant agencies in ensuring that Malaysia is able to attract foreign students to pursue higher education in the country. Given all these, Malaysian students must be empowered to make them equally or more competitive. One of the areas of empowerment is English language. Since its introduction in 1999, the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) becomes one of the requirements for school leavers to enter any undergraduate programs in public universities in Malaysia. This requirement was introduced due to issues such as low English language proficiency of Malaysian university graduates, which has hindered some of the graduates to succeed during interview sessions. The MUET is managed by the Malaysian Examinations Council, which also manages all national level examinations including *Sijil Peperiksaan Malaysia* (Malaysian Certificate of Education).

Offered to all candidates thrice a year (April, July, and November), candidates will have to sit for three papers, including listening, reading, and writing and attend a speaking test/session. Candidates are given bands to demonstrate their ability in using English language; nine bands are listed with Band 1 (equivalent to CEFR level A2) being the weakest and Band 5+ (equivalent to CEFR level C1+) being the most proficient. The weightage of the bands covers communicative ability, comprehension and the quality of task performance which will then be summarized into candidates being proficient users (Band 5+ = C1+); (Band 5 = C1); independent users (Bands 4.5 and 4 = B2); (Bands 3.5 and 3 = B1); and basic users (Bands 2.5, 2 and 1 = A2). Most offer letters to pursue undergraduate studies will just require a Band 1 except for medical and law programs that require a Band 4 and for Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) program, its requirement is set at a Band 5. It must be highlighted that these bands have been aligned to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, also known as CEFR, *arguably* an international standard for describing language ability of the students.

This pilot study attempts to document the journey of the author in finding suitable approaches that can be used in a special course at the National Defense University of Malaysia (NDUM) for scorers of Bands 1, 2 and 2.5 (CEFR level A2). The existence of such course was driven by the concerns of the Language Dean Council, operating at the ministerial level, which sees this lack of English language competency as something that must be addressed immediately and constantly. Because the NDUM has its own foundation programs, the defense university is thus responsible to prepare these students to take the MUET, normally offered in April each year. In general, ever since the NDUM has its students sitting for the test, not a single student has scored a Band 5+ (or a Band 6 in the previous assessment standard). From 2008 to 2021, a total of 2,678 students took the examinations, and only 21 students managed to obtain a Band 5. Most of these foundation students obtained Bands 3.5 and 3, and quite a handful of them obtained Bands 4.5 and 4.

Problem Statement

Taking into consideration the needs for internationalization and globalization, the concerns of the nation and the achievement of these foundation students, the Language Center at the NDUM decided to offer a non-credited English course that must be taken by all achievers of Bands 1, 2 and 2.5. The course titled *Basic Grammar and Vocabulary* aims at facilitating students who are weak at English especially in two critical skills of English, grammar, and

vocabulary. The course focuses on these two skills because the rest of the English courses at the NDUM are considered English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. *Basic Grammar and Vocabulary* is categorized as HW (*Hadir Wajib* – compulsory to attend), and this course is conducted one hour weekly during main semesters and two hours weekly for short semesters.

The questions that will be addressed by this paper are on how the author had conducted the classes for the achievers of Bands 1, 2 and 2.5, and how she had explored the teaching and learning activities, as well as the materials used. In so doing, the author attempts to find the best approaches to assist students to master grammar and vocabulary within a short period of time (one hour weekly for 14 weeks in a main semester and two hours weekly for seven weeks in a short semester). Although it is impossible for these students to exit the course at a Band 3, at least, the Language Center aspires that these students become more confident, effective, and accurate when using the language. This will assist students in internationalization programs such as mobility or exchange students' programs, and later to market themselves after graduation and to further studies abroad.

After conducting the course for two semesters (Short Semester, Academic Session 2021/2022 and Short Semester, Academic Session 2022/2023), the author is still perplexed in adopting the best approaches to help the students taking the course. Albeit the course outline and informed learning activities provided for all students taking the course, the author is not convinced that the students have benefited much from the course. During these two semesters, the author used a compilation of notes on grammar and vocabulary and explained to students the rules, followed by practices by completing tasks from various sources. Online strategies were used such as notes shared on WhatsApp and the Learning Management System (LMS) of the NDUM, and the students had had the opportunities to practice orally in face-to-face sessions due to the smaller number of students. Therefore, based on the journey of the author, approaches to mastering grammar and vocabulary could have been determined for this particular course.

Significance of Study

Because *Basic Grammar and Vocabulary* is a compulsory course for achievers of Bands 1, 2, and 2 .5 of the MUET to enrol and pass to graduate, the best approaches for students to master grammar and vocabulary must be identified. The approaches used during their previous learning at primary and secondary levels may no longer be effective. New ways and approaches must be utilized to allow students to use the language accurately and effectively. The successful approaches can then be applied too in other English courses to enrich the learning environment at the NDUM.

This pilot study has two key research questions that will be answered at the end of this paper. There are:
  a. What are the best approaches to assist students to master grammar and vocabulary effectively?
  b. What are the learning activities that can best accompany the approaches to assist students to master grammar and vocabulary effectively?

It is now important to present the layout of this paper. There are four main sections including this introduction. The second section presents selected literature relevant to this paper including one learning theory, behaviorism and one approach to teaching English, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Next, the methodology adopted will be

explained, followed by the conclusion that discusses the findings from the observations, together with data from the semi-structured interviews. It then closes the paper with recommendations.

Selected Literature

This section examines the critical literature that helps to build the arguments in this study. It starts with a discussion on behaviorism, and how it has influenced the mind-sets of many educators on teaching and learning. Then, the discussion continues to examine one approach to language teaching, CLT, and how it affects English language learning. It needs to be emphasized that these two aspects are crucial in understanding issues related to mastery of grammar and vocabulary for the achievers of Bands 1, 2, and 2.5 of the MUET.

Behaviorism

Contemporary behavior originates from the contributions of Pavlov, Watson, and Skinner. These scholars opined that repetitive training shapes human behavior by rewarding certain actions and penalizing others. For example, Skinner (1976) proposed that students may enhance their learning by rigorous drilling and practice, necessitating repeated exercises until they achieve proficiency. In a traditional classroom, students learn grammar by repeating sentences and memorizing rules. Language instructors frequently articulate words or sentences, which students are required to replicate both collectively and individually. This is what Skinner referred to as "drill-and-practice." The objective is to guarantee that students articulate correctly and retain rules appropriately. This is because it is argued that behaviorism has an impact on students' language acquisition (Anastasie & Cyprien, 2021).

Digital educational resources have also utilized behaviorism in their development. For one, behaviorism plays a crucial role in military applications, requiring quick responses and rapid personnel learning to ensure efficient deployment and ensure course mastery. Consequently, it is unsurprising that military training requires behaviorism. Military personnel rely fundamentally on their instinctive reactions to perilous circumstances. These perilous conditions resemble the "stimuli" discovered by Pavlov and Skinner as catalysts for eliciting a behavioral response. Contemporary military education is fundamentally based on behaviorism. The advent of technology in military education has rendered the behaviorist approach the principal learning theory for developing pertinent courseware. The first courseware employing the behaviorist approach was Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI), among others (An, 2021). CAI employs "drill-and-practice" methodologies to reinforce students' learning. The design of CAI is contingent upon the assessment of learning requirements and the methodical production of training known as instructional design (ID). ID derives from behaviorism, emphasizing observable behaviors, and subsequently serves as a methodology for instructional development.

As a pivotal figure in ID, Gagne (1985) established five principles of learning conditions as the framework for courseware development. Five primary categories of learning conditions are verbal information, intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, physical skills, and attitudes. The five categories indicate that designers must consider students' needs for acquiring the necessary abilities, depending on the talents to be taught. Gagne's initial category of learning circumstances, verbal information, facilitates learning through presentation in a structured, relevant context. Gagne's second condition of learning, intellectual skills, necessitates the preceding acquisition of prerequisite abilities. Cognitive methods are a type of learning that

demands repeated exposure to intellectual challenges. Practice acquires motor abilities, while human models and vicarious reinforcement most efficiently learn attitudes. In fact, Gagne's initial studies mostly focus on the requirements of the U.S. Air Force (Curry, Johnson & Peacock, 2021).

Ultimately, contemporary military education seeks to cultivate officers capable of acting not merely on a conditioned basis but primarily through their capacity to interrogate and understand important situations. Consequently, the pedagogical approach in military contexts is increasingly transitioning toward constructivism. The author in her quest to identify the best approaches to teaching students in *Basic Grammar and Vocabulary* has chosen to incorporate online tactics, such as videos, notes, exercises, and quizzes, to provide students with diverse learning resources. Some of them adhere to behaviorist concepts, while others align with constructivist theories.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

This paper will not explore constructivism in depth. Instead, it will directly address one of the numerous tactics employed in constructivist learning methodologies. This methodology is based on several concepts of constructivism that anticipate students would engage actively in classroom learning. The CLT approach examines the utilization of language (Teh, 2021). There is a contention that students should effectively manage English courses at the university level, considering their exposure to the language since Standard One. This is because the Malaysian education system consists of six years of primary education, followed by five years of secondary education. The basic and secondary English language curricula ensure that school graduates acquire all six English skills, encompassing grammar and vocabulary. While the NDUM did not focus solely on grammar and vocabulary until the launch of *Basic Grammar and Vocabulary* in 2012, it provides other ESP courses aimed at preparing prospective graduates for their daily lives and professional careers.

Huang (2023) identified three features of CLT: communicative ability, application principles, and the significance of meaning and context. For students at the NDUM, a teaching atmosphere that fosters the communicative aspects of a language enhances engagement and encourages them to express their thoughts more freely. Due to the nature of the courses, students are required to communicate in English with confidence and efficacy. The CLT approach also advocates for the use of more real resources in teaching and learning (Qasserras, 2023). The shift to authentic content enables students to engage with the real world in advance. Qasserras claimed that CLT prioritizes learners in the teaching and learning process. This aligns with the objective of the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia, which stresses student-centered learning (SCL).

Nggawu and Thao (2023) discovered that CLT recognizes and addresses various student populations. Due to the diverse backgrounds of students entering English lessons, CLT enables them to leverage their prior knowledge and apply it in various classroom learning scenarios. Nonetheless, CLT has its challenges. According to Panyaatisin and Toomaneejinda (2022), CLT must strike a balance between communicative competencies and explicit instruction in grammatical and lexical elements. Moreover, there are problems regarding the use of CLT, as it neglects to account for local learning contexts and the specific needs of students (Al-Khamisi & Sinha, 2022). The summary provided by the critics highlights several common misconceptions about the implementation of CLT in English language classrooms. Thompson (1996) identified four misconceptions: that CLT classrooms do not teach

grammar, focus solely on speaking, rely on pairwork, and place excessive demands on instructors. These fallacies indicate a superficial comprehension of the CLT technique itself. This study emphasizes CLT since it underpins all activities and resources utilized in English language classes at the NDUM, despite the contention that no single technique or method is inherently superior to others. In short, these two facets of literature illustrate that they can effectively enhance one another in English language instruction and acquisition, provided there is enough planning and execution. The section after the next will further elucidate this.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this research is a descriptive research design, employing qualitative approach, where class observations and semi-structured interviews were employed. This study focuses on trying to solve the issue of effective grammar and vocabulary learning for achievers of Bands 1, 2, and 2.5 of the MUET at the NDUM.

The number of students used in this research was small; only four students, who enrolled in the author's groups for *Basic Grammar and Vocabulary* for two short semesters mentioned earlier (the first – one student; the second – three students). The reason for the small number of samples is because the author was the only instructor teaching the course during the short semesters, and thus the time spent on face-to-face sessions, which was 14 hours focused on activities such as role plays, impromptu running commentaries, and the students had to take three formative tests. Apart from a compilation of notes and materials used during face-to-face sessions, students were also given online notes and materials through the LMS, and online quizzes were also prepared for them.

The students were given pre- and post-tests to investigate any improvements in their proficiency. The tests can provide some evidence on any improvements in the students' results using the learning methods utilized by the author. Further, the data from the semi-structured interviews were manually analyzed based on students' responses.

Conclusion

Findings and Discussions

This sub section will first present the results of the pre- and post-tests of the students, followed by data from the semi-structured interviews. Before that, Table 1 illustrates the approaches and learning activities involved in the author's class.

Table 1: Strategies and Learning Activities Used

Approaches and Learning Activities	Medium	Hours
Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) – Engage-Study-Activate (ESA)	face-to-face sessions & online	Every hour
Drill-and-Practice – grammar rules; pronunciation of new vocabulary; dictation	face-to-face sessions	Every hour except for hours 2 and 12
Role Play – short conversations based on predetermined situations	face-to-face sessions	Hours 4, 7 and 9
Cue cards (phrases/single words) – build up sentences [each student held three cards, then students were asked to create sentences based on the cards held by their peers]	face-to-face sessions	Hours 5, 6, 9, 11
Online notes and reading materials	online	Every hour
Online quizzes	online	Every hour except for hours 2 and 13
Three tests – formative assessment	face-to-face sessions	Hours 4, 8 and 12

*For students attending the course alone, the author was the companion for role-playing activities or any activity that required a partner.

Table 2 shows the students' pre- and post-test scores. Briefly, it appears that there is a mixed outcome between pre- and post-tests, meaning that not every student did better after completing the learning exercises. Out of four students, one fared better in the pre-test than in the post-test, while one scored the same on both. Despite the inconclusive summary on the pre- and post test scores, the author opines that these scores are indicators of the effectiveness of the learning activities and teaching methods *or* lack of them during the class.

Table 2: The Scores of Pre- and Post-tests

Students	Pre-test	Post-test
A (male)	15	19
B (male)	14	16
C (male)	14	14
D (male)	14	11

All students were selected for the semi-structured interviews. Each respondent spent about 10 to 15 minutes for the interview session. There were generally six questions asked to all respondents including:

    a. What do you think of the activities in the class?
    b. What do you think of the online materials given for the course?
    c. Which activity in the class do you like the most?
    d. Which online material is the most helpful?

e. What can be done to improve the learning of grammar and vocabulary?
f. Which learning activity that has assisted you the most in learning grammar and vocabulary?

The results of the students' interviews are presented in Table 3. The analysis is done manually based on the students' answers.

Table 3: Findings From the Semi-structured Interviews

Questions	Responses	Frequency of Answers (some with multiple responses)
What do you think of the activities in the class?	• Very Interesting • Interesting • Engaging • Challenging	4 3 3 4
What do you think of the online materials given for the course?	• Very Interesting • Interesting • Engaging • Challenging • Easy to follow • Beneficial	4 4 4 3 3 3
Which activity in the class do you like the most?	• Role Plays • Cue Cards • Drill-and-Practice • Presentation-Practice-Production	4 4 4 4
Which online material is the most helpful?	• Videos on Grammar Rules • Videos on Role Playing • Vocabulary Notes • Grammar Notes	4 3 4 3
What can be done to improve the learning of grammar and vocabulary?	• More time to learn grammar and vocabulary • More Drill-and-Practice online activity • Use English outside of classes	4 4 4
Which learning activity that has assisted you the most in learning grammar and vocabulary?	• Role Plays • Drill-and-Practice	4 4

Based on the data, the author argues that the approaches and learning activities utilized in her class helped students enhance their grammatical and vocabulary skills. The findings show that the most effective approaches and learning activities for assisting students with grammar and vocabulary are a combination of behaviorism and CLT. Behaviorism enables language instructors to impart rules and concepts to their students. The author did this through two

modes of instruction: face-to-face sessions and online. After drilling, the students practiced the rules and ideas.

These practices incorporate CLT in their approach so that students can apply the principles later in real-world circumstances. Due to time constraints, the author frequently moved directly to drill-and-practice. The author informed the students about their roles, which included listening to or watching online lectures and reading online notes and resources. They were better prepared for the drill-and-practice sessions when they arrived at class. Then students were expected to take online tests based on the week's lessons. Figure 1 illustrates the students' learning experience.
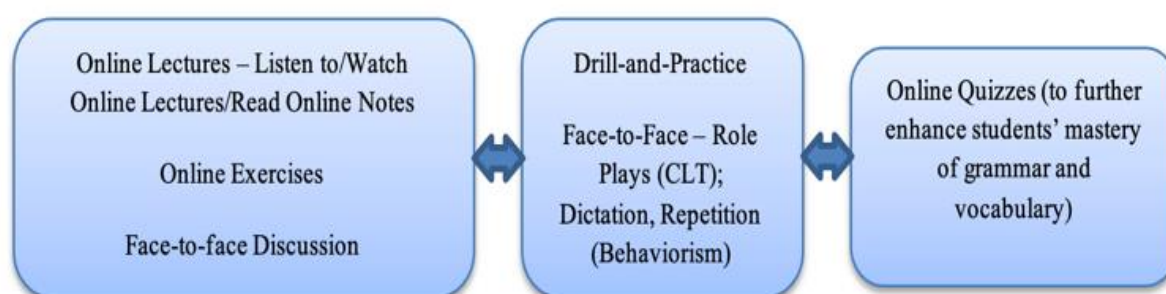
Figure 1: The Learning Experience of Students

This learning experience is similar to Harmer's (2007) proposal for the Presentation-Practices-Production (PPP) idea. For all three components, there were two modes of delivery: face-to-face and online. Harmer went on to provide three ways for educators to apply in their classrooms, each with three procedures: engage, study, and activate (ESA). ESA's three techniques include straight boomerang and patchwork arrow lesson procedures. This study uses the Patchwork Arrow because students can activate their knowledge at any time, and reengagement can occur after the study session (see Figure 2). However, Harmer warns that the PPP is "useful in a focus-on-forms lesson, especially at the lower levels, but is irrelevant in a skills lesson."
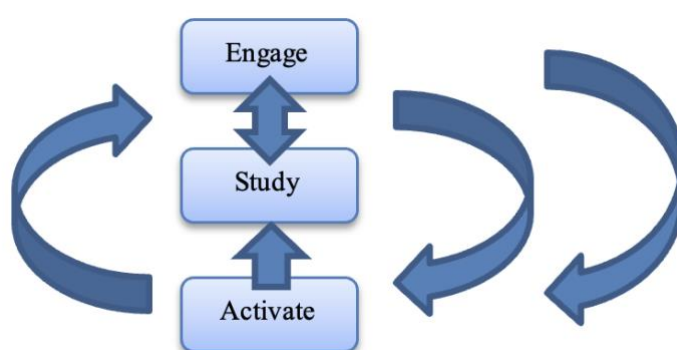
Figure 2: An Example of Patchwork Lesson Procedures (Harmer, 2007)

During the teaching and learning process, the author halted the students when they made mistakes, particularly during grammar and vocabulary drills (phrase and sentence repetition). Although halting students in the middle of their spoken discourses may demotivate them (Farjami & Takhti, 2020), the author contends that there must be opportunities to emphasize their errors so that they can relearn their grammar abilities. Moreover, there remain

unresolved disagreements about the role of grammar education in second language learning. Among these considerations are the function of explicit instruction, the selection of structures to target, the type of intervention, and its duration, timing, and intensity (Aguion et al., 2021). However, this study will not address these concerns. The author also observed students during face-to-face interactions using a checklist table on their reactions and responses. The author believes that students were better prepared during classroom learning sessions. They felt comfortable participating in role plays, particularly those involving the use of tenses and terminology. Furthermore, the author discovers that students in these classes have a better understanding of tenses and the purposes of English language. Students' engagement has improved because they understand how to execute assignments more effectively, particularly in role plays and sentence creation activities.

Given the above discussion, it is reasonable to assume that the optimum techniques and learning activities for the MUET achievers in Bands 1, 2, and 2.5 are a blend of behaviorism and CLT strategies. Since this is a pilot project, extensive research is necessary to convince other English language instructors to utilize these methodologies and learning activities for enhancing students' comprehension of English grammar and vocabulary.

Moving Forward

This paper details the author's teaching journey and her search for the best ways and learning activities to help achievers in the lower bands of the MUET learn grammar and vocabulary. While the findings do not definitively reveal the reasons behind students' achievements, such as the activities or methods that led to higher post-test scores, they do offer valuable insights into potential steps to assist students. Therefore, the next step towards maximizing the value of the course for students is to ensure that all instructors teaching *Basic Grammar and Vocabulary* during the main semesters implement the same teaching methods and learning activities.

To further evaluate the teaching methods and learning activities, future studies should involve all students enrolled in the course. The language instructors can then test the approaches and learning activities on students enrolled in different English courses too. The author goes on to suggest that retraining all English instructors who teach the course is necessary and should be done soon, given that the course is offered in both main and short semesters. This pilot study is not without restrictions. Aside from the small number of students who participated, this paper is unable to determine which approaches or learning activities were most effective in improving students' grammar and vocabulary. Furthermore, this paper is unable to identify any additional external elements that could have contributed to the increase of students' language skills.

This course at the NDUM addresses the Language Dean Council's issue, but it is important to note that higher grades or bands do not guarantee students' communicative competence. Students must feel comfortable using the language, and the author argues that comfort in English stems from both knowing *what* (functions) and knowing *how* (forms) knowledge. Furthermore, the author expresses confidence in the existence and effectiveness of additional approaches and learning activities, which she plans to implement to cater to the diverse student body at the NDUM. The country expects graduates of the NDUM and other Malaysian higher learning institutions to confidently speak and communicate in English. Aside from gaining decent employment with polished English, these graduates may demonstrate Malaysia's commitment to educate future global leaders. These graduates can

also serve as ambassadors for Malaysia by participating in internationalization programs and representing the country abroad. As one of the initial steps, it is hoped that this obligatory English course is able to help students communicate more effectively by improving their grammar and vocabulary.

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The Influence of Makeup on Individual Self-Identity: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

Makeup has increasingly become an important factor affecting self-identity and social interaction among college students. With the popularity of social media and the rise of the beauty industry, more and more young people are using makeup to shape their social image and express their personalities. The purpose of this study is to explore the Chinese universities students' makeup habits, their influence on social interaction and self-identity, and how these are affected by cultural background. This study used a mixed-methods approach to collect qualitative and quantitative data from 66 respondents, and SPSS and thematic analysis were used to analyze the data. The results show that makeup has a significant correlation with social interaction and self-identity, affecting college students' personality expression, self-esteem, and group belonging. Research has an important impact on young people at a critical stage of identity, helping them to better use makeup as a tool to explore and express themselves, increasing their mental health and self-esteem.

Keywords: Makeup, Cultural Norm, Social Interaction, Self-Identity

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1. Introduction

In today's diversified and visual-driven society, makeup is more than a representation of external beauty; it affects an individual's mental expression and social interaction at a deeper level. The use of makeup as an expression of religious belief and social status could date back to ancient times. However, the meaning of makeup between the cultures has significantly changed as time has passed. From a cross-cultural and historical viewpoint, both males and females participate in the use of makeup as a tool for body enhancement and individual modification (Davis & Arnocky, 2020). Nowadays, makeup is a common tool utilized by people, especially young people, to help them change their appearances and assist them with self-expression. In the key stage of development, young people are experiencing the process of physical and mental growth. At this stage, appearance has an important impact on the establishment of self-image and self-confidence, and makeup also plays an important role in the process of self-exploration.

Become a widely accepted technique, research has shown that makeup is associated with ambiguous social perception. People who have makeup are usually seen as attractive and enthusiastic (Schneider & Moro, 2022). Through improving their external image, individuals can remodel their social charm and engage in further internal exploration. If makeup is proven to be intrinsically motivated and seen as a regulator of creativity, mastery, and social relationships, then it has more potential as a regulator of mood and self-esteem (Tran et al., 2020). Nevertheless, there is also the claim that makeup can cause self-objectification, leading to low self-esteem. The effect of makeup on self-identity will be diverse; it is not binary and the relationship of makeup with self-identity needs to be further explored.

To fill this gap, this study aims to explore the effects of makeup on self-identity, self-expression, and mental health, as well as how it shapes personality formation and self-esteem. Studying the utility behind makeup provides insights into the complex effects of makeup on self-identity and provides guidance for the mental health and identity development of college students.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study aims to explore the influence of makeup on Chinese universities students' self-identity. Figure out how the Chinese universities students makeup habits are affected by the culture, how makeup impact their mental, and how makeup can be used as a tool for self-identity. Specifically, this study will be guided by the following research questions:

1.1.1   How do cultural affect an individual's makeup habit?
1.1.2   What is the psychological impact of makeup on individuals' identity formation and social interactions?
1.1.3   How may makeup be used as a tool for identity construction and self-expression?

1.2 Research Objectives

1.2.1   To explain the participants' s awareness and habits to makeup and occasions and how it be influenced by the social culture;
1.2.2   To assess the psychological impact related to makeup including the expectation of beauty and the relation the makeup with self-regard;

1.2.3 To determine makeup helps with identity building, self-expression, and social interaction.

1.3 Hypothesis

The following hypothesis will conduct this study. There is no relationship between makeup and self-identity.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research is significant to the following:

Students:
This study can provide students with a better understanding of makeup application and how to use makeup as a tool to enhance their self-identity. This also increase their psychological well-being and self-esteem by assisting students in making more deliberate decisions about how they express their personalities and explore who they are.

Educators:
Educators can reduce stereotypes about makeup because of the finding of this study. Make it easier to meet students' needs and design more inclusive educational environments to protect students' mental health and help them with creativity and self-exploration.

Makeup producers:
Help producers better understand the consuming preferences of college students as an essential consumer group. Assist producers in positioning new marketing strategies and carrying out product innovation in response to market demand.

1.5 Definition of Terms

Makeup-refers to cosmetics applied to the skin to change appearance or emphasize features.

Self-expression-refers to a process in which individuals express their thoughts, feelings and characteristics through speech, behavior, and appearance.

Self-identity-refers to individual's cognition and understanding of himself, including his identification with his values, characteristics, sense of belonging, and self-esteem.

Psychological impact- refers to the influence of external factors on individual mental and behavior.

2. Literature Review

The following Literature Review contains different relative studies on the topic of the influence of makeup on individual self-identity.

2.1 Cultural Norms and Beauty Standards

Cultural norms refer to behaviors and values that are commonly recognized and observed by social groups, and beauty standards are generally recognized physical characteristics and individual figures of social groups (Davis & Arnocky, 2020). These concepts are influenced by a variety of factors, such as the social group, cultural traditions, social media, and commercial advertisements. Cultural norms and beauty standards jointly shape individuals' cognitive behavior of appearance, affect their understanding and shaping of their own image, and then affect their behavior of appearance enhancement. Makeup can be seen as an important form of appearance enhancement (Davis & Arnocky, 2020).

With the popularity and development of social media networks, social media makes a great difference in shaping cultural norms and beauty standards. Social media is not only a channel for information dissemination but also a producer of aesthetic forms. On social media, the ideal appearance is seen as part of social activities, and users participate in the sharing of the ideal appearance through social media, thus influencing cultural norms and beauty standards (Sari et al., 2022). By promoting specific looks and lifestyles, the trends and influencers that are prevalent on social media platforms set new standards that are often associated with beauty standards and become what users aspire to. This phenomenon has prompted users, especially women, to tend to modify their appearance to fit these new and changing standards.

Makeup commercial advertising is also an important factor in participating in beauty standards, emphasizing appearance and the external self and shaping the standard of beauty as an idealized body image that must be achieved. Meanwhile, women's personal makeup practices tend to emphasize intrinsic value and the connection between inner emotions and outward appearance; makeup advertising focuses narrowly on external evaluations. Women adapt to individual needs by changing the messages they receive from advertising, forming dynamic interactions with the cultural norms and beauty standards imposed by advertising (McCabe et al., 2017). As a ritualized practice, makeup is influenced by advertising and cultural norms and actively participates in the construction of cultural norms.

2.2 Makeup Practices

Makeup Practice From an Evolutionary Perspective. There's constant competition to look like the perfect companion, and makeup can be considered a significant way to improve looks and promote oneself in order to increase one's own value as a potential mate (Davis & Arnocky, 2020). Under the existing cultural norms, makeup practice has gender differences; women and men adopt different strategies for appearance enhancement. Men tend to emulate traditional male role models, while women tend to emulate female teachers and celebrities (Read, 2010). Survey data show that most women have a higher rate of wearing makeup in social situations, especially when out with friends or on dates, compared to a lower rate of wearing makeup among men (Davis & Arnocky, 2020). Women usually improve their competitiveness through beauty products and services, and men through physical fitness and status. From the perspective of evolution, appearance and beauty have been prioritized in different cultures and periods. Under the heterosexual background, women and men will adjust their appearance according to the preference of the sex, thus affecting the practice of makeup.

Makeup Practice Among American Women. In the era of social media, images of women can be endlessly photographed and shared, further reinforcing the importance of appearance. However, makeup is more than just a means for women to pursue external beauty but also a way for women to seek themselves in consultation with social relationships, materiality, and commercial advertising. The American beauty standard emphasizes the external self, while the experience of American women emphasizes the practice of internal and external expression, and makeup can be used as a reflective medium (McCabe et al., 2017). Therefore, the practice of makeup as a part of identity formation brings the internal self to the external, using makeup as a tool, and produces a complete and true self. Research has shown that makeup practice helps women look healthier and more confident, meaning more professional work and greater earning potential (Nash et al., 2006). Makeup produces a sense of self-validation by connecting the exploration of external expression with an internal orientation.

2.3 Self-Perception and Identity Development

Under the cultural norm of consumerism, commercial advertisements fragment women, thus affecting women's views on themselves and society's cognition of women. Such fragmented presentation not only reduces the presentation of women as individuals, but it also shapes women's self-perception and identity development (Rocha, 2013). Female images in advertisements are often silent and one-sided, in which product advertisements try to represent women's ideas, and this phenomenon also exists in makeup practice. Women express themselves through makeup while also facing pressure to meet society's beauty standards. This contradiction leads women to constantly seek a balance between pursuing personal identity expression and adapting to social expectations.

McCabe et al. (2017) pointed out that the core meaning of makeup is to link internal self and external beauty, generate confidence in the moment of self-enhancement, and have a profound impact on the process of identity development. The practice of makeup is regarded as a symbolic carrier, an intermediary between emotion, cultural norms, and practice. Women adapt to changing social situations through makeup and prepare themselves to transform their perception of beauty into meaningful practice and self-perception. The generative sense of self-creation under the influence of time, space, and society can be seen in the makeup ceremony, which generates new entities and is expressed as new selves in the research (Bull & Mitchell, 2016). Makeup is considered a tool to aid self-perception, and the ritual of makeup is a reflective practice. In the moment of self-enhancement with makeup, women will consciously enhance their body, change self-perception, and shape identity, which will help stimulate vitality, confidence, and self-identity (McCabe et al., 2017).

In addition, the use of makeup for appearance enhancement is thought to be associated with self-objectification and may have a negative impact on self-perception and cognitive performance (Robertson et al., 2008). Anxiety, self-presentation, and compliance have been shown to be positively correlated with makeup, and makeup may be perceived as a psychological mask to cover up internal insecurities (Robertson et al., 2008). Although makeup use provides women with a tool for self-expression and identity building, the negative correlation in the study also reveals its potential side effects. This suggests that relying on makeup to promote confidence and a social image may undermine an individual's recognition and affirmation of their own intrinsic worth. Therefore, the use of makeup, while promoting self-expression and exploring self-identity, may also become a tool to objectify women and hinder deep self-exploration.

2.4 Interpersonal Relationships

The meaning and practice of makeup are influenced by cultural norms, among which interpersonal relationships also profoundly affect the practice of makeup. The pursuit of the ideal appearance is closely related to interpersonal relationships in the context of social media. By presenting images that conform to the beauty standards on social media, women seek social approval and belonging (Sari et al., 2022). The pursuit of identity and a sense of belonging is a reflection of how interpersonal relationships influence makeup application as people modify and portray their looks to build and sustain relationships. Women will change their makeup based on different interpersonal relationships to better adapt to specific relationships. Meanwhile, if women expect a social activity, they will be more interested in and attentive to the makeup ceremony. Thus obtaining higher self-interpretation and reflection (McCabe et al., 2017).

Kim and Cho (2023) stated that college students who are dissatisfied with their interpersonal relationships have also mostly accepted body dissatisfaction, and those who are dissatisfied with their bodies tend to try to decrease their body dissatisfaction through makeup management behavior. The greater the degree of dissatisfaction with their bodies, the more active they will be in their makeup management behavior. At the same time, physical self-esteem and satisfaction with one's appearance directly affect one's self-confidence and social ability. Lee and Jeong (2020) pointed out that when individuals are satisfied with their appearance, they are likely to be more confident in social interactions. Makeup can further strengthen this connection. At the same time, body awareness and body self-esteem have a significant correlation with interpersonal skills. To improve an individual's appearance and self-perception, makeup may directly affect their interpersonal skills (Lee & Jeong, 2020). Therefore, in interpersonal relationships, the self-image displayed through makeup can affect others' perceptions and reactions to the individual, thus invisibly shaping the dynamics of interpersonal relationships.

2.5 Makeup as a Tool of Self-Expression

Society is generally suspicious of beauty makeup, which has been criticized as an unrealistic beauty standard disguised under the concept of self-expression (Negrin, 2000). However, Smith et al. (2020) stated from the perspective of existential philosophy that authenticity stems from self-creation, and makeup is a palette through which individuals can express their identity, emotions, and values. Self-expression provides a channel through which people who work in beauty can be seen to be free to "make up" themselves. Smith et al. (2020) emphasize that makeup is not necessarily a submission to beauty standards but a consumer's right and a self-expression of individuality. People can freely create, choose to define, and express themselves through makeup.

Makeup art is a form of face painting that emphasizes craftsmanship. It shows a person's ability to develop the qualities of an artwork, while the skill of applying makeup is based on an understanding of personality (Kusumadinata et al., 2024). The art of makeup can have a positive impact on the wearer as a visual medium, enhancing self-confidence and helping to express personality through non-verbal forms. It is obvious that makeup changes an individual's appearance. People who get used to makeup regularly are also affected by makeup. makeup provides a calm space and makes people feel closer to themselves. Makeup can be an external reflection and expression of a person, and it can make people feel a sense of self-control and balance (Triolo-Rodriguez, 2023).

2.6 Identity Representation and Symbolism in Makeup Use

The Influence of Makeup on Identity Is Not a Binary Concept. Women who wore makeup in college exams had better scores than women who did not wear makeup, suggesting that makeup has an impact on academic performance through enhancing self-esteem (Palumbo et al., 2017). However, in contrast, the use of makeup is negatively correlated with social confidence and self-esteem. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) pointed out that makeup is correlated with self-objectification and has a negative impact on self-identity. The act of applying makeup is thought to be influenced by both internal motivation, which is identified as performing an activity through internal satisfaction, and external motivation, which is for separable results. When the main sources of motivation for makeup are competence, autonomy, and relevance, it is helpful for self-identity and can promote growth and health (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

Makeup is closely related to interpersonal relationships and social activities, reflecting the identity tension experienced by individuals in the era of social media and the negotiation process between external beauty and intrinsic value, which can be used both as an act of self-affirmation and as a response to the requirements of beauty standards (McCabe et al., 2017). Makeup can be used as a means to show personality and identity, but this can also lead to an expression that is not consistent with your true self. Makeup may become a tool to increase self-identity, but it may also become a source of contradiction between the individual and the self. It is important to find the balance of makeup in daily life so that people can show, test, and reshape their identity in makeup, enhance social identity and adaptation, and improve mental health.

2.7 Conceptual Framework
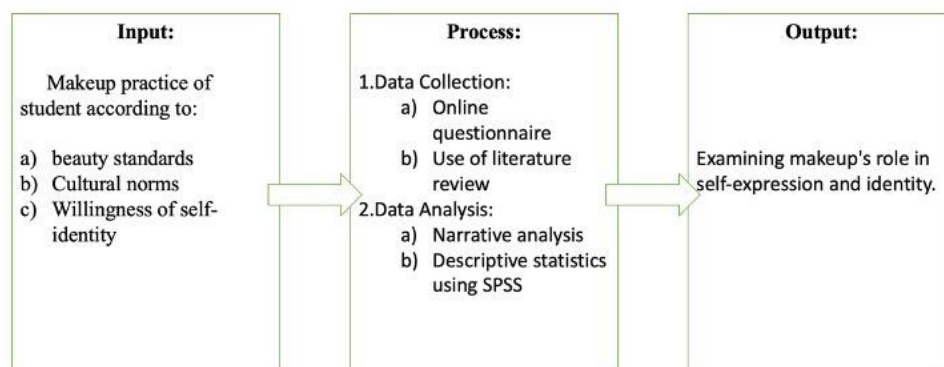
This study adapts the IPO Model. The inputs include the makeup practices of WKU students, prevailing beauty standards, cultural norms, and the personal willingness to express self-identity through makeup. The process phase encompasses literature review, online questionnaire includes qualitative and quantitative research, and data analysis includes narrative analysis and SPSS using. The output is an examination makeup's role in self-expression and identity. The IPO model framework aims to describe how makeup as a means for young Chinese individuals to express themselves and shape their identities.

3.   Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

According to the research problem, this study will investigate how the makeup habits of students at Chinese universities affect their self-identity. This study used mixed-method research, which blends qualitative and quantitative methods, to analyze the research object in a comprehensive way. Quantitative approach of this study uses structured questionnaires to collect data on students' makeup habits and the impact they believe makeup has on aspects includes self-esteem, confidence, and social interaction. The quantitative approach can contribute to quantifying the relationship between makeup and self- identity variables and providing statistical evidence. The Qualitative approach will complement quantitative data by providing depth and insights into how individuals perceive and express the makeup experience as it relates to their identity and social interactions. For the sampling strategy, the target population is the students at Chinese university. Researcher will use convenient sampling, and the sampling approach is an online questionnaire survey. The researcher will collect, display, and analyze the data at an objective level to make sure the result is reliable.

3.2 Respondent and Sampling

The target population for this study is the students at Chinese universities. The research will distribute at least 60 questionnaires and conduct data analysis. This sample size is chosen to ensure data to perform meaningful quantitative analysis while remaining manageable for qualitative follow-ups. Data will be collected through an online questionnaire survey, which is an effective method for reaching respondents within the university setting. To ensure feasibility in data collection, the researcher will select respondents using convenience sampling, which will be conducted through an online questionnaire survey.

3.3 Research Instruments

The questionnaire for this study is constructed by incorporating specific questions from surveys previously developed by Nario-Redmond et al. (2004) and Korichi et al. (2009), supplemented with self-made questions to address specific aspects of the research. The questionnaire includes closed-ended and open-ended questions such as single-choice, scale selection choices, and short-answer questions. There are three different parts in the questionnaire: the first part is makeup usage habits; the second part is cultural and social influences; and the third part is the psychological impact of makeup.

3.4 Data Analysis

In order to explore the influence of makeup on self-identity and the relationship between them, this study will adopt descriptive statistics for objective analysis. The data sources are students from Chinese universities, and the data will be impartially examined in order to support the purpose of the study. For quantitative data, researcher will use SPSS as a tool for analysis to comprehensively analyze the correlation and influence between the two variables. For qualitative data, it will be coded based on full understanding. Using data analysis, examine how cultural factors affect an individual's makeup habit (objective 1). Measure the psychological impact of makeup on individuals' identity formation and social interactions (objective 2). Describe how makeup can be used as a tool for identity construction and self-expression (objective 3).

3.5 Establishing Quality

In order to obtain suitable samples quickly, convenient sampling was used in this study to select eligible participants from an easily accessible group of young adults. In terms of the content of the questionnaire, the design is partly clear, and the depth of the questions is gradually progressive, and the questionnaire does not contain directional questions to avoid bias. Also, an online questionnaire can better protect the anonymity of respondents and make the data more objective. Quantitative questions are constructed by validity questionnaires to accurately measure the data, such as cultural influence and self-esteem, while qualitative questions can better understand the respondents' complex thoughts.

3.6 Limitations of the Study

In the process of this study, some limitations will be noticed. The study just focuses on the students from Chinese universities so the results may not be applicable to other groups of people. Also, the data collected by the study is self-reported, which can introduce bias. While using questions from established surveys, the questionnaire combines with self-made questions that can influence the measurement quality. Additionally, this experiment assumes that all students are from China and have the same cultural background, which may not be rigorous enough given that students from various provinces may have diverse backgrounds.

3.7 Ethical Issues

The ethical principles of this study are well respected, focused by researcher in every process of research. All respondents participate in the study voluntarily and know that they can withdraw at any time without any consequences. Respondents' data will be anonymous and fully protected, and respondents are aware of how the data will be used. Researcher will not use the data for purposes other than academic research and will not provide respondents' private information to others.

4.　Results and Discussion

4.1 The Basic Information of the Respondents

As we can see in Table 1, the demographic distribution of the 66 respondents from Chinese universities. 87.88% of respondents were aged between 18 and 25, 9.09% were aged between 0 and 18, and 3.03% were older than 25. This age group is closely related to the study and includes a majority of young people at a critical stage of identity and social interaction. Of the 66 respondents, 19.7% were male, 78.79% were female, and 1.52% were of other genders. The data is enriched by importing men and other genders, which is rarely discussed when it comes to makeup. There is a big difference in the frequency of makeup: many respondents (43.94%) often wear makeup, a small number of respondents (4.55%) wear makeup every day, which is in contrast to 18.18% who never wear makeup, 10.61% who almost never wear makeup, and 22.73% of respondents who rarely wear makeup.

Table 1: The Basic Information of the Respondents

Category	Type	Frequency	Percentage
School	Chiese universities	66	100%
Gender	Male	13	19.70%
	Female	52	78.79%
	Others	1	1.52%
Makeup Frequency	Never	12	18.18%
	Almost Never	7	10.61%
	Seldom	15	22.73%
	Often	29	43.94%
	Everyday	3	4.55%

4.2 Cultural Effect on Makeup

4.2.1　The Impact of Gender Norms on Makeup

Based on Table 2, 54.55% of respondents believed that gender norms have no significant impact on makeup frequency, which means more than half of respondents from WKU thought gender expectations and norms did not have a significant impact on them. 30.3% of respondents thought gender norms increased their makeup frequency; 9.09% of respondents thought gender norms did not encourage them to try makeup; and 4.55% of respondents thought gender norms reduced the frequency of their use of makeup. Gender norms had an enormous impact on a minority, with 1.52% of respondents saying they had significantly increased makeup frequency and even encouraged them to wear makeup every day. The different findings highlighted the complex effects of gender norms on an individual's makeup, with a significant number of people believing that gender norms in the current cultural context would somewhat reduce or increase how often they wear makeup.

Table 2: Gender Norms Effect on Makeup

Type	Frequncy	Percentage
Let you never try makeup/no idea of makeup	6	9.09%
Reduce the amount of makeup you wear	3	4.55%
No significant impact	36	54.55%
Increase the number of times you wear makeup/make you think that some occasions must require makeup	20	30.30%
Drastically increase the amount of makeup you wear/make you think that you need makeup in your daily life	1	1.52%

4.2.2 Cultural Background of Makeup

Table 3 showed that 46.97% of respondents believed that cultural attitudes were neutral and objective, while 33.33% thought that cultural attitudes were relatively conservative, and 1.52% considered them too conservative. Additionally, 15.05% of respondents believed that cultural attitudes were relatively radical, and 3.03% thought they were overly radical. These opposing attitudes reflected the diverse perceptions influenced by cultural attitudes from different perspectives, emphasizing the complexity of makeup as a cultural product.

Table 3: Perceived Cultural Attitudes Toward Makeup

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Too conservative, think daily makeup is not correct	1	1.52%
Relatively conservative, only accepts daily light makeup, criticizing heavy makeup/creative makeup	22	33.33%
Objective and neutral	31	46.97%
Relatively radical, encourage specific occasions or daily life makeup	10	15.05%
Overly aggressive, encourage makeup under any circumstances	22	3.03%

4.2.3 Beauty Standards and Appearance Anxiety

The majority of respondents thought that beauty standards had an impact on their appearance anxiety, among which 31.82% thought it was a normal influence and 45.45% thought it was a relatively important influence. 6.06% of respondents considered it to be very important. However, 10.61% and 6.06% of the respondents considered it to be relatively unimportant or not important at all. The data suggest that cultural norms of beauty standards have an effect on the majority, increasing their appearance anxiety and possibly influencing their self-perception and makeup choices.
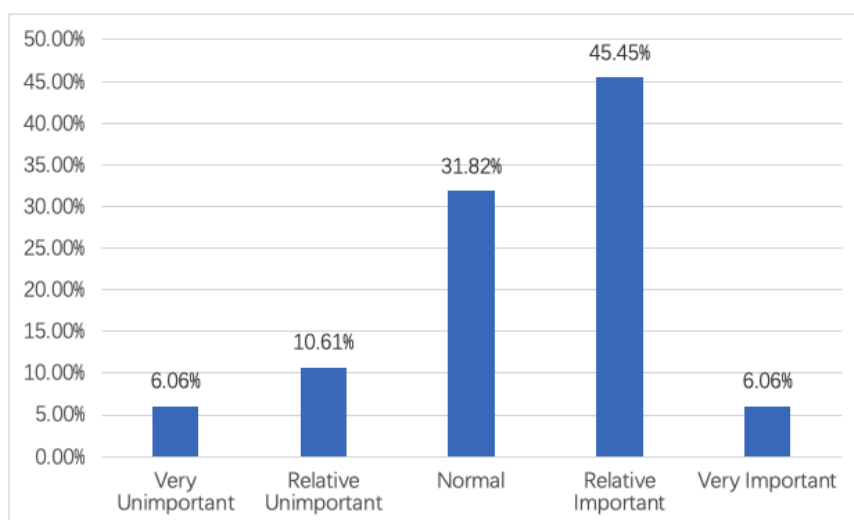
Figure 1: Influence of Beauty Standards on Appearance Anxiety

4.3 Psychological Impact of Identity Formation and Social Interaction

Correlations between makeup frequency, confidence, and social factors were examined to examine bivariate relationships. As can be observed from Table 4, the results show that the makeup frequency has a significant impact on social interaction and identity formation (r =.56**, p <.005). This study used a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 is "strongly disagree" and 5 is "strongly agree." The average score of respondents for their tendency to wear makeup in formal settings was 4.44, indicating that people are more likely to wear makeup in formal settings to help with image management and confidence. Among the approval groups, the average rating for belonging was 3.8 And the average score of the respondents' increased self-confidence when wearing makeup was 3.94. This suggests that makeup also plays a positive role in people's integration into the group, and enhance people's self-confidence.

Table 4: Correlation Between Makeup Frequency and Confidence and Social Attractive (N=66)

Makeup	Identity Formation and Social Interaction
	Confidence and Social Attractive
Makeup Frequency	.56**

*p < .005

4.4 Hypothesis Test

H0: There Is No Relationship Between Makeup and Self-Identity.

The results in Table 5 show that there is a significant positive correlation between makeup frequency and self-identity construction and expression (r =.71**, p <.005). This strong correlation suggests that the more often participants wore makeup, the more positive effects they felt in terms of their self-identity construction and personal expression. This finding strongly contradicts the study's original hypothesis (H0) that "there is no relationship between makeup and self-identification." Therefore, the study rejected the null hypothesis and confirmed that makeup behavior is not only an appearance modification but also an important factor affecting an individual's self-identity and self-exploration. This study provides an empirical basis for further exploring the impact of makeup on individual psychology and also provides a basis for the development of relevant educational interventions and support services.

Table 5: Correlation Between Makeup and Self-Identity (N=66)

Makeup	Self-Identity
	Identity Construction and Self-Expression
Makeup Frequency	.71**

*p < .005

4.5 The Multiple Effects of Makeup and Individual Identity

4.5.1 Makeup As the Expression of Personality

In the open question of how makeup enhances your identity, respondents generally believe that makeup is not only a reflection of external beauty, but also an expression of personality and social identity. Many respondents mentioned that makeup reflects their "personality" and "attitude", and even helps them better "integrate" into social circles with shared interests. This demonstrates that makeup is not merely about appearance but also a means of expressing one's personality and social identity. Other responses emphasized how makeup "enhances identity and personality", suggesting that makeup helps individuals more clearly define and showcase their identity, both socially and culturally.

4.5.2 Factors That Affect Makeup

From a long-term perspective, the reasons why participants changed their makeup style reflected the role of makeup in emotional expression and reflection of mental states. Some respondents mentioned that they change their makeup style because they are "in a good mood". This highlights the importance of makeup as a tool for personal expression and emotional expression. Other respondents noted that they changed their makeup style because they found it "novel and wanted to try it", reflecting makeup's role as a means of self-exploration and experimenting with different self-images. Notably, some responses highlighted a shift in makeup style to break away from aesthetics "dictated by the male gaze", opting instead for styles that are more "creative" and aligned with their own "outfit, mood, and attitude". These responses reveal that makeup is not just about pursuing beauty but also serves as an expression of gender identity and cultural resistance. These responses reflect that makeup, as a multi-functional cultural tool, has an important impact on individuals' self-expression, social interaction, and emotional and psychological states.

5. Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendation

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study was conducted primarily to: (1) examine the frequency of college students wearing makeup; (2) explore the cultural factors that affect the frequency of makeup; (3) examine the psychological impact of makeup on self-identity, especially in terms of self-confidence and social attraction; and (4) explore the role of makeup in self-expression and its cultural meaning.

The survey was completed by 66 Chinese universities students, the majority of whom were female and mostly between the ages of 18 and 25. The researcher used an online questionnaire to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The findings show that cultural norms greatly influence an individual's makeup choices. Moreover, the frequency of makeup was positively associated with increased personal confidence and social attractiveness, confirming the idea that makeup has a significant impact on an individual's self-esteem and social perception. And makeup is not only a tool to enhance the appearance but also a means to display personality and emotion.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the correlation analysis between college students' makeup frequency and personal identity construction, this study finds that makeup does significantly affect students' self-identity and social interaction. The results showed that an increased frequency of makeup was positively associated with increased confidence and social attractiveness reported by students. In addition, makeup, as a cultural practice, reflects social and cultural standards and also provides a platform for individuals to display and reshape their self-image. Therefore, the null hypothesis of the study was rejected, and there is a significant association between makeup and self-identity. Through this study, the researcher calls for educational programs to pay more attention to the interaction between makeup and personal identity and how this relationship affects young people's mental health and social adjustment.

5.3 Recommendation

This study explores the relationship between makeup and the construction of college students' personal identities, finding that makeup not only enhances students' self-confidence and social attractiveness but also plays an important role in personal expression and social identity and is influenced by cultural norms. While data from Chinese universities suggests a strong relationship between makeup and personal identity, more samples from diverse backgrounds should be included in the sample to improve the study's generalizability and representativeness. Further research should delve into more psychological factors and consider more data collection methods that delve into how such factors as body image and mental health interact with cosmetic behavior and feelings of personal identity. While this study primarily focuses on individual psychology, educational institutions and marketers can use these findings to investigate more beneficial approaches to marketing and teaching that are more appropriate for today's youth.

Appendix

Questionnaire Survey about Self-identity and Make-up

Participants consent: I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

1.Consent to study:
I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw or refuse to answer any questions at any time without any consequences.
○ I agree
○ I disagree (Please skip to the end of the questionnaire and submit the answer sheet)

2. Your age is [multiple choice]
○0-18 years old
○18-25 years old
○25 years old +

3. Gender: [single choice]
○ Male
○ Female
○ Others
○ Tend not to inform

4. How often do you wear makeup?
○ Never
○ Only wear makeup for special occasions such as ID photos or photo shoots
○ Wear makeup for important daily occasions such as interviews and speeches
○ Wear makeup as needed in daily life
○ I wear makeup almost every day

5. Think gender norms/gender stereotypes influence your makeup is
○ Let you never try makeup/no idea of makeup
○ Reduce the amount of makeup you wear
○ No significant impact
○ Increase the number of times you wear makeup/make you think that some occasions must require makeup
○Drastically increase the amount of makeup you wear/make you think that you need makeup in your daily life

6. Think that the cultural background norm of the attitude towards makeup is
○ Too conservative, think daily makeup is not correct
○ Relatively conservative, only accepts daily light makeup, criticizing heavy makeup/creative makeup
○ Objective and neutral

○ Relatively radical, encourage specific occasions or daily life makeup
○ Overly aggressive, encourage makeup under any circumstances

7. What do you think is the influence of adulthood on makeup
○ You never try makeup/have no desire to wear makeup
○ Reduce the amount of makeup you wear
○ No significant impact
○ You don't think you can wear makeup until you're an adult or try to do so until you're an adult
○ Increase the amount of makeup you wear

8. To what extent do you think beauty standards/standards of beauty affect your appearance anxiety

Very not important	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	Very important

9.I have a positive attitude about myself

Strongly disagree	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	Strongly agree

10. I don't like the way I look without makeup

Strongly disagree	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	Strongly agree

11. I feel more confident when I put on makeup

Strongly disagree	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	Strongly agree

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4.; 5 options

12. I tend to make up if I can on formal occasions

Strongly disagree	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	Strongly agree

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

13. Think I'm attractive when I put on makeup

Strongly disagree	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	Strongly agree

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

14. I use makeup to control my image, or I believe makeup can be used as a method of image control

Strongly disagree	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	Strongly agree

15. I want to attract others when I wear makeup, or I believe I am more attractive when I wear makeup

Strongly disagree	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	Strongly agree

16. I feel like I belong in most of my approved groups

Strongly disagree   ○1   ○2   ○3   ○4   ○5   Strongly agree

17. Makeup for me is a creative process

Strongly disagree   ○1   ○2   ○3   ○4   ○5   Strongly agree

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

18. How do you decide which makeup to wear? [Multiple choice]

☐ Personal preference

☐ Current fashion trends

☐ Cultural or social norms

☐ Advice from friends or family

☐ Celebrity or influencer style

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

19.If you want to try a new makeup style, what is your main motivation?
[Multiple choice]

☐ I want to see a different side of myself

☐ Desire to change or re-create

☐ Influence from the media or peers

☐ Mood enhancement

☐ Prepare for special events

☐ Don't like to try new makeup styles

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

20. I feel that I can express my personality better when I wear makeup

Strongly disagree   ○1   ○2   ○3   ○4   ○5   Strongly agree

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

21. I usually make up to match my mood and outfit

Strongly disagree   ○1   ○2   ○3   ○4   ○5   Strongly agree

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

22.
Makeup makes me feel more like I'm a unique individual

Strongly disagree   ○1   ○2   ○3   ○4   ○5   Strongly agree

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

23. Have you ever used makeup to challenge or subvert society's expectations/stereotypes about beauty or gender?

Strongly disagree   ○1   ○2   ○3   ○4   ○5   Strongly agree

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

24.To what extent do you use makeup to stand out as opposed to blending in with others?

| It's not a good match | ○1 | ○2 | ○3 | ○4 | ○5 | It's a good match |

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

25.To what extent do you feel your makeup choices give you control over other people's perceptions of your identity?

| It's not a good match | ○1 | ○2 | ○3 | ○4 | ○5 | It's a good match |

26. Can you elaborate on what aspect of your identity do you think makeup enhances? (e.g. values, beliefs, identity, personality traits, interests, and understanding of one's role in society and culture) [Fill in the blanks] *

_____
Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

27. In the long term, have you changed your makeup style, or have you tried new makeup styles, and what are the reasons for the change? [Fill in the blank] *

_____
Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

28.I think I can have a good way to express my personality without wearing makeup

| Strongly disagree | ○1 | ○2 | ○3 | ○4 | ○5 | Strongly agree |

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Gender Roles Perceptions Among Preteen in Bali: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

Gender roles are one of the constructs within gender that are typically socialised during childhood through various sides such as family, social environment, culture and media. Balinese culture holds distinctive concepts of gender roles known as *purusa* and *pradana*, where a misunderstanding of these constructs has led to a perception that males are more dominant than females in their cultural and social environment. The preteen stage marks the transitional phase from childhood to teenage, which involves biological, psychological, and social shifts. Due to the limited research focusing on preteens in Indonesia, this study aims to explore the preteens' understanding of gender roles within the context of Balinese culture. This research employs qualitative methods, using interviews with drawing instructions assigned to four preteens born into Hindu-Balinese families. The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is used to analyse the findings. This study finds diverse perspectives on gender roles among preteens influenced by their environment. The influence of parents was the most dominant in shaping the views and experiences of preteens, although peer socialisation also played a role in shaping gender role perceptions. Besides that, preteens hold their views on gender roles that are different from their environment, and they interpret their cultural tasks as a duty and identity. In conclusion, parents have the most dominant influence on how preteens shape their perceptions of gender roles. However, each preteen has and already holds their own beliefs on gender roles and actively engages gender roles in their daily, social, and cultural lives.

Keywords: Balinese, Cultural Role, Puberty, Psychosexual, Psychosocial

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Introduction

Gender role is a construct that addresses how individuals behave based on their biological sex (Matsumoto & Juang, 2013). Gender roles are usually socialised to individuals through family, peers, schools, culture, and media from childhood. Balinese culture has a distinctive concept of gender roles called *purusa* and *pradana*. *Purusa* and *pradana* are concepts the Balinese use as the basis of kinship, marriage, and inheritance (Wedanti et al., 2023). The preteen phase marks the transition of children to teenagers, which is a phase where individuals start to explore their sexuality and gender, and influences their identity. Based on the following explanation of how preteens start to develop their view on gender, how the gender role concept is socialised, and how Balinese culture has a concept similar to gender roles, this study aims to research how Hindu-Balinese preteens perceive gender roles on a daily basis.

Theoretical Perspective
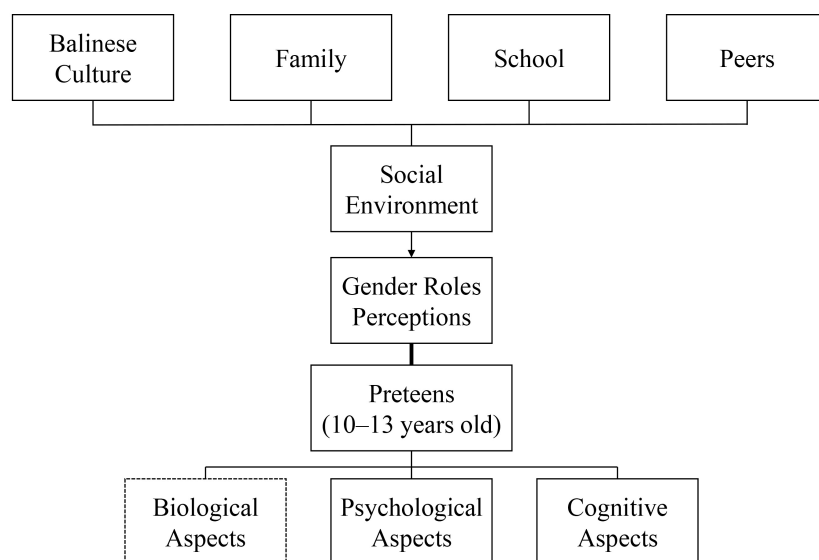
Figure 1: Research's Theoretical Framework
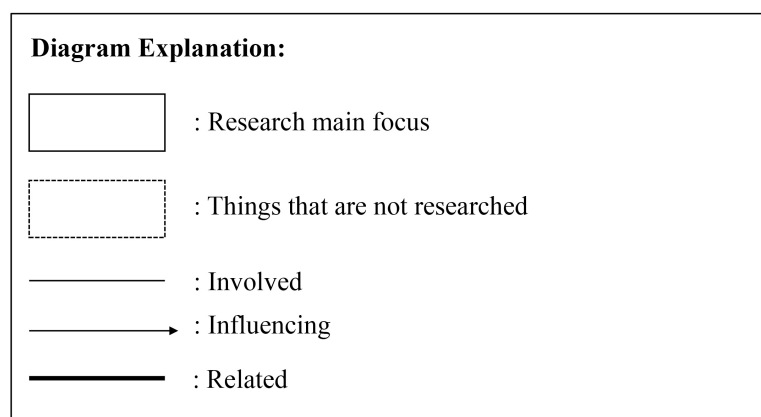
Figure 2: Theoretical Framework Explanation

External Factors

- ***Balinese Culture***

Culture has an impact on how individuals understand gender roles concept. In the Balinese culture, *purusa* and *pradana refer* to someone who becomes the successor of their own family line. In contrast, *pradana* refers to someone who leaves their own family to join *purusa's* family through marriage and perform their duties as part of *purusa's* family. Because of the patrilineal kinship that Balinese adheres to (Ayu et al., 2022), the *purusa* role is usually given to a man while the *pradana* role is given to a woman. However, it is possible to give the *purusa* role to a woman through *sentana rajeg* marriage. There is misconception about *purusa* and *pradana* is that the *purusa* role refers to boys, and *pradana* role refers to girls. While after marriage or *sentana rajeg* marriage, both man and woman do their own role according to the Balinese society.

- ***Social Environment***

Family, peers, and school strongly influence individuals' perceptions of things. Family is an individual's first place in learning societal values and norms (Roostin, 2018). Preteens spend most of their time in school while they learn how to behave based on their school's habits. Preteens mostly spend time with their peers in or outside school, and they can see their peers as role models in how to behave in the social environment. Peers can also influence an individual's views and perceptions.

Internal Factors

- ***Biological Aspects***

Preteen's biological transformation can be seen through an individual's physical and hormonal changes, affecting emotion and self-identity (Özdemir et al., 2016). There are increasing changes in testosterone and estrogen hormones in preteens.

- ***Psychological Aspects***

Psychological changes can cause decreased self-esteem because of unstable emotions, but it also affects how preteens think. There are changes in the neurocognitive function that cause preteens to be emotionally unstable (Goddings et al., 2012). Based on Freud's psychosexual developmental theory, preteens are in the latent phase (6-12 years old), in which they start to develop an interest in the opposite sex (Lantz & Ray, 2023). Based on Erikson's psychosocial developmental theory, preteens are in the competency phase (5-12 years old), in which peers significantly influence an individual's self-confidence (McLeod, 2018).

- ***Cognitive Aspects***

According to Piaget's cognitive development theory, preteens are in the formal operational stage, where they start to think deductively and inductively, think hypothetically, and do scientific reasoning. Preteens start to absorb memory and process information quickly. Preteens think more reflectively about their social environment, which affects how they see themselves (Diananda, 2018). According to Huttenlocher (in Latif, 2021), preteens develop their social cognitive function in how they start to develop self-awareness.

Based on the explanation and framework figure, this research focuses on how external factors (Balinese culture, family, school, and peers) and internal factors (psychological and cognitive aspects) influence preteens' perceptions of gender roles.

Data Collection

This research uses qualitative methods with a phenomenological approach. The instruments are semi-structural interview guidelines and a few art-based tools. The data is collected by interviewing while using an art-based approach to collect more data. The art-based approach is used to make the participants feel at ease when being interviewed. Four participants were interviewed: two boys and two girls. Two participants live in Mengwi Regency, while two live in Gianyar Regency.

Data Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is used to gather data for the research. The purpose of this analysis is to understand each participant's interpretation and experience of gender roles. The result from this analysis is a report on how each participant's experience is connected to each other. This method also reviews the uniqueness of each participant's interpretation and experience.

Results

This study found six themes that could be categorized as external and internal factors interrelated with the view of gender roles in Balinese Hindu Preteens. The six themes are family relations, peer relations, cultural values, gender role values, gender stereotypes, and cognitive processing. The external factors are family relations, peer relations, and cultural values, while the internal factors are gender role values, gender stereotypes, and cognitive processing. The following table describes each theme found.

Table 1: External Factors Results

External Factors	Descriptions
Family Relations	- The close-knit between preteens and their parents affects their views on gender roles. The parents were their role models in daily activities. They also listened to their parents' advice and did that daily. - The relationship between preteens and their siblings affects how they see gender roles. If the preteens have siblings of the opposite sex, they have always been told that they have the same equality as a boy and girl. - Both of the female participants have house chores at home. While, among the males, only one boy has his house chores, while the others do not have to do house chores. - One of the participants felt a different treatment from their parents between her and her brother, while others felt both parents treated all of their children equally. - The female participants have been told by their caregivers to know how to behave in public and to protect themselves in public. The male participants are taught to be responsible and know their duty as part of Balinese society. They have also been told not to be rude or harsh to girls.

Peers Relations	• In socialising, the female participants tend to have a smaller group of friends. They said they only have two closest friends. While the male participants tend to have a bigger group of friends, they said they can play with everyone in the class. • All of the participants do not like to play with their opposite-sex peers. They feel uncomfortable to socialise with opposite-sex peers, and they tend to have a negative opinion of their opposite-sex peers.
Cultural Values	• All participants have been socialised with their cultural duties since they were children (4-6 years old). The feminine figure socialised the cultural duties to the female participant, while the masculine figure socialised the cultural duties to the male participant. • Both female participants felt content when they were doing their cultural duties. The duties that the girls usually do is *metanding canang*[1], in which they use for prayers. They also do the ritual prayers every day. The male participants were mainly involved in their cultural duties by following their fathers and socializing with others in a *banjar*[2]. Sometimes they helped their mother by doing the prayers and *mentading canang*.

Table 2: Internal Factors Results

Internal Factors	Descriptions
Gender Role Values	• Preteens already hold their values as girls or boys. The female participants think girls must be independent, not rely on others, and perform their cultural duties. The male participants think boys must be responsible, earn money, and be decisive. • Preteens already hold their own cultural values and duties. The female participants think their duties as Balinese women are cooks, *metanding canang*, and *mebanten*[3]. The male participants think that their duties as Balinese men are making *lawar*[4] and making *penjor*[5] *and canang* (both used for prayer purposes), and they must be diligent. • Preteens have their aspirations, which are influenced by figures around them.
Gender Stereotype	• **Games:** Some of the preteens think that there are toys that are not suitable for each sex. One of the participants thinks that online games are not suitable for girls. One of them also stated that boys are not suitable for playing with dolls. • **Profession:** Some of the preteens have gender stereotypes toward the profession. They stated that women are not suitable for entering the military. • **House chores:** All preteens do not have stereotypes about house chores. They all help their parents by doing the house chores. They think house chores is an essential human activity. • **Emotions:** All preteens do not have stereotypes about specific emotions. They think boys can cry because it is a way to express and let out sadness. They also think girls can be mad because it is a form of correcting people's wrongdoings.

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[1] Assembling a little traditional Balinese Hindu offering that contains flowers and a young coconut leaf.
[2] A local community organisation in each area in Bali
[3] In a Balinese Hindu tradition, it is a process of praying the offering they have made before.
[4] A traditional Balinese food that mixes vegetables and meat with a traditional Bali seasoning.
[5] A traditional craft often made from bamboo with a curved tip decorated with young coconut and palm leaves, it is often used for big days.

Cognitive Processing	• Male preteens tend to understand numerical subjects quickly but think it is hard to understand linguistic subjects. • Female preteens tend to understand linguistic subjects quickly but need help understanding numerical subjects.

Discussion

This study aims to understand how Hindu-Balinese preteens perceive gender roles daily. It was found that parents are the most influential figures in their preteens' view on gender roles, as they become role models and provide advice. It also found that even though siblings do not have any significant influence on preteens, opposite-sex siblings could affect preteens' behavior. It is found that peer socialization could affect how gender stereotyping and gender behavior are formed in preteens (Fabes et al., 2014). At this age, the preteens still show signs of gender segregation, whereas the preteens tend to be comfortable with same-sex peers. However, as a result of the study, it is found that preteens have already done their cultural role at this age where they are doing *metanding canang*, *mebanten*, making *penjor*, and many more.

Based on the internal factors, it found that preteens already hold their views towards gender and cultural roles (Kågesten et al., 2016). It is also shown in how the preteens think they do not have any differences between themselves and their opposite-sex siblings and peers. Some preteens have gender stereotypes regarding things such as professions and toys. They still think some of the professions and toys do not go well together with a particular sex. It is also found that there is a difference in cognitive processing between girls and boys, where girls tend to be easier to understand linguistical subjects, and boys tend to be more understanding of numerical subjects. Meanwhile, the girls have the most challenging time learning to understand numerical subjects, and the boys have difficulty understanding linguistical subjects in school.

Conclusion

Relationships with the family have an essential role in shaping preteens' views on gender and cultural roles. Both parents have the most dominant effects on preteens. However, this does not affect preteens' personalities and identities. Peer relationships affect the preteens' view of gender stereotypes daily. It can be seen that boys and girls have different patterns in peer relationships, where boys tend to have a bigger group of friends, and girls have smaller groups of friends.

All preteens have been socialised about their cultural duties since they were in kindergarten (4-6 years old) through their parents, grandparents, and school. During this stage, they already know their identity as a part Balinese Hindu, so they do many cultural rituals to fulfil their part in the Balinese Hindu society. The Preteens have their own view on their gender identity, gender roles, and gender stereotypes, and they already know how to fulfil their cultural duties and how they are assigned to each cultural duty as a boy and a girl. The preteens stated that they feel content and enjoy doing their cultural duties. All preteen participants stated that boys and girls have the same equality in every aspect.

Recommendations and Suggestions

For further studies, it is recommended that the interview session be conducted in a quieter situation with the preteens to increase their focus and prevent them from being distracted by their environment. It is also recommended that they have deep knowledge about the culture that was assigned to be the topic. It is highly recommended that parents and educational institutions give preteens proper sex and gender education. This study's purpose is to help people understand how culture could affect a person's mind, so it is important to have gender education from the early phase and raise awareness of people's understanding of the importance of gender concepts in our daily lives.

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Japanese Folk Toys (Kyodo Gangu): New Perspectives on Craftsmanship Models, Collectors and Cultural Nostalgia for the 21st Century

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyse the topic of Japanese Folk Toys (JFT) from a multidisciplinary perspective bringing the subject to the 21st century. While considering its previous historiography (S. Shimizu, F. Starr, and J. Kiburz) it will also analyse new aspects and the communities that are involved. While we can observe a crisis in the traditional hereditary craftsmanship model, due to the lack of new/younger artisans eager to continue traditional craft production (considered by some as the expiration date of these pieces) we cannot neglect the appearance of a new type of creators and crafters (notably female) producing these toy pieces; breaking, in an indirect manner, the mould of historically produced, gendered and patriarchal craftsmanship structures, historically reproduced. In parallel, in this new era of JFT there is a renewal regarding the profile of new collectors, as local and global consumers. These groups of enthusiasts of Kyodo Gangu represent today a more diversified community, making the consumption and appreciation more democratic and socially expanded in contrast with the previous more elitist approach to art and crafts collecting of these pieces, with an evident bias towards Orientalist sensitivity. To conclude, this work attempts to question the still persistent narratives of "modernity vs. tradition" that have consistently marked the cultural environment of these pieces (starting in the Meiji era and still present nowadays). The work also includes some illustrations by the author in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the subject, as well as some interviews of creators and collectors.

Keywords: Japanese Folk Toys, Cultural Nostalgia, Craftmanship Models, Kyodo Gangu, Cultural Studies

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Introduction

Japanese Folk Toys have recently gained some degree of popularity in western countries, potentially due to the growing circulation of images thereof on social media platforms. The appeal of Japanese material culture for a broad range of aficionados and collectors is not necessarily novel, but aspects of this raise some interesting questions.

Toys have an allure of nostalgia. When we relate them clearly to our own childhood, it seems obvious, but they also have unique features to be appreciated: the design thought process that was put into their creation, the chosen colour palette, their functionality, cultural aesthetics and the handmaking process in the case of more craft-made or artisanal toys.

In the myriad of Japanese Folk Toys or Kyodo Gangu as they are usually called, we can name a few such as Darumas from Gunma, Kokeshis from Tohoku, Akabeko from Fukushima, Uma horses from Honshu, and even Maneki Nekos. They have a background of storytelling in their origins, some of them mythical others based in legends close to historical facts.

Found all around the map of Japan and in different materials, shapes and varied symbolic meanings; they retain, and are still used, within the framework of a means of protection from different forms of evil, or as good luck charms. In recent years, their popularity has increased as collectors' pieces among different social and national profiles, in Japan, and more recently, also globally.

There are two words usually used to reference these pieces, *Omocha* and *Gangu*. *Omocha*, is the general definition of toys that became, in some cases, like souvenirs (*Omiyage*) or charms (like some *Omamori*). *Gangu*, refers to the toy as resulting from certain traditional craftmanship (usually handcrafted) and is also related to aspects of Folklore. Therefore, a more accurate definition of Japanese Folk Toys might be *Kyodo*[1]*- Gangu*, which broadly means, those toys that are part of the folklore (and tradition) of Japan.

This gives us a sense of the broad concept that the idea of "toy" has within Kyodo Gangu. There is a fluid notion of what *play* means, and the different meanings of playing or using these toys as collectors' pieces.

Japanese Folk toys have been around since ancient times. Their production became more consistent after the Edo period (1603-1868), during the peaceful, though isolated, period under the Tokugawa shogunates. There are some theories that place the origin of these Folk Toys in China, where the craft industry of toys was flourishing. This ties into many other cultural Chinese influences in ancient Japan, the broader development of craftsmanship and the use of different materials. Indeed, if we observe toys in both mainland China and Japan, we can see some similarities in form, although not in their symbolic values or uses (Kiburtz,1994).

Brief Historiography From Starr, Shimizu, to Kiburz

The first study about Japanese Folk Toys (JFT) was originated by Shimizu Seifu during the Meiji Era (1868-1912). This illustrated guide was published between 1891 and 1913. It ranks

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[1] Kyodo can be interpreted as "the colour of a region" or the Folklore of a place.

as the first and only complete catalogue depicting the different types of Japanese Folk Toys in existence for almost 300 years, and it stills constitutes the main reference for toy collectors.

Shimizu illustrated the first three volumes, entitled "Unai no Tomo" (Children's friends). Consequently, after Shimizu passed away, the work was completed by Nishizawa Tehiko, his friend and assistant, in a similar style of block prints. Every toy was assigned to a specific region, detailing the type of craft involved according to the local availability of materials: wood, bamboo, paper (papier mâché), clay and fabrics.

Both Shimizu Seifu and Nishizawa Tehiko were toy collectors. They were part of a network around Japan, mostly concentrated in Tokyo and Kyoto. These groups of Toy Collectors belonged to an economically stable social sector, a bourgeoisie with access to broad-ranging practices and forms of consuming art. Surprisingly, among them, we find an American professor of Anthropology, Frederick Starr, who wrote the article "Japanese Toys and Toy collectors" in 1926, the first work in English about Japanese Folk Toys, which remains to this day a key reference on the subject.[2]

More recently, the work of Josef Kiburz "*Omocha:* Things to Play (or not to Play) With," (1994) became, and still is, the most complete and relevant work about Japanese Folk Toys. This author discussed a new classification of Toys and symbolic meanings, compared to those of F. Starr, and from Yanagita Kunio's work on Folk Tales from 1941. The main contribution from Kiburz was based on the fluidity of the concepts about *play* and *playing* in Japanese society, but also the role of collectors in relation to these toys, as coveted pieces throughout different periods of modern Japanese history.

Cultural Nostalgia

Observing the historiography of JFT we can detect a general Narrative of Nostalgia around them, that was already present in the first years of the Meiji era, when Shimizu, Nishizawa, or later Starr approached the subject. There have been different waves of discourses of Cultural Nostalgia about these pieces involving their artisan production as part of traditional schemes of craftmanship in Japan, and their future as pieces that have been evolving from toys to amulets, to souvenirs, and collector's pieces.

I have divided these Narratives of Cultural Nostalgia into four different historical waves with characteristics that not only reflect the similarities or persistence of the idea of Nostalgia around them but also how other factors such as industrialisation, artisanal production and consumption have evolved along the years.

The idea of Cultural Nostalgia is based on a diagnosis of loss. The Kyodo Gangu has always been the object of narratives of crisis, as something that is about to disappear. The sense of loss also involves angst around the void, being at the edge of seeing traditions disappear. In this case, the concept is applied to the type of production, artisanal, based on traditional craftmanship.

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[2] Starr was assigned as Professor of Anthropology by William Rainey Harper who founded the University of Chicago with a generous donation from J.D. Rockefeller. He went to Mexico and Congo to conduct some fieldwork before landing in Japan at the beginning of the 20th century, where he would remain until his death in 1933. Henry D. Smith: "Folk Toys and Votive Placards: Frederick Starr and the Ethnography of Collector Networks in Taisho Japan," from *Popular Imagery as Cultural Heritage: Aesthetical and Art Historical Studies of Visual Culture in Modern Japan,*" Final Report, (PI: KANEDA Chiaki), University of Columbia, March 2012.

The Nostalgic narratives always hark back and praise a better past than what there is at present, or in the future. They blame modernity or other factors, such as Europeanization in this case, as the origins of that loss.

The responses to the different narratives marked the different Nostalgic discourses about Kyodo Gangu.

David Berliner (2014) divides the concept of Nostalgia into two: *Endo Nostalgia*, which refers to personal lived experiences; and *Exo Nostalgia,* which is a narrative about something external, not personal. In both cases, there is the notion of loss. The latter concept appears as the more appropriate to work with these waves of Cultural Nostalgia that are embedded within the modern history of Japanese Folk Toys. This translates into a sense of indignation, anger, pain and sadness. Perhaps, because Kyodo Gangu are related to field of Folklore (as the works of Starr suggested (1926), the idea of nostalgia roams over its history.

First Wave of Narrative of Cultural Nostalgia (1890-1920) - Crisis of Industrialisation

The first wave of narratives of Nostalgia comes with the aforementioned publication by Shimizu Seifu about Kyodo Gangu.

The rise of modernisation also brought the fear of losing traditional methods of production: craftmanship models based in handmade artisanal work.

The initiative around the development of Unai no Tomo (1891-1923), was based on this sense of loss, followed by the urgent desire to maintain an archive. Shimizu and Nishizawa believed that Industrialisation was endangering the production of these toys; endangering a model of production based on heritage and apprenticeship. The need for a greater workforce in the industrial sector could leave the world of crafts bereft of continuity, of apprenticeships, and thus a fall in the production of Kyodo Gangu, or even their disappearance. It is important to note at this stage that Shimizu was a collector himself.

This sense of loss could have contributed or paved the way to bigger initiatives with similar sensibilities, such as the Mingei movement a few years later.

Second Wave of Narrative of Cultural Nostalgia From the Pre-World War (20's-30's) - Searching for National Identity

In the 1930s there was a general narrative of revalorisation of Traditional Folk stories, that included also the Kyodo Gangu. In search for arguments to strengthen the National Japanese Identity, Cultural appreciation was based on the exceptionalism of Japanese craft production and craftmanship. The Mingei movement and the main ideas of Yanagi Sōetsu about Japanese folk crafts and the importance of keeping its traditional manual production, considerably influenced this narrative of Cultural Nostalgia towards the end of the 30's. The most notable example being the publication "Japanese Folk Toys" by Tehiki Nishizawa, Shimizu Seifu's collaborator.

The publication was translated and published in English in 1939 by the Japanese Board of Tourist Industry and by the Japanese Government Railways. It is one of many other small volumes conceived to promote travel in Japan. Despite its links to publicity or marketing, Nishizawa's text, which is completed with accurate illustrations of the Folk Toys, comes with

reflexions on the state of artisanal production and, most of all, traditional craftmanship in Japan.

> "*In recent times (...) with the amazing progress in transportation and the free interflow of cultures, the so-called "local colour" within different districts of a country has gradually ceased to be "local". In other words, the hot bed for the production of folk toys is almost about to disappear. The same fate threatens not only toys but all forms of folk art, local culture. (...) giving rise to the opposition of the hand to the machines, of craftmanship to wage-earning (...) Such conflicts are the evils of this century. But our civilization moves in that way and there is no way to stop it. Civilization, whether ours or our fathers', ought inevitably to bring happiness to mankind. There is only one way of comporting ourselves in the face of this crisis, and, that is, for each nation to endeavour to enhance its national and racial consciousness. Folk toys (...) must now be given protection.*" [3]

The main response to this crisis was the growing praise for national treasures, for local tradition, for authenticity. The exceptionalism of the Japanese crafts, here in the figure of the Folk Toys is given by a narrative of "Japaneseness" as the main response to that crisis marked by the perils brought upon by the machine (industrialisation) and a certain process of Europeanization.

In this reaction, quite in tune with the general nationalism of the period, there is also a certain degree of reverted Orientalism (Moeran, 1996) as discussed by Ohashi Ryosuke (2002) and Sonya Ryang (2004). The praise for the exceptionalism of the model of craftmanship, in this case of these toys, aims to counterbalance its enemy (part of the used language of Nishizawa), embodied as the external cultural forces threatening Japan, exemplified by industrialisation. Exceptionalism as the praise for the exoticism of Japanese craftmanship itself.[4]

Postwar Narratives of the Reconstruction

During the years following WWII there was a decline in the production and popularity of Japanese Folk Toys. For Japan, the emerging era of Tin Toys symbolised the triumph of the demonised industrialisation process, although with some interesting results in terms of cultural production.

Prior to the war, there was already a small surge in the manufacture of mechanical and electrical toys. This was based on a steady local consumption that would reappear and reach its peak in the 1960's. In that period, Tin Toys represented 60% of Japan's export goods.

The decades of 1970 and 1980 will embrace the design of plastic moulds in toy manufacture, which will place Japan as one the world's principal creators and producers of Toys.

Third Wave of Narrative of Cultural Nostalgia - Cultural Heritage (1980-2000)

With the increase in mechanical, plastic, and electrical toys, some collectors started to go back to older toys, including those from the first era of mechanical toys, and folk toys as well.

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[3] Nishizawa, T.: *ídem*.

[4] Yüko Kikuchi analysed this for the case of the Mingei Movement: Kikuchi, Yüko: *Japanese Modernisation and Mingei Theory: Cultural nationalism and Oriental Orientalism*, Routledge, 2004.

A new type of collector appears on scene, with clubs organised around toys. While this phenomenon already existed in the first years of the Meiji era, these new collectors were not exclusively from a bourgeoisie linked to the power of consumption but consisted in more diverse groups with different interests and profiles such as Star or Shimizu.

Collectors at the time wanted to share their collection pieces with the broader public. The Yokohama Toy Club, which was one of the main Toy Clubs at the time, would eventually establish a museum, becoming a forerunner for the subsequent Toy Museums.

In 1974, one collector of Japanese Folk Toys opened his own collection to the public in the town of Himeji. The museum hosts the largest collection of Kyodo Gangu along with other toys from around the world. The director of the Japan Toy Museum at the time of writing, the collector who shared his collection, Mr. Inoue refers to that period and to one of his main motivations to share his pieces:

> "*The situation was that the cultural heritage related to children was lost*".[5]

In this case, the narrative of Nostalgia around Japanese Folk Toys reacted in a different way to previous experiences of fear of loss. The openness and the need to share the toys to keep the craft alive, not as a tradition, but as a knowledge, marks a different and less anxious reaction towards the actual situation of Folk Toys.

Fourth Wave: 21st Century, Narrative of a Crisis (Revised) - Sense of Despair and Uncertainty

In the last twenty years there have been some changes in the models of consumption and valorisation of Kyodo Gangu. A surge in the Kawaii Culture has helped to rekindle interest in the world of Japanese Folk Toys, with a different gaze and by different consumers. Although these changes have impacted the production as we will discuss below, a discourse of crisis has also appeared around the situation of craftmanship models.

Craft and craftsmanship models in Japan work with apprenticeships, many of which are structured within the same families. Thus, sons in priority, are given the opportunity to inherit the learning and practice of craft production. Due to economic changes and crisis, many young people decided not to pursue or continue their family craft production, and many youngers who would be candidates to apprenticeships, even outside the family entourage, also decided to pursue other careers in the cities.

The lack of continuity in the formation of apprenticeships and therefore future artisans represents a significant shift in this situation. The narrative of crisis reemerged, once again around the fear of the loss, but now with a greater sense of despair and resignation.

Many collectors of Japanese Folk Toys state that the situation will get worse as artisans grow older and they are unable to continue their work, without the support of assistants or apprentices to guarantee the continuation of Folk Toy production.

In some interviews I have heard this discourse presented as the normative situation. However, the landscape of Gangu has increased in popularity outside Japan and continues to expand.

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[5] See the website of Japan Toy Museum of Himeji. https://japan-toy-museum.org Consulted on March 2024.

Although global consumption has been dominated by Chinese collectors, slowly, other consumers have started to collect, reaching out directly to artisans and buying pieces online.

The surge of e-shops that sell Japanese Folk Toys in different forms have created another market for these pieces. The presence of Kyodo Gangu for sell on e-Bay, Etsy, or even MUJI with its lucky cans for new year, and online shops owned by some new artisans proves that the narrative of loss and crisis that is a theme for some collectors has a flip side. While some older collectors keep their pieces as valued commodities and investments, shying away from exhibiting them, as was the case in the 80s; younger consumers of Japanese Folk Toys shake the ground of Cultural Nostalgia.

New models of craftsmanship are also emerging, as is the interest of different artists or designers to pursue a career in craft work. Pop-up markets in Tokyo are a showcase of different artists and artisans who are evolving in the craft of Japanese Folk Toys, revealing the existence of these pieces to a new public. There is new and expanding interest in Kokeshis, Darumas, Akabekos as their consumption outside Japan grows. This is largely due to social media platforms with visual approaches such as Instagram or Pinterest, where new consumers can virtually meet new producers and creatives around the world.

Indeed, if the economic situation shows that younger generations migrate to cities instead of pursuing apprenticeships, there is also another source of artisans, mostly females that with different artistic or craft backgrounds are creating pieces modelled and inspired by Gangu and presenting another take on old and traditional pieces, with new materials, colours, or sizes. Old models of inherited craftmanship are, in many cases, being reformulated as more females are taking up the practice and craft, taking on apprenticeships.[6]

In sum, a new type of collector is emerging within an increasingly global market for Japanese Folk Toys, which is showing signs of change. Many of these collectors correspond to a more democratic kind of collector, in contrast with the previous, predominantly elitist culture of consumption of pieces of JFT.

Conclusions

There is a wandering spectre haunting the narratives about the world of Japanese Folk Toys or Kyodo Gangu that historically established a certain pessimism towards its future existence. There were in this history, different waves or moments of anxiety, and diagnosis of crisis and a pervading sense of cultural loss.

Nevertheless, while this narrative persists even today, we can now see a wave of change building up. Models of apprenticeships are changing, challenging the previously established gender order (the one that, in many cases, used to prioritise male heirs to female heirs). A new type of collector has emerged with a global access to know, learn, and buy these pieces. This is also facilitating the appearance of new creators of the craft who are bringing new twists to the same models of toys. A new access to Japanese Folk Toys as collectors' pieces by different social sectors that opposes the traditional norm an elitist consumption.

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[6] A recent film "Tsugaru lacquer girl" by Keiko Tsuruoka (2023) demonstrates this case, with the story of a daughter who must fight for her right to continue as the main heir of the craftmanship lacquer business of her father.

Briefly, there are some clashes between a history of Cultural Nostalgia based on a narrative of angst, crisis, and loss of tradition. A cultural hegemony of the past that, for the 21st century, seems to be counterbalanced by new cultural interests from both collectors and creators/apprentices at the same time.

Author's Note

This is a research in progress, thanks for reading. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have comments or suggestions about the subject.

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Exploring Instagram Advocacy for Citizenship Rights of Children Born to Malaysian Mothers Overseas

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Abstract
Social media has become a crucial tool for advocacy efforts as it has the power to connect individuals and communities globally and amplifying voices for crucial issues. On 9th September 2021, the High Court in Kuala Lumpur ruled that children born overseas to Malaysian mothers who are married to foreigners are automatically conferred Malaysian citizenship. However, on 13 September 2021, the Malaysian government filed an appeal against the decision. This study employs non-probability sampling and qualitative content analysis, to analyse postings on the Instagram account of 'Family Frontiers', a women's rights non-governmental organisation (NGO) that advocates equal citizenship rights for Malaysian women and their overseas-born children. This study will focus on 'Family Frontiers' account from 9th September 2021 to 16th September 2022 concentrating on four areas which are: 1) the personal experiences of the Malaysian mothers affected 2) Politicians' support towards Family Frontiers 3) #TarikBalikRayuan social media campaign 4) Information of the citizenship case.

Keywords: Family Frontiers, Citizenship of Children, Malaysian Mothers, Equal Citizenship, Social Media

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Introduction

Social media platforms, notably Instagram, have become influential tools for advocacy, enabling individuals and organizations to raise awareness, mobilize support, and amplify voices on significant issues (Castells, 2015; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Instagram's visual-centric approach and broad user base make it particularly effective for such purposes (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2017).

This research examines Instagram's role in advocating for citizenship rights for children born abroad to Malaysian mothers. The issue is particularly pertinent due to Malaysia's historical focus on paternal lineage for citizenship, which has led to challenges for children of Malaysian women married to foreign nationals (Tan, 2021). A landmark decision by the High Court of Kuala Lumpur on September 9, 2021, declared these children automatic Malaysian citizens, but this ruling faced immediate appeal by the government, illustrating the contentious nature of the debate (Tan, 2021). 'Family Frontiers,' an NGO focused on women's rights and citizenship issues, has utilized Instagram to advance their cause, employing strategies like personal storytelling and hashtag campaigns such as #TarikBalikRayuan to advocate for the withdrawal of the appeal (Tan, 2021). This study assesses how 'Family Frontiers' and similar groups used Instagram from September 9, 2021, to September 16, 2022, to engage audiences, garner political backing, and shape public opinion on citizenship rights. By evaluating Instagram's effectiveness and the challenges faced in advocacy, this research contributes to understanding the impact of social media on political and legal discussions (Bruns & Burgess, 2011; Tufekci, 2017).
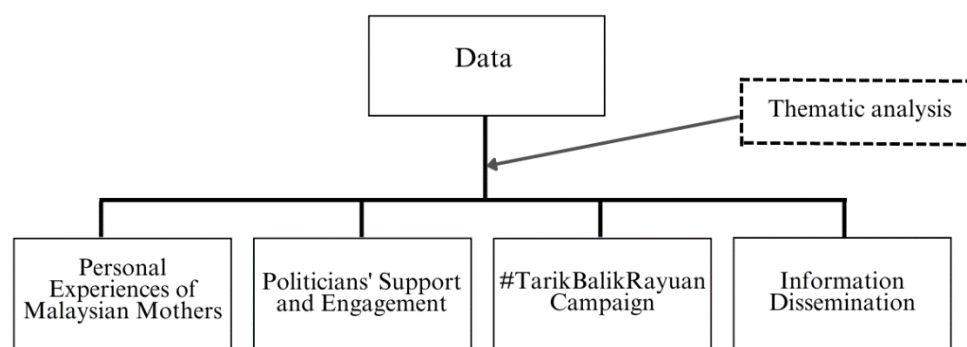
Adapted from Foley et al. (2019)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Qualitative Content Analysis

Research Objective

i.   To explore the personal experiences of Malaysian mothers affected by the citizenship ruling and subsequent government appeal as shared on the 'Family Frontiers' Instagram account.

ii. To examine the role of politicians in supporting 'Family Frontiers' advocacy for equal citizenship rights, as evidenced through their engagement and statements on Instagram.

iii. To analyze the effectiveness of the #TarikBalikRayuan social media campaign on raising awareness and mobilizing support for the citizenship rights case on Instagram.

iv. To examine how 'Family Frontiers' uses Instagram to disseminate information about the citizenship case.

Social Media as a Tool for Advocacy

Social media platforms have become effective advocacy tools that allow people and organizations to raise awareness of important social issues (Smith & Wilson, 2021; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Castells, 2015) They have revolutionized the way advocacy groups interact with audiences and garner support for a range of social and political causes. According to Jackson and Foucault Welles (2017), these platforms offer a worldwide platform for the amplification of marginalized groups' voices, expedite the circulation of information, and enable real-time contact. In particular, Instagram has become more popular because of its visually focused layout, which enables users to share captivating stories and pictures that emotionally connect with viewers (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2017).

Social media platforms like Instagram play a crucial role in advocacy by connecting diverse global communities, allowing them to share personal stories and garner support (Johnson, 2020). Instagram's focus on visual and narrative elements helps organizations humanize issues and engage with a broad audience (Gupta & Agrawal, 2019). It is frequently used to disseminate information, raise public awareness, and advocate for policy changes due to its user-friendly design and emphasis on visual storytelling (Chang & Kang, 2022; Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2017). Advocacy groups leverage Instagram's features, such as hashtags, user-generated content, and celebrity endorsements, to evoke empathy and mobilize support (Bruns & Burgess, 2011). The platform's algorithmic nature ensures that content reaches various audiences based on their interests and engagement, thereby amplifying the effectiveness of advocacy campaigns (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013).

Citizenship Rights Advocacy on Social Media

The advocacy for citizenship rights, particularly for children born overseas to Malaysian mothers, underscores the intersection of legal challenges and social justice issues (Tan, 2021). Instagram serves as a critical tool for influencing public opinion and pressuring lawmakers to enact legislation (Tufekci, 2017). Advocacy groups like 'Family Frontiers' utilize Instagram to share personal narratives, provide legal updates, and issue calls to action, thereby fostering community solidarity, challenging prevailing narratives, and affecting legislative outcomes (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2017). NGOs, such as the prominent Malaysian women's rights organization "Family Frontiers," play a pivotal role in advocating for legislative reforms and human rights protections (Nguyen & Tran, 2023).

Political Support and Engagement

Social media is a common tool used by political actors to promote advocacy initiatives. Public opinion and the results of policy can be greatly impacted by politicians' support of and amplification of NGO initiatives on social media sites like Instagram (Lee & Kim, 2021). The exposure and legitimacy of lobbying initiatives can be increased by politicians' remarks and support, as demonstrated on social media (Chen & Wang, 2020).

Effectiveness of Hashtag Campaigns

Tang & Tan (2022) assert that hashtag campaigns, like the #TarikBalikRayuan campaign started by "Family Frontiers," play a crucial role in galvanizing grassroots backing and increasing consciousness on matters pertaining to citizenship rights. These initiatives use

Instagram's hashtag culture to spread their message, involve supporters, and put pressure on decision-makers to make changes (Jackson & White, 2019).

Information Dissemination and Engagement Strategies

NGOs such as 'Family Frontiers' use Instagram as a forum to provide information about new advances in citizenship rights law and policy. These organizations educate their audience, seek input, and cultivate a network of supporters committed to advocacy efforts using interactive material and visual storytelling (Wu & Liu, 2023).

Methodology

To examine advocacy activities for citizenship rights for children born to Malaysian women abroad, as documented on the 'Family Frontiers' Instagram account between September 9, 2021, and September 16, 2022, this study uses a qualitative methodology. Four thematic themes were identified from the content on the Instagram account, and these areas will be the focus of the research, which includes qualitative content analysis and non-probability sampling.

Sampling and Data Collection

The study employed purposive non-probability sampling to analyze 'Family Frontiers' Instagram posts from September 9, 2021, to September 16, 2022. This approach effectively captures the perspectives and experiences of Malaysian mothers affected by citizenship issues (Gorard, 2019). The sample includes posts from this period, ensuring a comprehensive representation of the advocacy efforts and developments following the High Court's decision on citizenship rights for Malaysian mothers' overseas-born children (Bryman, 2020; Polit & Beck, 2017). Data collection involved systematically retrieving Instagram posts along with their metadata (e.g., date, captions, hashtags) for detailed analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). To ensure the validity of the findings, the study utilized a sample size of nine consecutive weeks of content from newspapers over five years, adapting this approach to 114 Instagram posts (Othman et al., 2023). The study employed thematic analysis to categorize the Instagram posts into four key themes:
1. Personal experiences of Malaysian mothers
2. Politicians' support and engagement
3. The #TarikBalikRayuan campaign
4. Information dissemination

This thematic analysis aimed to provide insights into the advocacy efforts on Instagram regarding equal citizenship rights for Malaysian women and their overseas-born children.

Data Analysis

To find reoccurring themes and patterns in the chosen Instagram posts, a qualitative content analysis was carried out (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Krippendorff, 2018). First, all entries were categorized according to predetermined themes that came from the research goals (e.g., personal stories, political involvement, successful campaigns, and sharing legal knowledge) (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The meanings and implications included within these categories will then be interpreted through the application of theme analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
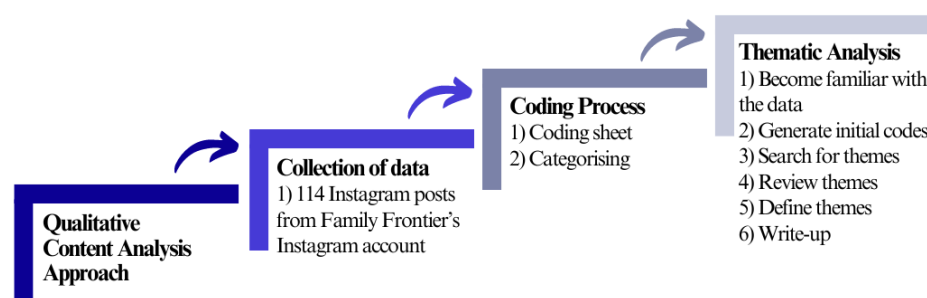
Adopted from Othman et al. (2023)

Figure 2: Process of Qualitative Content Analysis

The study uses a qualitative content analysis approach to analyze 114 Instagram posts from Family Frontiers' account from September 9 to September 16, 2022. The coding process involves creating a coding sheet with predetermined themes, analyzing each post, extracting content, and categorizing it into specific themes. Thematic analysis is used to identify and categorize themes, and the findings are summarized in a write-up, contributing to understanding Family Frontiers' Instagram advocacy for citizenship rights.

Ethical Considerations

Following ethical criteria for the use of social media data, this study protects participant anonymity and confidentiality and obtains the required approvals for data collection and analysis (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). According to Markham and Buchanan (2012), the research attempts to maximize transparency and validity of findings while respecting the privacy of individuals whose postings are studied.

Findings and Discussion

A qualitative content analysis was performed on the information gathered from the 'Family Frontiers' Instagram account between September 9, 2021 and September 16, 2022. Through a methodical evaluation and classification process, text posts, photos, videos, and user interactions were examined to find recurrent themes and patterns of the campaigning for the citizenship rights of children born to Malaysian women abroad.

Personal Experiences of Malaysian Mothers

A variety of personal narratives expressed by Malaysian moms impacted by citizenship decisions and appeals were found throughout study. Emotional testimonials regarding difficulties encountered as a result of citizenship limitations, individual experiences negotiating legal complications, and the effect on family dynamics were among the themes. Numerous posts emphasized the annoyance and tenacity of mothers who are fighting for their kids' equal rights. Below are the numbers of Instagram posts on Family Frontiers' Instagram account:

Table 1: Personal Experiences of Malaysian Mothers Theme

Theme	Number of posts
Personal Experiences of Malaysian Mothers	33

Sharing of personal experiences on social media to spread awareness and gain public support is widely used among the public. Michie et. al. (2018) confirmed by stating that digital storytelling on social media has been widely used as an advocacy tool to raise public awareness on crucial issues and expand allies. For Family Frontiers, it is noted that the advocacy efforts on the citizenship rights of children born to Malaysian mothers overseas are conducted through Family Frontiers' Instagram account, "familyfrontiersmy." Within the period of September 9, 2021 to September 16, 2022, 33 posts are recorded.

Family Frontiers Instagram postings are in the form of images and short videos:

Table 2: Number of Likes and Views of Family Frontiers' Instagram Posts

Date	Instagram post	Form	Likes	Views
9.9.2021	Emotions of Myra, Suri Kempe and Adlyn	Image	375	-
12.10.2021	Malaysian mothers despair over Home Minister's Statement	Image	470	-
25.4.2022	Personal experience of Dr. Yap Chng Yung	Video	120	1,167
16.9.2022	Personal experience of Zura	Video	100	-

The second most prominent theme in advocacy efforts on Instagram is the sharing of personal experiences by Malaysian mothers, which draws significant engagement through "likes" and "views." For instance, Dr. Yap Chng Yung shared her struggles with obtaining Malaysian citizenship for her daughter born in Taiwan, receiving 1,167 views on a video posted on the Family Frontiers Instagram account. Despite applying when her daughter was four months old, the process remained unresolved after five years. Dr. Yap, who served as a frontliner during the COVID-19 pandemic, also highlighted her personal sacrifices, such as leaving high-paying jobs in Taiwan. Her daughter's lack of citizenship led to severe emotional impacts, including post-traumatic stress disorder. Dr. Yap expressed her frustration, saying, "*We have been applying for my daughter's citizenship since she was 5 months old. I am so happy and I cannot wait to tell her that she is also Malaysian, like her brother.*" Another impactful post featured Zura, a Malaysian mother who gave birth abroad due to high-risk pregnancies and work obligations, which also garnered considerable attention.

On September 9, 2021, the High Court ruled that Malaysian women could confer citizenship on their overseas-born children, a decision widely supported and celebrated on Instagram. Posts featuring three mothers, including Myra, Suri Kempe (President of Family Frontiers), and Adlyn, received 375 likes, along with supportive comments from users. Suri Kempe emphasized the significance of the ruling, stating, "*This judgement recognizes Malaysian women's equality, and marks one step forward to a more egalitarian and just Malaysia.*" Adlyn, another mother and plaintiff, shared her relief, saying, "*Malaysian women have been waiting for years, and the day has finally arrived. Justice has been served.*"

However, the Malaysian government filed an appeal against the decision, which sparked further reactions. Family Frontiers posted a video of then-Home Minister YB Dato' Seri Hamzah Bin Zainudin's interview, where he suggested that mothers who prioritize Malaysian citizenship should give birth in Malaysia. This statement was criticized by many, including a mother who shared her difficulties in trying to return to Malaysia to give birth due to pregnancy complications. Kavita Kaur, a Malaysian mother, responded: "*Women should not be told to put our lives and our babies' lives at risk just to board planes and fly back to Malaysia to give birth. Our pregnancies should not be trivialized. The Home Minister must do the right thing and stop fighting Malaysian mothers.*" The post received numerous likes

and critical comments, highlighting how emotional content resonates strongly with audiences, leading to higher engagement.

Politicians' Support and Engagement

Politicians and other public figures expressed varied degrees of support for 'Family Frontiers' lobbying activities in posts and conversations. Statements of solidarity, requests for legislative change, and involvement in public gatherings or campaigns were among the themes. Instagram political participation helped to spread the advocacy message and attract more attention from the public and authorities (Smith & Johnson, 2021; Lee & Kim, 2022). Below are the Instagram posts in Family Frontiers' Instagram account:

Table 3: Politicians' Support and Engagement Theme

Theme	Number of posts
Politicians' Support and Engagement	5

Politicians and public figures that participate and speaking up on issues gain more attraction from the public (Atkinson & Dewitt, 2018). In Family Frontiers' Instagram account, posts that features royalty and politicians gain more attraction and high likes as shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Number of Likes and Views of Family Frontiers' Instagram Posts

Date	Instagram post	Form	Likes	Views
20.9.2021	DYMM Tuanku Sultan Ibrahim, Sultan of Johor	Image	209	-
10.5.2022	YB Nurul Izzah, MP of Permatang Pauh	Image	76	-
30.7.2022	YB Ramkarpal, MP of Bukit Gelugor	Video	69	802
11.8.2022	YB Maria Chin Abdullah	Video	268	-
17.8.2022	YB Amira Aisya, DUN Puteri Wangsa	Video	162	-

Politicians' support and engagement area recorded the least in Family Frontiers' Instagram account. However, postings that feature politicians and public figures receive a high number of likes and views. For example, DYMM Tuanku Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar stated:

> *"The sanctity of the courts must be upheld. Why discriminate against Malaysian mothers with overseas-born children? It doesn't feel right that Malaysian fathers and mothers are viewed differently in the eyes of the law concerning their child's citizenship. Are Malaysian mothers less Malaysian than Malaysian fathers?"*
> - DYMM Tuanku Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar.

The statement from DYMM Tuanku Sultan Ibrahim on 20th September 2021 suggested that His Majesty criticized the government's decision to appeal the High Court ruling that allowed Malaysian mothers to confer citizenship to overseas-born children. Comments of support from postings of His Majesty also garnered support from the public such as:

> *"Very well said by Sultan!"* – Instagram user 4.
> *"Long live Sultan Johor."* – Instagram user 5.

A widely viewed Instagram post features YB Ramkarpal Singh, MP of Bukit Gelugor, discussing the need to amend Article 14(1)(b) of the Federal Constitution to clarify ambiguities surrounding citizenship for children born overseas to Malaysian mothers. In his

video, YB Ramkarpal emphasizes that even if the government withdraws its appeal, the underlying citizenship issues will remain due to the current provisions of Article 14(1)(b), which permits Malaysian men to confer citizenship to their overseas-born children but does not extend the same right to Malaysian women (Family Frontiers, 2022c; Halimy, 2024).

Support for amending Article 14(1)(b) has been echoed by other politicians, including YB Tuan Nga Kor Ming, the Housing and Local Government Minister. YB Tuan Nga has advocated for all Members of Parliament to back the amendment to ensure citizenship rights for children born abroad to Malaysian mothers and non-Malaysian fathers (Loh, 2024). This ongoing political support underscores the effective advocacy efforts by Family Frontiers and suggests that persistent awareness and pressure from lawmakers could lead to favorable legal reforms.

#TarikBalikRayuan Campaign

The #TarikBalikRayuan campaign's extensive usage in postings and user-generated material demonstrated its efficacy. Analysis revealed how the hashtag raised awareness of the citizenship rights problem, encouraged solidarity among impacted families, and rallied supporters. Beyond Instagram, the campaign had an impact on media coverage and public conversation (Tang & Tan, 2023; Jackson & White, 2020). Below are the numbers of posts:

Table 5: # TarikBalikRayuan Campaign Theme

Theme	Number of posts
#TarikBalikRayuan Campaign	19

The #TarikBalikRayuanCampaign (Withdraw the Appeal campaign) is an online campaign created by Family Frontiers to urge the Malaysian government to withdraw the appeal after the High Court in Kuala Lumpur ruled that children born overseas to Malaysian mothers who are married to foreigners are automatically conferred Malaysian citizenship (Family Frontiers, 2021a). The online campaign had received a high number of likes and views as shown in Table 6:

Table 6: Number of Likes and Views of Family Frontiers' Instagram Posts

Date	Instagram post	Form	Likes	Views
13.9.2021	Justice Delayed is Justice Denied – The Government Must Withdraw its Appeal against the Landmark High Court Decision	Image	795	-
23.9.2021	Malaysian mothers hand over petition with over 30,000 signatories to call on the Govt. to #TarikBalikRayuan	Image	196	-
21.2.2022	After 4-Hour Long Printer Debacle, National Registration Department Issues Citizenship Certificates to Overseas-Born Children of Three Plaintiffs	Image	203	-
9.3.2022	Experience of Li Li, a Malaysian mother and call to sign #TarikBalikRayuan online petition	Video	38	500
20.3.2022	Short movie of Aini, a Malaysian mother and call for the government to #TarikBalikRayuan	Video	541	16,775
22.3.2022	Recap: Tarik Balik Rayuan campaign	Video	77	1,702

On September 9, 2021, the High Court in Kuala Lumpur made a historic ruling that children born overseas to Malaysian mothers and non-Malaysian fathers are automatically granted Malaysian citizenship. This decision received widespread public support, as seen in the comments on Family Frontiers' Instagram account. However, on September 13, 2021, the government filed an appeal to challenge the decision.

In response to the government's appeal, Family Frontiers launched the "#TarikBalikRayuanCampaign" to express public dissatisfaction and urged the government to withdraw the appeal. The campaign included an online petition and a statement posted on Instagram titled, "Justice Delayed is Justice Denied – The Government Must Withdraw its Appeal against the Landmark High Court Decision," which garnered 795 likes. Tan Sri Annuar Musa, President of the Muafakat Nasional political party, commented on the post: "*The voices of mothers in Malaysia must be heard. My fellow Cabinet members and I will discuss this*." His remarks underscored the need for political and legislative support to address the citizenship issue.

One significant video posted by Family Frontiers on March 20, 2022, featuring Aini, a Malaysian mother whose overseas-born daughter's citizenship application was unsuccessful, garnered 16,775 views and 541 likes. The video documents Aini's efforts to secure citizenship for her daughter, Nana, who was born in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and discusses the legal challenges involved.

Another popular video features Li Li, a single mother from Johor, explaining her decision to give birth abroad in 2017 due to concerns from a previous miscarriage. On March 22, 2022, Family Frontiers posted another video summarizing updates on the case ahead of the Court of Appeal's hearing, which received 1,702 views.

Videos that incorporate music and personal stories tend to attract high engagement. Research suggests that music in videos can evoke a range of emotions, enhancing viewer connection, while images of faces effectively induce emotional responses. These elements contribute to the effectiveness of Family Frontiers' #TarikBalikRayuan campaign, which includes a petition titled "Government must Uphold Equal Citizenship Right of Malaysian Mothers," gathering 50,688 signatures as of 2024.

Information Dissemination

Instagram was a useful tool for "Family Frontiers" to spread timely information about the citizenship case. Posts with legal updates, instructional materials on citizenship legislation, and summaries of court decisions were found through analysis. To engage followers and cultivate a community dedicated to advocacy efforts, the group used interactive elements and visual storytelling (Gupta & Agrawal, 2019; Gonzalez & Perez, 2022).

Table 7: Information Dissemination Theme

Theme	Number of posts
Information Dissemination	57

Family Frontiers' advocacy efforts use visual storytelling technique which garners a high number of likes and views as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Number of Likes and Views of Family Frontiers' Instagram Posts

Date	Instagram post	Form	Likes	Views
9.9.2021	Family Frontiers Wins Case for Equal Citizenship at KL High Court	Image	1,029	-
17.9.2021	Issue of dual citizenship is why Malaysian mothers cannot automatically pass on citizenship on their overseas born children: Jom, let's debunk this argument	Image	382	-
2.7.2022	Astro Awani interview with Suriani Kempe, President of Family Frontiers	Video	43	481
5.8.2022	The Fight Goes On For Malaysian Women as Court of Appeal Overturns High Court Decision in Suriani Kempe Case "We Will Not Be Deterred"	Image	1,479	-
12.8.2022	Breakdown of the Court of Decision in the Family Frontiers case	Video	106	1,177
22.12.2021	Court of Appeal Unanimously Dismissed Govt's Stay Application of 9 Sept Citizenship Decision	Image	415	-

Family Frontiers began its legal battle to secure citizenship rights for Malaysian mothers in 2020, when the NGO, along with six Malaysian women, filed a lawsuit seeking a declaration that Malaysian women married to foreigners should have the right to confer citizenship to their overseas-born children. In 2021, the Kuala Lumpur High Court ruled in their favor, granting citizenship by operation of law to these children. However, the Malaysian government appealed this decision, leading to a prolonged legal struggle.

To raise awareness and garner support, Family Frontiers has focused its advocacy efforts on social media, particularly Instagram. The NGO uses its account, "familyfrontiersmy," to provide updates on the legal case, share information, and engage the public. This strategy aligns with research indicating that social media platforms like Instagram are effective for spreading awareness and building support for policy changes.

Significant posts on Family Frontiers' Instagram include updates on the legal case, such as:
   i.   "*Family Frontiers Wins Case for Equal Citizenship at KL High Court*" – September 9, 2021.
   ii. "*Court of Appeal Unanimously Dismissed Govt.'s Stay Application of 9 Sept Citizenship Decision: Malaysian mothers can now obtain identity documents for children born overseas*" – December 22, 2021.
   iii. "*The Fight Goes on For Malaysian Women as Court of Appeal Overturns High Court Decision in Suriani Kempe Case: We Will Not Be Deterred*" – August 5, 2022, which garnered 1,479 likes.

Family Frontiers has been critical of the Malaysian government, particularly regarding its failure to amend the Federal Constitution to remove discriminatory provisions. For instance, a post titled "*We Have A Seat in The Human Rights Council*" criticized the government for ignoring 30,000 petition signatures calling for equal citizenship rights. The NGO also responded to statements by Attorney General Tan Sri Idrus Harun, highlighting issues with the citizenship application process under Article 15(2) and the lack of progress on amending Article 14(1)(b). The United Nations has also criticized Malaysia's stance, noting that

denying citizenship rights to children born overseas adversely affects their access to essential services and impacts their social identities.

Family Frontiers uses a blend of humor and emotion to engage audiences. A short video posted on October 21, 2021, humorously depicted the frustration of Malaysian mothers who must renew their children's visas every six months. The video, which received 134 likes, included a caption:

> *"POV: You're a Malaysian mother renewing her kids' visas every 6 months. You prepare tens of documents as requested by the immigration office, spend hours securing an appointment, apply for leave (both yours and your kids'), attend the appointment, only to be told: 'further documents required'. Repeat cycle. #sayajugaanakmalaysia #keluargamalaysia."*

This use of humor aligns with the idea that humor can effectively raise awareness and drive social change.Family Frontiers also provides practical guidance for Malaysian mothers navigating the complex process of obtaining citizenship for their overseas-born children. For example, a post from March 29, 2022, offering a brief guideline on this process, received 149 likes.

The NGO's Instagram account also highlights the negative impacts of Malaysia's gender-discriminatory citizenship laws. Posts such as *"Impact of children's lack of Malaysian citizenship on a mother"* (October 28, 2021), *"Why the Government must issue citizenship to overseas-born children of Malaysian mothers"* (December 27, 2021), and *"The impact of gender-discriminatory citizenship laws on Malaysian women"* (May 18, 2022) address issues like the difficulties Malaysian mothers face in leaving abusive marriages, protecting their children, or obtaining legal assistance. These posts have sparked engagement from the public, with comments such as:

> "*Our overseas-born child is only allowed to stay in M'sia with a student visa. The same visa used by foreigners to study here. That's all our overseas-born children can have and hold on to in order to live here legally with their M'sian mothers.*"

> "*@ismailsabri60 Many families are depending on it. My child needs her citizenship for public school enrollment. Please end our suffering NOW.*"

These comments suggest that the audience is actively engaging with Family Frontiers' content, highlighting the ongoing relevance of the issue.

Findings

i. Public Engagement and Awareness: The analysis emphasized Instagram's function as a forum for educating the public and fostering public dialogue on topics related to citizenship rights. User interactions revealed an expanding group of stakeholders and supporters who are committed to the cause, as seen by comments and shares (Chen & Wang, 2021).

ii. Political Impact: The visibility and legitimacy of the advocacy effort were greatly enhanced by politicians' participation on Instagram. Their words and deeds made the advocacy message more widely known and forced decision-makers to take citizenship reforms seriously (Smith et al., 2020; Chang & Kang, 2021).

iii. Hashtag Campaign Effectiveness: The #TarikBalikRayuan campaign showed how social media activism can mobilize grassroots support and sway public opinion. It demonstrated the potential of digital platforms in furthering social justice causes and sparked both offline and online actions (Wu & Liu, 2024; Johnson, 2019).

iv. "Family Frontiers'" Educational Role: By carefully disseminating information, "Family Frontiers" improved the general public's comprehension of citizenship laws and court procedures. Their educational initiatives enabled informed advocacy and provided affected individuals with knowledge (Elo & Kyngäs, 2021; Braun & Clarke, 2020).

Implications and Recommendations

The findings highlighted how important Instagram and social media are to modern campaigns for citizenship rights. To maintain the momentum for legislative reforms, recommendations include expanding digital advocacy tactics, staying in touch with lawmakers, and continuing community support.

Limitations

While qualitative content analysis provided valuable insights, limitations include the potential for bias in user-generated content and the scope of data collected solely from Instagram. Further investigation into more expansive social media platforms and the integration of many viewpoints could enhance the comprehension of advocacy dynamics.

Conclusion

This study underscores the significant role of Instagram in advocating for citizenship rights for children born to Malaysian women abroad, focusing on 'Family Frontiers' activities from September 9, 2021, to September 16, 2022. Through a qualitative content analysis of Instagram posts, the study revealed impactful personal stories from affected mothers, highlighted successful political engagement strategies that garnered policymakers' interest and support, and demonstrated the effectiveness of the #TarikBalikRayuan campaign in raising public awareness and fostering community solidarity. By leveraging Instagram, "Family Frontiers" effectively advanced informed advocacy and community engagement regarding citizenship regulations. The findings align with Smith and Wilson's (2021) research, which highlights Instagram's critical role in modern advocacy by amplifying the voices of underrepresented groups and mobilizing public support for social justice causes. Organizations like 'Family Frontiers' harness interactive features and visual storytelling on Instagram to engage stakeholders and influence policy outcomes (Gupta & Agrawal, 2019). Future research should continue to explore social media advocacy dynamics and its effects on legislation and the ethical considerations of online activism (Chen & Wang, 2021). Comparative studies across different social media platforms and geographical contexts could further enhance our understanding of digital advocacy strategies (Lee & Kim, 2022).

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The Role of Mass Media in Political Stability

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Abstract

Social media have caused significant changes in interpersonal relationships and relationships between political systems. The masses and media have become such powerful tools that various societies and political systems cannot ignore them in their affairs and strategic planning. From a different perspective, political order and stability remain the most fundamental issues of human societies. The social and political parameters that influence how order and stability are formed or shaken, and consequently impact the political systems, have been among the most important concerns of political experts. This study utilizes the descriptive-analytic method on data from two developed countries (Japan and Norway), as well as two under developed countries (Afghanistan and Yemen), to explore how social media creates political and social order and stability or opposition in a society. The method comprises quantitative (number of media users) and qualitative (circumstances of media users) analysis factors, and is applied on collected data from different sources, most notably, U.N data regarding development and social media platforms. The research came to the conclusion that mass media can provide the means for development and expansion of political and social order and stability, through education and culture with emphasis on the commonalities among different communities within a society. More specifically, our findings suggest that this phenomenon promotes social order and political stability in developed political systems and, conversely, opposition in under-developed political systems.

Keywords: Mass Media, Political Stability, Cultural Communality, Development

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Introduction

At present, mass media has become an incredibly powerful media and communication tool that not only ordinary people in various societies but also governments cannot ignore and easily bypass. Despite the digital divide between developed and developing countries, the use of social media is rapidly increasing in developing countries and even less developed countries, and every second more people are added to the group of media users. The scope of influence of mass media and related facilities has expanded rapidly, both quantitatively (number of users) and qualitatively (circumstances of users). This age is the age of information and the dominance of new communication technologies. The information age is an age that is based on electronic communication and in which the transfer of information is done quickly and easily. In this era, time and space have lost their previous importance and traditional valuation systems in the form of local and national borders have been severely threatened. The virtual space has undergone tremendous changes in human life, although the characteristics of this transformation are not yet fully known. Thinkers supporting new communication technologies imagined a utopia in front of us with the emergence of these technologies, in which the roots of many social problems at the global level would be eradicated. Based on this, some looked at the emergence and rapid growth of new communication technologies with a Panglossian view and promised a very bright outlook. Serious and extensive scientific discussion about the nature, course, and the impact of communication's revolution and the beginning of the digital age in the lives of individuals and societies have given new life to the research of communication and media and their role in politics today. (Minavand, 2015). The extensive changes are taking place in the field of communication and media, which has put a completely different perspective on the performance and impact of the media in front of researchers.

One of the fundamental issues in all societies and especially for political systems and many sociologists who fall under the mainstream of sociology, has always been the issue of maintaining order and stability (how and why and under what conditions is order maintained or shaken) This basic question has also aroused the interest of researchers in the field of communication. This topic has been discussed since the introduction of the telegraph as the first universal means of communication (Orr, 2007).

The extraordinary and unprecedented capacities and facilities that the mass media has provided for communication between individuals, groups, non-governmental organizations and finally governments, has led to a new wave of scientific and academic mobility in various fields, especially communication and political science, to study the effects and consequences, that this emerging field of communication will start on these societies or governments.

Research Background

Aristotle paid attention to the concept of communication for the first time and introduced the exchange of multiple thoughts as a social element. He considered the main elements of the communication flow as "sender", "message" and "addressee" and the sender's goal of sending a message is to convince the addressee. But now the impact of the media is evaluated even beyond the persuasion and change of attitude that were the criteria for investigating the effects of the media during the previous decades. The investigated effects are now placed in the framework of sciences such as social psychology and cultural anthropology in order to evaluate the efficiency or inefficiency of the media in performing its function. Meanwhile,

"awareness" and "transparent information" of what is happening in the society has become the focus of the media's function (Zare, 2013).

In relation to the dependent variable of this research, i.e. political stability, perhaps it is safe to say that the best work that has been published so far is the book "Patterns of Political Instability" by David Saunders, which is welcomed by most Iranian researchers interested in researching political stability and instability. And all the limited Persian works available in this field have many references to this book. In this work, Saunders has been able to provide criteria for recognizing the state of stability and instability.

Another book is "Political Competition and Political Stability in the Islamic Republic of Iran" written by Gholamreza Khajesarvi. This book is among the useful works that have been published regarding political stability in Iran. Khajesarvi has finally explained the concept of stability from Sanders point of view.

The article "Media, Surveillance, Security" written by Asghar Eftekhari can be considered as one of the useful works done in this field (Eftekhari, 2000). In this article, using the theory of functionalism, which is one of the most widely used theories in the field of media theories; Eftekhari examines the positive and negative functions of the press on political stability.

Theory and Concepts

Functionalism

The theory of functionalism is still one of the theories proposed in the field of communication and this research tries to use this theory to examine the flaws of the mass media in relation to the stability of the political system.

Functionalism explains how the social institutions that make up society, such as economy, education, family, religion, and media, all perform a useful purpose, and also influence the members of society.

Emile Durkhym believes that there were various means by which individual and society could be connected.

Talcott Parson organized social systems in terms of action unit. He defines a social system as network interactions between actors.

This research adopted, the term of Merton's functionalism, which is considered as a revision of the basic principles of functionalism, will be used.

Robert k. Merton developed a theory of deviant behavior based on different type of adaptation. He denied the interrelationship between social theory and empirical research, advancing structural-functional approach to the study of society, which is revision of the basic principles of functionalism.

Function

Functionality is the kind of service that each component performs in relation to the whole. Function has been defined as the effect of factors in social activities. According to Parsons,

the social system [in its macro and general sense and not in the sense of the social sub-system] is much broader than the concept of construction and plays a fundamental role in the concept of function. The coherence of a system is in its functional relationships. In sociology, the concept of function has been related to the three meanings of work, duty and role; And anyway, function is the work or impact that a phenomenon leaves in the social system. In the functional approach, all social structures and phenomena have a function in the society and are therefore necessary and inevitable. Functioning at different levels is imaginable; at the individual level, individual roles and their impact on the society and social environment, at the institutional level, the impact or function of institutions (as a collection of people) and at the societal level, the functions and duties of the entire society are examined (Haghighat, 1387).

Dysfunction

Early functionalists believed that function has only a positive dimension and the value and normative view of function was very strong. They considered the positivity of functions as a basic assumption, and this assumption caused basic criticisms to be made to functionalism from the beginning. However, the principle of functional unity and to some extent the principle of functional necessity, which are considered as the assumptions of functionalism, were criticized by later functionalist theorists, especially Robert Merten by proposing negative functions and subsequent hidden functions. Merten gave new functionality to functionalism and made this theory applicable in many more cases. In fact, the term skewed performance indicates negative performance. In this research, an attempt is made to use Merten's dysfunctional term to explain the mass media in relation to the issue of political stability.

Mass Media

From the discussion of the media with the Platonic model (which considers knowledge as synonymous with virtue), the simplest conclusion is that the media in today's world, to the extent that they provide information to people and make them aware, can help them avoid social harm. Based on this, the two serious functions of the media, i.e. education and information, fulfill Plato's expectation of spreading virtues (by expanding knowledge). The positive and correct functioning of the media in the two mentioned dimensions can make the power and ability flourish in the audience and strengthen their will for transformation and development. Furthermore, wherever more information, which is one of the essentials of development, is accumulated, the eruption of more power will be seen, which guarantees security and deep political-social stability (Mohamadi, 2013).

The extensive scientific discussion about the nature, course, and the impact of communications revolution and the beginning of the digital age in the lives of individuals and so In any case, the category of communication plays a significant role in the process of developing nations and strengthening the foundations and national pillars of countries, and its manifestations, mass media, can be a powerful tool for establishing unity and cohesion between different parts of societies that differ in terms of religion, ethnicity, language, and local tendencies, and they are grouped regionally and do not have the necessary national interweaving, to act and help reduce social gaps. It is obvious that such a great function that rightfully promotes national interests and promises the ground for uplifting and prosperity of human societies, is subject to the fulfillment of the prerequisites, one of the most important of

which is the awareness of the media and their audiences to such capability and its limits (Zare, op.c).

Therefore, we can also talk about the dimensions and positive effects of the mass media and other new communication technologies, although at least in the context of political stability, which is aimed at the political system. The impact of mass media can be seen in our everyday lives, and mass has become a basic need of human society as a whole (Sinaga l.r, Larasati, A., 2024).

The debate on the effects of the media in different areas and dimensions is ongoing, and this is especially related to mass media, considering the power and scope of influence of mass media and the ever-increasing number of its audience, and especially the various facilities that this media provides to its users. Maurice Duverge believes that the media and new tools in general (as one of the weapons of political struggle) have a dual function, therefore they work both in the direction of spreading homogeneity and compromise (or stability) in society and in political struggle. They act in the direction of conflict in society too. Duverge, Mass media, despite its many advantages in the direction of development and increasing the stability of the political system, which is not in doubt, also poses threats to the political system that ignoring them will definitely have consequences (Minavand, 2015).

Political Stability

political stability, despite the fact that it is very important, has received less attention, and of course, like many other concepts of political science, there is no theoretical consensus among the thinkers who have discussed this term.

From a macro perspective, political stability has been and is the ultimate goal of all political systems in history, regardless of any ideology or profession, and regardless of the way of governance. Therefore, without a doubt, all political systems use any means to maintain stability, and on the other hand, they stand against any factor or factors that cause the instability of the political system and do not hesitate to make any efforts to remove the destabilizing factors.

The definitions of stability from a political perspective (priority of political will over social issues) and social (priority of national will over political considerations) are generally different from each other. From a political point of view, stability is more about maintaining the previous constructions of power and at the same time legitimizing power to create order. And any message transmission is done easily and without body defense, and in the future the source of this effect will be completely hidden. However, from a sociological point of view, stability is more about maintaining social constructions and preventing the creation of social-political chaos, in this sense, more satisfaction with political construction and the realization of social rights is considered. Five different approaches have been used by researchers to study political stability, each of which provides a criterion for examining the mentioned phenomenon.

These approaches include:
1- Political stability means non-violence
2- Political stability means the continuity and stability of the political system
3- Political stability in the sense of the existence of legal political regimes
4- Political stability means lack of structural change

5- Political stability in the sense of the existence of multiple social criteria (Ahmadi, 1997).

Political Instability

Political instability can be defined based on indicators of political and social disorder. Based on this, cases such as massive protests, general strikes, riots, demonstrations and any other form of collective action that endangers political stability are defined under the term political instability. In an article titled Political Instability Criteria and Its Impact on Economic Growth, Jang Pin has named 24 important indicators of political instability. Due to the importance of recognizing political instability criteria in understanding political stability, these 24 factors are listed in full in the table on the next page.

Table 1: Instability Indicators From Jang Pin's Point of View

1. Guerrilla war	7. Assassinations	13. The number of years the main party has been in power	19. Changes in the leadership of the executive
2. Revolutions	8. Religious conflicts	14. Number of elections	20. Cabinet changes
3. Civil war	9. Internal media conflicts	15. Settlement of political or party accounts	21. General changes to the constitution.
4. Internal conflicts	10. Polarization of elites	16. Rebellions	22. Coups
5. Ethnic tensions	11. Social divide	17. Demonstrations	23. Political regime changes
6. Strikes	12. Superficial internal conflicts	18. Important government crises	24. Government stability

Development

The ends and means of development require examination an scrutiny for a fuller understanding of the development process; it is simply not adequate to take as our basic objective just the maximization of income or wealth, which is, as Aristotle noted, "merely useful and for the sake of something else". For the same reason, economic growth cannot sensibly be treated as an end in itself. Development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedom we enjoy. Expanding the freedom that we have reason to value not only makes our lives richer and more unfettered, but also allows is to be fuller social persons, exercising our own volitions and interacting with – and influencing – the world in which we live. In chapter 3, this general approach is more fully proposed and scrutinized and is compared with other approaches that compete for attention in an evaluative manner (Sen, Amaryta, 2001).

Sen explains how in a world of unprecedented increase of overall opulence millions of people living in the third world are still unfree. Even if they are not technically slaves, they are denied elementary freedoms and remain imprisoned in one way or another by economic poverty, social deprivation, political tyranny or cultural authoritarianism, social institutions like markets, political parties, legislatures, the judiciary, and the media contribute to development by enhancing individual freedom and are in turn sustained by social values. Values, institutions, development, and freedom are closely interrelated, and send linked them together in an elegant analytical framework (Sen, Amaryta, 2001).

Mass Media Freedom

Sen treats the freedom of individual as the basic building blocks. Attention is thus paid particularly to the expansion of the "capability" of persons to lead the kind of lives hey value and have reason to value.

There are two distinct reasons for the crucial importance of individual freedom in the concept of development, related respectively to evaluation and effectiveness. First, in the normative approach used here, substantive individual freedoms are taken to be crucial. The success of a society is to be evaluated, in this view, primarily by the substantive freedoms that the membe3r s of the society enjoy. This evaluative position differs from the informational focus of more traditional approaches, which focus on other variables, such as utility, or procedural liberty, or real income (Sen, Amaryta, 2001).

The instrumental role of freedom concerns the way different kinds of rights, opportunities, and entitlements contribute to the expansion of human freedom in general, and this to promoting development. This relates not merely to the obvious connection that expansion of freedom of each kind must contribute to development since development itself can be seen as a process of enlargement of human freedom in general. There is much more in the instrumental connection than this constitutive linkage. The effectiveness of freedom as an instrument lies in the fact that different kinds of freedom interrelate with one another, and freedom of one type may greatly help in advancing freedom of other types. The two roles are thus linked by empirical connections, relating freedom of one kind to freedom of other kinds.

Mass Media Freedom in Developed Countries

Norway's strategy for promoting freedom of expression in foreign and development policy was launched in 2021. The strategy sets out the priorities and objectives of Norway's efforts to protect and promote freedom of expression internationally.

Norway's efforts are intended to promote a diversified, independent media sector, ensure access to information, and protect the freedom of expression of journalists, writers, artists and other vulnerable groups. In the light of the rapid pace of development of digital technologies, Norway puts emphasis on safeguarding freedom of expression and information online.

Norway promotes freedom of expression and freedom of the press through its participation in the UN and other international and regional organizations, through bilateral dialogue and cooperation, and by providing support to media organizations, civil society organizations and human rights defenders (https://www.regjeringen.no).

Japan's highest RSF ranking of 11, scored in 2010, was an anomaly. For most of the previous two decades since the early 2000s, Japan hovered in the twenties to forties, falling to its lowest of 51 in 2008. The defeat of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in 2009 created expectations that its more liberal rival, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) would challenge or scrap the press club system. On 10th May 2024, Japan's parliament enacted an amended law aimed at facilitating the swift removal of defamatory content on social media platforms like Facebook and X with more transparency.

The revised provider liability limitation law mandates the operators of such platforms to set up points of contact for accepting deletion requests and disclose criteria for removing posts, among other measures. It will take effect within a year. The law also requires operators to notify people within a specified time frame whether posts will be deleted.

However, it's unclear if the law adheres to international human rights obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to protect freedom of expression and the Manila Principles on Intermediary Liability (Manila Principles, 2015), which holds that content should not be required to be restricted without a judicial order, and that requests for restriction of content to be clear, unambiguous, and follow due process on social media platforms like Facebook and X with more transparency.

The revised provider liability limitation law mandates the operators of such platforms to set up points of contact for accepting deletion requests and disclose criteria for removing posts, among other measures. It will take effect within a year. The law also requires operators to notify people within a specified period whether posts will be deleted.

Mass Media Freedom in Underdeveloped Countries

Yemen

Six years of war have changed the Yemeni media landscape for worst in terms of number of publications, independence, freedom of the media and the press and distribution. According to Freedom House "Freedom in the World" report Yemen received 11 out of 40 points for political rights, 10 out of 60 for civil rights, and a Not Free Status. These numbers indicate that Yemen belongs to the 25 least free countries in the world. On the scales of the Internet Freedom Scores and Democracy Scores Yemen did not even appear (https://www.regjeringen.no/).

Afghanistan

As part of its extremist rule, one of the major undertakings by the Taliban was a widespread ban on journalism and photography. The few media sources were strictly controlled by the Taliban and became a means to convey their radical perspective and legitimize their rule. Hence, media by definition became a propaganda tool for the Taliban.

2015 World Press Freedom Index ranks Afghanistan 122 out of 180 countries, increasing its rank by 6 from the 2014 results.3 But, taking into account the political context of the country, freedom of expression in practice has actually been in decline since 2013. The unique political structure formed by a President and a Chief Executive Officer of Afghanistan and the continued presence of the Taliban at different levels of power have increased competition among the various leaders and factions to influence and gain public support. Influential

power holders push their personal political agendas onto media personnel thus restricting the practice of free, democratic, and protected media in Afghanistan.

Finding: Mass Media Freedom

According to following data, developed countries also stand on top of the list in terms of mass media, while some underdeveloped countries did not even make the list. In what follows, freedom scores are shown in more details. As evident in Figure 1, Norway is in the first place with the score of 91.89. Japan is number 70 with the global score of 62.12; Yemen is number 154 with the global score of 33.67 and Afghanistan is number 178 with the global score of 19.09.

POS.	COUNTRIES	GLOBAL SCORE	POS.	COUNTRIES	GLOBAL SCORE	POS.	COUNTRIES	GLOBAL SCORE	POS.	COUNTRIES	GLOBAL SCORE
1	Norway	91.89	17	Czechia	80.14	32	Austria	74.69	47	Poland	69.17
2	Denmark	89.6	18	Iceland	80.13	33	Mauritania	74.2	48	Croatia	68.79
3	Sweden	88.32	19	New Zealand	79.72	34	Namibia	74.16	49	Romania	68.45
4	Netherlands	87.73	20	Timor-Leste	78.92	35	Dominican Republic	73.89	50	Ghana	67.71
5	Finland	86.55	21	France	78.65	36	North Macedonia	73.78	51	Uruguay	67.7
6	Estonia	86.44	22	Samoa	78.41	37	Seychelles	73.75	52	Chile	67.32
7	Portugal	85.9	23	United Kingdom	77.51	38	South Africa	73.73	53	Ivory Coast	66.89
8	Ireland	85.59	24	Jamaica	77.3	39	Australia	73.42	54	Belize	66.85
9	Switzerland	84.01	25	Trinidad and Tobago	76.69	40	Montenegro	73.21	55	United States	66.59
10	Germany	83.84	26	Costa Rica	76.13	41	Cabo Verde	72.77	56	Gabon	65.83
11	Luxembourg	83.8	27	Taiwan	76.13	42	Slovenia	72.6	57	Mauritius	65.55
12	Latvia	82.9	28	Suriname	76.11	43	Armenia	71.6	58	Gambia	65.53
13	Lithuania	81.73	29	Slovakia	76.03	44	Fiji	71.23	59	Bulgaria	65.32
14	Canada	81.7	30	Spain	76.01	45	Tonga	70.11	60	Liberia	65.13
15	Liechtenstein	81.52	31	Moldova	74.86	46	Italy	69.8	61	Ukraine	65
16	Belgium	81.49							62	South Korea	64.87

POS.	COUNTRIES	GLOBAL SCORE	POS.	COUNTRIES	GLOBAL SCORE	POS.	COUNTRIES	GLOBAL SCORE	POS.	COUNTRIES	GLOBAL SCORE
63	Malawi	64.46	78	Guinea	59.97	93	Haiti	55.92	110	Ecuador	51.3
64	Sierra Leone	64.27	79	Botswana	59.78	94	Senegal	55.44	111	Indonesia	51.15
65	Cyprus	63.14	80	Niger	59.71	95	Zambia	55.38	112	Nigeria	51.03
66	Argentina	63.13	81	Bosnia-Herzegovina	58.85	96	Chad	54.81	113	Togo	50.89
67	Hungary	62.98	82	Brazil	58.59	97	Tanzania	54.8	114	Mali	50.56
68	OECS	62.83	83	Panama	58.55	98	Serbia	54.48	115	Paraguay	50.48
69	Congo-Brazzaville	62.57	84	Qatar	58.48	99	Albania	54.1	116	Zimbabwe	50.31
70	Japan	62.12	85	Eswatini	58.31	100	Madagascar	54.07	117	Brunei	50.09
71	Comoros	61.47	86	Burkina Faso	58.24	101	Israel	53.23	118	Tunisia	49.97
72	Andorra	61.44	87	Thailand	58.12	102	Kenya	53.22	119	Colombia	49.63
73	Malta	60.96	88	Greece	57.15	103	Georgia	53.05	120	Kyrgyzstan	49.11
74	Nepal	60.52	89	Benin	56.73	104	Angola	52.44	121	Mexico	49.01
75	Kosovo	60.19	90	Northern Cyprus	56.72	105	Mozambique	52.42	122	Lesotho	48.92
76	Central African Republic	60.12	91	Papua New Guinea	56.02	106	Maldives	52.36	123	Democratic Republic of Congo	48.91
77	Guyana	60.1	92	Guinea Bissau	55.95	107	Malaysia	52.07	124	Bolivia	48.88
						108	Burundi	51.78	125	Peru	47.76
						109	Mongolia	51.34			

Figure 1: Mass Media Freedom by Data From the UN Finding

POS.	COUNTRIES	GLOBAL SCORE	POS.	COUNTRIES	GLOBAL SCORE	POS.	COUNTRIES	GLOBAL SCORE	POS.	COUNTRIES	GLOBAL SCORE
126	Singapore	47.19	141	Ethiopia	41.37	158	Türkiye	31.6	164	Azerbaijan	27.99
127	Equatorial Guinea	46.49	142	Kazakhstan	41.11	159	India	31.28	165	Bangladesh	27.64
128	Uganda	46	143	Libya	40.59	160	United Arab Emirates	30.62	166	Saudi Arabia	27.14
129	Morocco / Western Sahara	45.97	144	Rwanda	40.54	161	Djibouti	30.14	167	Belarus	26.8
130	Cameroon	44.95	145	Somalia	39.4	162	Russia	29.86	168	Cuba	25.63
131	Kuwait	44.66	146	Honduras	38.18	163	Nicaragua	29.2	169	Iraq	25.48
132	Jordan	44.3	147	Bhutan	37.29	164	Azerbaijan	27.99	170	Egypt	25.1
133	El Salvador	44.01	148	Uzbekistan	37.27	165	Bangladesh	27.64	171	Myanmar	24.41
134	Philippines	43.36	149	Sudan	35.73	166	Saudi Arabia	27.14	172	China	23.36
135	Hong Kong	43.06	150	Sri Lanka	35.21	167	Belarus	26.8	173	Bahrain	23.21
136	South Sudan	42.57	151	Cambodia	34.28	168	Cuba	25.63	174	Vietnam	22.31
137	Oman	42.52	152	Pakistan	33.9	169	Iraq	25.48	175	Turkmenistan	22.01
138	Guatemala	42.28	153	Laos	33.76	170	Egypt	25.1	176	Iran	21.3
139	Algeria	41.98	154	Yemen	33.67	171	Myanmar	24.41	177	North Korea	20.66
140	Lebanon	41.91	155	Tajikistan	33.31	172	China	23.36	178	Afghanistan	19.09
			156	Venezuela	33.06	173	Bahrain	23.21	179	Syria	17.41
			157	Palestine	31.92				180	Eritrea	16.64

Figure 1 (cont.): Mass Media Freedom by Data From the UN Finding

Ranking

The IOS ranking, or International Organization for Standardization ranking, typically refers to a system that evaluates various aspects of a country's political stability, governance, and overall effectiveness. Political stability is crucial for a country's development, as it affects economic growth, social cohesion, and the ability to implement policies effectively. A higher IOS ranking usually indicates a more stable political environment, while a lower ranking may suggest challenges such as political unrest, corruption, or ineffective governance.

Political Context

In a political context, "meaning ranking" typically refers to the process of prioritizing or evaluating the significance of various meanings, interpretations, or messages within political discourse. This can involve assessing how different political statements, policies, or ideologies resonate with the public, influence opinions, or shape political narratives. It helps in understanding which ideas or messages are most impactful or relevant in a given situation, allowing political actors to strategize effectively.

POL Economic Context

The term "POL" in an economic context typically refers to "political" factors that influence economic conditions and decisions. It encompasses how government policies, political stability, and regulatory environments can impact economic performance, investment decisions, and market dynamics.

ECO Legal Context

In a legal context, "ECO" typically refers to "Environmental Compliance Obligation." This term encompasses the responsibilities and requirements that individuals, businesses, or organizations must adhere to in order to comply with environmental laws and regulations.

These obligations can include managing waste, reducing emissions, and ensuring that operations do not harm the environment.

Leg Social Context

In social discussions, it might also refer to the idea of "legit in social discussions, it might also refer to the idea of "legitimacy" or "standing" within a community or group.

SOC

SOC safety involves ensuring that the integrated circuits and systems are designed to operate safely and reliably, on medical concept.

Safe Situation Zone Country

"Safe situation zone country" refers to a country or area that is considered secure and stable, where individuals can live without the immediate threat of violence, conflict, or significant danger. It often implies a place where the rule of law is upheld, and basic human rights are respected.

Table 2: Political Stability by Analysis of Seven Indicators

ISO; Score	Rank; Political Context	Rank_ Pol	Economic Context	Rank_ Eco	Legal Context	Rank_ Leg	Social Context	Rank_ Soc
NOR:91	89;1;94	87;1;89	84;1;89	5;2;90	48;1;94	74;7; Bonn	18; -3	29
DNK:89	6;2;94	11;2;83	07;4;88	82;3;86	9;5;95	09;5; Bonn	48;0	12
SWE:88	32;3;91	03;4;85	5;2;90	16;1;82	78;20;92	12;22; Bon	15;0	17
NLD:87	73;4;88	41;7;84	09;3;87	59;4;87	34;4;91	23;28; Bon	73	
FIN:86	55;5;89	05;6;80	9;5;86	16;6;84	52;14;92	13;21; Bon	94; -1	39
EST:86	44;6;86	88;10;76	77;8;83	65;12;90	88;6; Bonn	31;1	13	
PRT:85	9;7;91	51;3;72	92;10;83	79;10;88	27;3;93	03;15; Bon	6;1	3
IRL:85	59;8;89	86;5;77	45;18;86	61;6;94	05;9; Bonn	91; -4	32	
CHE:84	01;9;87	78;8;72	32;11;78	85;27;85	2;11;95	92;4; Situa	4; -0	39
DEU:83	84;10;85	22;14;77	63;6;84	69;8;82	38;22;89	29;40; Situ	91;1	93
LUX:83	8;11;87	74;9;71	53;13;77	56;34;85	32;10;96	83;1; Situa	98;1	82
LVA:82	9;12;84	42;15;74	69;9;80	29;19;83	21;17;91	9;26; Situa	27; -0	37
LTU:81	73;13;80	84;17;70	72;15;81	41;15;83	6;15;92	1;23; Situa	79; -5	6
CAN:81	7;14;86	23;11;66	35;21;83	75;11;82	38;22;89	76;36; Situ	53; -1	83
LIE:81	52;15;85	55;12;62	35;31;84	84;7;78	72;32;96	16;2; Situa	47; -2	95
BEL:81	49;16;81	96;16;71	41;14;79	49;24;86	51;7;88	1;52; Situa	47;5	2
CZE:80	14;17;80	21;18;62	58;30;80	18;21;85	16;12;92	58;19; Situ	58; -3	44
ISL:80	13;18;79	94;20;65	1;24;79	11;25;83	28;16;93	24;12; Situ	19; -3	6
NZL:79	72;19;85	36;13;72	8;12;71	15;54;79	76;29;90	24;32; Situ	23; -4	51
FRA:78	65;21;78	93;21;66	27;22;78	18;31;81	5;26;88	38;49; Situ	72; -0	7
WSM:78	41;22;74	9;23;68	98;19;69	11;62;83	03;18;96	03;3; Situ	15; -3	74
GBR:77	51;23;80	12;19;69	42;18;74	35;42;75	38;40;88	29;50; Situ	51; -1	
JAM:77	3;24;66	39;43;70	31;17;72	6;49;84	97;13;92	25;20; Situ	89;1	41
TTO:76	69;25;66	97;39;66	76;20;71	26;53;86	41;8;92	06;24; Situ	54;0	15
CRI:76	13;26;57	41;58;63	89;28;93	97;9;82	8;19;92	59;18; Situ	2; -4	7
TWN:76	13;27;74	7;24;56	77;41;80	05;23;76	39;38;92	76;16; Situ	54;0	59
SUR:76	11;28;66	67;40;70	66;16;71	79;51;79	56;30;91	87;27; Situ	62;5	49
SVK:76	03;29;65	52;44;64	84;25;80	53;17;80	85;27;88	39;48; Situ	22; -7	19
ESP:76	01;30;68	96;31;59	72;36;81	73;14;79	56;30;90	08;33; Situ	37;0	64
MDA:74	86;31;66	51;42;56	48;42;80	13;22;82	67;21;88	49;46; Situ	62; -2	76
AUT:74	69;32;68	99;30;60	2;34;78	45;29;75	3;41;90	53;30; Situ	3; -2	61
MRT:74	2;33;67	23;35;54	05;50;79	06;26;76	98;36;93	65;10; Situ	45;14	75
NAM:74	16;34;65	46;45;63	37;29;77	08;35;75;4	88;34; Situ	91;-6	75	
DOM:73	89;35;72	61;26;53	54;51;86	92;5;82	14;24;74	24;95; Situ	88;2	1
MKD:73	78;36;66	98;38;54	17;49;83	17;13;75	15;42;89	43;39; Situ	35; -5	57
SYC:73	75;37;67	1;37;59	79;35;74	23;43;75;4	62;17; Situ	71;-1	96	
ZAF:73	73;38;72	57;27;58	78;38;80	29;19;82	06;25;74	95;94; Situ	6; -4	57
AUS:73	42;39;74	43;25;64	58;27;69	23;60;70	41;59;88	44;47; Situ	24; -4	82
MNE:73	21;40;68	31;33;56	06;43;78	15;32;73	05;52;90	48;31; Situ	28; -1	7

CPV:72	77;41;69	51;28;54	25;48;74	7;39;73	35;50;92	03;25; Situ	72; -2	95
SVN:72	6;42;67	85;34;49	81;59;81	03;16;73	7;47;90	58;29; Situ	59;2	1
ARM:71	6;43;63	13;47;48	18;70;78	25;30;78	57;33;89	88;34; Situ	61;0	99
FJI:71	23;44;59	26;52;64	66;26;69	04;63;74	35;45;88	86;43; Situ	27;11	96
TON:70	11;45;66	52;41;57	92;40;61	35;90;71	43;55;93	33;11; Situ	29; -1	18
ITA:69	8;46;64	44;46;52	75;53;72	94;47;69	98;60;88	86;44; Situ	05; -2	25
POL:69	17;47;51	63;75;59	46;37;70	19;57;77	38;35;87	2;54; Situ	66;1	51
HRV:68	79;48;57	81;56;49	42;63;78	1;33;68	92;64;89	68;37; Situ	95; -3	16
ROU:68	45;49;61	92;48;48	2;69;70	54;55;73	38;49;88	2;51; Situ	04; -0	59
GHA:67	71;50;59	5;51;47	92;72;74	79;38;73	41;48;82	94;72; Situ	93;1	78
URY:67	7;51;53	62;71;48	36;67;76	65;36;70	58;58;89	29;40; Situ	33; -2	63
CHL:67	32;52;68	84;32;46	98;76;68	75;64;68	45;65;83	57;68; Situ	09;7	23
CIV:66	89;53;61	43;49;55	05;45;74	63;40;73	08;51;70	28;99; Situ	83; -1	94
BLZ:66	85;54;51	57;76;49	48;62;62	18;86;77	98;34;93	06;14; Situ	49; -3	64
USA:66	59;55;69	03;29;61	07;33;74	49;41;72	06;54;56	31:118: Situ	22; -4	63
GAB:65	83;56;58	51;54;49	74;60;70	19;57;71	09;57;79	59;82; Situ	12;7	71
MUS:65	55;57;50	43;79;47	4;74;62	88;83;80	12;28;86	9;56; Situa	56; -0	1
GMB:65	53;58;57	56;57;48	51;66;60	71;93;76	87;37;84	01;65; Situ	06; -5	53
BGR:65	32;59;60	63;50;41	6;105;72	24;50;67	06;70;85	08;61; Situ	98;2	34
LBR:65	13;60;54	87;64;45	98;80;73	08;45;71	43;55;80	27;78; Situ	34;0	79
UKR;65;61	15;36;62	24;32;78	61;28;75	89;39;41	11;142; Situ	19;3	83; -5	
KOR;64	87;62;51	11;77;54	9;46;69	51;59;61	77;89;87	04;55; Situ	34;4	96
MWI;64	46;63;58	78;53;46	06;79;64	96;75;68	12;66;84	39;64; Situ	55;1	12
SLE;64	27;64;54	55;67;43	56;92;69	23;60;72	62;53;81	39;77; Situ	62; -5	72
CYP;63	14;65;55	8;61;47	44;73;67	9;66;55	4;111;89	19;42; Situ	36; -10	48
ARG;63	13;66;54	83;65;38	45;119;76	12;37;63	89;80;82	34;75; Situ	96;0	23
HUN;62	98;67;38	55;124;48	23;68;67	88;67;74	29;46;85	97;58; Situ	36;4	2
CSS;62	83;68;54	63;66;50	4;56;57	01;105;65	28;75;86	82;57; Situ	42;2	47
COG;62	57;69;54	28;70;42	92;95;63	27;82;67	14;69;85	24;60; Situ	95; -1	15
JPN;62	12;70;53	07;73;55	83;44;64	35;80;54	38;113;82	95;71; Situ	25; -0	83
COM;61	47;71;48	84;85;52	19;54;62	02;87;65	71;74;78	57;86; Situ	05; -13	78
AND;61	44;72;55	07;63;36	46;130;65	38;74;57	14;105;93	15;13; Situ	76;1	61
MLT;60	96;73;45	35;99;49	57;61;60	1;95;61	9;88;87	9;53; Situ	89;2	2
NPL;60	52;74;55	46;62;52	92;52;71	41;52;61	43;90;61	41;109; Situ	38; -8	63
XKX;60	19;75;56	61;59;48	05;71;73	92;44;67	56;67;54	81;121; Situ	56;2	19
CAF;60	12;76;48	55;87;44	97;84;64	42;78;62	9;86;79	76;80; Situ	5; -7	56
GUY;60	1;77;44	93;103;46	61;77;60	46;94;65	18;76;83	33;69; Situ	46	
GIN;59	97;78;49	28;83;50;5	58;77;69	05;62;66	95;103; Situ	51;0	61; -4	4
BWA;59	78;79;49	9;80;42	56;97;57	28;103;69	56;61;79	59;82; Situ	84; -7	83
NER;59	71;80;54	35;68;44	58;87;67	69;68;67	5;68;64	42;107		13
ISR;53	23;101;56	34;60;58	33;39;49	04;127;60	42;94;42	02;137; Situ	57; -4	34
KEN;53	22;102;38	97;122;37	04;127;59	4;96;58	6;101;72	09;96; Situ	15;2	7
GEO;53	05;103;36	23;127;39	93;114;67	31;72;60	45;93;61	35;110; Situ	69; -8	64
AGO;52	44;104;40	82;115;36	81;128;55	98;109;58	33;102;70	25;100; Situ	3;4	14
MOZ;52	42;105;40	76;116;46	18;78;64	18;81;62	3;87;48	68;129; Situ	13; -3	71
MDV;52	36;106;43	48;109;36	04;133;54	42;111;48	1;131;79	76;80; Situ	93; -4	57
MYS;52	07;107;44	35;106;45	63;82;34	04;156;52	62;119;83	72;67; Situ	83; -10	76
BDI;51	78;108;45	32;100;44	89;85;53	32;113;58	01;103;57	37;115; Situ	14; -0	36
MNG;51	34;109;40	35;118;32	75;151;56	31;107;61	31;91;65	96;105; Situ	33; -7	99
ECU;51	3;110;39	57;120;43	33;94;60	77;92;47	38;136;65	48;106; Situ	51; -9	21
IDN;51	15;111;38	95;123;33	46;150;57	57;101;47	77;133;77	98;87; Situ	83; -3	68
NGA;51	03;112;47	26;95;41	9;104;61	65;89;62	96;85;41	4;141; Situ	56;1	47
TGO;50	89;113;44	38;105;42	27;100;51	2;119;59	82;96;56	76;116; Situ	06; -12	17
MLI;50	56;114;48	12;89;44	41;89;59	27;97;63	53;81;37	47;149; Situ	29; -1	73
PRY;50	48;115;40	9;114;34	95;139;64	42;78;56	88;108;55	27;119; Situ	96; -5	48
ZWE;50	31;116;36	96;126;40	63;110;52	76;114;52	68;118;68	5;101; Situ	17;2	14
BRN;50	09;117;49	42;82;45	16;83;41	08;141;37	83;146;76	99;89; Situ	2;5	89
TUN;49	97;118;48	04;91;40	94;109;50	19;123;59	76;98;50	92;126; Situ	11; -0	14
COL;49	63;119;48	05;90;37	58;124;72	71;48;48	08;132;41	75;139; Situ	23;4	4
KGZ;49	11;120;30	19;149;48	73;64;48	4;129;50	66;124;67	59;102; Situ	91; -0	8

Note: "EN, FR, …." refers to a country where English, French, etc., is the primary or widely spoken language.

Figure 2: Color Coded Map of Political Stability Worldwide
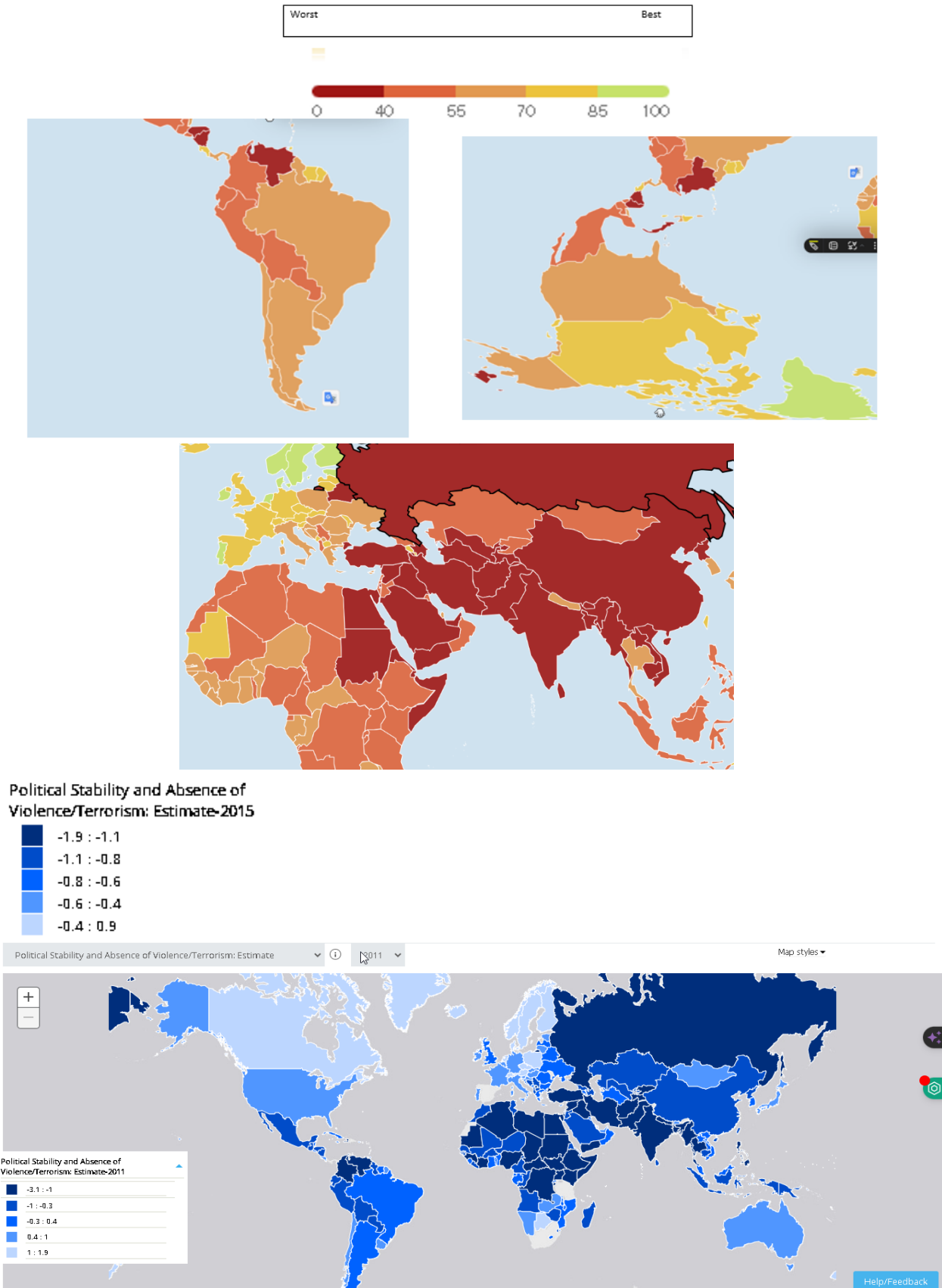
Conclusion

The presented work came to the conclusion that mass media can provide the means for development. More specifically, our findings suggest that mass media promotes social order and political stability in developed political systems but could promote opposition in under-developed political systems. The quality of communication between state and the people plays a significant role in the process of developing nations and strengthening the foundations of countries, and its platform. Mass media can be a powerful tool for establishing unity and cohesion between different parts of societies that have differences in their religion, ethnicity, language, and local tendencies. This is particularly effective when these subsets of the society are grouped regionally and do not have the necessary national interweaving, to act and help reduce social gaps. It is clear that this effective tool, which could promote national interests and promises the ground for uplifting and prosperity of human societies is subject to the fulfillment of many prerequisites for optimum performance, one of the most important of which is the awareness of the media and their audiences to its capabilities and limitations.

The positive and correct functioning of the media in the two mentioned dimensions, information and education, can make the power and ability flourish in the member of society and strengthen their will for transformation and development. As a result, wherever more information, which is one of the essentials of development, is accumulated, the eruption of more power will occur, which guarantees security and deep political-social stability.

The data from united nation and world bank supports our assumption about the relation between freedom of mass media and political stability. Therefore, we can conclude that more freedom means more political stability.

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From Clever Rain Tree to Cosmic Metaphor:
Toru Takemitsu's Musical Interpretation of Nature and Emotion

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Abstract

Toru Takemitsu's Rain Tree Sketch series, inspired by Kenzaburō Ōe's short story "Clever Rain Tree", exemplifies the composer's deep connection to nature and his masterful use of music to express emotion and metaphor. This paper explores Takemitsu's musical journey from the clever rain tree to the cosmic metaphor, investigating how he interprets and transforms natural elements into profound emotional and philosophical statements.Through an interdisciplinary approach that combines musical analysis with literary and philosophical inquiries, this study examines Takemitsu's use of the montage technique to create a non-linear musical narrative that evokes the mystical and eternal qualities of the rain tree. It also analyzes the influence of Japanese aesthetics, particularly the concepts of "Ma", on his compositions and how these principles shape his musical interpretation of the rain tree image. Furthermore, this paper delves into Takemitsu's use of water imagery and the metaphor of the sea as the ultimate destination of his musical journey, highlighting his philosophical reflections on the relationship between humans and nature. By tracing Takemitsu's path from the clever rain tree to the cosmic metaphor, this study offers a fresh perspective on his compositional techniques and his profound engagement with nature and emotion, contributing to a deeper understanding of his musical legacy.

Keywords: Rain Tree, Cosmic Tree, Metaphor, Takemitsu

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Introduction

The Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu (1930–1996) is renowned for his unique and poetic musical language, which reflects a profound understanding of nature and a multidimensional interpretation of human emotions. His creative inspiration derives not only from his acute sensitivity to the natural world but is also deeply rooted in the wisdom of Eastern philosophy. Takemitsu's compositions aim to bridge the cultural divide between East and West and to integrate tradition with modernity, offering a compelling contemporary perspective on the relationship between humanity and nature, as well as between emotion and reason.

This study focuses on Takemitsu's seminal work Rain Tree Sketch, exploring the journey from the imagery found in Japanese writer Kenzaburō Ōe's short story *The Clever Rain Tree* to a cosmic metaphor within the piece. Composed for solo piano in 1982, *Rain Tree Sketch* is widely believed to have been inspired by Ōe's story of the same title. Although differing significantly in genre, both works share commonalities in imagery and philosophical depth, exemplifying an ideal of interdisciplinary dialogue. By systematically examining Takemitsu's compositional trajectory, this study analyzes how he distilled the image of the "rain tree" from a natural landscape into a cosmic metaphor and employed the element of "water" as a central motif across his musical journey. This paper aims to uncover the core creative philosophy and aesthetic aspirations of this distinguished Eastern master.

In addition, this paper adopts an interdisciplinary perspective, supplementing musical analysis with insights from philosophy, aesthetics, and literature. As previously noted, Takemitsu's musical vocabulary is influenced by Western modernism while being deeply grounded in the philosophical wisdom and aesthetic traditions of the East. Therefore, traditional musical analysis alone cannot fully capture the profound layers of meaning within his works. To address this limitation, this study will consider the development and symbolic lineage of the "rain" tree and "water" motifs in traditional Japanese culture, seeking to contextualize Takemitsu's creative practice within a broader framework.

Such a cross-disciplinary approach not only aids in reconstructing the socio-cultural context of Takemitsu's work but also reveals the transformation and continuity of traditional wisdom within modern society. In other words, through his unique artistic expression, Takemitsu vividly interprets the contemporary relevance of Confucian and Daoist concepts and Zen aesthetics of ethereal transcendence. His work thus provides a valuable entry point for re-examining the enduring relevance of Eastern wisdom in the modern world.

Ōe Kenzaburō's "Rain Tree" Motif and Takemitsu's Creative Inspiration

The intellectual exchange between Takemitsu and Ōe Kenzaburō provides critical insight into the composer's creative inspiration. The two artists cultivated a deep friendship from the 1960s onward, frequently discussing each other's work and sharing mutual advice. Through this cross-disciplinary dialogue, Ōe's motif of the "rain tree" gradually permeated Takemitsu's musical imagination, eventually igniting the creative spark that would become *Rain Tree Sketch*.

In his short story *The Clever Rain Tree* (1980), Ōe vividly depicts the unique form and symbolic resonance of the rain tree. Ōe describes its roots as "black, fence-like structures emanating a hazy bluish-gray glow, occupying a commanding presence within the darkness"

(Ōe, 1982, p. 2). Through the nuanced use of color and spatial relationships, the author evokes the rain tree's mysterious allure, crafting a scene of profound poetic atmosphere.

Notably, Ōe's rain tree embodies deep symbolic meanings, tapping into the ultimate philosophical insight beneath the natural world. Scholars have noted that in Japanese mythology and folklore, the rain tree is often viewed as a metaphor for the "cosmic tree," representing the interconnectedness of the heavens, earth, and the structure of the universe (Enomoto, 1995). With roots reaching into the underworld, a trunk linking the human realm, and branches extending into the heavens, the tree forms a tripartite image connecting divine and mortal realms. In his work, Ōe reinterprets this rain tree with a modern sensibility, preserving its humble, natural form while imbuing it with profound cosmic connotations. This dual artistic approach, blending physical reality and metaphysical symbolism, had an undeniable influence on Takemitsu.

Although Takemitsu admitted he had not thoroughly read The *Clever Rain Tree*, he acknowledged the symbolic potency of the "rain tree" motif and its impact on his composition process (Finne, 1994). Through his dialogue with Ōe, Takemitsu gradually incorporated the rain tree into his creative repertoire. From the percussion trio *Rain Tree* (1981) to the piano solo *Rain Tree Sketch* (1982), and the orchestral piece *Rain Tree* (1981), the rain tree motif remained a constant source of inspiration for him.

To Takemitsu, the rain tree was not simply a natural object; it was a bridge into the realm of the spirit. He once expressed, "Music is like a garden, and I am its gardener. Listening to my music is like walking through this garden, experiencing the changes in light, patterns, and textures" (Takemitsu, 1993, p. 150-155). In this interplay between physical landscape and spiritual experience, Takemitsu achieved an artistic elevation of the rain tree motif. On one hand, he captured its subtle forms through multiple sensory lenses, such as vision and touch; on the other, he contemplated its natural rhythms and the profound mysteries of life from a philosophical perspective.

In this way, the seemingly ordinary image of the rain tree was endowed with a unique poetic significance, becoming a vessel for expressing human emotion and unveiling universal truths. As scholar Noriko Ohtake observes, Takemitsu's *Rain Tree Sketch* reflects an artistic realization of Ōe's cosmic tree, grounded in their shared philosophical resonance (Ohtake, 1990). Inspired by Ōe, Takemitsu transcended natural imagery to humanistic meaning, and immediate experience to ultimate reflection. This fusion of external landscape with inner sensibility epitomizes the singular expressive power of Takemitsu's musical language.

From "Ma" to "Montage": Takemitsu's Unique Musical Narrative

In his series of works inspired by the "rain tree", Takemitsu developed a distinctive musical vocabulary, characterized especially by his unique handling of temporal flow and structural organization. Through a masterful application of the concept of "ma" and the innovative integration of montage techniques, he broke away from traditional linear narrative structures, creating a poetic and contemplative musical space that invites reflection.

Takemitsu's emphasis on "ma" reflects his profound understanding and internalization of traditional Japanese aesthetics. In Eastern art, "ma" refers to the aesthetic treatment of empty or silent spaces, designed to inspire the viewer's imagination and introspection (Hara, 2000). This concept is particularly prominent in Zen aesthetics, where, for example, haiku poetry

often values "the unspoken that lingers beyond words," and ink painting cultivates an evocative space between abstraction and realism. Inspired by this philosophy, Takemitsu employed pauses, sustained notes, harmonics, and other techniques to create a sense of timeless resonance within limited tonal material.

In *Rain Tree Sketch*, for instance, elongated notes and irregular rhythms form an interconnected web of phrases. Throughout the piece, Takemitsu repeatedly employs dynamics like p, pp, and ppp, creating a delicate, ethereal atmosphere. Though seemingly simple, these musical gestures contain profound aesthetic depth, transporting listeners into a world where reality and imagination intertwine, allowing their thoughts to roam freely in the spaces between the notes. Through this "less is more" approach, Takemitsu transforms singular, seemingly unstructured notes into vessels of boundless meaning.

Complementing the aesthetics of "ma" is Takemitsu's adaptation and expansion of montage techniques. Originally a cinematic concept, montage refers to the juxtaposition of images or scenes to evoke new emotional or symbolic interpretations (Eisenstein, 1949). Although montage originates in Western artistic contexts, Takemitsu saw a deep connection between this technique and Eastern aesthetics, both of which seek to transcend conventional causality, expanding interpretive depth and scope.

Takemitsu's works often exhibit a montage-like structure, and *Rain Tree Sketch* is a prime example. The piece lacks a formal structure, yet its opening tempo markings—Tempo I and Tempo II—immediately fragment the composition. Tempo II, in contrast to Tempo I, offers a richer tonal texture, with not only a tempo shift but also added pedal markings and erratic note leaps, which make the fragmented sections of Tempo II more captivating. Through such structural choices, Takemitsu abandons the rigid logic of traditional composition, favoring instead a design that emphasizes visual and symbolic resonance. Listeners are drawn into the minute variations in sound, while simultaneously stepping back to appreciate the broader formal beauty of the composition. Each fragmented segment or phrase exists both in harmony and independence, echoing the rain tree's natural structure—dense and interconnected, with deep roots and abundant leaves. In this way, Takemitsu achieved an expressive synthesis of nature's form and spirit.

Overall, Takemitsu's creative use of "ma" and montage constitutes a defining feature of his musical language. By embracing the essence of Eastern aesthetics while integrating Western modernist techniques, he forged a singular artistic style that is both culturally resonant and innovatively universal.

From Droplets to the Ocean: The Philosophical Elevation of Life as Metaphor

In Takemitsu's musical universe, water occupies a core position. From *Water Music* in the 1960s to *Rain Spell* and *I Hear the Water Dreaming* in the 1980s, the motif of water persists throughout his career, laden with rich symbolic and philosophical meaning. For Takemitsu, water is not merely a natural object; it serves as a bridge between the physical and the spiritual, between nature and humanity, encapsulating the principles of cosmic cycles and the mysteries of life's continuity (Takemitsu, 1995).

Takemitsu's fascination with water reflects his relentless exploration of universal origins. He once remarked, "I often ponder the relationship between music and nature. For me, music is not merely a depiction of natural scenery; it is a means to awaken an awareness of life's

ultimate truth" (ibid., p. 3). Consequently, his artistic representation of water serves as a philosophical reflection on the human condition. Takemitsu saw water as the source of all things, embodying the ceaseless, cyclic laws of the cosmos. Its fluidity and periodicity mirror the transience of time and foretell the eternal nature of life—a creative philosophy evident in many of his works.

In *Rain Tree Sketch*, for instance, the title alone evokes an image that intertwines "rain" and "tree." The rain—a specific manifestation of water—is the prevailing symbol throughout the piece. Repetitive raindrop-like motifs, at times fragmented and at others more continuous, create a rhythm both persistent and varied. This delicate, nuanced soundscape reflects not only the natural rhythms of rain striking leaves but also hints at life's cyclical renewal within the river of time (Ohtake, 1993).

Beyond its concrete imagery, water in Takemitsu's music carries profound symbolic resonance. He frequently described water as a reflection of the spirit, emphasizing that only by moving beyond its physical properties can one grasp the mystery underlying water's essence. "In my music, the shifting states of water are metaphors: water resembles sound (indivisible), and the ocean, like music, produces waves through rhythmic tides" (Takemitsu, 1995, p. 129). With these metaphors, Takemitsu constructs a network of connections between nature and spirit, viewing the ocean as the ultimate destination of his musical creation.

In fact, he consistently used the notes $E^\flat$, E, and A as a central motif, symbolizing the concept of "sea" and infusing it as a core element within his melodies. This preference for specific pitches is no mere coincidence but reflects a deeply humanistic sentiment. For Takemitsu, the vastness and depth of the sea represent the ideal sanctuary for the human soul.

Through his multifaceted exploration of water as a theme, Takemitsu achieved a philosophical leap from simple emotion to profound contemplation. In his hands, the trickling flow of a stream and the delicate droplets of rain become reflections of life's ultimate questions. The image of droplets merging into the ocean serves as a metaphor for the unity of individual existence with the cosmic whole. As Takemitsu himself stated, "Music should merge like droplets joining the sea, seeking endless integration" (Takemitsu, 2000, p. 456).

Interdisciplinary Interpretations of Eastern Wisdom

Takemitsu's body of work reveals that his musical expression—embodied through imagery such as the "rain tree" and "water"—is fundamentally a modern interpretation of Eastern wisdom. As an artist deeply influenced by Zen aesthetics, Takemitsu excelled at discerning philosophical insights within everyday sights and extracting enduring themes from complex surface phenomena. As discussed, his rain tree transcends its natural image, symbolizing a tree of life intricately connected to the universe, while his favored water motif extends beyond perceptible form, reflecting an essential spirit of existence. In doing so, Takemitsu reinterpreted traditional wisdom through a modern musical language, offering a new path to celebrate Eastern cultural spirit.

Ultimately, Takemitsu's success in creatively transforming traditional resources is inseparable from his interdisciplinary perspective. Although he never received formal academic training, he was extensively versed in philosophy, aesthetics, and literature. As he expressed in *Confronting Silence*, "Through constant reflection on the relationship between music and nature, it has become increasingly difficult for me to separate musical creation

from philosophical thought. Although I do not intentionally pursue philosophy, I often find myself naturally drawn to the essential questions of life in my creative process" (Takemitsu, 1971, p. 142). Takemitsu's broad engagement with the humanities significantly deepened the expressive scope of his art.

His philosophical articulation of the "rain tree" motif, for example, was undeniably influenced by his thorough understanding of Ōe Kenzaburō's work. Through repeated study of Ōe's writing, Takemitsu grasped the metaphorical significance of the rain tree within the cosmic structure and expressed it anew through musical language. Furthermore, when Takemitsu broadened his perspective to include Zen philosophy, he drew profound inspiration from concepts like emptiness, for, and suchness. In his view, the rain tree exemplifies the Zen dialectics of "between likeness and unlikeness" and "the interdependence of being and non-being"—direct reflections of Zen wisdom within artistic creation. Thus, Takemitsu elevated his philosophical vision, distilling his interpretation of the rain tree into reflections on life, time, and truth.

In this light, Takemitsu's modern interpretation of traditional culture reveals both an expansion of singular artistic forms and the potential for a harmonious fusion of diverse intellectual traditions. Building upon his rich intellectual foundation, he integrated various theoretical frameworks and discourses into his musical practice, constructing a multidimensional, open aesthetic landscape. With his "universalist" cultural vision and Zen-like artistic imagination, Takemitsu offers a fresh lens for understanding the contemporary relevance of traditional wisdom.

Conclusion

From the clever rain tree to the profound ocean, from the rhythmic beauty of raindrops to the philosophical origin of all things, Takemitsu has used the language of modern music to give eloquent voice to Eastern wisdom. He transformed minute natural observations into timeless artistic themes and, from a height of grand philosophical insight, reflected on humanity's existential plight, embodying a spirit that transcends time and space. In Takemitsu's musical world, the "tree" is no longer merely a natural scene but a spiritual bridge that connects the flows of life, and "water" transcends physical perception to reveal the essential nature of cosmic truth. In this way, nature is endowed with a vibrant consciousness, becoming a sanctuary for human emotions and spirit.

Through his universal cultural perspective and Zen-like artistic imagination, Takemitsu has opened expansive possibilities for the contemporary transformation of traditional wisdom. Skillfully integrating elements of Eastern aesthetics like "ma" and "yūgen" with Western modernist techniques such as montage, he forged a unique musical language that bridges East and West, past and present. Most remarkably, Takemitsu did not merely adopt these creative techniques; instead, he continuously innovated within them, imprinting his own distinctive style. In this dialectical interplay between tradition and innovation, Takemitsu revitalized traditional resources for a modern context, showcasing the enduring allure of Eastern culture.

Surveying Takemitsu's creative journey, one sees that his philosophical expression—embodied through motifs like the "rain tree" and the "ocean"—provides an insightful lens for re-evaluating the relationship between humanity and nature.

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Task-Based Instruction (TBI) to Motivate Elementary Students in Ghizer, Gilgit-Baltistan to Improve English Language Speaking Skills

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Abstract

Public sector schools in Pakistan experience difficulties in teaching English, particularly spoken skills, owing to instructors' unfamiliarity with current language teaching techniques. This research, done in Gilgit-Baltistan, investigates the use of task-based instruction (TBI) to motivate and improve the English-speaking abilities of sixth-grade pupils. Pragmatic action study consisted of three data gathering phases: reconnaissance, intervention, and post-intervention. Observations, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom teaching reflections were some of the tools employed. A grade 6 language instructor and five specially chosen pupils took part. The reconnaissance phase indicated challenges with student motivation for learning spoken English, which were impacted by elements such as foreign language anxiety, confidence, readiness to communicate, and a propensity to code-switch to local languages. Teachers focused largely on writing and reading abilities, using the grammar-translation technique, which restricted possibilities for speech practice. The research discovered that involving students in activities, alleviating language anxiety, and creating a favourable language learning atmosphere dramatically increased their confidence and desire to speak English. The findings imply that increasing exposure to spoken English via task-based training may help students improve their language abilities and motivation.

Keywords: Task Based Instruction, English Language, Ghizer GB

Introduction

English is a language that is of global significance and is essential for global communication (Zeng, 2024). The goal of English instruction should be to develop proficient English language communicators among students (Zeng J, 2023). Pakistani students regard English as a second language that is primarily employed for academic and administrative purposes in accordance with predetermined standards (Baig, 2019). Consequently, students are experiencing challenges and are making an effort to refrain from articulating themselves in a language that is not their native dialect (Wang Z, 2020). The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) is the primary method employed by the majority of language instructors in Pakistan to emphasize writing abilities. The students' exposure to the target language is restricted by this method, which positions the teacher as the primary communicator and the students as followers (Smith LE, 2019).

Language instructors in both the private and public sectors in Pakistan tend to neglect the development and evaluation of speaking abilities, despite the importance placed on them in the National Curriculum of 2006 (Baig, 2019). The limited exposure of instructors to language instruction is the reason for their interest in enhancing the writing abilities of their students. (Adibah Sulaim, 2016). By using various language teaching methodologies, students acquire the ability to establish associations between diverse concepts by means of hearing and reading. Furthermore, they develop the capacity to articulate their thoughts via writing and speaking, as stated in Pakistan's National curriculum for English language in 2006 (Yang, 2019). The English language has unique characteristics and necessitates a distinct approach to instruction compared to other disciplines. Language instructors must possess suitable pedagogies and experiences connected to speaking, as well as the ability to effectively incorporate new approaches and tactics (Daud Ismall, 2014). Teachers may inspire their pupils by involving them in purposeful activities that promote linguistic discussion (Rahim, 2014).

An action research study was conducted on a sample of five sixth-grade kids from a private school in Ghizer Gilgit, District. The purpose of the study was to investigate:
  1- How may task-based instruction (TBI) be used to enhance the motivation of grade VI pupils at a government school in Ghizer District, Gilgit-Baltistan, to speak the English language?
  2- How can the English language speaking abilities of primary-level children in government institutions be bolstered and encouraged through TBI-related activities?
  3- What exercises, objectives, or tactics may be used to improve the English language speaking abilities of primary students?

Methodology

Pragmatism is concerned with action and change, and knowledge and action This study is located within pragmatism as its aim is to explore issues in society where different perceptions, experiences and practices exist (Creswell, 2003). Focus of the pragmatist paradigm is action, bringing about change and role of the researcher as a change agent in generating data and theories. Within the pragmatic paradigm, action research was carried out to explore how different activities can be used to build students' motivation in improving their engagement with speaking skills. Action research helped in developing and changing plans according to the need and situation (Kemmis, 2014). Lewin's cyclic model was used in

data collection phases which allowed moving forward and backward according to the situation. See Figure 1:
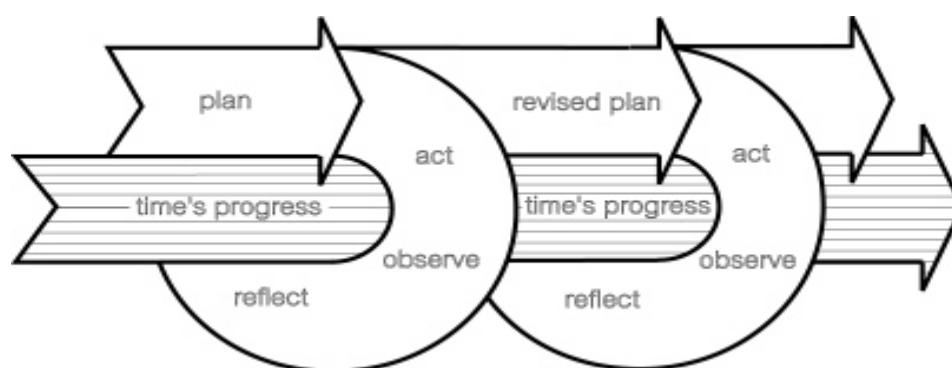
Figure 1: Lewin's Model
Source: http://www.berylgraham.com/asunder/mods/met3dvdl.htm

The research included five pupils from grade 6 in a government school located in Ghizer, a district in Gilgit-Baltistan. This group consisted of individuals with varying levels of proficiency in the English language, including high-achievers, average-achievers, and struggling pupils. The whole sixth-grade class served as secondary participants. The omission of real school names and participant identities was done to ensure confidentiality. Participants' replies were quoted using pseudonyms, which is an ethical practice in research. The data sets for this investigation were gathered in three distinct stages: reconnaissance, intervention, and post-intervention. The reconnaissance phase was specifically meant to serve as a phase for gathering factual information. The study used three passive observations and a focus group discussion (FGD) to analyse students' perspectives on the language education process, specifically the methods used to develop speaking skills. The semi-structured interview with the language instructor facilitated the identification and resolution of concerns by gathering data on the specific tasks and activities used to encourage students' proficiency in speaking their second language (L2).

Based on the obtained data on areas that needed improvement, an intervention was carried out by performing three cycles of action research. During each cycle, three sessions of 40 minutes each were done. There were a total of nine sessions that spanned over a period of fifteen days. A checklist was used throughout each of the nine sessions to document problems requiring development that impede students' participation in speaking their second language (L2). After each session, compile thoughtful notes on inquiries such as: to what extent are students actively engaging in classroom activities? What is the frequency of their code-switching? After the session, I discussed and analysed the participants and sessions with a critical friend (CF). After analysing the ongoing shared reflections, relevant adjustments were made for both the future sessions.

Conducted a focused group discussion (FGD) with main participants to explore how the intervention has influenced them in terms of improving their motivation level to learn English language speaking skills as well as to find out their perceptions about the teaching strategies used in the intervention stage. Comparing results of after-intervention FGD with reconnaissance phase FGD helped to see if there has been a change in students' use of English as it relates to level of confidence, willingness to speak and their general use of English in terms of vocabulary use. Semi-structured interview with CF was aimed at

capturing CF's reflections and retrospective perspective about the challenges and issues she faced in language teaching, especially in enhancing speaking skills of ESL students.

Findings and Discussion

Reconnaissance Phase

The reconnaissance phase data suggested that the instructor exclusively employed the grammar-translation technique to instruct the English language. This was apparent as she read the text, identified verb forms within it, and provided explanations for some of the more difficult terms. The instructor participated in a limited number of activities during classroom observations, with the primary focus on enhancing the writing and reading skills of the students. The teacher's use of the English language was severely restricted, and the classroom instruction was conducted in two languages. It was determined that learners were not actively engaged in the language learning process and were not actively participating in a classroom where the instructor is the primary focus of instruction. The language instructor's primary objective was to complete the coursework. The FGD data facilitated the determination that students had a sense of difficulty when prompted to communicate in the English language. The language instructor was correlating the pupils' speaking abilities with their understanding of grammar. The motivation for providing grammatical modifications was to enable pupils to speak English in accordance with the norms of grammar. In first session during an informal discussion, the teacher said:

> "You know exams are going on, I would request you to take those topics which I have not taught yet. Or focus on exercises which have been taught. It will be kind of revision for them." (Rubina, 2020)

The FGD also gave the impression that the teachers focus is on reading and writing skills.

> "Then she makes us read, later on she asks us to do exercises." (Surya, 2020)

Language confidence (L2) is defined by (Clement, 2005) as the anxiety-free belief of a learner about his ability to communicate in the second language or in the target language. During the reconnaissance phase, it was determined that there is a need for improvement in the area of L2 confidence observations. During the classroom discussion, it was noted that pupils were actively engaging in the use of the Urdu language. Several individuals did not exhibit any response in Urdu. The task of speaking in the English language seemed to be difficult for the kids. Students were unable to publicly present and communicate their thoughts or ideas to their peers. Whenever someone attempted to communicate in English, their peers would immediately engage in hushed conversations and laughter.

Therefore, it was crucial to assist students in overcoming this unfavourable self-perception in order to enhance their confidence and strengthen their drive. The analysis of the data from the reconnaissance phase indicated that students' desire to engage in English language activities is an area that needs development. Students were reluctant to engage in debates. During the non-participatory observations, it was noted that when students were prompted to verbally present their group assignments to the class, just two students were willing to do so. Rest of the class refused to take part in the discussion by sharing "miss we do not know.] It seemed that there was lack of students' willingness (MacIntyre, Baker, Clement & Donovan, 2002) to

participate in English language because most of the students did not participate. The language teacher perceived it as students' lack of interest in one-way teaching process.

As she commented:

> "In one way teaching one teacher use to speak. It means only teacher works and students are supposed to be silent listeners." (Rubina, 2020)

During the second session, it was noted that pupils were not engaging in any discussion with their partners, causing the instructor to feel ashamed. During the teacher's assignment of group exercises, only a small minority of the pupils presented their work in front of the whole class. This data indicates that the reason for this may be because pupils were unable to overcome their apprehension while speaking in the English language. According to the language teacher's view, this anxiety is related to public speaking and involves the dread of making errors. During the reconnaissance phase, a semi-structured interview was conducted, she said: "I think it is speaking because students like to think, if they will speak, they commit mistakes" (Rubina, 2020).

This area was decided to be worked further as it is interlinked with the issue of willingness to communicate and the overall issue of language confidence. Classroom observations indicated that code-switching is an area that needs improvement. The classroom education was conducted in many languages, including English, Urdu, and Shina (the indigenous language). The English language class did not include any group discussions or pair conversations. During the third session, the instructor posed inquiries to the pupils, who then provided answers in Urdu. Students seemed to be unable of sustaining their discourse in the English language. Both the instructor and pupils often switched to using Urdu language in the lesson. Neither of them have confidence in speaking English.

Data Analysis Intervention-Phase

There were three intervention rounds in this phase. During the first cycle, after analysing observations and engaging in formal and informal talks with the CF, the areas for development that were highlighted were the students' level of confidence, their participation in classroom activities, and their ability to use the target language in real-world situations. Three language training sessions were scheduled based on areas that needed development. Imagination, collaboration, and classroom environment were used as educational settings. The intended classroom activities to engage students included group work, pair tasks, and solo tasks, such as dialogue delivery, presentations, and image reflections. To facilitate pupils' learning, grammatical or structural errors were overlooked to avoid undermining their confidence (Oradee, 2012).

Reconnaissance phase data indicated that when pupils attempted to answer in English, their peers would ridicule them. The students were unable to go up and express their thoughts. Students' nervousness was evident in their body language, as their eyes would shift downwards when the teacher posed a question. A set of regulations was established, mandating that all individuals communicate only in English and prohibiting others from mocking them. Every student's engagement in the classroom was guaranteed, including those who did not participate willingly. Nevertheless, the major emphasis remained on the key participants of the research. In the first session, a warm-up exercise was carried out with the kids where they were required to discuss the hobbies they love doing at home.

When enforced to share in English she replied "ok miss I like … I like watch TV. I also like to play … hmm … playing cricket and go to prayers" (Atiqa, 2020).

Students were uncomfortable sharing their thoughts in English. For the sake of creating a supportive environment for language learning, they were engaged in pairs so that they would improve their confidence level (Brilianti, 2023). Tasks are more encouraging for students to use the target language confidently. Following was the response of primary participant group when they are assigned a task to task to recall and describe a "clean environment".

Areej responded like "the environment in mosque is very beautiful" (Areej, 2020).

Suriya responded like "I go to public school. I see very clean playground in school. There are many classes and many students but they do not through garbage in the school" (Surya, 2020).

Suraiyya used to participate very little but at this time, as can be seen from the extract, she tried to take part in discussion which indicates that this first teaching cycle was helping to somewhat address issues such as language confidence and WTC. On the whole, it seems that the intervention was successful in bringing about a slight improvement in students' behaviour and confidence level as compared to the beginning. Students were able to stand up and share few lines in English in front of their class maintaining eye contact. Students started to share fun they had with their fellows while doing tasks which showed that they are trying to overcome their fear. Students' involvement in the tasks seemed to raise their confidence. The more actively they took part in the conversations, the more their confidence level seemed to increase. However, it was still challenging for some of the students to communicate their message in English language.

The primary goal of this cycle was to increase the level of engagement of students in tasks and activities, thereby allowing them to engage in more interpersonal interactions. During the reconnaissance phase, it was observed that a substantial number of students in the language classroom were not actively engaged as a result of the language teacher's limited use of instructional activities. Students engaged in collaborative activities in both pairings and groups during the initial phase. Students who were not actively engaged in the discussions were subjected to additional questions. The goal was to guarantee their active participation in group discussions (Kamarudin Salleh, 2016).

The repeated attempts to contact Atiqa and Resham, who were initially non-participating students, served to make them aware that they could not remain inactive indefinitely. Consequently, they began to make an effort to engage and react. By the conclusion of this cycle, their engagement in the tasks was noticeably enhanced. For example, in the third lesson of this cycle, a group-task was assigned to describe two types of environments: clean environment and dirty environment. Resham presented her group work like:

> She replied Miss ……we are discussing about clean environment. I further probed ok tell me something more she added "like our school environment is clean and it is very beautiful. Students took care then switched to local language of Pakistan like Urdu.

She transitioned to the Urdu language when she was unable to continue in English. The active participation of students in any language was highly regarded as a means of fostering a comfortable environment for speaking and enhancing their level of comfort. For the

subsequent sessions, the objective was to meticulously select lessons, assignments, and activities that are compatible with the cognitive capabilities of sixth-grade students, are feasible for them to complete, and encourage their active engagement.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in the target language is defined by McIntyre, Baker, Clement and Donovan (2002) as the readiness or the intention to communicate with a particular person in L2 when choice of languages given to them. In the reconnaissance phase, it was observed that few students were talkative and most of them were reticent during the language teaching process. Both reticence and talkativeness are constructs of WTC (McIntyre, 1998). Except for a few students, most of the class was reluctant to speak in L2. It was important to make sure all students show their willingness to take risk to communicate in L2. For this purpose, tasks of students' interest were assigned to students so that they themselves wanted to respond without teacher's interference. It was included an individual task in the second session, which was "guessing the word". A tag of "NIGHT" was pasted on the back of a student (Shahida) without showing the word to her. Students were supposed to share their ideas about the word and Shahida was supposed to guess the word. Students' responses were like:

> "It is dark miss" (Areej, 2020)
> "I sleep in …." (Surya, 2020)

During Cycle two, two more areas requiring development were identified: students' proficiency in code-switching between Urdu and English, and their Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA) skills. These areas played a crucial role in enhancing and developing students' English communication abilities. The objective was to reduce the quantity of assignments and extend the length of each work, allowing students enough time for contemplation, practice, and response. The exercises were carried out in groups, pairs, and individually, with minor modifications in their form and content, such as focusing on conversation delivery and reflecting on observations. Initially, the kids exhibited shyness and hesitancy while providing responses. Despite first exchanging a few lines in English, they nevertheless had a fear of making errors. They seemed to have a dread of being incorrect. During the first session of this cycle, a task for individual completion was scheduled. Two images depicting contrasting environments were affixed on a whiteboard. Beneath the images, there was also a list of words provided. Students were expected to carefully examine and contemplate both images while using the assigned terminology. Students were given enough opportunity to contemplate and exchange ideas. Resham remained silent when she was called upon to go up and express her thoughts. Subsequently, a casual dialogue with Resham revealed the reason for her silence. She was unable to share her ideas in English language. She replied, "I am afraid of speaking in English language that it will be incorrect. I don't know how to respond in English" (Resham, 2020).

During the most recent session of this cycle, the assignment was to "attempt to remember a narrative in which one of your pets fell ill." Communicate it to your partner using your own language. The students started their conversation with great enthusiasm. During this cycle, it was seen that despite their apparent reluctance, they actively engaged in allocating some time. Despite their awareness of their improper speech, the students nevertheless actively participated in the conversation. Each of their attempts at involvement was commended in order to alleviate their language anxiety and apprehension about making errors. At first, the students displayed anxiety, but as the cycle advanced, their anxiety around making errors diminished. Nobody was speaking perfectly as these tasks were equally difficult for

everyone. By the end students seemed to have overcome this issue as compared to the beginning.

> "Miss there is a cow in my home. She gives milk to us and my mother like the cow very much." (Resham, 2020)

Another need-improvement area was students' tendency to code-switch from English to other languages. Students were unable to continue their discussion in the English language and started to speak in Urdu. Rules were implemented to handle this:
1- We will not switch to any other language very frequently.
2- We will try and speak in English language only.

In the second session, a presentation was given to students to explain the meaning of transitive and intransitive verbs with examples and assigned them an individual-task:

Go outside and observe the surrounding for three minutes. Make notes on the surrounding through making sentences and find out any example of transitive and non-transitive verbs from the sentences you made. You can also discuss it with the people outside and make sentences of these verbs. It was a different type of instruction for them. Their discussions were very interesting because they were speaking in English fairly. The fear of being observed and being wrong seemed to have disappeared. I noticed that they were enjoying conversing without switching to Urdu. They were exchanging sentences like:

"Zahida Miss is writing on the blackboard. Miss writing is a transitive verb because it has an object" (Rasheeda, 2020). The students engaged in thoughtful contemplation and articulation of their thoughts, although they refrained from using Urdu or the vernacular language. Resham was using the term 'lines' to refer to 'sentences'. The presence of speech fillers and pauses indicates that kids are encountering trouble and need a pause to gather knowledge in their minds. By the conclusion of the cycle, pupils seemed to have engaged in the English language without apprehension of committing errors. While not all students showed improvement, there was a noticeable beneficial shift in their behaviour in terms of increased confidence, willingness, reduced fear, and better code-switching. The students exhibited inappropriate speech, although they made an effort to communicate in English. Despite their errors, they remained steadfast in using Urdu.

Conclusion

TBI is an effective method to motivate their students for learning English language speaking through lowering learners' anxiety and boosting their confidence (Lopes, 2004). Teachers have the ability to create and execute tasks and activities that may enhance students' engagement in speaking and improve the current methods of teaching and learning language (Noor Syafiqah, 2016). Methodologies and approaches such as Task-Based Instruction can be employed to accomplish this (TBI) (Özdoğru, 2022). The data from this action study were examined using a combination of triangulation, reflection, and reflexivity. To get a comprehensive grasp of the problems, it is advisable to use both qualitative and quantitative techniques of data collecting.

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Rural Narratives and Media Convergence in Thai Cinema

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Abstract

The year 2023 marked a resurgence for Thai cinema, highlighted by the successes of *The Undertaker* and *Death Whisperer*, which brought rural narratives and socio-cultural themes to the forefront. Produced by Thibaan Studio, *The Undertaker* became Thailand's highest-grossing film of the year, while *Death Whisperer* engaged audiences with its haunting portrayal of family and community resilience in rural Thailand. Additionally, *The Murderer*, the first Northeastern dialect film to premiere on Netflix, demonstrates the global reach of localized storytelling. Together, these films signal a shift in Thai cinema, where authentic portrayals of rural life highlight issues such as cultural adaptation, economic hardship, and the negotiation between tradition and modernity. This analysis employs Henry Jenkins' concept of media convergence and John Urry's mobilities framework to examine how these films engage global audiences. Jenkins' notion of convergence highlights how platforms like Netflix connect local stories with international viewers, as demonstrated by *The Murderer*'s success. Urry's mobilities framework further illustrates the transformation of regional films into transnational cultural flows, emphasizing the balance between local specificity and global accessibility. By centering rural narratives, these films challenge urban-centric depictions in Thai cinema, promoting a richer representation of Thai culture that engages critically with social challenges and cultural identity in a globalized world.

Keywords: Thai Cinema, Rural Narratives, Media Convergence

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Introduction

In 2023, Thai cinema saw a resurgence, driven by the success of *The Undertaker* and *Death Whisperer*, which marked a shift towards rural narratives. *The Undertaker* became Thailand's highest-grossing film of the year, earning over 700 million baht. Meanwhile, *Death Whisperer*, a horror film rooted in rural Thai life, grossed over 500 million baht and was released on Netflix following its theatrical run. These films reflect a departure from the conventional focus on urban settings, offering a more nuanced exploration of rural identities and experiences. Extending this trend further, *The Murderer*, the first Northeastern dialect film to premiere on Netflix, brings localized stories to global audiences, leveraging digital platforms to share regional narratives beyond national borders. Collectively, these films represent a transformative moment in Thai cinema, highlighting the richness of rural stories and engaging with audiences both domestically and internationally.

This paper argues that the success of *The Undertaker*, *Death Whisperer*, and *The Murderer* signals a broader shift in Thai cinema, as these films foreground the diversity and complexity of rural life. Using Henry Jenkins' concept of media convergence and John Urry's mobilities framework, this analysis explores how rural narratives are both localized and globalized through modern media platforms. Jenkins' notion of convergence explains how platforms like Netflix facilitate the global dissemination of regional stories, as demonstrated by *The Murderer*'s international reach. Meanwhile, Urry's concept of mobilities illustrates how these films transcend cultural and geographical boundaries, transforming local stories into transnational cultural flows. This interaction between regional authenticity and global accessibility suggests a growing trend toward more inclusive and diverse representations, fostering a deeper appreciation of Thai cultural complexities on the global stage.

To contextualize this shift, it is crucial to examine the evolution of rural representation in Thai cinema. Over time, portrayals of rural Thailand have fluctuated between romanticized idealizations and critical reflections, shaped by the socio-political dynamics of various eras. Understanding this trajectory provides essential insight into the current resurgence of rural narratives and their implications for the future of Thai cinema. The following section traces this evolution, setting the stage for a more in-depth analysis of contemporary rural-themed films and their role in redefining Thai cinematic identity in an increasingly globalized media landscape.

Evolution of Rural Representation in Thai Cinema

The portrayal of rural life has significantly shaped the trajectory of Thai cinema, reflecting the nation's socio-political and cultural shifts. Early depictions often presented rural life as innocent and virtuous, positioned in contrast to the corruption associated with urban settings. This dichotomy is evident in early films such as *Going Ashtray* (1932), where the protagonist is led astray by urban temptations but ultimately returns to his rural roots. While the contrast between rural and urban life has persisted as a theme, its complexity has deepened across cinematic eras.

During World War II, the portrayal of rural life became a part of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram's nationalist agenda. Films like *Ban Rai Na Rao* (1942) glorified rural agrarian life as integral to the nation's strength and identity. This romanticized vision of rural Thailand drew on the historical precedent set by King Ramkamhaeng's thirteenth-century stele, which described the land as fertile and abundant: "There is fish in the water and rice in

the fields" (Bowie, 1992, p. 797). This discourse linked rural prosperity to royal virtue, reinforcing the centrality of the countryside in national narratives of strength and unity (Bowie, 1992, p. 798). In this context, the promotion of rural life was both a celebration of tradition and a projection of Thailand's modernization, seen in the adoption of Western-style clothing in rural settings (Herrera, 2015, p. 36).

The post-war period was further complicated by the Cold War, where Thai military regimes, backed by the United States, used cinema to promote nationalist ideologies and government policies (Chaloemtiarana, 2007, p. 145). Thai films during this time were heavily influenced by the political climate. Many reflected anti-communist sentiments and promoted Thai values. For example, *Fai Yen* (1965), supported by the United States Information Service (USIS), portrayed the horrors of communism and offered a positive image of the anti-Communist Thai government during a time when communist influence was growing in Thailand, particularly in the rural areas of Northeastern Thailand where the film was set (Pirakjunyakul, 2017). The rural is portrayed as impoverished but on its way to a better life with the help of the government and royal patronage, combating the communist accusation that the rural had been neglected.

The post-war era also saw the rise of independent filmmaking, driven by the reduced cost of 16 mm equipment. This led to a diversification of perspectives in Thai cinema, with open-air screenings becoming popular in rural areas. Films like *Thai, the Gentleman Bandit* (1949) portrayed rural protagonists as noble yet wronged figures forced into criminality by external forces. These narratives echoed the frustrations of rural populations, who felt increasingly marginalized by modernization and widening social inequalities. The rural setting became a site of resistance and a reflection of the growing class divide, with the protagonist's fight for justice resonating with rural audiences who sought fairness in a rapidly changing society.

By the 1970s, political upheavals and student movements led to a more critical portrayal of rural life. As May Adadol Ingawanij (2006) observes, the left-wing nationalist discourse encouraged intellectual identification with rural life and celebrated folk and popular culture (p. 81). This perspective reflected a growing awareness of the social and economic challenges faced by rural communities, urging artists and filmmakers to depict these realities more honestly. This era gave rise to the "Art for Life" movement (sinlapa pua chiwit), which embraced social realism and was committed to representing the struggles of the masses (p. 83). Filmmakers of the Thai New Wave, such as Chatrichalerm Yukol, incorporated these ideals into films like *Karn* (1973), which portrayed the injustices faced by rural populations, including poverty, lack of education, and bureaucratic corruption. Similarly, *Plae Kao* (1977) by Cherd Songsri challenged romanticized portrayals of rural life by depicting the economic struggles of peasants and the growing disparity between rural and urban Thailand.

Filmmakers began addressing issues of poverty, migration, and the exploitation of rural communities by urban elites and corrupt political systems, while the rise of urbanization was often portrayed as a threat to traditional values and rural livelihoods. With many Northeasterners migrating to Bangkok for labor work, numerous films have been made particularly about the Northeastern part of Thailand (known as Isan) that make use of the local culture and Northeastern way of life. According to Somboon and Chummuangpak (2022, p. 192), there were three trends before 2007 in Northeastern films: Isan for life (realism), local musical films, and action films. The most notable one in the "Isan for life" category is *Luk Isan* (Vichit Kounavudhi, 1982), which uses the Northeastern dialect and adopts a realistic approach to the subject matter with no stars in the film. The film

emphasizes the struggle of the villagers and portrays the Northeastern villages as barren lands constantly in drought.

In the 21st century, filmmakers like Apichatpong Weerasethakul have revolutionized rural representation in Thai cinema, blending mysticism, memory, and the supernatural with depictions of rural existence. Films such as *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (2010) move beyond purely socio-economic narratives to explore the personal and spiritual dimensions of rural life. These films challenge earlier depictions of rural life as simple or backward, offering instead a space for narrative experimentation and ambiguity. Films like *Pai in Love* (2009) and *Chiang Khan Story* (2014) reflect a nostalgic longing for rural life, framing it as an authentic and peaceful contrast to the corrupt and hectic nature of urban existence. However, as Adadol critiques in her analysis of *Mon-Rak Transistor* (2001), this romanticization of rural life often fails to address the real struggles of rural populations facing modernity, capitalism, and globalization (p. 85).

The representation of rural life in Thai cinema has evolved from idealized, nationalist depictions to more complex portrayals that reflect the country's socio-political and economic transformations. This evolution sets the stage for films like *The Undertaker*, *Death Whisperer*, and *The Murderer,* which highlight the cultural richness of rural communities while engaging with themes of tradition, modernity, and the supernatural.

Redefining Rural Narratives in *The Undertaker*, *Death Whisperer*, and *The Murderer*

This section focuses on *The Undertaker, Death Whisperer*, and *The Murderer*, which were released around the same time and exemplify the growing prominence of rural narratives in Thai cinema during the age of global platforms. The analysis of these films will cover their narrative, socio-cultural themes, and representation of rural life, while also exploring their success in domestic and international markets, particularly through media convergence in the next section.

The Undertaker

Produced by Thibaan Studio, this film is the sixth installment of the Thibaan series, which is known for its authentic portrayal of rural Isan culture and is made by Isan filmmakers. The momentum of the rise of the representation of the Northeastern has continued since the latter half of the 2000s, with 'Isan Fever,' a local trend of the Northeastern region permeating the rest of the country through music, television series, food culture, and film (Somboon & Chummuangpak, 2022). It is no longer content that circulates only among the Isan people. Many films since 2014 have been locally produced instead of funded by big studios from Bangkok. Isan is no longer a land of drought, as Pattana Kittiarsa (2014) suggests, but a strategically positioned center of development within the Mekong region (p. 32). This new Isan is not a poor immigrant who flocks to Bangkok for work but a proud Isan who represents their local culture (Kodtummee, 2020).
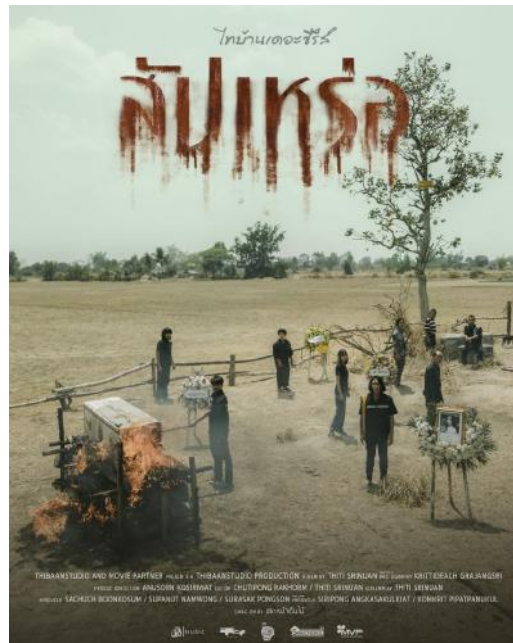
Figure 1: *The Undertaker* (Thiti Srinuan, 2023) Official Poster

Thibaan: The Series is part of the continuation of this trend, building on the success of earlier films about Isan since *Yam Yasothorn* (Petchtai Wongkamlao, 2005), which was made by a big studio, to *Phubao Thai Ban Isan Indy* (2014), made on a very low budget by local filmmakers. The first *Thibaan: The Series* was made in 2017. The film follows Ja Lod, a shy young man from rural Isan, who attempts to find love by courting 100 girls while working as a school janitor, alongside his friend Pong, an ambitious entrepreneur facing pressure to abandon his dreams and farm instead. The next four films of *Thibaan: The Series* use the same characters and explore interconnected stories, referred to as the 'universe of Thibaan.' The narrative in all six films similarly portrays the everyday lives of villagers, balancing humor, tradition, and modernity, while still centering around the 'Home–Temple–School' relationship—a key social structure that has held Thai community together since the past. *Thibaan: The Series* has added a new element, technology, into this relationship (Srijinda, Wattansis, & Karupad, 2020, p. 75). These films have portrayed Isan culture as a hybrid culture where modernity has become part of their lives.

In *The Undertaker*, the film focuses on Jerd, a 25-year-old law graduate who is forced to help his sick father as an undertaker despite his fear of ghosts, and Xiang, who, heartbroken by the loss of his ex-girlfriend Baikhao, seeks to reunite with her in the afterlife through spiritual practices. Through the undertaker, whose role in the community is both practical and spiritual, his duties include overseeing funerals and helping families navigate the process of mourning, reflecting the central role that death rituals play in rural Thai communities. The film's portrayal of these rituals is deeply rooted in local customs, offering a rich, ethnographic depiction of life in rural Thailand, particularly reflecting Isan beliefs surround death.

Despite socio-economic pressures of capitalism and globalization, the people still maintain their strong beliefs, reflecting resilience in the face of change. Chutikamoltham (2015) argues that rural horror films often portray rural villages as spaces where unresolved social tensions manifest through supernatural phenomena, reinforcing a dystopian view of the countryside as a place trapped by its past. *The Undertaker*, however, reinterprets these elements, using supernatural aspects not as symbols of stagnation, but as catalysts for the village's negotiation

between past and present. For example, the ghost of Baikao represents the weight of the past, yet rather than haunting the present, it provides Xiang with a way to reconcile his grief and move forward, illustrating how rural communities adapt tradition to navigate change.

Thibaan: The Series, initially popularized among Northeastern audiences, exceeded expectations and expanded its reach into urban centers like Bangkok. Building on this established fan base, *The Undertaker* successfully resonated across diverse audiences, drawing urban and even international viewers. Its exploration of universal themes, such as death and the afterlife, allowed the film to transcend regional boundaries, showcasing the global appeal of local narratives and highlighting rural Thai culture on a broader stage.

Death Whisperer

Figure 2: *Death Whisperer* (Taweewat Wantha, 2023)

Death Whisperer is a horror film adapted from the novel *Thiyod... Whispers of Madness* by Kritanont (Kittisak Kittiviryanon), which recounts a chilling tale based on true events experienced by the author's family. Set in 1972, the film follows the mysterious deaths of young girls in a remote village in Kanchanaburi, as the protagonist Yak and his family grapple with the eerie presence and supernatural occurrences linked to the haunting sound of "Thiyod" that terrorizes the community, ultimately forcing them to confront the malevolent forces threatening their lives.

Death Whisperer can be analyzed through the lens of how rural horror films use supernatural elements to confront deeper cultural anxieties related to tradition, memory, and unresolved histories within rural communities. As Chutikamoltham (2015) suggests, rural horror films like *Ban Phi Pob* (Srisawat, 1989) and *Phi Hua Khat* (Khomsan, 2002) utilize supernatural narratives to subvert the romanticized image of the village, transforming it into a space of hidden fears and suppressed anxieties. Similarly, *Death Whisperer* employs the eerie sound of "Thiyod" and the mysterious deaths in a remote village as metaphors for the haunting presence of the past and the unresolved traumas that continue to affect rural communities.

By setting the story in the 1970s, a period marked by social and political turmoil in Thailand, the film situates its horror within a specific historical context, reflecting how rural spaces are often burdened with the collective memory of suffering and loss. Thus, *Death Whisperer* extends the thematic concerns of earlier rural horror films by using the supernatural not only to terrify but also to reflect on the complex, often painful realities that shape rural life, be it unresolved historical traumas and social issues that rural communities in Thailand have

faced, such as poverty, social inequality, loss of traditional ways of life, and the lingering effects of political turmoil. What sets *Death Whisperer* apart from other Thai horror films is the way the family actively fights back against the haunting sound and the spirits that possess one of their members. Instead of relying on religious authorities, the family takes matters into their own hands, actively confronting the supernatural forces threatening their village. This approach transforms them from passive victims into agents of their own destiny, marking a departure from traditional portrayals of rural helplessness. The village in *Death Whisperer* supplants from a peripheral setting into a critical space where the past and present clash, highlighting the struggle and complexities of rural identity and experience in contemporary Thailand.

The Murderer

Following *The Undertaker*'s exploration of rural resilience and *Death Whisperer*'s focus on rural trauma, *The Murderer* brings a fresh perspective, using dark humor to critique the cultural tensions and identity struggles in rural Isan. As the first Isan dialect film produced in collaboration with Netflix and Transformation Films, *The Murderer*, directed by Wisit Sasanatieng, centers on Nawath (played by Petchtai Wongkamlao, a renowned comedian in Thailand), a seasoned investigator tasked with solving a mass murder in a remote Isan village. The primary suspect is Earl, a foreign son-in-law, as all evidence seemingly points to him. The film blends suspense with dark humor, exploring Earl's efforts to prove his innocence amid the deep-seated prejudices of the villagers. Earl's modest IT job and his non-traditional relationship with his wife, whom he met as a coworker rather than through the more typical circumstances often associated with 'farang,' distinguish him from the stereotypical image of a wealthy foreigner. This divergence from the expected stereotype intensifies the tension between him and the locals, complicating his place within the community and heightening suspicions against him.

Petchtai's comedic background adds a layer of nuance to Nawath's character. His comedic timing allows the film to subvert typical crime dramas, mixing humor with social critique, making it more than just a mystery or satire. Petchtai's performance highlights how rural spaces, often marginalized in Thai cinema, become vibrant sites for negotiating cultural tension. His portrayal of Nawath underscores the complexities of navigating local expectations in the face of outside influences, transforming the investigator's role from a mere figure of authority into one who mirrors the villagers' underlying anxieties. This duality—balancing humor with the weight of deeper issues—mirrors the absurdity and complexity of cultural encounters within the film.

Figure 3: *The Murderer* (Wisit Sasanatieng, 2023)

In *The Murderer*, Wisit Sasanatieng's use of color echoes the stylized artificiality Stephen Teo (2017) identifies in his previous work, *Tears of the Black Tiger*. Like in *Tears of the Black Tiger*, Sasanatieng employs exaggerated, vibrant colors that break away from traditional Thai naturalism, creating a heightened, almost surreal aesthetic that underscores the film's thematic contrasts between modernity and tradition. This approach visually reinforces the absurdity of cultural tensions within the rural Isan village, amplifying the clash between local norms and global influences. The artificial hues not only add a comic-book feel but also transform the village setting into an active site of cultural negotiation, where the exaggerated colors underscore the distortions and biases each character brings to their interactions. This stylization positions *The Murderer* within a unique narrative space that challenges and reinterprets conventional rural depictions.

Ultimately, *The Murderer* reframes rural spaces as active participants in shaping modern Thai identity. The film critiques the cultural collisions that occur as rural and global worlds meet, exposing the contradictions and negotiations inherent in this process. By blending dark comedy with sharp social commentary, *The Murderer* invites audiences to reconsider the role of rural Isan, not only within the Thai nation but also within a globalized cultural framework. The village, with its complex social fabric, embodies the tension between maintaining local identity and adapting to global influences, positioning rural spaces as critical players in Thailand's evolving cultural landscape.

Rural Narratives, Media Convergence, and Global Mobilities: The Case of *The Undertaker*, *Death Whisperer*, and *The Murderer*

Using Henry Jenkins' concept of media convergence and John Urry's mobilities framework, this section explores how rural local narratives are integrated into the global cinematic landscape, offering a more nuanced perspective on cultural identity and the shifting dynamics between the local and the global. This analysis is structured into three thematic areas:

Expanding Global Reach Through Digital Platforms

The success of these films is not solely a result of their engaging narratives but also stems from the strategic use of digital platforms like Netflix, which have expanded the reach of Thai cinema to international audiences. *The Murderer's* availability as a Netflix Original demonstrates the platform's role in curating and promoting culturally specific content to a

global audience. Netflix, using extensive data and user ratings, identifies a growing interest in non-Western narratives. This allows films like *The Murderer* to reach a broader audience, aligning with Jenkins' (2006) concept of convergence culture, where media flows across platforms, engaging diverse viewers through algorithm-driven recommendations.

The international availability of these films challenges Western-dominated narratives and brings visibility to non-Western stories. *The Undertaker*, *Death Whisperer*, and *The Murderer* bring local narratives to global audiences, encouraging engagement with themes and practices unfamiliar to Western viewers. This fosters a more inclusive global cultural discourse, allowing diverse voices and regional identities to thrive. However, this global reception raises questions about cultural authenticity. As Urry (2007) argues, the movement of cultural products across borders involves recontextualization. While these films remain culturally rooted, their global distribution introduces them to new interpretive frameworks, which can create tension between preserving cultural specificity and making the content accessible to a broader audience. For instance, several death-related rituals in *The Undertaker*—specific to Isan culture and Buddhism—may not fully resonate with Western audiences whose beliefs about death and the afterlife differ, illustrating the challenge of balancing local authenticity with global accessibility.

Additionally, these films benefit from the increasing global interest in non-Western narratives and the expansion of streaming platforms into new markets. Netflix's strategy of producing and distributing local content globally introduces Thai cinema to new audiences while encouraging filmmakers to think beyond their local markets without sacrificing cultural identity. This form of media convergence allows films like *The Murderer* to transcend regional boundaries and contribute to a global dialogue on cultural identity, modernity, and tradition. Digital platforms bridge the gap between local storytelling and global audiences, enhancing the visibility of Thai cultural narratives on the world stage.

Thematic Universality and Cultural Specificity

One of the key strengths of these films lies in their ability to blend universal themes with culturally specific narratives. *The Undertaker* explores the universal experience of dealing with death and loss, set against the backdrop of a rural Thai community. The film's emphasis on the rituals surrounding death and the role of the undertaker in the community provides an intimate glimpse into how rural Thai society deals with mortality. This theme resonates globally, as death is a universal experience, yet the film's portrayal of death rituals is deeply rooted in Isan cultural traditions, showcasing the specificity of beliefs about spirits, the afterlife, and the importance of rituals in rural Thai society. For example, the ritual of "cutting the ghost cord" (*tat sai naen*) breaks the ties between the deceased and the living to prevent the spirit from lingering or taking another family member with them into the afterlife. Such rituals not only highlight the communal response to death but also emphasize the spiritual responsibility the living have to ensure the peaceful transition of the dead. These practices, while specific to Isan culture, contrast with the individualistic and often more secular approaches to death seen in Western cinema, where rituals may focus more on grief management or emotional catharsis rather than on the metaphysical continuation of relationships between the living and the dead. By portraying these complex, culturally rich death rituals, *The Undertaker* offers a distinctive take on the universal experience of death, grounding it in a communal, spiritually nuanced framework that enriches the film's global resonance, while simultaneously preserving its cultural specificity.

Similarly, *Death Whisperer* uses supernatural horror to explore the lingering presence of historical trauma within a rural community. While this theme of confronting the past may resonate with global audiences familiar with similar narratives, the film remains firmly rooted in the socio-political history of Thailand, where the past is seen as an active force shaping the present. This localized context prevents the film from being merely a universal metaphor, instead grounding it in the specific historical and cultural struggles faced by rural Thai communities. *The Murderer*, on the other hand, the theme of the outsider struggling to fit in, while universal, is enriched by the film's specific cultural context, highlighting the unique challenges faced by those who exist on the margins of Thai society. Consequently, this blending of the local and the global allows these films to resonate with diverse audiences, demonstrating the potential of Thai cinema to contribute to global cultural dialogues.

Reimagining Rural Spaces & Negotiating Identity in a Converged World

The depiction of rural Thailand in these films reimagines the traditional portrayal of rural spaces, challenging simplistic binaries of rural-urban, tradition-modernity, and local-global. John Urry's (2007) concept of "mobilities" emphasizes that places are continually reshaped by the flows of people, ideas, and cultural practices, and these films show rural Thailand as actively engaging with modernity and global forces rather than remaining isolated or stagnant. Through migration, global media, and tourism, rural communities are influenced by shifting realities, positioning rural Thailand as a participant in global currents rather than a place left behind.

For example, by setting the story in a rural Isan village and using the local dialect, *The Murderer* subverts Western stereotypes of rural Asia as static or undeveloped. Rather than portraying a remote, unchanging backdrop, the film presents a dynamic space where local culture actively interacts with global forces, exemplified by Earl, a British man, and another Isan son-in-law, Charlie, an American who fits more closely with the stereotype of a foreigner—meeting his wife at a bar and working hard to provide for her family, trying to navigate the intricacies of village life. These characters symbolize the complex relationships between locals and outsiders. This portrayal challenges Western assumptions about rural Asia, showing that the community is not isolated but globally aware and culturally distinct. The villagers, as one comments, see such foreigners as people "looking for someone to care for them in old age, to clean up after them," highlighting a well-understood dynamic within the community. By portraying locals who both recognize and navigate these relationships, the film complicates the Western notion of rural spaces as merely exotic, presenting rural Isan as an active participant in global cultural exchanges rather than a passive backdrop. The film further explores the negotiation of cultural identity within a globalized media landscape.

In *Death Whisperer*, Yak's resistance to supernatural threats goes beyond a mere struggle for survival, symbolizing a rural family's defiance amidst the turbulence of 1970s Thailand. This was a period marked by violent political unrest, such as the October 14, 1973, student uprising, which reflected widespread dissatisfaction with a centralized government often perceived as neglectful of rural communities. Rural populations found themselves largely unprotected and accused of being leftist sympathizers, forcing them to rely on self-sustained resources and traditions for survival. Yak's struggle represents this resilience, embodying rural communities' broader resistance to external political and ideological pressures encroaching upon their ways of life. According to Sattayanurak, the "community culture" model, which has shaped Thai intellectual and political perceptions of rural areas, often romanticizes rural life while overlooking actual conflicts and material needs (2010). Yak's

defiance thus resonates with modern challenges facing rural spaces as they negotiate identity and self-determination within a converging world, underscoring the timeless struggle to balance tradition and autonomy with external influences.

These films position rural spaces as dynamic areas where tradition and modernity intersect, revealing evolving identity landscapes in contemporary Thailand. Urry's mobility framework complicates our understanding of rural identity by showing how these spaces act as conduits for diverse and intersecting flows of people, culture, and economic forces (Urry, 2007). Unlike static portrayals, this perspective suggests that rural identities are constructed not solely through internal cultural practices or external global influences but through the interdependent mobility of ideas, values, and lifestyles. These flows create a layered identity that rural residents must navigate, often embracing modernity as a tool to reinforce traditional values, thereby creating hybrid identities that appear contradictory but are rooted in resilience and adaptability. In rural Thailand, where global influences are mediated through both localized practices and transnational relationships—such as migration networks and digital communication channels—identity formation becomes a multidirectional process. The portrayal of rural spaces as simultaneously rooted and globally engaged thus emphasizes a rural agency that actively shapes modern Thai identity through strategic adaptations, illustrating the complexities of belonging within a globalized yet place-bound framework.

Conclusion

This study highlights a transformative shift in Thai cinema, where films like *The Undertaker*, *Death Whisperer*, and *The Murderer* foreground rural narratives, challenging the dominance of urban-centric stories in Thai media. These films employ authentic portrayals of rural life, using local dialects, cultural practices, and socio-historical contexts to bring nuanced rural perspectives to both Thai and global audiences. The analysis, drawing on Henry Jenkins' media convergence and John Urry's mobilities framework, reveals how platforms like Netflix facilitate the international dissemination of these narratives, enabling them to resonate across cultural boundaries. This convergence of local storytelling and global distribution reflects a growing capacity for Thai cinema to engage in international cultural discourse, elevating previously marginalized perspectives.

The findings suggest that rural Thai films can serve as powerful tools for exploring and preserving cultural identity amidst globalization. By navigating themes such as resilience, adaptation, and tradition within a modernizing world, these films encourage viewers to reconsider the complexities of rural life beyond idealized or stereotypical portrayals. However, the study also acknowledges limitations: the global reach achieved through platforms like Netflix often necessitates adjustments to enhance accessibility for international audiences, which may risk diluting culturally specific elements.

Looking forward, the evolving role of rural narratives in Thai cinema suggests a promising future for diverse representations in global media. As Thai filmmakers continue to leverage digital platforms and transnational distribution, further research could explore how audiences interpret these culturally specific films, examining the balance between preserving cultural authenticity and adapting for broader viewership. This trajectory signals an expanding space for Thai cinema within the global media landscape, contributing to a more inclusive and dynamic cultural exchange.

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Fantastic: Exploring the Intermedial Productivity of the Fangirl

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Abstract

Fandoms serve as a rich site to examine intermedial play in modern culture, with fans engaging with and creating new, media-hybrid products that honour, subvert, and/or expand source material. While the body serves as both site and tool for this work, such productivity is only considered valuable and legitimate if conducted by a certain type of body – one detached from emotion and non-threatening to white, heteronormative, ableist, patriarchal society. The fangirl has long been condemned as a bad cultural producer with bad taste, too emotional to engage with or create worthwhile products. However, I argue that the fangirl's productivity challenges the assumed hierarchical divide between logic and emotion that dominates Western theory. Using my own affected responses as a starting point and focusing on fan edits, choreography videos, and concert films in the BTS and Taylor Swift fandoms, I combine personal experiences of fandom with academic research to examine the impact intermedial play has on the fangirl as both consumer and creator. My approach applies recent intermedial theory to current fan studies research and feminist analysis in order to understand the 21st century viewer from a more encompassing, multimedia perspective. Additionally, this autoethnographic method demonstrates the value (and presence) of affect in academic work first-hand. This exploration ultimately concludes that the fangirl actively uses affect in fan productivity to articulate identity and build community and thus demonstrates the value of emotion and affect in rational thought as it is a fundamentally embodied process.

Keywords: Fandom, Intermediality, Fan Productivity, Affect, Fan Studies, Media Studies

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Introduction

"Welcome to convergence culture," Henry Jenkins proclaimed in his 2006 book, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide,* where content flows across media systems that are constantly intersecting, combining, and co-existing in everchanging relationships (p. 2). This fluidity is not new; throughout history, the content we consume has repeatedly been influenced, inspired, adapted, and replicated in and by various modes of creative expression. What the digital age *has* done, however, is brought these changing medial relationships to the forefront of our attention, from TikTok dance trends that popularise songs, famous fanfiction narratives becoming best-selling novels, and even video diaries documenting the construction of intricate cosplay costumes. Products and practices that combine media not only draw in audiences from various spheres to ensure maximum profit but also allow viewers to actively participate in and generate culture. Nowhere is this more evident than in fandom, where fans engage with their chosen source material across a wide range of media. Yet fandom is also a site of creation, with fans producing works that blur medial boundaries to reimagine, extend, pay tribute to, and/or subvert that source material. Such creative engagement, Jenkins claims, demonstrates how consumers extract information from the "media flow" and actively use it to understand the world around them and negotiate their place in it (p. 3).

I explore what Nicolle Lamerichs calls productive fandom. More specifically, I investigate how the fangirl, a fan who is often ridiculed and dismissed, actively uses intermediality to assert herself in dominant culture. Exploring the intermedial nature of fan productivity, the affective power of fan works, and the role emotion and affect plays in articulating identity and building community through such work, I will demonstrate how the fangirl's work reveals the value of emotion in rational thought by highlighting it as a fundamentally embodied process. Combining my own affected responses with intermedial theory, fan studies research, and feminist analysis, I will expose the value of intermedial play as a tool that helps make sense of daily life.

Intermediality

In *Productive Fandom: Intermediality and Affective Reception in Fan Cultures,* Nicolle Lamerichs (2018) examines the intermedial nature of fan productivity. Lamerichs defines intermediality as "a transfer or combination of form and/or content that relates an individual media text to other media texts of the same or a different medium" (p. 21). Examining content this way, she claims, is essential as content does not exist "in isolation but rather in relation to other media", with interactions between media "historically ingrained in the practice of art" (p. 23). She notes that intermediality is best understood as an umbrella term – a way of looking at media that emphasises "exchanges within and between media in the broadest sense…and the complex ways in which one medium summons or includes another" (p. 22). I have adopted this understanding of intermediality as it encapsulates the various ways fan productivity crosses medial boundaries, such as cases when multiple mediums are present yet remain distinct, cases when media depend on each other to construct a piece, and/or instances of content and aesthetic conventions transferring across media (Lamerichs, pp. 23-24). This broader understanding also allows me to begin exploring fandom as a phenomenon and space reliant on such medial play. Lamerichs discusses how fans engage with the content they love by playing with "existing symbols, plotlines, characters, and settings" across media and generate new medial relationships (pp. 13-14). Such work does not merely borrow material for reiteration but creates *new* products as fans "actively work

with the blanks in the source text that spark their imagination" (Lamerichs, p. 17). A creative act, fan productivity sees fans reimagine source content and create new products that mix and exist *between* media. Fan productivity, therefore, is intermedial both as a process *and* in the resulting hybrid products.

Vidding

One example of such productivity is vidding. In *Vidding: A History*, Francesca Coppa (2022) describes vidding as the editing of screen footage to music, resulting in "a new multimedia object that tells a story, creates an interpretation, stages an argument, and/or produces a feeling" (pp. 23-24). Here, music serves as the video's "code and key…[where] all the information in a song—lyrics, melody, beat, tempo, instrumentation…[creates] aesthetic and narrative patterns in the footage" (Coppa, p. 24). As she eloquently puts it, "the ear tells the eye what to see" (p. 24). Vidding thus demonstrates how fans create meaning *through* intermedial play, mixing music with moving image to open the source material to new interpretations and expanding avenues for creative expression.

Vidding is particularly interesting as it rejects the priority typically given to text over image. In "The Ecstatic Embrace of Verbal and Visual", Anne Keefe (2011) examines the text/image relationship in ekphrasis. Ekphrasis, she explains, is "a verbal representation of a visual representation" (p. 135). In "Ekphrasis and the Other", W. J. T Mitchell (1994) describes ekphrasis as "an attempt to repress or 'take dominion' over language's graphic Other" (p. 173). Deeming it an 'othering' practice, he explains how ekphrasis privileges the verbal over the visual, reinscribing hierarchical structures where the active, masculine verbal gives voice to the passive, feminine visual (Mitchell, 1994). Keefe explains how understandings of ekphrasis have adhered to this idea, subsequently reasserting that the verbal and the visual are separate categories of communication and completely ignoring the influence the visual has on the verbal "in language, sound, form, and voice" (p. 135). As such, she demands a re-examination of the verbal/visual exchange, calling for it to instead be understood as a mutual influence that serves to form a hybrid product (Keefe, 2011). "[B]orrowing methods and formal qualities from each art", she states, ekphrasis allow writer and reader to move between "modes of experience", rupturing boundaries between text and image to create intermedial spaces that can be 'lived in' rather than just 'looked at' (p. 136). Ekphrastic works thus go *beyond* a transfer of aesthetic conventions with text and image influencing each other and fusing to create a product *between* media.

While lyrics play a role in establishing tone or imagery, they are only one aspect of vidding. Showcasing lyrics in a vid is not required or necessary, nor are they even present at all in some cases (i.e. the song used may be instrumental). A song's tone, rhythm, pitch, and associations with other media are equally important when editing images and clips together. It is by using *all* these elements that the creator produces a work that conveys certain emotions, ideas, narratives, points of view, or arguments. In this way, vidding is an ekphrastic format that pushes Keefe's examination even further, using the verbal, visual, and audible to allow creator and consumer to exist in a space where one not merely gets to look at content but live and feel it. Vidding then, is not only an example of how fan productivity can be intermedial, with fans combining media to create something new, but also demonstrates how such work pushes back against the way we have traditionally viewed media and its boundaries.

Vidding is not a recent phenomenon, yet the rise of social media platforms has made such productivity more visible. Look up a film you saw recently on Instagram or Youtube and you'll likely find at least one (if not hundreds) of fan-made videos emphasising certain narrative lines or character relationships present in the film. What has remained consistent about vidding is that it is an embodied practice. As is the case with all types of fan productivity, fan-made content needs to be physically created. Someone's hand needs to type a spin off narrative, move the mouse to edit clips, or hold the paintbrush. Even when intermediary tools are used to help create their vision, one still needs to physically input a certain amount of information to generate the desired outcome. Fan productivity is embodied practice because the works are not removed from the body but actively tied to it.

Dance

One fan practice that best demonstrates this is dance. Lamerichs' transmedial design proves useful here as she notes that while some forms of fan productivity establish overarching narratives *across* media, not all revolve around storytelling. Instead, they can be "forms of play, critical interpretations, and material or embodied performances", which may possess some narrative qualities but do not extend a source narrative (Lamerichs, p. 18). She proposes transmedial *design* to better reflect the various types of intermedial fan play, the term 'design' incorporating the fan products that, while not narrative focused, nevertheless play between media (Lamerichs, 2018).

Dance trend videos demonstrate how people use movement to participate in culture. This is not necessarily fan productivity; those who create such videos may not necessarily know the song or artist they are dancing to, but simply want to get involved in the latest viral trend. Yet artists have tapped into this form of engagement, sharing short snippets of choreography that fans can recreate and share with each other. Such participation can help popularise songs, artists, and even accompanying music videos, demonstrating the power of intermedial fan service (and how companies reply on it to market their product) to grow an audience.

Dance is a key component within K-pop groups and their fandoms, such as BTS and their fanbase ARMY. Such groups release dedicated choreography videos that emphasise the dance aspect of their performances. These videos are unlike other performance videos, which are either live or incorporate studio lighting, editing, and camerawork. In these dedicated choreography videos, the group is in a dance studio and all production values are stripped back. There are no sets, studio lights, and everything is done in a single take. The members are not singing live, sometimes not even lip syncing. The focus, instead, is purely on the choreography – on the physical performance of the song. Such videos are released simultaneously or close to the release of the official music video, underscoring dance as a crucial element to the piece. In presenting their songs as dances, the group transforms their music into multimedia pieces. In highlighting the choreography, these videos invite fans to participate with the group – to watch and learn the choreography so they can interpret the content in and with their own bodies and dance along with them. In this way, the fan's body becomes the site *and* tool of intermedial play. Some fans then share their interpretation with others, either through videos or at in-person dance conventions or random play dance events, events organised by fans where snippets of songs are played and anyone who knows the accompanying choreography can dance with other fans. Some even take the time to make their own videos breaking down the choreography for others to learn from at a slower pace.

Affected Space of Productive Reception

Yet fan productivity is not embodied merely because one physically creates something. A fan uses their body to make content they have been physically *affected* by, making fandom and fan productivity what Lamerichs calls "affective spaces of productive reception" (p. 14). She describes affect as "an unqualified bodily state or intensity in which we are touched by an encounter with another – an artwork, a human being, a place" (p. 205). While this state has no meaning in and of itself, meaning is created when this intensity is processed into emotions (Lamerichs, 2018). She describes being a fan as an experience rooted in feeling, with fan works "consciously and productively" articulating one's embodied response to source material (p. 206). Fan productivity is embodied, therefore, because fans are *moved* to create, using intermedial play to make meaning, process, and articulate their affected experiences. Emotions are thus central in and to such work, as is evident when Coppa describes vids as "concentrated emotion, where music is used to create or extend…feelings associated with that text", giving voice to the power of affect (p. 18). This works, in turn, to impact its own audience, making consumers "see what [the creator] see[s] and feel what they feel" (Coppa, p. 17). The same is true of dance; a fan is compelled to reimagine choreography in his or her own body because of the affected experience they had and the desire to share that experience with others. Fan works both convey and provoke affect to engage in, make sense of, and *share* "a deeply felt and embodied experience" (Lamerichs, p. 30).

Affected Fan Works as Ekphrastic Works

Ekphrasis is useful to further understand the affective power of media blurring on creator and consumer more broadly. As Keefe asserts, ekphrasis is "located in the experience of the material body", with writers using their bodies to capture experience and fuse text and image to heighten intensity and affect their readers (p. 137). It requires both writer and reader to "write, read, see, and hear with and from the body", rendering the body central in not only creating but consuming the work (Keefe, p. 146). In affect being an unqualifiable experience, understanding fan products as ekphrastic works highlights them *as* affected responses – a way a fan makes sense of overwhelming sensations that are deeply felt yet hard to articulate. Other forms of fan productivity function in the same way, whether they center on the text/image relationship or not; intermedial play and creation becomes a way to untangle and make sense of affected responses, further underscoring fan production as an embodied practice, both affected and affective.

Concerts

The affective power of intermedial play is on full display at concerts, particularly large-scale pop concerts. These are overwhelming sensory experiences. Each show is a single event built upon the combination of various media, such as music, live performance, and videos on screen, and showcase various fan practices and products. Fans sing and dance along, display handmade signs and banners, and don outfits specifically chosen or made for the event. At K-pop concerts, for example, where each song is accompanied with particular choreography, fans dance along with the group on stage or with the music videos played before the show begins. Taylor Swift's Eras Tour saw the widespread sharing of handmade friendship bracelets inspired by a lyric in one of her songs. The thought, effort, and time that went into participating in the event (even if it is as simple as learning the lyrics to sing along) demonstrates how fans are moved to engage with the content. Such engagement and amalgamation of various media creates an intensely affective experience, leading many to

dance, sing, cheer, and even cry with the people around them – people who share their interests.

The Concert Film

The last few years has seen a rise in concert films that aim to replicate this experience in cinemas. These films focus primarily, if not solely, on the concert as a performance, rather than providing behind the scenes content. The camera is not static and no view is restricted, with sweeping camera movements and close-ups that capture the spectacle while keeping viewers close to the artists. The editing style changes throughout the film to mirror the tone of each song. In BTS's concert film, *BTS: Yet to Come* (2023)*,* for example, the aggressive rap songs utilise more rapid editing to reflect the quick pace and high energy of the performance while the ballads use longer uninterrupted takes that underscore their gentle tone. Yet in both instances, as in other contemporary concert films, the film constantly cuts between the performance on stage and the crowd, providing cinema goers with a sense of inclusion even though removed from the venue. Such films make use of cinematic techniques and aesthetics to mimic conventions of live performance, blurring the two to create a new type of experience for the viewer.

The impact of such media blurring is evident in the fact that viewers do not treat the screenings of these films like regular movie experiences. Fans bring signs, wear special outfits, handout handmade keepsakes, sing along, dance in the aisle, cry, and take videos of the events they see on screen. With the K-pop concert films, fans bring that group's light sticks (a flashlight type wand that lights up in accordance with the music) that they wave around *even though* it is not synced with the crowd on screen. Unlike live concerts, ticket prices for these films are the same regardless of where one sits. In fact, such films provide fans with a far cheaper way to see the concert they may have missed or did not experience from this intimate vantage point. While some films are recordings of previous performances, others are live-streamed, aiming to recreate the liveness of the actual concert by having fans in cinemas experience the event in real time. In both cases, however, the films are marketed as *events*, typically screening only once or twice before disappearing (*Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour* (2023) was an anomaly in this regard, playing in cinemas for multiple weeks). While some may appear later on streaming sites (*BTS; Yet to Come* is currently on Amazon Prime and *Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour* is on Disney +), most do not. Whether this will happen is never announced before the cinema run, generating a sense that if one misses it in theatres, they may miss it entirely and giving the experience a sense of rarity. Positioning these films this way plays a huge role in their financial success. BTS's film made over $29 million globally at the box office while Taylor Swift's made over $93 million on its opening weekend in North America alone, eventually grossing over $261 million globally and breaking the world record for the most financially successful concert movie in history. The financial success of these concert films demonstrates not only how fandom is built on intermedial play and receptive to further medial blurring to extend the life of beloved content but also how fans display and embody their fandom through various media experiences.

Female Labour and Emotion

Intermedial fan play requires skill and time to engage in and produce, both physically and emotionally. In *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom,* Abigail De Kosnik (2016) describes this as "a type of free labor…on which companies have come to rely for the generation and maintenance of audience interest in…their commodities and

platforms" (p. 13). This labour is predominantly done by women, people of colour, and the queer community. Vidding, for example, was pioneered by women (Coppa, 2022), while fanfiction was "created primarily by…and for people who self-identify as female or as not-male, many of whom identify as nonheterosexual or not exclusively heterosexual" (De Kosnik, p. 12). Yet dominant culture does not take this work seriously, specifically regarding female fan expression as "a 'scandalous category' of cultural production, well outside the bounds of 'good taste, appropriate conduct, or aesthetic merit'" (De Kosnik, pp. 14-15), leading women to fear "both legal repercussions and ridicule" by those outside of their communities (Coppa, p. 5). This is because such work is considered 'emotional'.

In *Loving Fanfiction: Exploring the Role of Emotion in Online Fandoms,* Brit Kelley (2021) explains while fan work necessitates powerful emotional engagement with source material, emotions are typically "relegated to the realm of the feminine or the other (sometimes racialised, sometimes not) – the weak" (pp. 2-4). This belief derives from the dominant Western, Cartesian theory of being, which regards emotions as something to be overcome to attain knowledge (Kelley, 2021). Like the supposed divide between media, this approach views emotions and logic as separate categories, positioning logic as superior to unproductive, irrational emotions. Despite being an integral part of learning – the place where one makes sense of feelings, experiences, and ideas – the body and its responses are dismissed, as "to be emotional is to be unprofessional, and irrational, and even, sometimes, unreliable" (Kelley, p. 4). Fan productivity then, predominantly female labour, is not taken seriously because emotions and embodied responses are not taken seriously.

The Fangirl

The fangirl is a type of fan routinely ridiculed for being overly emotional. In "Fangirling as Feminist Auto Assemblage", Emma Maguire (2018) explains how the term 'fangirl' denotes "obsessive fandom", a woman "'who has overstepped the line between healthy fandom and indecent obsession'" (pp. 112-113). While the term has been assumed by and applied to women and men "with varying degrees of irony, insult, and pride," it is typically used as an insult to "police the consumption and appreciation of cultural texts" (Maguire, p. 113). Supposedly consumed by out-of-control emotions, the fangirl and her interests are "trivial, low-quality, and not to be taken 'seriously'", her work hysterical and "beyond the boundaries of normal or healthy appreciation of texts" (Maguire, pp. 113-114). Simply put, the fangirl is regarded as a bad cultural producer, incapable of engaging with and creating worthwhile products *because of her emotions.* Yet this labour is an integral part of self-expression for women, particularly young women. With dominant culture often ignoring female narratives and perspectives, fan productivity allows women to imagine, expand, and interpret materials to *include* their voices (Maguire, 2018). In a culture where women are looked at, represented, and defined by others, repurposing and remixing media allows them to take control of their media (Maguire, 2018). The fangirl then, is a prime of example Keefe's 21st century viewer – "a viewer who is self-reflective about her own viewing" (Keefe, p. 135), enabling women "to critique, evaluate, and make meaning from cultural texts" by blurring boundaries to challenging their existence altogether (Maguire, p. 114). Maguire further explains how the fangirl constructs identity across media, bringing together a range of media objects and actively combining media into a single self-representation (Maguire, 2018). Such work is valuable not despite its emotion but *because* of it, allowing women (and others marginalised in dominant culture) to articulate their own perspectives, desires, bodies, and identities.

Building Community and Fan Archives

Fan productivity also helps the fangirl find and build community as her labour is "rewarded with the currencies of social belonging and identity" (Maguire, p. 114). Expanding on this, De Kosnik discusses how female fans act as rogue archivists to create safe spaces for their members and preserve their communities. While official archives are maintained by traditional institutions to document cultural memory, *rogue* archives preserve the content ignored by such memory institutions – online spaces that disregard copyright restriction and are constantly available and free to anyone connected to the Internet (De Kosnik, 2016). Rogue archives document what official archives will not, protecting communities "whose histories and cultures are constantly in danger of being overwritten, forgotten, deleted…by the guardians of 'official' history and culture" (De Kosnik, p. 135). Thus, De Kosnik proclaims, "memory has fallen into the hands of rogues", all those typically left behind by straight, white, male dominant culture (p. 10). As fan works are often produced by women, fan archives value and preserve a mode of female cultural production typically "derided by the male-dominated media industries" (De Kosnik, p. 142). Like both Lamerichs and Keefe, De Kosnik emphasises embodiment, noting how fan archives are maintained by physical labour by preserving embodied fan practices. Discovering such archives is beneficial to fans as it proves he or she is not alone "in their acts of…appropriation and transformation" but instead part of a community with similar interests, experiences, and identities (De Kosnik, pp. 135-136). Fan archives thus archive affect, preserving affected responses and labour and showing fans that their communities are worth remembering (De Kosnik, 2016).

Physical Fan Archives

While De Kosnik's discussion revolves around digital fan archives, I wondered what its physical manifestation would look like, if it could exist at all. Embodiment and space are important aspects in female fan expression as the treatment by dominant culture directly impacts how female fans display their fandom. This, of course, comes back to the larger issue of the space women are permitted to take up in the world generally. When alone, the fangirl is easily othered. However, by coming together in a physical space and displaying their fandom, digital fan archives can be *made physical*. A concert is not only a prime example of fans coming together, but also, like the archive, houses a wide range of fan practices. It is not, on its own, a fan archive but rather *becomes* one by incorporating a range of fan work into the single experience of the concert. That is, the venue becomes a fan archive *through* fan productivity. It is *that* which transforms spaces into fan archives – community spaces where the fangirl can safely embrace, engage in, and display her interests with like-minded individuals and ultimately assert her existence and the value of her work.

Concert Films as Rogue Fan Archive

It is not just concert venues that transform in this way. Screenings of concert films function in the same way. Yet unlike concerts, where thousands of fans travel to the building for the same purpose, the audience for such cinema screenings is significantly smaller. These films are typically shown at multiplexes, meaning that not everyone there is there to see that particular film. This often results in fans hiding their fandom until they are inside the screening room to avoid any ridicule or suspicious looks garnered when not visibly part of a community. Yet the experience changes upon stepping into the screening room, with viewers growing more relaxed knowing everyone there has gathered for the same reason. Fans unveil their outfits, pull out their banners, trade homemade keepsakes, and grab their lightsticks. As

all of these things would be common to see at concerts, by bringing them to cinemas, fans use intermedial play and references to turn the mundane screening room into their community space where singing, dancing, and talking throughout the film are permitted. It is worthwhile noting that the content of this screening is not necessarily new. Fans may have already been to the concert in-person or seen videos of the performances online. While there may be some who are seeing it for the first time, the majority of those in attendance are more than just casual fans. This means that while there is a desire to see the content, there is another reason they chose to attend the screening – that is, to recreate the experience with others. For those few hours, fangirls reclaim a physical space in the world where they can freely display and practice their fandom. The energy of such a transformation lingers once the credits roll, with viewers sticking around to discuss their experience. Unlike coming into the theatre, where people are hesitant that they will be out of place, fans leave the building at the same time. Together. In this way, by coming together, the fangirl carves a space for herself and her community in a world that normally shuns her.

Conclusion

Fans of BTS and Taylor Swift are precisely the type of fans routinely belittled, mocked, and dismissed for how they engage with the content they consume. They are *just* fangirls, too emotional to be rational. Yet treating this engagement seriously and investigating the affective power of intermedial fan work first-hand – by talking to fans and going to these events and embracing the loud, self-aware ridiculousness yet fully earnest fan play – exposes the importance of embodied, felt responses to logic and understanding. The fangirl's work is valuable not despite its emotion but *because* of it, allowing her (and all those marginalised from mainstream culture) to articulate her own perspectives, desires, bodies, and identities. Neither obsessive nor an expression of out-of-control emotions, such work is in fact labour that requires effort, skill, and time. It is an avenue for one to feel and process affected experiences in order to articulate a sense of self and build community in a world that undermines and dismisses such experiences. While I focused on female fan expression and the fangirl, this project provides a starting point for further exploration into how intermedial fan play is affected by such things as gender, race, class, and sexual orientation. Not merely a phenomenon in art nor a method to increase affective power, intermedial play combines various modes of expression in order for one to communicate with the world. A way to articulate thoughts and understand overwhelming feeling, intermediality helps give life meaning.

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Collaborative Hospitality Design Study Linking Academia and Industry:
Understanding the Shifts in Guests' Preferences for Innovative Design Models

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Abstract
The hospitality sector is facing considerable transformation leading to changes in guests' needs. According to studies, innovative design solutions are in demand for distinctive experiences. This investigation identifies current hospitality guests' expectations for advanced design responses. Several data validate the research including the results of the Hospitality Design Challenge incorporated in a design course at the American University in Dubai. Being the competition conceived in collaboration with a relevant Hospitality Operator, the implications of interrelating academic and professional practice in the learning experience are explored.
The qualitative and quantitative study comprises:
• Design senior and junior undergraduate students' development of their design concepts for an innovative guestroom, the scope of the annual challenge. The design process involves research, case-study analysis, surveys, and professional juries. The competition was conducted for six editions, involving 109 individuals.
• Assessment and comparison of results and data, observations, interviews, and literature review, including a supplementary questionnaire during the COVID-19-related period.
The findings on current trends in guests' needs highlight a focus on well-being, accessibility, biophilia, authenticity, space flexibility and multifunctionality, sustainability, and technology integration. Responsive conceptual design models are elaborated. Experiential learning has proved crucial in supporting innovation, meeting industry demands, and student engagement. Furthermore, despite the reciprocity of Academia and Industry collaboration, the lack of resources may be a limitation. The research offers insights into the evolution of the Hospitality Design field for educators, future designers, and industry stakeholders, contributing to the sector's advancement.

Keywords: Hospitality Design, Innovative Design, Experiential Learning, Active Learning, Design

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Introduction

The Hospitality Design field comprehends the design of functional and accessible spaces for hotels, restaurants, and all the hospitality-related areas. It is an essential component of the commercial design industry. Being a multidisciplinary sector, it includes several other disciplines such as lighting design, MEP, architecture, contract design.

In addition, it is an extremely dynamic area, subject to rapid advancements and modifications mainly due to the high level of competition. The field is subject to pivotal transformations affecting the whole sector and, subsequently, the operational aspects along with the design and use of space. The reasons for these changes are diverse, including the increasing sophistication and diversification of guests' needs. Economic, cultural and social transformations due to recent events such as the global pandemic, the fast-technological advancement, the shift in general priorities and, as a result, the adoption of new behaviors, contribute to the modifications of guests' needs. The focus shifted towards new requirements related to the hospitality experience. The growing research for authenticity and link with the location, along with additional privacy and personalization, the integration of technology, innovation, and the rising of awareness on sustainable aspects, are just few of the sensitive directions driving the guests' preferences and leading to innovative design responses.

Understanding the guests' needs and trends is crucial for the sector's success. Designers have an extremely important role in addressing the market, the industry and the guests' expectations through design, anticipating future changes.

The study focuses on the shifts in guests' preferences through the years for the identification of current and future design trends. The research also examines the importance of Academia and Industry collaboration for students, educators and academia, industry, and the overall Hospitality Design field. The collaborative design challenge developed by the Interior Design Department at American University in Dubai and Rotana Hotel Operator is a key component of this study.

Background & Context

1. Brief Historical Evolution of Hospitality and Hospitality Design

The Hospitality concept as we intend nowadays is relatively recent; origins of commercial-related activities can be found going back to the ancient civilizations of Greece and the Roman Empire (O'Gorman, 2009).

Initially, the development of such activities was principally linked to the main trade and army routes. The activities were purely related to travelers' fulfilment of necessities, with usually shared accommodations where the practicality was the priority and comfort had minor relevance.

Following, other structures received travelers, like the monasteries. Taverns and inns became popular, providing affordable shelter. With the expansion of the infrastructures' network due to the introduction of new and fast transportation means such as the train, more lands and city became accessible. The transportation of goods intensified and expanded, with the consequence of an increase in movement and a rising demand for additional passengers and travelers' accommodations.

According to O'Gorman, Hospitality was a primary feature in the development of the societies that have been considered. It is an essential part of human existence, especially as it deals with basic human needs (food, drink, shelter, and security) (O'Gorman, 2005).

Grand Hotels and the concept of hospitality industry developed around the 18th and 19th Centuries in Europe (Denby, 2002). These structures were luxuriously designed for their wealthy guests. Later on, modernity embraced minimalism, focusing on design simplicity and service, balancing the experience in terms of aesthetics, functionality, and fulfillment of needs. The 20th Century sees then the definition of Boutique Hotels, offering unique experiences.

This quick overview highlights the continuous evolution of the hospitality sector where an increasing market segmentation generates diversification of the hospitality offers in terms of experience and design.

2. Transformation of the Hospitality Sector & Responses of the Hospitality Design Field

As mentioned, in the past years the sector witnessed rapid transformations. These changes are reflected in guests' expectations.

Sustainability is increasingly linked to hospitality and hospitality design. Studies suggest that a range of factors help to explain this trend: to comply with the growing volume of environmental and social regulations within many jurisdictions; concerns over the scarcity of natural resources; increased public awareness of the growing importance of environmentally and socially consciousness; growing media coverage; brand strategies (Jones, Hillier, & Comfort, 2016). In terms of hospitality design, the integration of biophilic design and eco-friendly practices is a current trend. The guests are informed about the topic, resulting in the corresponding requests for hospitality experience where sustainable and environmentally friendly practices are implemented.

Technology integration is becoming a requirement in the sector, not only for the adjustments in the work environment due to the use of technologies, but because it is increasingly part of the daily life. Advancement in innovative technologies is a fast process. Smart rooms, implementation of Internet of Things (IoT) and Augmented Reality (AR), Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Virtual Reality (VR), contactless services… are all expected elements of immersive and innovative hospitality experiences.

Privacy concerns due to the increasing number of sensors and IoT/IoE installed around hotels consider that technological advancement will lead to more efficient and profitable hotels in the future (Leung, 2021).

Another important aspect in hotel design is to increase the flexibility of hotel features to offer hotel guests greater control over their temporary homes based on their needs and wants. "Customization" is the key term in hospitality that represents this type of flexibility (Lo, 2010).

3. Hospitality Sector and Hospitality Design in the UAE

Despite being a relatively recent Nation, constituted in 1971, the United Arabs Emirates (UAE) are a well-known touristic hub in the Middle East, extremely attractive due to stability

and geographic location. The Country is known for its multiculturalism and strong identity. According to Mordor Intelligence Research & Advisory, it had a fast-post-pandemic recovery rate in the hospitality field, with a constant growth (Mordor Intelligence Research & Advisory, 2024).

The UAE Hospitality Industry is diversifying its offer and strongly implementing both sustainability and technology in the experiences. The market is very competitive, considering the recent rise of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a touristic destination. It is a dynamic sector, fast in modifications and adaptation to demands, open to the adoption of innovative and pioneering solutions.

The sector is ground-breaking in integrating technologies into design, demonstrating a shift towards digitalization.

The overall commitment to digital transformation and sustainability has not left the hospitality and tourism industry untouched. Like its peers in other regions, the industry has had to rapidly adapt to the changes brought about by the pandemic by embracing innovation (Nadkarni & Haider, 2022). Ultimately, the hospitality design in the UAE embraces modern trends and cultural identity, highlighting the elements of its rich heritage.

4. Guests Expectations

Amongst the several theories and methodologies focusing on the definition and measurement of guests' expectation, the SERVQUAl is one of the most commonly used. It is a multiple-item scale measuring consumer perceptions of service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988).

The perceived physical environment does not directly influence guest experience but is indirectly shaped through the sensory, affective, cognitive, social and behavioral responses the environment elicits in the visitor (Gavilan, & Al-shboul, 2023).

A memorable experience occurs when emotions are involved along with the satisfaction of needs and expectations. Several Guest Centered methods consider guests at the center of the design and the design process. Involving them during the design progression, such as in testing or through experience-related observations, supports the designer and the design itself.

As consumers become increasingly connected, their expectations, preferences, and behaviors are also evolving. The result is more informed and empowered consumers. As favorite apps and networks evolve to personalize engagement, the standards for guest experiences rise. This behavior will only continue to advance (Solis, Li, & Szymanski, 2014).

Technology integration through continuous connectivity and integration of technology pre-during- and post- experience became normalized in the past years and is included in the current expectations.

Guest centric approaches support design. In view of the fast changes in the field, experts must not only anticipate future needs but also exceed guest expectations for the success of the field.

5. Collaboration Academia and Industry in the Hospitality Design

In recent times, Academia and Industry have increased their collaboration in various forms. This partnership is increasingly evident and beneficial for both parties. Students are exposed early to market and industry demands for better training and preparation in view of their next career step. Industry contributes in nurturing young talents, leading to access to the workforce. Since the hospitality sector is experiencing rapid and continuous changes, collaboration with academia supports the development of the sector in terms of research and investigation of innovative and effective solutions. These advancements are reflected in the hospitality design field.

Professionals collaborating in the learning experience contribute to students' knowledge, and the refinement of their skills. The initiatives, such as real-life projects developed in class, create professional practice opportunities, resulting in effective learning outcomes.

These kinds of activities have impact on different stages of the teaching-learning process and dissimilar influence on students' acquisition of knowledge, abilities and professional skills (Lantada, Morgado, Muñoz-Guijosa, Sanz, Otero, García... & Ochoa, 2013).

These partnerships, in several forms:
- Support the process of bridging Academia and Industry, interlinking theoretical knowledge and practical skills;
- Support research and innovation useful for both sides and the general field;
- Support the development and identification of innovative teaching methods and active learning;
- Improve the overall learning experience, usually generating motivation and interest, building important professional networks and connections, better preparing students for their next professional step;
- Support the Academia and the improvement of academic programs;
- Support the Industry;
- Enhance design practice and research on sustainability;
- Promote inclusion;
- Often generate internships and employment opportunities.

Purpose of the Study

In examining the ongoing transformation of the Hospitality Market and Industry, the study focuses on identifying trends in guests' needs.

Detecting key elements in guests' perceptions supports the Hospitality Design field and the designers in fulfilling their expectations. It also facilitates the designers and architects themselves in the design process for effective outcomes.

The research identifies the design patterns for the definition of design models implementing recurrent trends, through six years of study and cross-examining multiple design solutions.

The study analyzes a real-base project's impact on the learning experience reflected in the student's performances and supports the definition of innovative active-learning methodologies.

Method

The investigation has been developed at the American University in Dubai, Interior Design Department, CIDA (Council for Interior Design Accreditation) accredited Department, in Dubai, United Arabs Emirates. CIDA is an independent, non-profit accrediting organization for Interior Design Education Programs at colleges and universities in the United States and internationally.

It is validated by the **#Hotel REgeneration Student Design Challenge** multiple annual editions shaped by Prof. Lambri in collaboration with **Rotana Hotels**, one of the major Hotel Operator of the Region and internationally. It has been developed in the Interior Design course Hospitality Design for six years, offered every Spring semester from 2018/19 to 2024. It mainly involved junior undergraduate interior design students for a total of 109 individuals. All participants voluntarily contributed to the study. Students received detailed information and acknowledged their participation.

Table 1: # Hotel REgeneration Design Challenge Participants' Profile

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent %
Year	2024	24	22
	2023	25	23
	2022	16	15
	2021	19	17
	2020	15	14
	2019	10	9
	Total	*109*	*100*
Academic Level	Junior	109	100

The qualitative and quantitative study comprises two phases:

- The development of design concepts for an innovative guestroom, which is the scope of the annual challenge with the support of Rotana Hotels, partners in the Design Challenge initiative.
    - o This portion of the study includes research and analysis, design process, case-study analysis, surveys, and data collection. Professional international juries are also involved.
    - o The competition, also named *Design Atelier*, follows Guest-Centric Design approach. It challenges students' creativity to envision an innovative design concept. The aim is to analyze, study and develop the concept and the operational aspects in a post-pandemic scenario, envisioning an innovative *Hotel Guestroom/Suite-System.*
    - o Key elements of the Challenge are: Flexible spaces, Diversification and Space Flexibility, Well-being, Sustainability, Innovative solutions.
    - o It reached its 6th successful edition, becoming well-liked amongst the students for its topic and the consisting development in terms of contents and outcomes.
    - o International Professionals of the field of Hospitality are involved in the process through critique sessions, lectures and as jury Members selecting the winners of the challenge. The Rotana Hotels team contributes along with the professor in periodic revisions and dedicated workshops.

- The second part of the study has been elaborated by the faculty and includes assessment and comparison of results and data, observations, interviews, and literature review, along with an additional questionnaire conducted during the COVID-19-related period.

    o   A specific focus has also been given to pre- and post-pandemic implications, particularly in terms of guests' needs and expectations along with students' perspective as young generation of designers and guests. The analysis has been conducted in consideration of the advancement of the Hospitality field and the impact of this experiential learning experience on students.

Findings, Discussion & Models

The results highlight essential elements to be considered for a successful guest's experience.

Components like well-being, accessibility, biophilia, authenticity, space flexibility and multi-functionality, personalization, sustainability, and technology integration resulted relevant in guests' expectations.

Based on these findings and the analysis of innovative layouts and design solution developed during the Design Challenge, responsive design models have been formulated, mapping design references for current and future implementation.

In addition, the #Hotel REgeneration Student Design Challenge, being an interesting example of collaboration Academia and Industry, demonstrated the benefits of a direct connection with the industry for undergraduate students, facilitating the overall learning experience and supporting students' pro-activeness. Students involved in the challenge demonstrated an exceptional interest in the topic and a strong commitment, along with enthusiasm and a positive attitude at all stages of the design process. Therefore, outcomes demonstrate interesting design solutions.

A professional experience in the hospitality sector is highly regarded by potential field-related employers, facilitating internship and employment opportunities. Experiential learning proves to be instrumental in promoting innovation, addressing industry demands, and student participation.

Findings: Survey

The Survey was conducted in the Hospitality Design class 2024 involving twenty-four undergraduate Interior Design junior level students. A few graphics:

1. Identification Current Trends in Hospitality Design
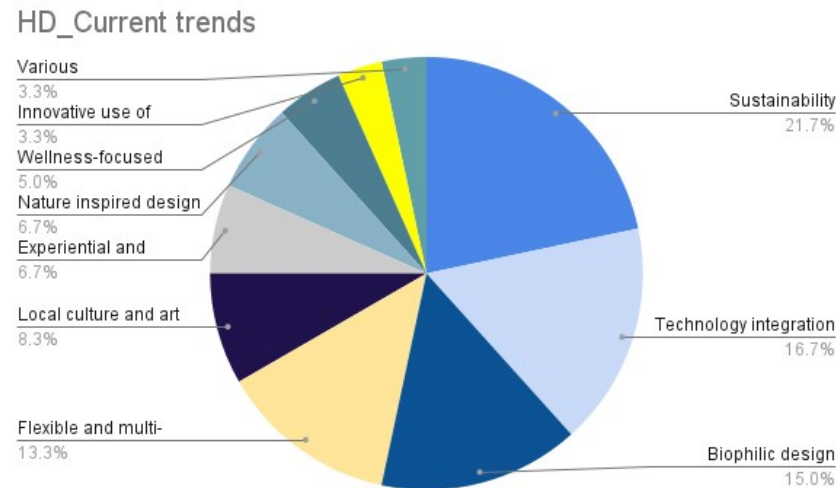
Figure 1: HD Current Trends

Table 2: Survey

Sustainability	**21.7%**
Technology integration	**16.7%**
Biophilic design	**15.0%**
Flexible and multi-Functional/modular spaces	**13.3%**
Local culture and art-inspired design	8.3%
Experiential and unique experience	6.7%
Nature inspired design	6.7%
Wellness-focused experience	5.0%
Innovative use of materials	3.3%
Various	3.3%

2. The Role of Sustainability in Shaping Hospitality Design Trends
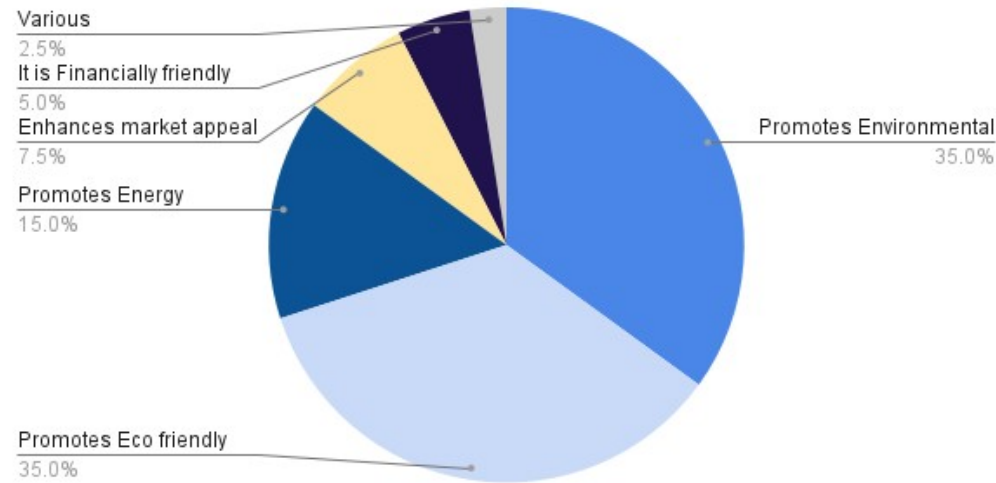
Figure 2: Sustainability in Shaping Hospitality Design Trends

Table 3: Survey

Promotes Environmental consciousness and impact	**35.0%**
Promotes Eco-friendly practices and Resource efficiency	**35.0%**
Promotes Energy efficiency	15.0%
Enhances market appeal	7.5%
It is Financially friendly	5.0%

3. The Role of Technology/AI/VR in Shaping Hospitality Design Trends

Figure 3: Technology/AI/VR in Shaping Hospitality Design Trends

Table 4: Survey

Enhances transformative and immersive experience	**20.0%**
Enhances Technology in the experience	**20.0%**
Enhances space innovation and efficiency	**20.0%**
Enhances creative and unique design	**20.0%**
Enhances personalized and human-scale experience	18.2%
Promotes sustainability	1.8%

4. The Role of Nature in Shaping Hospitality Design Trends
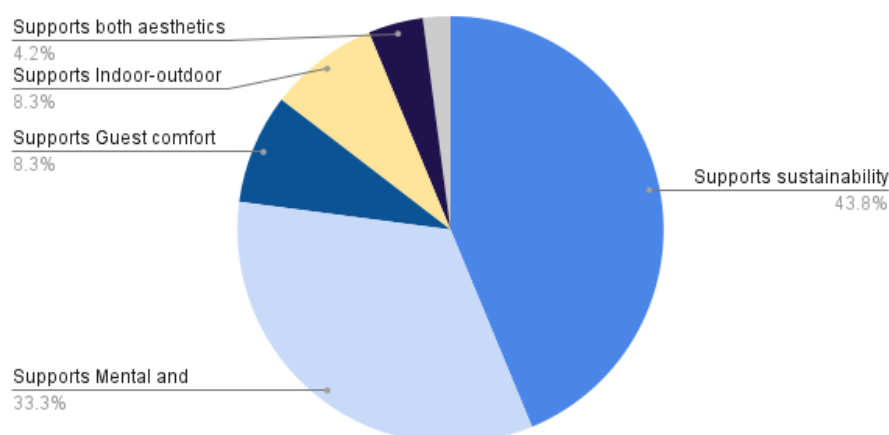
Figure 4: Nature in Shaping Hospitality Design Trends

Table 5: Survey

Supports sustainability and Biophilic design	**43.8%**
Supports Mental and physical well-being	**33.3%**
Supports Guest comfort and sensory experience	8.3%
Supports Indoor-outdoor connectivity	8.3%
Supports both aesthetics and functionality	4.2%
Various	2.1%

Survey Findings Conclusions

Participants, resulted mainly informed about hospitality design trends through online sources.
- Current trends in hospitality design are identified in: Sustainability; Technology integration; biophilic design; Flexible and multi-Functional/modular spaces.
- Incorporating modern design trends enhances the guest experience mainly in terms of Aesthetics and visual appeal; Comfort and Ergonomics; Functionality.
- The role of Sustainability in shaping hospitality design trends is mainly identified in: The Promotion Environmental consciousness and impact; The Promotion of Eco-friendly practices; Resource efficiency.
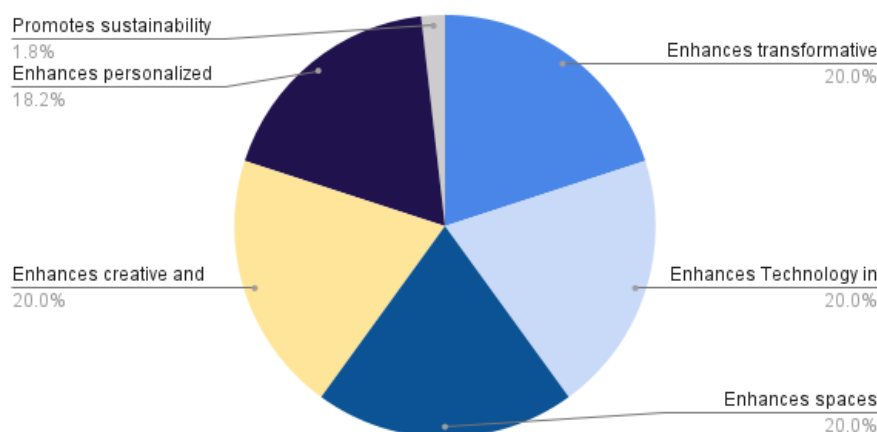- The role of **technology/AI/VR** in shaping hospitality design trends, mainly: Enhances transformative and immersive experience; Enhances Technology in the experience; Enhances space innovation and efficiency; Enhances creative and unique design.
- The role of **nature** in the hospitality design field, mainly: Supports sustainability and Biophilic design; Supports Mental and physical well-being.
- **Shifts in guest preferences** are mainly identified in: Wellness and Health demand; Flexible spaces allowing to fulfil different needs; Technology integration.
- Main challenges designers face in the implementation of new design trends in hospitality projects: Budget constraints; Balance innovation and functionality.
- Hospitality design trends differences across various regions are identified in: Cultural influences; Climate considerations.
- Main shift in the perception of hospitality for the guests after COVID-19 in: Emphasis on Health and Safety concerns and measures; Emphasis on Hygiene priorities and standards.

Findings: Elaboration Data (six years) #Hotel Regeneration Challenge

1. Design Choices–Theme
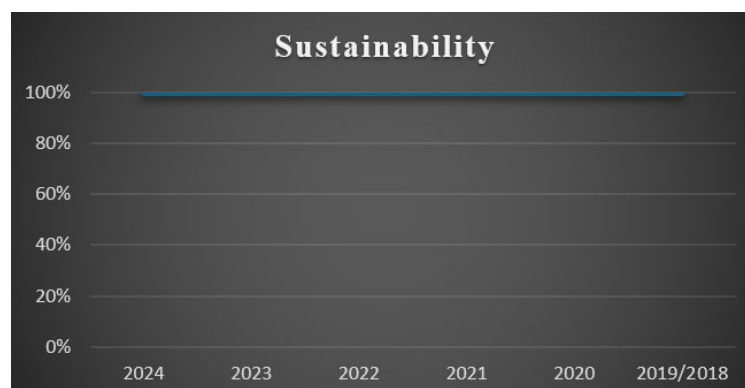
Figure 5: Sustainability

Table 6: Design Choices. Theme Sustainability

2024	100%
2023	100%
2022	100%
2021	100%
2020	100%
2019/2018	100%

2. Design Choices-Theme
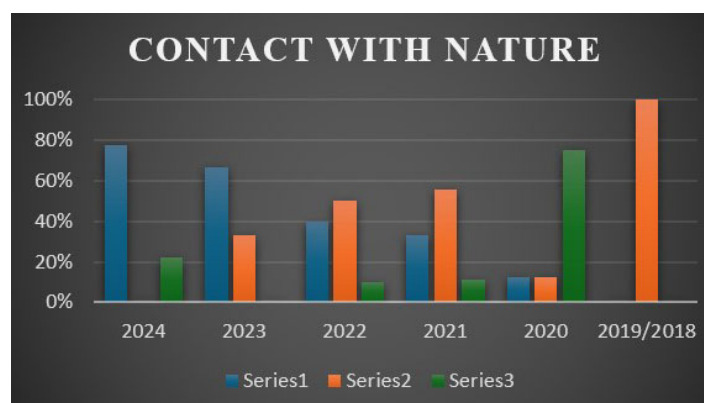
Figure 6: Contact With Nature

Table 7: Design Choices. Theme Contact With Nature

	1 Specific location	2 City location to requalify	3 Unspecific location/adaptable to different locations/movable/modularity
2024	78%	0%	22%
2023	67%	0%	33%
2022	33%	11%	56%
2021	33%	11%	56%
2020	13%	75%	12%
2019/2018	0%	100%	0%

3. Design Choices–Theme
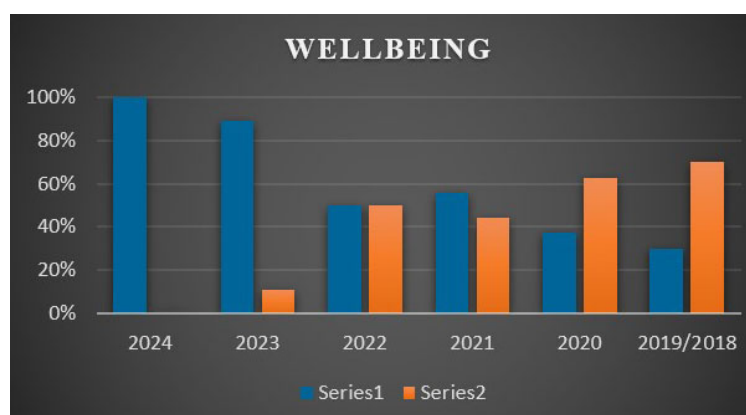
Figure 7: Well-being

Table 8: Design Choices. Theme Well-being

	1 Body and mind wellness activities *Physical activities, Contact with nature, Art-related activities.*	2 NOT specified wellness-related activities
2024	100%	100%
2023	89%	11%
2022	50%	50%
2021	56%	44%
2020	38%	62%
2019/2018	30%	70%

4. *Design Suite/Guest Room*

Figure 8: Design Suite/Guest Room

Table 9: Individual Structure or Part of the Hotel's Main Structure

	1 Individual	2 Part of the hotel's main structure
2024	100%	0%
2023	100%	0%
2022	90%	10%
2021	11%	89%
2020	38%	62%
2019/2018	0%	100%

Data Findings Conclusions

Observations elaborated from data:
- Relevance of sustainability: all projects **100% applied sustainable Design Principles** through the years.
- **The need and research of contact with nature is currently extremely relevant.** Noticed a progressive shift thought the years: in 2018 projects have been mainly located in cities (100%), in 2024 the 78% of the participants preferred to locate their projects in a specific site in contact with nature.

- **Current focus on well-being in several forms such as physical, mental, spiritual, social.** Noticed a progressive shift thought the years: in 2018 projects did NOT specified wellness-related activities (70%) while in 2024 Body and Mind wellness-related activities are extremely relevant and included in all projects (100%).
- **Design Suite/Guest room: current preference for privacy and personalization given by an individual structure**, such as lodges, chalet or villa, not included in the main hospitality building. Noticed a progressive shift thought the years: in 2018 all projects were part of a main structure (100%), in 2024 all projects have an individual structure (100%).
- **Architectural Typology: new structure or re-qualification of existing building.** Except for 2018 where was given relevance to requalification of existing structures, through the years it has been noticed the predominant preference in new structures till 2024 (100%). **This result highlights the preference on the personalization of the experience.**
- **Target–Noticed the constant identification of a specific target.** Interesting the increase of specific categories such as art lovers, sport-related guests, nature lovers, along with mainly sustainability supporters and itinerant tourists.
- **Type of experience and location;** preferred destination location. In 2018 for all projects the location was extremely important (100%), currently reduced to 78% but still relevant, such as UAE, Saudi Arabia. **Noticed an increment in Adaptable or Modular solutions.**

*All projects with constant connectivity, technology integration, offered activities, innovative solutions and the option for remote working.

Findings: Models

Model 1. Earthen Retreat, Saudi Arabia
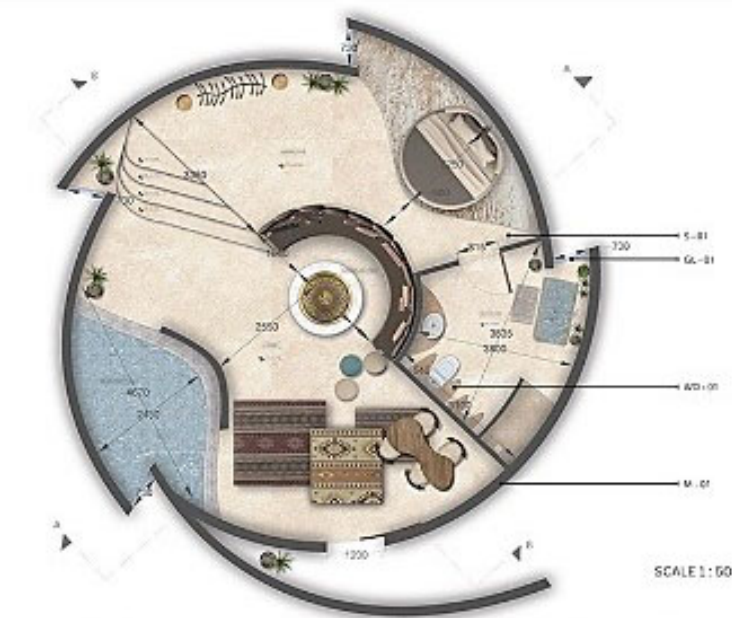
Figures 9, 10: Earthen Retreat, Saudi Arabia
Credits –Project by Afra Al Suwaidi, Mehak Minocha, Sameya Masroof Ahmed
Mentor Prof. A. Lambri.

Main Elements:
- – Authenticity: link to the territory and natural environment, Art lovers.
- – Well-being, accessibility, Flexibility and Personalization.
- – Space flexibility and multi-functionality.
- – Sustainability: 3D printed project.
- – Technology integration.

Model 2. Falls, Modular Project, Adaptable
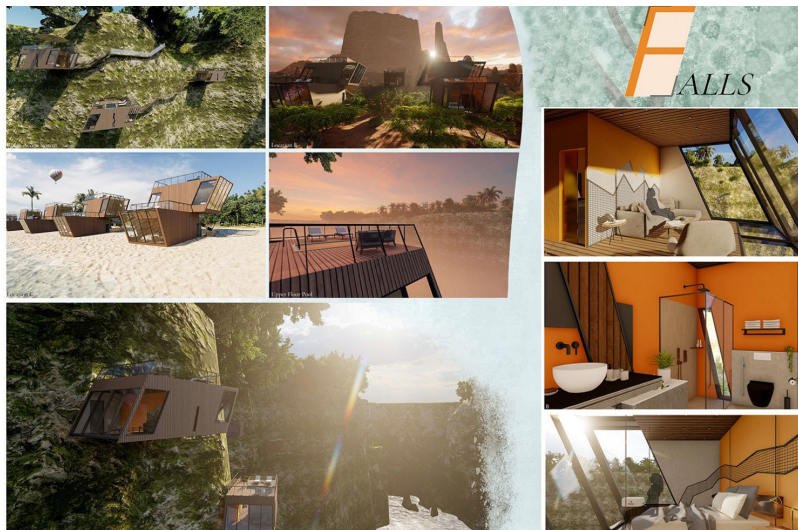
Figure 11: Falls, Modular Project, Adaptability
Credits – Project by Dalin Abubaker. Mentor Prof. A. Lambri

Main Elements:
- – Modularity. Adaptability.
- – Well-being, Accessibility, Flexibility and Personalization.
- – Space flexibility and multi-functionality.

- Sustainability.
- Contact with nature.
- Technology integration.

Model 3. *Yugen, Modular Project, Adaptable*

Figure 12: Yugen, Modular Project, Adaptability
Credits – Project by Lana Shadid, Nouf Al Doseri. Mentor Prof. A. Lambri

Main Elements:
- Modularity. Adaptability.
- Well-being, Accessibility, Flexibility and Personalization. Physical Activity – climbing.
- Space flexibility and multi-functionality.
- Sustainability.
- Contact with nature.
- Technology integration.

Model 4. *Areesh Retreat, UAE*
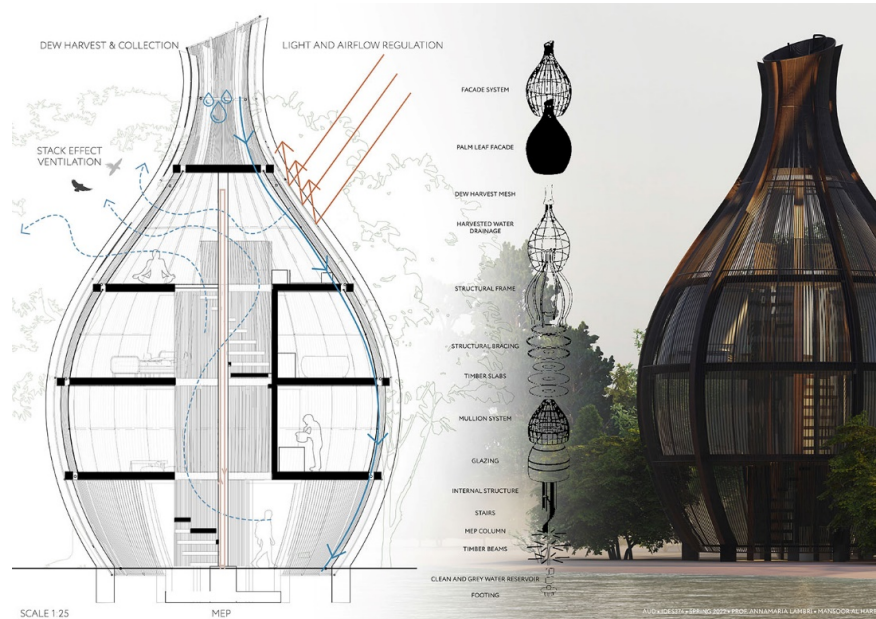
Figures 13, 14: Areesh Retreat, UAE
Credits – Project by Mansoor Al Harbi. Mentor Prof. A. Lambri

Main Elements:
- – Modularity. Adaptability.
- – Well-being, Accessibility, Flexibility and Personalization.
- – Space flexibility and multi-functionality.
- – Sustainability. Self-sustainable.
- – Contact with nature. Biophilia.
- – Technology integration.

Conclusions

The study highlights the following components to be included in design as an expression of guests' expectations:
- • Well-being;
- • Accessibility and personalization;
- • Contact with nature and biophilia;
- • Sustainability;
- • Authenticity and identity;
- • Space flexibility and multi-functionality along with modularity;
- • Technology integration.

The major shift in expectations was observed as a post-pandemic impact. Due to the period's limitations (both physical and emotional), individuals reprioritized their needs, particularly in terms of personalization of the experience, contact with nature and an increase research of well-being-related initiatives. Individuals demonstrate their preference for flexible spaces adaptable to needs.

The research highlights the importance of the collaboration Academia and Industry for the definition of effective learning experiences and innovative teaching methods. Furthermore, Experiential Learning generates students' engagement and enthusiasm, enhancing creativity. Although limitation could be experienced in terms of Academic or Industry constrains, the

commitment with the industry is beneficial for their future careers and supports our role as Interior Design professionals and educators in preparing students for entry-level work.

Ultimately, a successful Academia and Industry partnership supports innovative solutions, and effective design responses to guests' changes in needs.

Acknowledgements

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Unveiling the Dissonant Narratives of Mintal, Davao City As the Philippines' Little Tokyo

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Abstract

This study presents the complex heritage narrative of Mintal, Davao City, dubbed as the "Little Tokyo of the Philippines." It critically examines the dissonant heritage claim that contrasts the celebratory Japanese influence with the marginalized Filipino contributions in historical accounts. Drawing from an extensive literature review encompassing 236 sources, including works by Japanese writers in English, post-war historians, and local scholars, the paper centers on the Japanese establishment of an agro-economic community in Mintal from 1903 to the 1940s. This period saw significant local development, leading to the recognition of Ohta Kyosaburo as the 'Father of Davao Development.' Despite acknowledging some merit in this narrative, the paper argues that it is an overstated and incomplete story. It emphasizes the often-overlooked role of Filipinos, whose contributions are frequently rendered invisible or undervalued in historical discourse. The paper seeks to uncover the dissonance in these narratives, advocating for a reevaluation that acknowledges Filipino agency and fosters national self-pride. By presenting a nuanced view that elevates the Filipino perspective, the study aims to contribute to a more balanced historical understanding and raise national identity.

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Introduction

This paper presents the case of Davao City, specifically a small barangay called Mintal, situated between the Davao gulf seaports and the mountainous foothills, which claims that it is the "Little Tokyo of the Philippines". I will argue how this moniker represents a dissonant heritage, where conflicting ideologies and inconsistent interpretations abound.

The analysis presented here stemmed from a review of 236 titles from related literature that includes books, doctoral thesis paper, research papers, journal articles, periodicals, website writings available online in English. This list represents different writers from different timeframes – Japanese who wrote in English like Hayase (1984), post-war historians like Goodman (1967), Filipino post-war historians like Saniel (1966), and local historians like Corcino (1997), Gloria (1987), and Tiu (2005). Primary sources were not gathered because surviving first and second generation eye witnesses to this Japanese period in Davao is incredibly rare.

To study the narratives of these texts, the concept of frame analysis by Erving Goffman in 1974 and as reinterpreted in many other studies (Entman, 1993; Adair, 1996; Druckman, 2001; Scheff, 2005; Yu Jose & Dacudao, 2015) was used as a tool to find perceived themes that "are selected, emphasized, and presented to show what exists, what happens, and what matters" (Gitlin, 1980) to certain groups in a particular historical era. The interpretations enumerated below attempts to accomplish the following: (1) show the dissonances of this "Little Tokyo" heritage idea, (2) the nuances in the otherwise simplistic relationship between the actors, and (3) offer reinterpretations or contradictions that give a fuller picture of this heritage story.

At the center of the idea of "Little Tokyo" is how the Japanese, from 1903-1940s, established in Mintal an agro-economic community that vastly contributed to the local development so much so that a Japanese by the name of Ohta Kyosaburo was named by local historians themselves as the 'Father of Davao Development'. The extant texts by various scholars included in this review support this general idea. While I recognize this idea to have some merit, I argue that it is only partial and that it is somehow overstated. I also want to highlight what very few scholars (Yu Jose & Dacudao, 2015; Tiu, 2003) insist – that the role of the Filipinos was often made invisible, understated, undervalued, or its significance unrecognized.

The gaping lack, that compelled me to unravel the points of dissonance related to this heritage story, is the often negative, self-diminishing, or silent and unlearned voice of the Filipinos when telling of their role to this history and to the present. I could only hope that by presenting the conflicts or nuances in the prevailing narratives, specifically in favor of the Filipino, one can scaffold or increase the sense of nationalism and self-pride in dire shortage in literature and real life.

What Is the Geographical and Historical Context of Barrio Mintal?

Mintal is a 6 square kilometer (or 600 hectare) barangay in the third congressional district of Davao City. In the map, it is located 111 meters above sea level and situated in the suburban area of the city towards the more mountainous periphery of the city. The land area is relatively flat and traversed by several major waterways such as Tamugan and Talomo rivers.

It was once a part of a lightly dense forest which was relatively easy to clear. A fitting land use for such a geographic profile is surely agriculture.

Davao City, at present, is a chartered city that was once part of the District of Davao Moro Province. The Davao Region included not just Davao City but neighboring towns as well, such as Padada where the Awad Abaca Plantation was located.

The entire Davao Region have large tracts of land that were flat. Throughout history these lands had been used as settlements, agricultural lands, landing sites, military camps and others. Relative to Mindanao, Davao is located at a secured enclave at the South. It is seldom exposed to typhoon and surrounded by mountain ranges. A fitting location for a secure settlement among many travelers and migrants.

What Actors Should Be Considered in the Narratives?

This "Little Tokyo of the Philippines" heritage story is generally about two peoples – the Filipinos and the Japanese. I further stratify them into four: Prewar Filipino settlers of the region that is to be identified as Barrio Mintal, Prewar Japanese immigrants led by two Japanese businessmen Ohta and Furukawa, the present-day Japanese descendants also referred to as *Nikkei Jinkai*, and the present Filipino community who are current settlers in this 'Little Tokyo' of the Philippines.

Each actor has a different frame of reality that reflects their understanding of the past and present situations. Based on the texts reviewed, the Filipinos are often depicted as silent, compliant, or the invisible actor who were hospitable and accepting of the Japanese. The Japanese, on the other hand, is depicted as the active contributors, the planners, and the strategists who kept to themselves as a distinct community.

I suggest the possibility that the root of this difference is heavily tethered to their experiences in the preceding century. The pre-war local inhabitants were independent tribal groups that existed in small societies. However, the Spanish rule and American government subjugated them and once making the Davao Region a Moro Province. The Filipino psyche was understandably suppressed and overcome by several colonizers resulting to what is often referred to as colonial mentality – an expected result of a combined 400 years of an invading exploitative presence.

When they first met, the Japanese, on the other hand, had just came out from two centuries of tight-lid self-isolation (known as *Sakoku*) precisely to ward off colonial influence. The first actor, even with countless resistances and display of heroism, had been successfully brainwashed to own defeat and open borders to different migrants or exploiters. The second actors, on the other hand, had seemed to preserve their strong sense of nationality, albeit arguably grounded on a strong sense of fear and shame. I imagine these two people meeting, the other psychologically harassed for so long, perhaps calloused, and therefore apathetically friendly. The other, diligent, wary, but with a strong sense of self. Clashes in the interpretations of their relationship is bound to happen which was amplified by the language, cultural and political barriers at that time.

What Makes the "Little Tokyo" Heritage Dissonant?

Elsewhere in the Philippines, the memory of the Japanese presence, although brief, is mostly filled with remorse and a deep sense of traumatic loss. The picture in Davao city is claimed to be one of redeemed friendship and economic success. I point to several controversies within this grand picture and in the actors' narratives that incite questions about the veracity of this story.

1. *A Fatherless City Development*

The ascribed status and title of Ohta Kyosaburo as the "Father of development in Davao" is an overstatement. Davao, in this sense, can cumulatively refer to the Davao Region at that time which expands wider than Davao City today. The fact that this title was attributed by Davao local historians perhaps echo the self-negating tendency and colonial mentality of Filipinos though that may not be the intention. This title, though an informal recognition, is repeated through various accounts about the city's history. There is a crucial difference between saying 'a Japanese contributed to Davao's development through the following…' and saying that 'a Japanese is the *father* of Davao's development'. So, why is the latter an exaggerated accolade?

What being the 'father of development' implies is that the progress of Davao is a single historical moment marked by a pioneering work attributed only to this foreign Japanese national. This idea of 'the pioneer' can be traced to other Filipino historians' (eg. (Abinales, 1997) depiction of how the Japanese entered Davao:

> *"Suffering no rivalry in terms of farm management (American settlers were leaving) or in the provision of labor (the Filipinos were still hesitant to migrate to Davao and Chinese labor was disallowed by the Americans),* **the Japanese had practically a free hand to shape Davao to their liking**. *The hands-on involvement of the consulate facilitated migration from the Japanese prefectures of workers and their wives (or betrothed), which sustained the early economic breakthrough."* (emphasis mine)

In several accounts, Ohta is pointed out as the first Japanese to establish a large-scale Abaca business in the city. This description, like many others, also suggests that Davao was an empty albeit fertile land area which the Japanese had free reign to "develop". Both are historically incorrect and erroneous descriptions.

Before Ohta came, a Japanese, named Suda Ryosaku, arrived with a few Japanese to work at Awad Plantation in 1903. Ohta accompanied the Japanese workers to Davao in 1904 from Baguio who helped build the Kennon Road. Ohta's contribution was well recorded in the curriculum circulation among schools in Japan, relaying how he cared for these workers, fed them, and found them work in Davao. He was depicted as a 'hero'. *But* there were other Japanese businessmen like Ohta who ventured into Davao like Furukawa Yoshizo and Akamine Saburo. He did not singlehandedly venture into Davao.

More importantly, Davao was not an empty land before the Japanese arrived. There were 15 indigenous groups residing in the vast lands namely the Ata, Bagobo, B'laan, Dibabawon, Giangan, Kalagan, Kulaman Manobo, Mandaya, Manguwangan, Mansaka, Matigsalog, Obo, Samal, Sangil, and Tagakaolo (Tiu, 2003). Davao was also once under the control of a powerful local leader named Datu Bago, who resisted the Spanish invasion of his land.

However, in 1848, a group of 70 Spanish settlers led by Don Jose Cruz de Uyanguren, who came from Vergara, Guipuzcoa, Spain, arrived to establish a Christian colony in a mangrove swamp area that is now the Bolton Riverside. They managed to defeat Datu Bago and his forces and renamed the region Nueva Guipozcoa after Uyanguren's hometown in Spain (Eroy, 2014). Davao became District of Davao and a part of the Moro Province in 1903 as established during the American colonization (Hayase, 1985). There were also other nationalities who came to Davao to conduct business and trade even before the Japanese came. Most notable were the Chinese (Dacudao, 2010). There were also Filipino migrants from the Visayas starting in 1903 when Davao District became a Moro Province. These Filipinos reached 200,000 by the 1930's and some engaged in considerable businesses alongside the Japanese. The Filipino settlers far outnumbered the Japanese who probably reached 30,000 as the recorded maximum population (Dacudao, 2010). The old central district of Davao City (including San Pedro, Claveria, Quimpo Street) were already established and teeming of economic activities well before the Japanese came.

I argue that the development of Davao (whether as a province, region, or city) is a cumulative effect of multiple peoples, activities, and circumstances throughout a long period rather than the work of a single Japanese businessman as the father of it all. I understand the necessity in historical writing to name important figures who contributed to a unit's change. To show this honor, we name streets, buildings, monuments, or trust funds after them or we give them status awards. To be named a 'father of a city's development' like the 'father of modernism' or 'father of Filipino architecture' bears significant weight. One must singlehandedly exceed what contemporaries have done and carve an enduring legacy that persists to the present - a feat that Ohta Kyosaburo may not have accomplished sufficiently to be able to merit that historical title.

2. *Skewed Heritage of the Abaca Industry*

It is factual that a substantial increase in economic activity was observed at the height of Abaca production (Manila hemp or hemp) in Davao. I assert, however, as an alternate interpretation, that this increase may not represent one with a pioneering economic impact as often recorded in the texts *but a first variation* in business activity. After all, abaca production was the first medium-scale industrial activity done in the Davao region. However, it is important to note that there were already other existing business activities and plantations at the time the Japanese came. And perhaps the most incriminating aspect to the heritage story of the abaca industry is that it did not last even half a century and did not regain its pre-war market status mainly because it cannot compete with the quality and cost of synthetic fibers.

But it is relevant to discuss the heritage of the abaca industry because it lies at the center of the "Little Tokyo" narrative. The Davao Japanese settlement, the largest in the Philippines and Southeast Asia, revolved around this crop. Considerable text in literature describes the vibrancy of the community as they engage in this economic activity. The dominant narrative here is that the Japanese was at the forefront of this Abaca Industry which was stretched to mean city or region-wide development. However, if Davao was already populated by the time the Japanese came and were exceeded in number during that period, the critical and necessary question then is "what was the Filipino's contribution" to this industry?

To begin with, it was not the Japanese who opened the Abaca plantations, it was the Americans. When the Philippine Insular Government established the Moro Province, they gave 30 American soldiers land and the propriety rights to cultivate coconut and hemp. After

two years of cultivation, the number of plantations increased from 27 to 40 (Gleeck, 1974) inviting more Americans to come to Davao. They needed more laborers and so more migrants were invited including Filipinos, Japanese, Chinese to add to the existing laborers. I want to highlight that majority of these laborers were indigenous and migrant Filipinos.

The Japanese were initially laborers mostly recruited from Japan themselves by their government. At that time, Japan underwent a major banking crisis rendering many jobless. The prospect of work and earnings attracted as many as 20,000 – 30,000 Japanese. The produced abaca hemp was then sold to Japan (Jose, 1996). The earnings of the Japanese were often also sent back to Japan through money transfer system regulated by their government. Some laborers were able to buy pieces of land to cultivate by cohabitating with Filipino women. The Filipino common-law wife, as long as she retains her citizenship, can buy land up to sixteen hectares. Japanese corporations can buy up to 1,024 hectares. Corporations and not a single Japanese can acquire land in the Philippines. The acquisition of land was strictly regulated by the Public Land Law of 1903 (and 1919) which was then interpreted by the Japanese as an indirect strategy to curtail them. The Filipinos, mostly statesmen based in Manila, closely monitored the Japanese activities in Davao city and made sure legal boundaries of property sale were existent to preserve the nationalist idea of development.

Two major Japanese corporations were the Ohta plantation stationed in Mintal (the present-day "Little Tokyo of the Philippines" nearer to the mountain foothills) and the Furukawa Plantation stationed in Toril (nearer the seaport). The Japanese plantations were named after their owner or heads. I want to highlight at this point that there were Filipino plantation owners who owned similar land holdings as the Japanese. Names were recorded among Jose P. Laurels court folders, during the time when he and his law firm represented Japanese and Filipino landowners — this was before Atty. Jose P. Laurel became Philippine president. Most of the landed Filipino businessmen were professionals who migrated to Davao and who have ample money to invest. Among these Filipinos were Cipriano Villafuerte Sr., Casiano Salas, Juan Sarenas, and Rufina Tudtod (Yu Jose & Dacudao, 2015).

When the Americans sold their plantations and businesses, the major players became the Japanese and Filipinos. The business relationships and dynamics were varied. Both Japanese and Filipinos were hired as laborers in plantations. In some instances, Filipinos own the land and the Japanese counterpart planted, cultivated, and harvested the product. Sometimes the Filipino landowners contribute the land, the Japanese plant and harvest the product and the Filipino sells them at a local auction. In most texts, the Japanese are portrayed to have the capital, the planting and harvesting technique, and the Filipino as a laborer or as landowner who only accepts 10-15% profit. So much so, that most Filipinos were recorded as "dummy" business entities because most of the Japanese are written in accounts to move the money. I want to highlight, however, that majority of the plantations were owned by Filipinos or Americans (but by the 1940s, Filipino businesses dominated the field). Sixty percent of plantations workers were Filipinos. Filipinos entered into joint venture agreements, land-labor agreements, and investment agreements with the Japanese. The Japanese-owned companies regularly consulted Filipino lawyers to interpret the law and word contracts for them.

Notwithstanding textual accounts insinuating how poor the workmanship was or how passive the role of the Filipinos was, in contrast to how the Japanese broke their backs to reach economic success, the sheer scale of this Abaca operation cannot deny the contribution and roles of the Filipinos to this economic activity. One might ask why the Japanese needed their

accomplishments periodically written about more than the Filipinos. One explanation is that the Japanese existed with the constant need to legitimize and justify their presence in Davao. Another way to look at it, is that the height of the abaca production coincided with international rumors about the Japanese plans to conquer Asia, the Philippines included. While unproven through printed documents, the economic activity (which involved monetizing labor and important materials usable to the army) was an efficient cover to the military plans that is to unfold a few years after. Davao is also strategically located far from the center of the new Philippine government and located along a convenient route for refueling and landing military air support.

The Abaca Industry of Davao was not a Japanese creation. The success of this economic activity was a result of accumulative contributions of all actors in a business relationship. And though land and business owners are often the only ones recorded in the books, they are but representatives of a thousand nameless people, mostly and majority are Filipinos, who made the Abaca industry work for a time.

3. *Heritage of a Blurred Communal Nostalgia*

When we imagine how the "Little Tokyo of the Philippines" might have looked like from available text, we imagine a tight-knit small community composed of Filipinos and Japanese who co-existed in a self-sustaining environment planting and cultivating abaca. Today this moniker is only attributed to Barrio Mintal, the center of the Ohta plantation in located in Mintal. Even its name has Filipino and Japanese versions to its origin story. The Filipino version tells of a Bagobo *Datu Intal* as leader to the indigenous group who owned the land before the Japanese came. The Japanese version tells of how the Japanese referred to this land as *"Mintaro'* which may have meant 'a person without a title who is governed'. Consider the contrast and derogatory inference of the latter version. I argue here that there really was *not* an inter-women community that existed in this Little Tokyo narrative as seen in 3 aspects: intermarriage, communal life, acculturation.

Intermarriage among the Japanese men and Bagobo women was a common theme in most of the available texts. This idea needs nuanced clarification. Unpopular in literature, there were two social groups of Japanese who came to Davao, the Okinawans and the non-Okinawans. Even among the Japanese there was a distinction. The non-Okinawans were known to be more learned, refined, monied, and dressed in American attire, attending formal events among like Filipinos. The Okinawans are described to be more brutish, strong muscularly, tough, and more gregarious. The Okinawans were the only ones who took local women for 'wives'. And even this 'marriage' is not formally legal in the Philippine laws ― because a legal marriage will mean changing citizenship which will then disempower the Filipino woman to acquire land presumably on behalf of the Japanese. The Okinawan Japanese is also highly discouraged to renounce his citizenship to become Filipino. The non-Okinawan, the more elite of the group, on the other hand, ordered brides from Japan or went to fetch Japanese wives through arranged marriages.

Marital status is an integral aspect included in the "Little Tokyo" narrative. One explanation suggested that the uniqueness of this Davao settlement among other Japanese settlements in Asia was that it was mainly led by married men, unlike the other settlements where female prostitutes presumably predominated (Abinales, 1997). However, technically, there really was no legal Filipino-Japanese intermarriage but only a cohabitation among multi-nationals acknowledged by the local indigenous group.

Second, extant texts describe several institutions built to support the communal life within the "Little Tokyo". At least 13 Japanese schools were built. Houses were constructed. Hospitals, markets, different shops (including photography studios), entertainment venues, and a hydroelectric plant were recorded to be built by the Japanese. Records show that Filipinos were included in these institutions. Filipino doctors served at the Japanese hospital built in Mintal. Filipino laborers worked to build the hydroelectric plant. There were accounts of children attending Japanese schools learning English and calisthenics (Cody, 1959).

However, what is not explicitly described is the strict demarcation of access to these institutions. Housing for Filipinos and Japanese were separate both in the structure and zoning. The houses of the Japanese with Filipino wives were located far from the center of the settlement. The Japanese husbands had allocated housing in the group structures and seemed to be counted as single men. In school, there were separate curriculum for lessons for the Japanese and the Filipino children, although some level of integration exists. Japanese entertainment activities like plays and musicals were recorded to be attended by Filipinos, but in some accounts, there was not much to enjoy due to the language barrier. Perhaps, one significant indication of the massive effort to integrate both cultures is the creation of a new dialect called *Abaca Spanish*, now extinct but is said to be made of a few key words that pertain to major business and field transaction among the laborers (Saniel, 1963).

The type of acculturation that the Japanese exhibited was one of separation. In contrast to how the Chinese incorporated their culture into the host Filipino culture. The Japanese kept to themselves. They managed their own earnings, investments, and remittances. They solved their social disputes among them and when it involves a Filipino, the Japanese were commanded to stand down. They kept their own ceremonies, cultural traditions, and were not keen in replicating or mirroring local Filipino traditions. The "Little Tokyo" paints more of the communal life of the Japanese here in Mintal rather than one shared and integrated fully to the Filipino culture. Their relationship with the Filipinos had been marked with civility and composure but not necessarily friendship or devotion.

4. *Heritage of Abandonment*

When WWII ended and the Japanese were expatriated, many *Nikkejins* were left poor, hated, and without family. The *Nikkejins* were the children of the Japanese and Bagobo women. When the Japanese were ordered back to Japan, children 15 years old and below were ordered to stay. Those older ones were given the choice whether to join the father or remain with the mother. At this juncture, another picture of the Japanese groups is portrayed in literature — the pre-war or local Japanese and the Japanese imperial army. There were personal accounts that tell of how the wounded local Japanese were helped by Filipinos, perhaps most probably the Bagobos. Moreso, other accounts that tell of how Japanese helped Filipinos escape death from the imperial army. While all very touching and perhaps are distinct stories, one fact remained – that the Japanese were unwaveringly loyal to their Emperor. The local Japanese were not brainwashed to relinquish their nationalistic sentiments during their stay in Davao. This is engrained into them from a young age. Those who were born elsewhere were educated in Japan starting their high school years to instill these deep ideologies. The Japanese always knew the had to leave at some point.

This part of the "Little Tokyo" narrative bears the most pain and trauma. Mothers and young children unwanted by fellow Filipinos were forced to surrender their property. Some escaped to the mountains where very little sustenance were available. Some changed their names and

destroyed all proofs of familial lineage to avoid social harassment. Most were not able to see or know their fathers. For a long time, the orphans had to live in extreme poverty because of their association with the Japanese. Not until the reconciliation and reparation agreements were finalized through the Quirino's presidential clemency did the lives of these *Nikkejins* improved. The former Davao Japanese Association was one such institution that spearheaded programs that aided the *Nikkejins* specially in terms of education. When the first group of Japanese came to Davao in 1964 to pay respects to their fallen ancestors, they came giving gifts to local children and families. The *Nikkejins* who were also able to prove their ancestry were invited or sponsored to visit, work, or stay in Japan.

5. *A Lost or Unknown Heritage*

The narrative of the "Little Tokyo of the Philippines" once refer to and include the whole Davao Region where the Japanese immigrants once visited. Today, Baranggay Mintal is the only political unit specifically claiming this moniker's meaning. There are three monuments that refer to the Japanese period. The obelisk dedicated to Ohta Kyosaburo located at the Mintal Elementary school is referred to by present-day students as 'pencil'. When random local Mintal citizens who had lived at least 50 years here are asked what the Japanese legacy is ─ the common answer is that they had buried gold or the Yamashita treasure in their haste to leave the country. Urban legends about the mystery of these unfound valuables are many. These are the present dominant narrative of the "Little Tokyo". On the barangay hall, pictures of this period are displayed at the lobby. There are also war artifacts displayed within a locked cabinet. However, the sense of place, the streets, the layout, or the urban grain of Mintal today do not exhibit any of this memorialization of Japanese presence at the level of the daily life. A former barangay captain declared that when he went to Japan where he got the feel of what a typical small Japanese village looked like. Mintal is a far picture from that.

What is evident, though, is an institutional memorialization. One of the two Japanese schools in Davao City, though not in Mintal, hosts the Philippine-Japan Museum which showcases the Abaca heritage. There are annual Obon Festival in August when Japanese descendants (in groups of 10-15) visit the sites in Mintal to pay homage to their ancestors. There are programs and formal events usually spearheaded by the Consulate and Davao Japanese Association, held in local malls to celebrate Japanese culture. But none that permeate the daily consciousness of the present-day settlers. The dominant narrative in the present-day depiction of the "Little Tokyo of the Philippines" is one that involves friendship, cooperation, and historical relationships. What I surmise from the local barangay government's sentiment towards the Japanese seems to be one of indebtedness NOT of camaraderie among equals. When we read local features in periodicals, the echo of gratitude for the latter's contribution is often the subject. And I can understand the sentiment. Japan today is s first-world rich country where the Philippines is a major contributor of labor. The wheels have turned.

Conclusion

Were the Japanese a friend or foe to the Dabawenyos? Often the way heritage is championed to the public is by presenting a grand plot, often a summarized positive interpretation of the historical facts that appeal to one's sense of identity, pride, and ownership. However, there is always the possibility of plural interpretations that show contradictions and conflicts. I learned that heritage studies are not about the search of one grand story but more of a retelling of the many sides to a past reality. Dissonance in heritage, the kind that represent several multi-faceted ideologies, invite a richer meaning and appreciation, and sometimes

sober clarity or correction, to a communal experience. And while there is essentially no grand plot, one can choose among the many chronicles which voice to re-echo, or better yet, make personal interpretations to contribute.

The writing of this paper made me realize that the Japanese were indeed really just strangers, neither friends or foe, who briefly interluded in the local history. There are diplomatic relations existing but cultural integration on both sides experienced by both nationalities without discrimination is not the true narrative of the "Little Tokyo of the Philippines". Not at present and not even historically. Perhaps what can be pointed as a direct influence of the Japanese are the karaoke and videoke, the manga comics, Japanese food, and electronic influences such as the camera. However, the locals may not even know this information.

The narrative of the "Little Tokyo of the Philippines" is a dissonant heritage story where the inconsistencies between what is written and what happened may have favored the Japanese more. In this narrative, the Filipino spirit is lost or silent. And while there are economic roles, the contributions of the Japanese seemed to have been overstated or exaggerated to the detriment of the advancing Filipino nationalistic ideas and diminishing the colonial mentality that pervades our consciousness. It feels like a lost heritage the Filipinos are trying to revive but is not theirs to own in the first place.

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Fanfiction: Mode of Storytelling or Marketing Device, Analysed Through Uses and Gratifications Approach

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Abstract

Fanfiction is an evolving literary genre that happens in a fictional world, combining the elements of beloved characters and alternate scenarios. It is a technique of world-building with retellings of stories catered to the preferences of audience practiced in the contemporary world. In the recent times with the coming of the Marvel Comics adapting their stories on to the screen, the number of fan activities have involved a digital approach. It has taken the forms of writings and drawings on various online "notice boards" including Wattpad and Reddit. One of the earliest forms of fanfiction is oral retellings of stories which originated since the circulation of Homer's writings. The alterations brought to the tales have been speculated to be the reason for the birth of fanfiction. These stories are circulated both online as well as in the real-world. Comic-cons and cosplays are huge part of promoting these stories as fans take the opportunity to teach and learn from each other in a community-like setup. With trending topics sensitised, fanfiction has expanded its horizons with the inclusion of people with different skin tones, sexualities and the differently abled. Fanfiction has helped connect users of media across the world due to its rather public nature. In applying Uses and Gratifications approach, the reactions of the users who in this context involves the audience/readers of the Marvel films/comics. With the release of these films, the multi-national corporations that own department stores by attracting consumers use strategic marketing techniques to boost their sales who are the unofficial marketing agents of this business.

Keywords: Canons, Fanons, Alternate Reality, *The Hex*, Fanfiction

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Introduction

Cultural transmission through storytelling is a global phenomenon. These stories are more often oral than written. Earlier, children were told stories by their grandparents, and these were a generational tradition, passed down by word-of-mouth. One of the oldest stories transmitted orally is the folktale of Beowulf in the Anglo-Saxon language. As language changed according to times, the mode of storytelling also took to other forms such as writing and painting. With the development of Internet over a significantly short amount of time, these have taken to other forms such as graphic novels, e-books, light novels etc. Along with these, a significantly emergent form of popular artistic talent was evident in the production of fanfiction. Fanfiction is a form of narration in which the audience decides when and where the plot should deviate from the original story. For instance, the films from the *Shrek* franchise of Universal Studios have a way of connecting with the audience by convincing the audience that Cinderella was manipulated to get married to Prince Charming by the Fairy Godmother, and not her good fortune. In a similar fashion, fanfiction and fanart have a way of convincing the audience that the films, by means of newer actors are an attempt at buying the "interest" of audience. A similar theory in the same franchise convinces the audience of yet another theory that the dragon that guards Fiona's (Shrek's wife's) tower was also a princess cursed, but whose saviour turned out to be an animal and not a prince. Hence, her transformation remained incomplete.

Stories have a connecting with their audience. A lot of people connect with the same story because of their shared experiences. This is one of the strategies used by the Marvel pictures to attract their audience is to engage their emotions. They shed away all the protective layers of a superhuman from the character and portray them as mere mortals. For instance, in a scene from *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) Thor gets a chance to meet his mother due to time-travel and he tries to warn her about her forthcoming death. On seeing her, he loses the arrogance of being the "strongest avenger" and immediately turns into her son in a matter of seconds. This moves the audience' heart and creates a sense of empathy in them. It is on this emotion of losing a parent at any age that the following events in Thor's life is created. Similarly, when Iron Man dies, everyone is bawled over by the event because he is the one and true leader of the Avengers. People could not accept the new reality and vented their emotions through stories on Wattpad and online drawings. These were circulated among close members of the community via Pinterest, Tumblr, and other online arenas. Fan activities such as drawings, stories, comic book conventions, are a huge part of publicising the commercial product of making a film. It is a cyclical process with fanfiction being created off movies' endings and moviemaking inspired by fanfiction. Bronwen Thomas in his work *Literature and Social Media*, brings out the distinguishing feature between a 'canon' and a 'fanon' with the former having fixed points of departure and variation, while the latter being the process by which certain tropes have been accepted by the majority due to widespread fan-following.

Literature Review

For this study, I have relied heavily on the content that is produced online on mediums such as "Reddit", "Tumblr", "Wattpad", "ArchivesofOurOwn", for the majority part. Since fanfiction is an output of the digital participation of the fans of the films and comics, it is not a product of an author or writer, but a reflection of a collective emotion. Previous studies in the topic relates itself to Boukra Roza's analysis of the *Fifty Shades of Grey* to the *Twilight* collection in a toxic yet realistic sense. The former as mentioned above, is a series of books

written by E.L. James which was later adapted onto screen due to a widespread interest and fan following, while the latter is a record of fanfiction written by Stephanie Meyers which has also become a successful film franchise over the period of time. While Roza maintains the more dominant side of the heroes Christian Grey and Edward Cullen respectively, she tries to focus her study on the similarities between the characters. Fanfiction has been known to have a compensating effect on its readers from the emotional journeys they undertake while watching the films. The development of fanfiction took place in three waves: the first, involving two parts of a Marxist perspective with one side exhibiting the power dynamics prevalent in society and the other, the participatory nature of the activity. Henry Jenkins and Cornel Sandvoss, two theorists whose observations on fanfiction as a form of rebellion against the "ruling class"/show creators create an interesting power dynamic. These dominant ideas, in other words, are what is referred to as 'canon'. The participatory aspect of it highlighted by Jenkins, is what is referred to as 'fanon' which consisted of memes, photos, videos, gifs and fanfiction. The second wave of fanfiction was studied by Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. In Thomas' words, fanfiction rose to the occasion as a "[response] to the emergence of new media forms that contributed to an explosion in fan activity and that facilitated all sorts of new possibilities and interactions between fans." (Thomas, 4) The final wave of this theory, also the highlight in my study, is the contribution of fans. This includes cosplays, role-playing, conventions and meet-ups. Apart from these, it also includes two significant concepts termed "fan-tagonism" and "anti-fan" which will be discussed in the paper. Lauren Moore in her research article *Fanfiction Archive of Our Own* (published in December 2023), has focused on the content produced solely on Archive of Our Own and has in fact, laid the groundwork for conducting a study on the topic by defining the terms "fandom", "fanfiction", "gen", which would be a part of my research as well. She has pointed out the importance of studying smaller and larger groups of fan communities and how it can provide varying insights, depending on the nature of study. The study is mostly focused on the Marvel Studio's unique ability to trigger the emotions of their audience and hence, a vast majority of the supporting literature would be dependent on several websites that provide information related to their characters. For instance, "Marvel [database] Fandom20" and "Marvel Unlimited" are two databases that provide the contents of Marvel comics that has been used to support the research carried out in this paper. It provides a chronological account of the characters that is looked up online.

Methodology

Through snowball sampling, the reliability of the samples has been tested and ensured. Two separate sets of questionnaires were prepared and circulated among two batches. One set was circulated among academicians and people interested in the technical aspects of marketing and the other among a younger crowd who preferred to see the art form as a part of popular culture. By collecting the data from a diverse set of audience, the responses of a wider set of population were made a possibility. In order to circulate the questionnaire, the convenience sampling was applied for the questionnaire based on storytelling and purposive sampling on the questionnaire for marketing strategy. The theoretical framework applied in this case being the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the difference in the viewpoints of the two sets of responders to the questionnaire is based on their judgement and rationale. The responses to the questionnaires are recorded by means of graphs which will be analysed in the paper. These graphs are categorised by means of pie charts which will be analysed using data interpretation techniques. Following the graphical representations, the analysis will be supported by results on which the analysis will be validated. These statistics are used to determine the accuracy of the data collected. The graphs are given below.

Data Interpretation
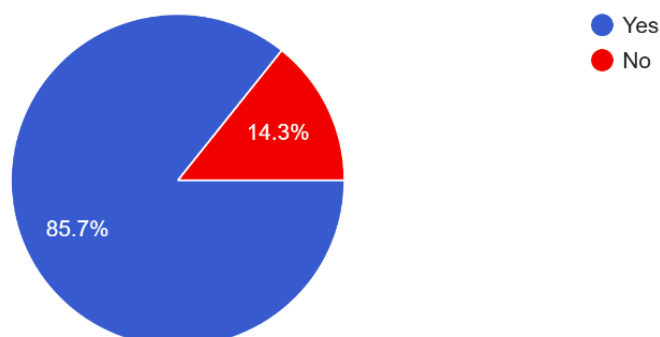
Figure 1: The Number of People Who Are Engaged in Successful Professional Practices

Figure 2: The Number of People Aware of Fanfiction Among the Younger Generation

As observed in the two graphs above, there is a very small percentage of people, accustomed to the digital world who are not familiar with the term "fanfiction". However, analysis points out that those actively engage in the creation of fanfiction is a smaller number.
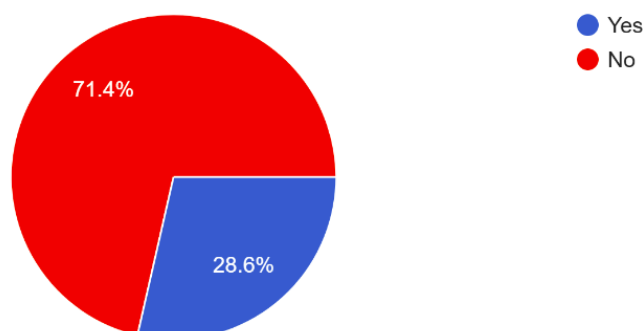
Figure 3: The Number of People Who Actively Engage in the Exchange of the Online Content

This implies that the active users of the internet, inclusive of social media might not be well acquainted with the different arenas of the internet that are used by a fairly large number of people.

Analysis

Both questionnaires were circulated around a varied age group. Five general questions were asked in both questionnaires while the remaining five were specific to the individual questionnaires. They were divided on the basis of people favouring fanfiction as a marketing strategy and as a device to communicate stories. While it was made clear that many people are aware of the online content, only a handful of them wants it to be included in the mainstream content for academia; the rest prefers it as a form of entertainment. The awareness surrounding the topic is minimum and maybe the reason for the large number of people participating in the activity. These participants mostly involve young people who prefer to fantasise their lives by combining their scenarios with that of the characters. Through fanfiction, audiences are able to connect with the stories and able to add their own flairs to the content. Marvel Studios derive their own content for their films by means of this method, combining the content of the comics as well as the reception of the audience. For instance, due to increased fan interest the universes of Deadpool and Wolverine have combined in the latest *Deadpool and Wolverine* movie. According to the comics, both characters are members of the Weapon X program, and trained mercenaries. Thus, a culmination of the two universes was welcomed by audience with the recent acquisition of Fox Studios by Disney.

Another moment that was of great importance in terms of fandom is when Disney+ released the weekly episodes of *WandaVision*, inspired by Marvel Comic in the early months of 2021, following the events of *Avengers: Endgame* (2019). Even though the series took two years to release due to the pandemic in the real-world, the time period between the events in the movie and the series span over six months. This makes it even more realistic as fans are able to transport themselves to the fictional world in a matter of seconds. While "Marvel [database] Fandom 20" gives a peek into the life of the character, the story that is portrayed on screen is often vastly different from the one depicted in the comics. This is due to the reception of the story by the viewers of the film who expect a certain catharsis and redemption for the character. In a much similar manner, *Supernatural* raised a poll on the music choice for their upcoming season before their twelfth instalment. This makes the fans feel acknowledged and the showrunners, a guarantee that "the show will go on".

With a global audience, DC and Marvel, and even *Archies* and *Tintin* have become everyday across Southeast Asia. For instance, the *Archies* comics was written for the Indian audience, still set in the fictional location of "Riverdale". This allowed the Indian audience to connect with the American teenager and his group of friends to the Indian subcontinent and to a majority of Asian audience, breaking the stereotype of the classical American teenager. These have given the audiences more opportunities to interact with the content creators through such fan conventions happening across different locations. Last year, ComiCon visited India with various events and opportunities for such interactions, proving it to be a grand success. With the release of each movie from the franchise, the aim to increase fan-building through stories is a major phenomenon. For instance, theme parks such as "Disneyland", "Universal Studios" theme parks are major tourist destinations which attract people all over the world, over the holiday seasons. This along with the merchandise and fan content produced online raises a number of interesting questions regarding the nature of commercial films.

Conclusion

While the graphical representations indicate that the number of people engaging in the activity is comparatively less to the people who are aware of it. However, this paper might help people who are attempting to understand the phenomenon of fanfiction. In simple words, fanfiction is the literature in response to a particular situation that diverts from its canon journey. In such a situation, the outcry of the audience takes the form of fanfiction, usually a short content of one-shots where an alternate scenario providing a solution to the problem is posed, in the form of an "episode fix". For instance, when Wanda Maximoff loses her loved ones, she creates an alternate reality called "The Hex" as a coping mechanism from her grief. Within the Hex, she creates a new Vision from her memories and gives birth to twins, Billy and Tommy. However, according to the comics Wanda's powers exceed her control and ends up harming the Avengers, including the Hawkeye. Another form of fanfiction content is the romance relationships that are depicted in the comics and films. Due to the gender-fluid nature of today's society, the audiences have expressed an interest in slash fanfiction where traditionally masculine heroes such as Captain America and Iron Man share a romantic relationship. Apart these, the traditional romances also form a part of fanfiction such as the widespread fan following of Captain America and Black Widow.

These are some of the major plot points found in the comics which are altered by the films. However, the acceptance of both as art forms results in the form of fanfiction, where an entirely different version of the stories is presented. Large-scale production houses employed by the Marvel comics assist in the marketing of their stories through goodies and easter eggs. This is their marketing strategy which is responsible for their relevance. The popularity of these films has also referenced in other shows such as "The Big Bang Theory" where they constantly engage in fun arguments on who is the strongest avenger, etc. Thus, the stories connect the audience with the content shown on screen and become a part of their personalities. This also builds in a sense of community across the diverse groups of people who view the content.

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Memes as Critique of Daily Life: A Study on "HomeDesign369" TikTok Videos

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Abstract

The rise of interior design short videos on YouTube Shorts and TikTok has become favourable content, offering entertainment and practical solutions for daily life problems. Recently, the popularity of these videos has surged, particularly due to the viral phenomenon of "Little John". The narratives of "Little John" and his interior problems were popularised by a Chinese TikTok account called *HomeDesign369*. "Little John" videos have taken over social media platforms, delivering interior design solutions with a unique blend of sarcastic humour and life commentary. Each video features a generated voice narration that tells the story of Little John, accompanied by design solutions using materials like 'Galvanized Square Steel' and 'Eco-Friendly Wood Veneer' which eventually become popular keywords. These elements have become memes, dominating platforms like TikTok and YouTube Shorts. Utilising Shifman's meme typology, Wiggins' elaboration and Barthes' semiology and mythology, I explored the "Little John" video meme to analyse how these videos reflect and critique contemporary living conditions. The object videos spanning from May 26 to June 1 were chosen based on Google trends 'Little John, 'Galvanized Square Steel' and 'Eco-Friendly Wood Veneer' keywords, indicating intense public interest in the video I argued that the memes respond to the struggle of many people to afford homes that accommodate their lifestyles, highlighting the trend of living in compact apartments in cities such as New York, Shang Hai and Hong Kong, as narrated in the Little John stories.

Keywords: Meme, TikTok, Interior Design, Semiology, Mythology, Meme Theory

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Introduction

The rise of short video formats has become one of the pinnacles of social media trends during the 2020s. TikTok, a Chinese social media become one of the most successful apps which introduced this format ever since its rebranding strategy from Musically. As it grows to become one of the most popular social media apps, social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube released their feature to facilitate short video needs, Reels for the former and YouTube Shorts for the latter.

Short video format in general isn't replacing the traditional horizontal video, it transforms the video format into shorter, bite-size and vertical-shaped videos. Short video isn't only a format to showcase entertainment, but also a short educational and informational content. It happens also in the interior design industry where many people showcase their designs through short video formats. The short video format allows creators and brands for quick and engaging content, making it perfect for showcasing design tips, DIY projects, and before-and-after transformations. It has also led to the democratization of interior design, allowing a wider audience to access and engage with design content in a more accessible and relatable manner. As a result, interior design short videos have become a popular and influential trend, inspired creativity and sparking new interest in the world of design. As videos turn into bite-size, brands and creator turn to short video formats to seize the opportunity to market themselves, share their knowledge and promote their business.

One of the most popular home interior design accounts is *HomeDesign369*. *HomeDesign369* was originally a TikTok account demonstrating the solution to interior design problems. It gained popularity in May 2024 as it creates a story surrounding the character of Little John. Little John is often characterized as a young adult who just moved into a big city, whether New York, Shanghai or Hong Kong. He is usually depicted as someone who saves his money by working hard and having a desire to move into an apartment which he bought himself. Sometimes, he didn't get what he wanted by getting a tiny apartment. He was frustrated and decided to expand his house, so he could live and enjoy his life. The creator of the video suggested many ways to better his house condition by adding galvanised squared steel layered with eco-friendly wood veneer. In the video, the narrator explains that Little John would borrow screws from his family member, mostly his aunt, to assemble the galvanised steel. Then, Little John would create other interior solutions such as bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchens and entertainment spaces.

This story of Little John has emerged in TikTok and thus gained popularity for its absurdness. *HomeDesign369* would use Little John for many lores but with a similar plot. The lores themselves depend on *HomeDesign369* as the creator, ranging from the place where Little John lives to the absurd measure of his tiny apartment. But the plot acquires a realistic problem-solution for tiny apartments, even from unrealistic situations such as a $1m^2$ square apartment. The story of Little John is liked by audiences and thus gradually the plot becomes absurd. This absurdness is a satirical exaggeration of the housing crisis which happens in the cities where Little John's story plots: New York, Shanghai and Hong Kong. Little John story peaked its popularity in May 2024, when it became one of the most searched keywords in Google Trends. The storytelling approach of HomeDesign365 is interesting as it not only captures the solution to everyday home living situations but also criticises the absurdly small and unhealthy living conditions in an entertaining story.

To sum up these problems, I would like to ask How do HomeDesign365's TikTok videos utilise meme culture in short video formats to critique daily life such as urban housing challenges? To answer the question, I will discuss the overview of meme theory in the first part of the article. In the second part, I will discuss Barthes' semiology and mythology to encode the discourse and ideological practice that runs in the meme. By utilising these theories, I aim to seek the intersection of the meme, interior solution, and social commentary about urban housing issues as a way to criticise daily life using the narrative strategies used by HomeDesign365.

An Overview of Meme Studies

In this section, we will look at the current literature on memes. The term meme is derived from Richard Dawkins' 1976 book called The Selfish Gene. According to Dawkins, memes are small cultural units which spread from person to person by copying or imitation (Dawkins, 1976). Shifman defined memes as a group of digital items that share common traits that are awarely created, circulated, and imitated through the internet (Shifman, 2014). According to Shifman, the common traits of memes–content, form and stance–are what create memes as memes. The difference between Shifman's meme and Darwins' is her concept of meme is rather an umbrella term to refer a similar content with various forms and stance. For example, the Little John meme can come in the form of a video or a photo and will be referred to as the Little John meme. These common traits will be explained later. Wiggins (2019) added along about his definition of a meme. He argued that Dawkins' definition of a meme "ignores the discursive aspect of meme" (Wiggins, 2019). According to Wiggins, a meme is a complex cultural product which creates and spreads across the platform. Therefore, memes become synonymous with internet culture and ride along with the trends by their ability to be copied, altered, and imitated without losing their similar content, then spread through various platforms.

First, content refers to the text, which alludes to ideas and ideologies. Second, form refers to the deliverable of content, including the audio and visual inputs of certain text. Third, stance refers to the delivery of content, how to say, and what to say of specific text. Shifman borrows Jakobson's typology to talk about human communication, which includes (1) referential communication, means refering to the context, the real condition or fact; (2) emotive, oriented to the emotions of the addresser; (3) conative, is an imperative communication towards the receiver; (4) phatic, means maintaining an open conversation; (5) metalingual, means to clarify the meaning of certain text; and (5) poetic, oriented towards the aesthetic quality of the message (Shifman, 2014). Wiggins later argues that memes "are not merely content items" but rather also "visual arguments" (Wiggins, 2019). He added that meme isn't just a cultural transmission, but has a discourse power which indicates an ideological practice (Wiggins, 2019). This practice runs by seeking through the semiotics and intertextuality of memes. Semiotics and intertextuality intertwine, forming ideological practice which comes in the form of sharing, curation, and remixing (Wiggins, 2019).

Wiggins expands Shifman's memetic dimension to elaborate on how ideology, semiotics and intertextuality emerge. He argues that content is the site where ideology plays in a meme, while stance conveys the semiotics and intertextuality of a meme. This elaboration was made to analyse image-based memes, where the forms aren't as much as complex as video-based memes. Wiggins elaborated on form as the place where memes materialise with a neutral message, ranging from video and image to verbal text. The form of video-based memes can later be broken down into visual and audio forms, which can be memeified into newer

memes. For example, the Little John memes famously used a song called Morsmordre which made by Crazy Donkey, a Chinese producer. It became popular and associated with the Little John meme, and even internet users began to remix the song as a newer meme.

Barthes's Semiology and Mythology

In 1964, Barthes launched his work on semiotics called *Éléments de Sémiologie* (English: The Element of Sociology). For cultural studies scholars, semiology is synonymous with semiotics, which means the study of signs. This study also shows how signs have interpretations and meanings. Barthes's semiology is inspired by Saussure's semiotic theory, which contributed to the study of language as a system of signs. Barthes elaborated that semiology isn't only for language, but also for interpreting any other form of signs, such as images, gestures, music, and even the combinations of these signs (Barthes, 1977). Hence, Barthes argued that semiology can be used in any cultural phenomenon. Barthes' further semiotic development would lead to signs, system and syntagm, connotation and denotation, and mythology.

Barthes borrowed Saussure's concept of signs, which consists of the signifier and signified. The signifier rules over the expression, while the signified rules over the content (Barthes, 1988). He argues that the signifier and signified relationship is unstable, and depends on the context. This would later develop to uncover the meaning of a sign, not just the mental construction of a sign, but also ideological. This relationship shows that the signified and signifier is a cultural and social construction. For example, the picture of a tree is a sign. The image itself is a signifier, but the signified requires the mental characterisation of a tree; the leaves, the branches, the trunks. Depending on the context, the tree itself can hold a meaning, whether it signifies growth or protection.

The second part is syntagm and system. Syntagm is a combination of signs in a linear sequence. This combination of signs cannot be interchangeable. According to Barthes, system is a set of possible choices which can be substituted in the syntagmatic unit. Barthes explained syntagm and system in a case of fashion. The fashion system consists of garments that cannot be worn at the same time but can be used interchangeably, such as toque, bonnet and hood. Syntagm is a sequence of clothing that consists of different systems, such as skirt, blouse and jacket. The utilisation of one of these systems can create a different sign meaning to the whole syntagm, and thus create a separate meaning.

The last concepts that Barthes introduced in Element of Sociology are denotation and connotation. He introduced these concepts to explain how signs can have multiple layers of meaning. Denotation implies the first-order, the direct meaning of the sign, while connotation means the second-order which implies the cultural meaning of a sign. This includes the ideological discourse associated with the sign. For example, a rose is denotatively remarked as a flower, while connotatively associated with love and romance. Like the signified, connotations are influenced by cultural and social construction, which can signify the ideological discourse of a sign.

But semiology isn't enough to explain the ideological practice that happens in a sign. Barthes' mythology is utilised to deconstruct the ideological level, the deeper meaning of a designed sign. Seven years before launching Element of Semiology, Roland Barthes published a book called Mythologies. This book consists of two parts. The first part called

Mythologies, examined the myths in cultural phenomenon. Barthes looked for mythologies that happen in daily life such as wine, discounts, and even detergents.

The second part of the book called Myth Today, examines the myth through semiology and later its power. Barthes utilised semiology by decoding the myth as part of a sign which holds a certain meaning depending on the context. Myth therefore has its signifier and signified and considered as the second-order of semiological system (Barthes, 1972). As the second-order of semiological system, myth conveys the language system, meaning that myth acts as the whole sign or final first-order of semiological system. Hence, myth is a powerful tool to gain political power. According to Barthes, the bourgeois use myth to manipulate and maintain control over the proletarian. Using myth, the ruling class can also create neutral and status-quo imagery to maintain their power. Hence, mythology, especially that happens on a daily life basis, should be questioned to discover its truth.

Research Method

The research methodology in this article utilises Shifman's meme theory along with Wiggins's meme elaboration to explain the dimension of the meme. Shifman's meme dimension will classify The Little John's meme traits and what will be discussed in those traits. Wiggin's elaboration which includes the ideological discourse, semiotics and intertextuality is necessary to explain the topic of each trait. According to Wiggins, form is considered neutral and doesn't bear an ideological, semiotic nor intertextuality position. However, in this paper, I will use form to deconstruct the video into three signs: visual, verbal and audio signs.

From the meme theory, I will apply Barthes' semiology to search deeper for the meaning and interpretation of *HomeDesign369*'s videos. For content, I will utilise Barthes' connotation, denotation and mythology theory to explain further the memes' ideological discourse. In stance dimension, I will use Barthes' signs, system and syntagm to decode the signs and their meaning. The relationship between the meme theory and Barthes' is explained through Table 1.

Table 1: The Correlation of Shifman's Meme Dimensions, Wiggins' Elaboration and Barthes's Semiology

Shifman's meme dimensions	The locus of Wiggins' Theory	Barthes' semiology theory	Usage in this article
Content	The ideological discourse	Connotation and denotation, mythology	Decode the ideological practise
Form			Categorise the signs into three forms: verbal, visual and audio
Stance	The semiotics and intertextuality	Signs (signifier and signified), system and syntagm	Decode the semiotics

The *HomeDesign369*'s TikTok videos that are used in this article are the videos that were posted from May 26th until June 1st, 2024. These videos are chosen based on the most searched keywords that relate to *HomeDesign369* in Google Trends on the worldwide level. The keywords are: "Galvanized Square Steel" and "Little John", while there's no data for "Eco-Friendly Wood Veneer" phrase. I will explain the form and divide the signs that occur in the videos. Then, I will analyse the stance by exploring each sign, especially the repeated ones. Finally, I will discuss the content by looking for the connotation, denotation and mythology that are being used in *HomeDesign369*'s videos.

The Little John Meme: Form, Stance and Content

Form of the HomeDesign369's *Videos*

HomeDesign369's famous Little John storyline only starts in March 2024, while the Galvanized Square Steel phrase was mentioned for the first time in December 2023 (Song, 2024). The form of the meme itself has many variables. There is a generated voiceover to narrate the story of Little John, which later identified as the voice from the website elevenlabs.io with the voice name Arnold. The animated videos are made and rendered in 3D software which helped produce multiple designs and story plots.

The first time *HomeDesign369* created its own character to tell a story was on January 2nd, 2024. However, the character itself isn't Little John, but Liam. Little John only be created in their content on February 5th, 2024. The Little John lore has become popular in TikTok by a repeated narrative that tells his problem. Little John problems are diverse, ranging from surviving in a tiny apartment despite has been working hard, living in a cliff to create solution for multiple children's bedrooms.

From May 26th to June, 1st 2024, I summarised the signs to verbal, visual and audio signs in Table 2. These signs will be analysed in the next subsection to seek the repeated patterns and unique signs.

Table 2: The Visual, Verbal and Audio Signs on HomeDesign369's TikTok Videos

Date Posted	Visual Sign	Verbal Sign	Audio Sign
May 26th, 2024	3D-Rendered Video with Little John as the main character.	Little John; Eagle; Cliff; Size of a Coffin; Galvanized Square Steel; Borrowed Screws From Aunt; Eco-Friendly Wood Veneers; Soft Cover Against Wall; Soft Lucky Colours; Underwear; Smelly Socks; Out of Season Sheets and Bedding; Large Clothes; Trousers; Bedtime Reading Materials; Outlet Switch; Charging Phones; Induction Cooker; Veggie Washing Area; Seasoning Bottles; Bowls; Chopstick; Mirror Cabinet; Suspended Ceilings; Separate Wet and Dry Area; Dining Table; Movie Night	AI-Generated Voiceover named Arnold; Song: Morsmordre – Crazy Donkey

May 28th, 2024	3D-Rendered Video with Liam as the main character	Liam; Bunk Bed; Naughty Kids; Never Do Their Homework; Old Layout Never Working Anymore; Galvanized Square Steel; Borrowed Screws From Aunt; Eco-Friendly Wood Veneers; Soft Cover Against Wall; Glass Partition; Study Materials; Charging Phones	AI-Generated Voiceover named Arnold; Song: Morsmordre – Crazy Donkey
May 29th, 2024	3D-Rendered Video with Little John as the main character.	Little John; Wife; One hundred million kids; Kick the wall; Borrow space from his neighbour; Galvanized Steel Frames; Comfy Mattress; Floor tiles; Wardrobes; The dining area;	AI-Generated Voiceover named Arnold; Song: Morsmordre – Crazy Donkey
May 30th, 2024	3D-Rendered Video with Little John as the main character	Little John; Wife; Cabinet; Neat; Organized; Induction Cooker; Sink Area; 100 years	AI-Generated Voiceover named Arnold; Song: HVOB - Dogs
May 31th, 2024	3D-Rendered Video with Little John as the main character	Be Brave and Live; Little John; New York; Helicopter; Hometown; Cave; Jade cement board; Durable for 10.000 years; Thermal insulation; Titanium-armoured door; Galvanized Square Steel; Screws from Seventh Aunt; Wood Veneer; Cabinets; Phone Charging; Soft Mattress; Studying; Movable-table; Wardrobe; Out-of-seasoned quilt; Wall-mounted Toilet; Shower; Vegetable washing area; Induction Cooker; Seasonings;	AI-Generated Voiceover named Arnold; Song: Morsmordre – Crazy Donkey
June 1st, 2024	3D-Rendered Video with Little John as the main character	Little John; Wife; Eight babies; Train; Floor tiles; Shoe cabinet; Glass door; Separate space; Galvanized Steel; Borrowed From Aunt; Wood Veneer; Durable for Ages; Mattresses; Cousin's Place; Soft cushion; Study area; Iron guard rail;	AI-Generated Voiceover named Arnold; Song: Morsmordre – Crazy Donkey

The Stance of The Little John's Meme

The videos on May 26th, 2024 to June 1st, 2024 has multiple storylines. One involved Liam as the main character, while others are Little John. The storyline of each video is described in Table 3. Little John is narrated to be struggled with his saving and ends up in live in a tiny place, having tiny space or even having multiple kids which consequently not having enough space. The overall story of Little John in *HomeDesign369*'s TikTok accounts also highlight

the working hard main character who struggle to afford his living in the big city or not enough room for their million babies. The stories always use the problem-solution format, which concluded in how the main character would have feel after the interior design solutions. In short, these problems can be concluded by the limited space that has to be solved by the main character.

Table 3: The HomeDesign369's TikTok Videos Storyline From May 26th, 2024 to June 1st, 2024.

Date Posted	Storyline
May 26th, 2024	Little John saved up his earning to buy a house. He flies to the cliff using his eagle which turns out a coffin-size room. He designed his house to create a cozy space despite the tiny space.
May 28th, 2024	Liam has two children, a daughter and a son, who shared the same bedroom. Both of the children need privacy and bother each other. The goal of the design is the supportive environment for the children to study and being private.
May 29th, 2024	Little John married his wife and become a CEO. They have 100 million kids, hence the need for bigger room. He created the design so he can raise his kids and have a big family perfectly.
May 30th, 2024	Little John has trouble with his current kitchen as his countertop has no space and the kitchen utensils placement in the cabinets are either unsafe nor waste the space. Little John sets his kitchen up to be efficient and safe.
May 31th, 2024	Little John had worked in New York and saved his earning to buy a house. However, his life in the big city takes a toll on him, so he decides to move back to his hometown. His hometown has been demolished, only left an open abandoned tunnel. Little John designed this tunnel to create a home where he can live normally.
June 1st, 2024	Little John and his wife have eight kids and it caused chaos at home. He decided to purchase a train and designed it to accommodate his family live comfortably.

As we can see through the selected contents, there are three explanations regarding the stance that can be decode. First, the repeated signs such as 'Galvanized Square Steel', 'Eco-Friendly Wood Veneer' and others are the necessary items for interior solutions. These items along with the repeated signs that has been traced in Table 2 are important for the character to create their home situations liveable. Even the exaggerated adjective on certain items, such as 'Smelly Socks' and 'Out-of-seasons bedding' serves to make this interior solution humanely possible and engage with the audience.

Second, the AI-generated voiceover sounds humorous and sarcastic tone with the chosen verbal signs. However, when we seek *HomeDesign369*'s content before the Little John nor Liam's lore, the tone and narratives are educating even utilising AI-generated voiceover. It means that the verbal exaggerated adjectives help creating a humorous vibe even using the AI-generated voiceover. According to Jakobson's typology, the contents of Little John mainly serve an emotive function. It tells the Little John emotional conditions and struggles, eventually finds a solution to housing problems. The generated voiceover added the satire layer to the content. The viewers who recognise the satire and exaggeration are entertained by the humourous tone. The humorous and sarcastic tone becomes iconic and engages well with the audience.

Third, the exaggeration and absurd stories can be perceived as entertaining the self despite unrealistic solution. However, this can be perceived as positivist way to make a way in the living situation. Little John's narrative also highlights how Little John has accumulated enough wealth, yet it isn't enough to get a proper spacious household for himself. Despite that, he always makes up with solution, no matter how worse the living condition he gets nor questioning the economy, legal, political situation. As the sign has a second-order meaning or becomes a myth, this Little John narrative is no longer presented as humorous interior design but rather a critique of modern housing.

The Content of the Little John's Meme

The content of Litte John's story provides practical interior design tips with a space for social commentary. Little John's struggles are happening because of the unaffordability of house living. Hence, Little John creatively uses many resources such as Galvanised Squared Steel, Eco-Friendly Wood Veneer and Expanding Screws to make his living bearable. Through its contents, we can see how these tools have helped improve Little John's living space. The room which only fits one bed becomes more spacious. The storytelling technique is informative and entertaining, providing the how-tos and the design process with an absurd twist. Whether the twist is in the form of flying an eagle, riding a helicopter or borrowing neighbour's wall, the current situation of Little John's living condition highlights how absurdly the real housing situation in three cities: New York, Shang Hai and Hong Kong.

The current living situation in New York, Shang Hai and Hong Kong has similar housing problems in terms of affordability (Elmedni, 2018; Sun, 2020). According to Sun, the housing prices in Chinese cities has soaring up and impacted the middle and lower-class household. In New York also had the same problem and thus creating housing programs and policy to ensure the lower-class ability to afford the house (Elmedni, 2018). To guarantee a 'cheaper' housing for the lower-class, some landlords and housing companies create new tiny apartments for a single person or small family. But the housing affordability and tiny apartments doesn't paid off. The tiny apartments had impacted the physical and mental health, especially in a family (Chan et. al., 2024).

The *HomeDesign369* story itself becomes an underlying myth that people have to adapt to smaller living spaces due to the modern housing crisis. This sarcastic, satirical and exaggeration stories is a response for a critique of the inaccessability of comfortable housing in three cities. It later becomes a myth that the *HomeDesign369* would provide the solution in a positivist way as the larger problem of the housing condition lies not in the bad interior problem, but rather in unaffordable house condition. The house privatisation in these three cities has impacted the housing cost, which creates a new problem: coffin-size houses and compact apartments.

Another consequence of living at a high cost through Little John's stories is to saving money by borrowing the family resources. The selected contents include the storyline of Little John who has been helped by his relatives for upgrading his apartments. These are the aunts who lends the expanded screw to placed the galvanized steel in multiple storylines. One storyline also talks about Little John's cousin who provides the mattress for his children. The narratives of relatives helping Little John show the condition that the family bond is still strong in the big city. It also common in Chinese cities that parents are helping and maintaining the intergenerational wealth even in the housing situation (Forrest, 2009; Niu, 2018).

At last, *HomeDesign369*'S TikTok videos eventually produce an absurdly 'expanded' looking building becomes the myth that being shared through remixing and repurposing the meme. As the famous keywords such as 'galvanized square steel', 'Little John' and 'eco-friendly wood veneer' is memeified, it also covered the real signification of the meme and thus carnivalised. According to Gorka, memes in the sense of carnivalised means that the political groups are no longer debating about the truth, but unimportant issues (Gorka, 2014). The *HomeDesign369* meme are repurposed and shared through many internet platforms outside TikTok, but retold in carnival fashion. The most popular remix was Alan Walker's TikTok post that highlighted the 'expanded' building. The video itself tried to tell how the expanded building was featured in Alan Walker's past music video. This remix showed how the building has been designed in an expanded manner. Alan Walker's music video called 'Heart Over Mind' shows that the 'expanded room design' has becoming more common in the architecture and interior design. The remixed memes are no longer talk about the underlying issues of the housing situation but rather to laugh at the satirical condition on the daily life.

Conclusion

HomeDesign369's videos with viral phrases such as 'Little John', 'galvanised square steel' and 'eco-friendly wood veneer' have become a viral sensation across the internet, especially TikTok. The videos not only provide bite-size interior solutions but also provide social commentary through the exaggerated and satirical narrative. The videos later became a video meme and its widespread engagement has resonated with its audience.

Using Shifman's meme theory, Wiggins's elaboration and Barthes' semiology and mythology, the study decodes the deeper critique of a daily in this video. It reveals that the humour and meme culture isn't only for engaging with the internet audience, but also to subtly talk about the housing crisis that happens in Little John's home whether it's New York, Shanghai, or Hong Kong. This housing crisis reflects on Little John's actions and his inability to afford a spacious house in those big three cities despite having worked hard. Another thing that happened is the ability of the family to help the character with an interior solution. The family help such as Little John's aunt reflected on how families also take part in Little John's struggle, despite living in the big city.

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Transformation of Rituals and Movement of Mandar Sandeq Sailors Into the Creation of Theater Performance

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Abstract

The development of performing arts today, especially theater, has undergone a connection of events across time explored by artists. In the Indonesian context, the discourse on tradition and local cultural wisdom often becomes a primary subject on stage. The Mandar people, as an ethnic group on the western coast of Sulawesi, maintain an intimate relationship with the sea. This community uses small boats called Sandeq, capable of navigating the ocean solely by wind navigation and ancestral astronomical knowledge. They uphold the maritime ecosystem through rituals and mantras as expressions of respect for nature and its Creator. The creation method employed is descriptive qualitative, starting with research interviews with informants to uncover symbolic meanings and practices related to the sea. The research results indicate that this relationship can be effectively explored in theatrical performances through the interpretation and transformation of dialogue, gestures, and visual elements that reflect the identity of the Mandar sailors. This study also demonstrates that the integration of local elements not only enriches the narrative of the performance but also serves as a catalyst for collective awareness of the importance of maintaining balance between humanity and nature. This performance is expected to be an initial medium to showcase the universal discourse of the Mandar community with the sea and to encourage critical reflection on the current human-environment relationship through the lens of theatrical performance.

Keywords: Mandar, Theater, Arts

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Introduction

The performing arts, particularly theater, have long served as a mirror reflecting the social, cultural, and spiritual dynamics of various societies. In Indonesia, the evolution of theater has been shaped by the interweaving of indigenous traditions and external influences, resulting in a complex and rich cultural discourse. As the world rapidly changes, there is an increasing awareness of the need to preserve local traditions and cultural wisdom, which are often central themes in Indonesian theatrical productions. This focus on tradition is not merely an artistic choice but a response to the ongoing quest to retain cultural identity while addressing contemporary societal issues.

The Mandar people, an ethnic group residing on the western coast of Sulawesi, exemplify a community whose cultural practices are deeply intertwined with their natural environment. The Mandar's close relationship with the sea is a testament to their enduring maritime heritage, which has been passed down through generations. The Sandeq boat, a small but powerful vessel, is a symbol of this heritage. Renowned for its ability to navigate the open seas using only wind power and ancestral astronomical knowledge, the Sandeq boat represents not just a mode of transportation, but a connection to the spiritual and cultural life of the Mandar people.

In Mandar society, the sea is viewed as a sacred entity, a source of life that demands respect and reverence. This respect is expressed through a variety of rituals and mantras, which are integral to the Mandar's way of life. These practices are not merely ceremonial but are rooted in a profound understanding of the natural world and the need to maintain a harmonious relationship with it. The rituals associated with the sea, such as those performed before setting sail in a Sandeq, reflect the Mandar people's belief in the interconnectedness of humanity, nature, and the divine. These cultural practices also serve as a reminder of the importance of living in balance with the environment, a message that resonates strongly in today's context of environmental crisis.

In contemporary theater, there is a growing movement to explore and integrate local cultural elements as a means of enriching artistic expression and fostering cultural preservation. The incorporation of Mandar culture into theatrical performances offers a unique opportunity to showcase this rich maritime heritage while also addressing broader themes of human-environment relationships. By translating the symbolic meanings and practices associated with the Mandar's maritime traditions into the language of theater, performers can create a narrative that is both visually compelling and deeply meaningful.

The integration of local elements such as dialogue, movement, and visual symbols that reflect the seafaring life of the Mandar people not only enriches the narrative but also serves as a catalyst for raising collective awareness about the importance of environmental stewardship. This approach to theater-making underscores the potential of the arts to act as a medium for social reflection and change. By engaging with the cultural heritage of the Mandar people, theater practitioners can contribute to a broader discourse on sustainability and the need for a balanced relationship between humans and the natural world.

This study aims to explore the ways in which the maritime traditions of the Mandar people can be effectively interpreted and adapted into theatrical performances. Through qualitative descriptive methods, including interviews with cultural informants, this research seeks to uncover the symbolic meanings embedded in these traditions and how they can be translated

into a performative context. The findings of this study will demonstrate how the integration of local cultural elements into theater can create a rich, multi-layered narrative that not only entertains but also educates and inspires. Ultimately, this research contributes to the ongoing conversation about the role of the arts in promoting cultural preservation and environmental awareness.

Literature Review

1. Folklore

Etymologically, the term folklore originates from the English language, specifically the word folklore. This term is a compound word derived from two words: "folk" and "lore" (Danandjaja, 2002: 1). According to Dundles (as cited in Danandjaja, 2002: 1), "folk" refers to a group of people who share common physical, social, and cultural characteristics. Essentially, "folk" means a collective. Meanwhile, "lore" refers to a part of culture that is passed down orally. Jan Harold Brunvand (as cited in Danandjaja, 2002: 21) classifies folklore into three major categories based on its type: verbal folklore, partly verbal folklore, and non-verbal folklore.

2. Verbal Folklore

Verbal folklore consists of folklore that is purely oral in form. The genres of folklore that fall into this major category include: (a) folk speech, such as dialects, nicknames, traditional titles, and noble ranks; (b) traditional expressions, such as proverbs, sayings, and maxims; (c) traditional questions, such as riddles; (d) folk poetry, such as pantun, gurindam, and syair; and (e) folk songs (Danandjaja, 2002: 21-22).

3. Myth

A myth (as described by Wadiji, 2011) is a term derived from the Greek word "muthos," which literally means a story or something that is told. In a broader sense, it can mean a statement. Additionally, the term "myth" is also associated with "mythology" in English, which refers to the study of myths or the content of myths. Mythology or myth comprises a collection of traditional stories usually passed down from one generation to another within a certain ethnic group. Barthes, a semiologist, states that mythological narratives are created for communication and have a process of signification that makes them comprehensible to the mind (1972). In this context, myths cannot be regarded as mere objects, concepts, or stagnant ideas but as modes of signification or new ways of thinking. This implies that in-depth study of the content or messages, as well as comparative analysis, is essential to stimulate specific thoughts or knowledge. Furthermore, myths can also be used to stimulate the development of creative thinking. Culture, as an abstraction of human experience, is dynamic and tends to evolve in line with the development of its supporting community. Therefore, myths that reflect culture also tend to convey transformative messages. These transformative messages can be embedded within a single myth or manifested in new versions of the same myth.

4. Tradition

In the anthropological dictionary (Siregar, 1985), tradition is synonymous with customs, which refer to the magico-religious practices of an indigenous community's life, encompassing cultural values, norms, laws, and regulations that are interconnected and

subsequently form a stable system or rule encompassing all cultural system concepts for governing social actions. In the sociological dictionary (Soekanto, 1993), tradition is defined as customs and beliefs that can be preserved in a society from generation to generation. Meanwhile, Stompzka (2007: 69) argues that tradition is the continuity of material objects and ideas originating from the past that still exist today and have not been destroyed or damaged. Tradition can be interpreted as a true legacy or an inheritance from the past. However, traditions that occur repeatedly are neither accidental nor intentional. More specifically, traditions can give birth to culture.

5. Oral Tradition

Oral tradition is one type of cultural heritage in a community, where the process of inheritance is done orally. According to Budhisantoso (1981: 64), oral tradition is a source of culture, such as the ability to behave and social skills in accordance with the values, norms, and beliefs that prevail in the community that supports it.

According to Pudentia (Sibarani, 2014: 32-35), oral tradition encompasses everything related to literature, language, history, biography, and various types of knowledge and other arts that are conveyed orally. Therefore, oral tradition does not only include folklore, riddles, proverbs, folk songs, mythology, and legends, as is commonly assumed, but also relates to the cognitive systems in culture, such as legal history and medicine.

Theory

1. Drama Structure

Etymologically, the word "structure" comes from the Latin word structura, which means form or building. Structure refers to the mechanism of interrelationships between one element and another. These relationships are not solely positive, such as harmony, suitability, and agreement, but also include negative elements, such as conflict and opposition. Essentially, structural analysis functions as a tool to uncover hidden elements within a literary work (Ratna, 2004:91). In this context, Kernodle (as cited in Dewojati, 2010) divides the elements that create the structure of drama into three: plot, character, and theme.

2. Plot

Dewojati (2010:167) explains that Aristotle's idea of plot was later developed by Kernodle. He divides the development of the plot into several parts: exposition, point of attack, inciting force, complication, build, minor climax, let down, anticipation, foreboding, great suspense, major crisis, major climax, conclusion, and denouement.

3. Character

Character not only refers to the identification of a figure through age, physical appearance, attire, tempo/rhythm of the character's performance but also the inner attitude of the character. For example, it can be used to identify whether the character is a doubter, humorous, cheerful, melancholy, wise, or someone who tends to be playful (Kernodle as cited in Dewojati, 2010:170).

4. Theme

Theme is the next important element in a literary work because it represents the central idea encompassing all the issues within the story. Kernodle (as cited in Dewojati, 2010:173) also reveals that the theme can be implicitly derived from the characters, setting, and the richness of nonverbal texture that can be observed on stage.

5. Drama Texture

Texture in drama performance is created by sound, language imagination, strong stage mood, props/stage materials, story content, color, movement, setting, and costumes. The texture expressed in drama includes dialogue, mood, and spectacle. The texture in dialogue can be found in the haupttext (main text), while mood and spectacle are usually found in the nebentext (subtext).

6. Dialogue

Dewojati (2010:176) also suggests that universally, dialogue in drama serves as a medium for the author to convey information, explain facts, or communicate main ideas. In other words, dialogue is a medium for the audience to grasp information, clarify facts, or understand main ideas. In addition to dialogue, drama also includes monologues. Abdullah (as cited in Dewojati, 2010:180) argues that a monologue in its initial sense is a person speaking alone; it is the opposite of dialogue (where two or more characters converse).

7. Mood

According to Kernodle (as cited in Dewojati, 2010:182), the creation of mood in drama involves many elements. In other words, mood is built in relation to other elements, such as spectacle, dialogue, and rhythm in the drama.

8. Spectacle

Spectacle can also be referred to as the visual aspects of a play, particularly the physical actions of the characters on stage. It also refers to the staging, costumes, makeup, lighting, and other equipment. Spectacle is considered one of the elements that bring life to a drama and is an important part of the performance. Kernodle illustrates the significance of spectacle by highlighting how Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are depicted in beautiful robes, seated on a magnificent throne, surrounded by attendees, trumpets, and banners, marking their victory (Dewojati, 2010:185).

Research Method

1. Observation

The data collection process for this research begins with observation. Observation involves conducting field research to examine the object being studied. According to Margono (2007:159), observation techniques are used to see and monitor the changes in social phenomena that are growing and developing, allowing researchers to make judgments about necessary and unnecessary elements. Similar to folklore studies, in the observation process,

researchers identify informants or sources who will support the discovery of research data, including the agreed-upon time and location.

2. Interview

Taum (2011:239) divides the interview process into two stages. The first stage is 'unstructured interview,' which allows informants maximum freedom to speak. The second stage is 'structured interview,' where pre-prepared questions are asked to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding. During both stages, researchers use recording devices to document the informants' responses.

3. Transcription

Transcription is the process of converting audio data into written form. According to Endraswara (2009:227), the transcription process involves the following stages:Rough Transcription: The recorded or field note data is presented as is, without concern for punctuation, capitalization, etc. Perfect Transcription: The text is compared with the recording. Any unclear words are clarified by repeating until their meaning is clear. The text's formatting, including punctuation, is then refined.

4. Performance Creation Technique

Based on the theoretical framework and data collection above, the next step is the performance creation technique. The writer will go through two stages to achieve this:
1. Transformation
   Transformation, as previously explained, involves converting mythological text into a dramatic script. The obtained narrative data will be adapted into a script.
2. Following Drama Structure
   The drama structure, divided into plot, character, and theme, will be aligned with the transcribed mythological story. Interviews and observations of traditions will be sorted and organized into a structured script concept.

Result and Discussion

1. Sandeq

Sandeq is a type of outrigger canoe typical of Mandar. It is used for fishing and trading, characterized by its white color, a single mast, a triangular sail, and equipped with two outriggers (cadik) and two stabilizers (katir). Based on size, sandeq is categorized into two types: sandeq kayyang (large, crewed by 3-6 people) and sandeq keccu (small, crewed by 1-2 people) (Alimuddin, 2003).

Types of Sandeq Boats

1. *Sandeq pangoli*
   The sandeq pangoli is a smaller-sized sandeq that cannot be used for fishing near reefs or areas where currents converge, while dragging a bait made from chicken feathers behind the boat (mangoli). This type of boat is very fast and nimble, allowing for quick direction changes to chase fish while avoiding reefs.

2. *Sandeq parroppo*

   The sandeq parroppo is used for fishing at sea, specifically at fish aggregation devices (rappo). This type of boat is relatively large, capable of carrying two to three smaller boats that are deployed in the rappo to expand the fishing area. Sailors can carry supplies for trips lasting between two to five days, and the boat is designed to withstand large waves and strong winds in the open sea where fishing occurs.

3. *Sandeq potangnga*

   The sander potangnga is used for fishing in the open sea. This type of boat is large enough to accommodate provisions and equipment needed for voyages lasting two to three weeks. Its design helps it handle high waves typically encountered in fishing areas. This type often features additional raised platforms, known as lewa-lewa, installed on either side behind the mast (Alimuddin, 2005).

Hull Construction

The hull of a sandeq consists of several layers of planks, reinforced by frames, with the entire top covered to prevent water from entering the boat. Specifically, the hull or body of the sandeq consists of a section called **belang**, which is the lower or main part of the hull made from a single piece of wood, usually pailipi. The belang is the first part constructed in the making of a sandeq. The belang is also referred to as balakang. To raise the hull, additional planks are added: **papan tobo** (planks at the bottom), **papan lamma** (planks in the middle), and **papan tariq** (planks at the top). These planks are joined together by **tajo**, curved beams installed inside the boat from top to bottom, serving as the boat's framework or ribs. The tajo ensures that the belang, tobo, lamma, and tariq are strongly integrated. They are fastened with wooden or brass nails, especially at the bow and stern. The number of tajo on each side must be odd (Alimuddin, 2005).

2. Fisherman Rituals

One of the traditions practiced by Mandar fishermen is the "makkuliwa lopi" ritual. According to Amrullah (2015), this tradition involves a ritual practice and a belief related to their profession as sailors. The makkuliwa lopi ritual is a customary practice among the Mandar community, performed by fishermen (posasiq) when there is a new boat or before setting out to sea. Mandar fishermen always strive to perform the kuliwa ritual for their boats, even if done in a simple manner, because they believe that neglecting this tradition could lead to troubling and disruptive experiences during their voyages.

In the Mandar language, "kuliwa" means "balanced," and makkuliwa means "to balance." According to Ismail (2012:153), in the context of fishermen's rituals, makkuliwa refers to a safety prayer. This prayer is intended to ensure that both land and sea environments remain in harmony, preventing disturbances and disruptions, thus allowing for a peaceful life. The makkuliwa lopi tradition involves a recitation ritual, performed when a new boat (lopi) is launched or when an old boat is put back into service after a long period. Typically conducted by fishermen before heading out to sea, this ritual involves balancing the boat to receive barakkaq (blessings).

During the ritual, certain foods must be present as well. These include *sokkol* (cooked sticky rice), *loka* (bananas), *ule ule' bue* (mung bean porridge), and *tallo'* (eggs). These foods symbolize good fortune and are believed to bring favorable outcomes. They are an essential

part of the ritual, as it is hoped that the positive qualities associated with these foods will be imparted to the boat and its journey.

The preparation stage is the initial step in carrying out the makkuliwa lopi tradition. This stage is crucial as the ritual cannot proceed without it. During preparation, all necessary requirements must be met and all initial conditions of the tradition fulfilled. The first thing to prepare is the boat that will undergo the kuliwa. This boat may be newly built or an old one that has been renovated. In the makkuliwa lopi ritual, the boat is the central element. There are no specific requirements for the shape or size of the boat to be blessed. Whether it is a small boat or a large one, as long as the boat has been newly constructed or renovated, it must be balanced before being used for fishing.

3. Transformation to Performance Art Theater

3.1 Performance Concept: "Weaving the Waves"

This performance, titled Weaving the Waves, will combine two main elements of Mandar culture: the ritual of sailing and weaving. These elements symbolically represent the relationship between humans, nature, and local traditions. In this context, weaving is not only a physical activity performed by Mandar women but also a metaphor for the process of navigating life, maintaining balance between the visible (physical) and invisible (spiritual) worlds. Waves, as an uncontrollable natural element, will symbolize life's challenges, which must be faced with patience, courage, and a deep connection with nature. The story will follow a fisherman who sails using a *sandeq potangnga*, while his wife performs rituals and weaves on land. The ritual performed by the wife reflects hopes for safety, luck, and balance in nature, closely connected to her husband's journey at sea. The performance will feature two actors—one male and one female—playing central roles: the male as the fisherman sailing, and the female as the keeper of tradition, weaving while awaiting her husband's return.

3.2 Dramatic Structure Analysis in the Context of "Weaving the Waves"

3.2.1 Plot

a. **Exposition:** The story begins by introducing the life of a Mandar fisherman, the *sandeq potangnga* boat, and the weaving tradition practiced by women. In the opening scene, the woman prepares her loom at home, talking with her husband, who is about to sail. Together, they perform the *makkoli lopi* ritual, which involves prayers for the safety of his journey.
b. **Inciting Incident:** The *sandeq potangnga* boat sails away from the shore, leaving the wife behind, who begins to weave at home, symbolizing the separation between the land and sea. The husband faces challenges at sea while the wife continues weaving with hope and prayers.
c. **Initial Cause:** At sea, the husband faces a change in weather or a storm that threatens his boat and safety. Meanwhile, on land, the wife feels anxious but continues her work. Tension builds in both worlds.
d. **Complication:** Tension peaks when a major storm confronts the husband's boat at sea. Meanwhile, the wife performs another ritual for safety, repeating her prayers, and weaving faster, symbolizing her effort to "weave" balance for the rocking boat.

e. Building Tension: Tension increases as the storm shakes the boat, while on land, the wife accelerates her weaving, with each beat of the loom representing the struggle of controlling the boat. At the same time, the wife weaves with the conviction that the balance of nature will guide her husband's safety.

f. Climactic Conflict: A great struggle occurs between the fisherman and the storm, marking the greatest challenge in the journey. On land, the wife prays fervently, weaving with hope that her husband will return safely.

g. Resolution: After the storm passes, the fisherman safely returns to shore. On land, the wife finishes her weaving, symbolizing the long ritual and wait. They perform a thanksgiving ritual together, both experiencing the peace that comes from the achieved balance of nature.

3.3 Themes and Meanings in "Weaving the Waves"

3.3.1 Main Theme

Weaving the Waves explores the relationship between humans and nature through ritual. This theme is expressed in two aspects: the interdependence between women and the sea and the balance in life maintained through tradition. On one hand, the ritual of women weaving at home reflects continuity in everyday life, while on the other hand, the perilous voyage highlights how uncontrollable nature must be faced with courage and spiritual connection.

3.3.2 Ritual and Tradition

Weaving is not only the work of Mandar women but also a symbol of maintaining balance in life and nature. This activity reflects the cycle of life, which, in the context of this performance, intersects with the husband's journey at sea, which is riskier and more unpredictable.

3.3.3 The Relationship Between Women and the Sea

Although Mandar women engage in weaving on land, they have a deep connection with the sea through the rituals they perform. Rituals such as *makkuliwa lopi* are ways they maintain balance between the land and the sea, ensuring that everything remains harmonious and in sync.

3.3.4 Implicit Themes

a. Courage and Balance: Mandar women not only maintain the family and household but also safeguard their husbands' safety through prayer and ritual. In this context, weaving becomes a symbol of the courage and patience women exhibit in the face of the uncertainties their husbands encounter at sea.

b. Gender Roles and Tradition: This performance also reveals the gender dynamics in Mandar culture, where, although men sail to earn a living, women play an equally vital role in sustaining the family through their domestic duties and rituals.

3.4 Dramatic Texture Analysis

3.4.1 Dialogue and Monologue

Dialogue: Dialogue between the husband and wife will reflect their hopes, anxieties, and courage. The wife will use language that contains prayers and mantras, showcasing her belief in the rituals she performs. Meanwhile, the husband, at sea, will speak about the difficulties and challenges he faces, but with optimism fueled by his belief in his wife's prayers.
Monologue: The wife's monologue while weaving may express her inner feelings of worry and hope. Similarly, the husband's monologue while struggling at sea will depict his inner struggle between fear and trust in nature, as well as in his wife's weaving at home.

3.4.2 Mood

On land, the mood begins with calm and peace created by the weaving routine. However, when the storm hits, the mood shifts to tension and anxiety. This contrast will be enhanced with dramatic lighting and sound effects, creating a shift between the tranquility on land and the chaos at sea.

3.4.3 Spectacle

Visual: The visual representation of the *sandeq potangnga* boat will show the movement of the voyage at sea, while on land, the act of weaving is performed with costumes representing everyday Mandar women's life. Props such as the loom and the boat's sails will emphasize the difference between the land and sea worlds, reinforcing the symbolism of "weaving the waves."

3.4.4 Dramatic Movement:

The actors' movements imitating the actions of weaving and sailing, as well as transitions between the two, will intensify the dramatic impact. Lighting and sound will add to the intensity of the atmosphere, highlighting the contrast between the visible and invisible worlds and the crucial role of women in maintaining the balance of both.

Conclusion

In this performance, the life of Mandar fishermen and their reliance on the Sandeq boat will be vividly brought to life. The story unfolds through a carefully crafted dramatic structure, capturing the essence of their maritime world. The plot will begin by immersing the audience in the unique culture and rituals of the Mandar fishermen. It will follow their preparation for the voyage, the actual journey across the sea, and the trials they face. The narrative will reach its peak as the fishermen confront a powerful storm or other formidable challenges, before concluding with the rituals and reflections that follow their return to shore.

Characters will be richly drawn, featuring a wise captain who guides the crew, spirited sailors who navigate the seas with skill, and new recruits who are still finding their way. Their interactions and dialogues will reveal their personalities and their deep connection to the sea. At the heart of the performance is a theme that explores the delicate balance between humans and nature. It will highlight the courage needed to face the unknown and the significance of

preserving cultural traditions. Through the characters' experiences, the rituals they perform, and the obstacles they overcome, this theme will be poignantly expressed.

The texture of the drama will be brought to life through dynamic dialogue, including traditional mantras and expressions from the fishermen. The mood will be crafted with a blend of visual and auditory elements, creating an immersive atmosphere that transports the audience to the world of the sea. The spectacle will involve detailed representations of the Sandeq boat, the actors' movements, and the stage design, all reflecting the maritime environment.

Dialogue will play a crucial role in conveying the essence of the story, building character relationships, and embedding cultural nuances. Monologues will offer deeper insights into the characters' thoughts and emotions, enriching the narrative. The mood will be shaped by a synergy of dialogue, visual elements, and sound, evoking the varied conditions of the sea and the fishermen's emotional landscape. Finally, the spectacle will include visually striking elements such as costumes, props, and lighting, enhancing the audience's engagement and highlighting the beauty and challenges of the fishermen's journey. Through these elements, the performance aims to deliver a compelling portrayal of the Mandar fishermen's life, celebrating their rich cultural heritage and the profound relationship between humanity and nature.

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The Dark Side of Adolescent Girls' Minds in "The Corn Maiden: A Love Story" by Joyce Carol Oates

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Abstract

The Corn Maiden: A Love Story (2005) by Joyce Carol Oates tells the story of an 11-year-old blonde girl with a learning disability, Marissa Bantry, who is kidnapped and held captive by 13-year-old Jude Trahern and her friends. Eventually, Marissa is rescued, and Jude commits self-immolation. Other characters include Marissa's single mother, Leah, and Mikal Zallman, a part-time math teacher and computer consultant at the school Marrisa and Jude attend. Despite coming from a wealthy and prestigious family, Jude's parents divorced when she was young, and she now lives in a large mansion with her grandmother. Jude has grown up feeling neglected and is unable to tolerate the seemingly happy mother-daughter relationship between Leah and Marrisa. Additionally, Jude has a strong desire for approval and feels resentful when Zallman does not pay her the attention she seeks, leading her to frame him for Marissa's kidnapping. While Oates meticulously portrays the frustration and anger lurking within the hearts of adolescent girls in this novel, she seems to imply that they need the kind of unconditional love that Leah shows to Marissa. In this paper, I will analyze the darkness in the minds of adolescent girls from a psychological perspective, exploring how Jude's self-destructive behavior emphasizes the novel's message about the essential role of genuine love from others in our lives.

Keywords: Joyce Carol Oates, *The Corn Maiden: A Love Story*, Adolescent Girls

Introduction

In *The Corn Maiden: A Love Story* (2005) by Joyce Carol Oates, the story centers on Marissa Bantry, an 11-year-old blonde girl with learning disabilities, who is kidnapped and held captive by 13-year-old Jude Trahern and her friends. Marissa is eventually rescued, and Jude burns herself to death. Other important characters include Leah, Marissa's single mother, and Mikal Zallman, a part-time math teacher and computer consultant at the school where both Jude and Marissa are students. Jude finds it unforgivable to see Marissa and Leah seemingly happy as mother and daughter. Moreover, Jude has a deep need for approval and becomes resentful when Zallman does not treat her in the way she desires. As a result, she manipulates the situation to make it appear as though Zallman is the one who kidnapped Marissa.

Oates said the following about Jude in the interview by Vanessa Becknell (2012):

> Jude is yearning to be loved—to have a true, loving mother as the Corn Maiden has; therefore, she wants to appropriate the Corn Maiden as herself. And when it comes to the sacrifice, she realizes this: it is herself who must be sacrificed, not the innocent girl. So Jude is really not, finally, such a villain; she does the "decent" thing.

Oates uses the character of Jude in this novel to intricately depict the irritation and anger lurking in the hearts of adolescent girls, while subtly suggesting that they need unconditional love, like the love Leah shows to Marissa. In this paper, I will analyze the darkness within the minds of adolescent girls from a psychological perspective, considering Jude's motivation for kidnapping Marissa and her strong desire to be noticed and appreciated, which comes from the lack of love she should have received from her parents.

Jude's Motive for Kidnapping Marissa

Jeff VanderMeer (2012), in his review of "The Corn Maiden" for *The Guardian*, comments on Jude's motive for committing the crime.

> Indeed, Jude's evil genius lies in realising that with a single action she can hurt several people at once.

> But Jude's motivations aren't really part of the focus, dismissed early on in a confession by the disturbed teen: "Because it was an experiment to see if God would allow it. That's why."

Thus, VanderMeer interprets Jude's motive for this incident as not being the focus of the story because she does not clearly state her motive, but is this really the case? On the contrary, what Oates wants to depict in this novel may be found in the motive that is not mentioned by Jude. Here, I will explore the darkness of Jude's heart by considering her true motive for kidnapping Marissa and sacrificing her by imitating Indian rituals.

Jude provides various motives for the kidnapping of Marissa. For example, the novel begins with the line, "Why why you're asking here's why her hair" (Oates, 2011, p. 1), which can be interpreted as "Jude's motive for kidnapping Marissa is her hair." Additionally, Jude mentions the following motives:

> Here's why in sixth grade a field trip to the museum of natural history and Jude wandered off from the silly giggling children to stare at the Onigara exhibit of the Sacrifice of the Corn Maiden … you stepped through an archway into a fluorescent-lit interior of dusty display cases to state at the Corn Maiden with braided black bristles for hair and flat face and blind eyes and mouth widened in an expression of permanent wonder beyond even terror and it was that vision that entered Jude's heart powerful as any arrow shot into the Corn Maiden's heart that is why.
>
> Because it was an experiment to see if God would allow it that is why.
>
> Because there was no one to stop me that is why. (Oates, 2011, p. 2)

In this way, Jude seems to list various motives for kidnapping Marissa on a whim, but, as VanderMeer points out, none of these motives provide a valid reason for the abduction. If we look closer at these motives, questions arise: Why would Marissa's hair be a motive for kidnapping? Why did Jude feel the need to imitate the Onigara Indian ritual? Why did she have to test whether God would forgive her? Additionally, why did she resort to crime simply because no one stopped her? However, Jude offers no answers to these questions.

The ritual of the Onigara Indians, which Jude cites as the motive for Marissa's kidnapping, is described by Jude herself as follows:

> In the Onigara ceremony Jude said the Corn Maiden was slowly starved and her bowels cleaned out and purified and she was tied on an altar still living and a priest shot an arrow that had been blessed into her heart. And the heart was scooped out with a knife that had been blessed and touched to the lips of the priest and others of the tribe to bless them. And the heart and the Corn Maiden's body were then carried out into a field and buried in the earth to honor the Morning Star which is the sun and the Evening Star which is the moon and beg of them their blessing for the corn harvest. (Oates, 2011, p. 69)

This story reveals that the Onigara Indians have a reason for sacrificing the kidnapped girl, which is to pray for a good corn harvest—a necessity for their survival.

On the first page of the novel, there is a note that reads, "Note The Sacrifice of the Corn Maiden is a composite drawn from traditional sacrificial rituals of the Iroquois, Pawnee, and Blackfoot Indian tribes" (Oates, 2011, p. 1). Among these, the Pawnee Tribe did, in fact, kidnap and kill young women from other tribes as sacrifices. George E. Hyde (1974) explains the reason why the Pawnee Tribe sacrificed young women: "But the mass of the Skidi [Pawnee] tribe … were still convinced that if the sacrifices were given up crops would fail and the tribe would be overwhelmed by every form of misfortune" (p. 162). In other words, young women were sacrificed by the Pawnee Tribe to pray for a good harvest and to protect themselves from misfortune. Furthermore, Ralph Linton (1926) describes the Pawnee Tribe's methods of kidnapping and brutally killing these sacrificial victims:

> As soon as a girl of suitable age was captured the attack ceased and the war party returned. The girl was dedicated to the Morning Star at the moment of her capture and was given into the care of the leader of the party who, on its return, turned her over to the chief of the Morning Star village. During the time preceding the sacrifice she was

> treated with kindness and respect, but it was forbidden to give her any article of clothing. (p. 457)

> When the Morning Star appeared, two men came from the east with flaming brands and touched her lightly in the arm pits and groins. Four other men then touched her with war clubs. The man who had captured her then ran forward with the bow from the Skull bundle and a sacred arrow and shot her through the heart while another man struck her on the head with the war club from the Morning Star bundle. (p. 459)

It can be said that the Pawnee Tribe's Morning Star sacrifice ritual is reflected in the ritual of the fictional Onigara Indians created by Oates.

However, Jude is neither a member of the Onigara Indians nor in an environment where she must pray for a good harvest. Therefore, there is no reason for her to imitate the Onigara Indians' ritual by offering a sacrifice. In other words, the original meaning of the Onigara Indians' sacrificial ritual, which is to pray for a good harvest, holds no significance for Jude. What matters to her is punishing Leah and Marissa for displaying the happiness of a parent and child—a happiness she herself can never have. This is because Jude confesses the following: "There was her mother [Leah]. I saw them together. I saw the mother stoop to kiss *her*. That arrow entered my heart. I thought I *will make you see me*. I would not forgive" (Oates, 2011, p. 1).

The "you" in this passage clearly seems to refer to Marissa's mother, Leah. It can be assumed that Jude, upon seeing the close relationship between Leah and Marissa—between a mother and daughter—feels jealous of the happiness they share, a happiness she can never experience herself. She feels anger toward Leah for giving her love to Marissa instead of to her. From Leah's perspective, it is only natural for her to show love to her own daughter, and she has no reason to be resented by Jude for doing so. Jude's complex emotions may have been shaped by the fact that, despite her wealth, she was raised in an environment where her parents were divorced, and she was unable to receive their love.

Another important factor to consider is that Jude is going through adolescence. In a review by *The Guardian*, VanderMeer (2012) describes Jude as "the disturbed teen." Furthermore, *Kirkus Review* (2011) views Jude as "severely disturbed." These reviews interpret Jude as if she were mentally ill, but is she truly suffering from a mental illness? Anna Freud (1958), the daughter of Sigmund Freud and a psychoanalyst herself, discusses the psychological symptoms of adolescence:

> The adolescent manifestations come close to symptom formation of the neurotic, psychotic or dissocial order and merge almost imperceptibly into borderline states, initial, frustrated or fully fledged forms of almost all the mental illnesses. Consequently, the differential diagnosis between the adolescent upsets and true pathology becomes a difficult task. (p. 267)

Adolescence can be a time of mental instability, making it difficult to distinguish between symptoms that are unique to this stage of life and actual mental illness. Jude's act of kidnapping Marissa for sacrifice may seem pathological, but it is premature to conclude that Jude is mentally ill. If we labeled her as mentally ill, her crime would simply be seen as an act of madness. As Oates stated in the interview by Becknell, "So Jude is really not, finally,

such a villain; she does the 'decent' thing." This suggests that Jude's emotions are more complex, rooted in adolescence, and cannot be easily dismissed as a mental illness.

Denise and Anita are holding Marissa captive with Jude, and one of them confesses the following about drugs:

> Fifth grade, Jude instructed us how to get HIGH sniffing S. Where Jude got S., we didn't know.
>
> Seventh grade, Jude gave us X. Like the older kids take. From her secret contact at the high school Jude got X. (Oates, 2011, p. 3)

School counselor Lisa Damour (2016) discusses children who get involved with drugs at an early age.

> Who is most likely to experiment with sex, drugs, or drinking at an early age? Psychological science consistently points to two factors: disproportionately, girls on the fast track come from disrupted families or lack a close relationship with at least one parent. The link between having a difficult family life and early risky behavior often comes down to low levels of supervision…. Left alone (and often becoming lonesome), girls sometimes go looking for trouble. (p. 41)

Jude fits the criteria of children who try drugs early, as mentioned by Damour. She lives with her indifferent grandmother, having lost both her father and mother. Their relationship is more like that of mere housemates, lacking any emotional connection. The family has fallen apart, and she has not experienced a close relationship with either parent. In other words, Jude has reached the eighth grade without receiving any love that should have come from her family.

Damour states that there is a lack of supervision of children, and Jude is exactly in that situation. Jude's kidnapping and imprisonment of Marissa can be seen as a form of revenge against the parents and society of a child who has been left alone (and has come to feel lonely). Behind Jude's attempts to justify Marissa's kidnapping with seemingly unfounded motives lies a cry for love from someone she may not even realize she desires. Jude cannot openly express this longing, so she can only express it through her distorted actions of kidnapping Marissa. In other words, Jude's motive for kidnapping Marissa can be seen as jealousy of the parental love that a teenager, who should normally receive it, is unable to obtain, as well as a longing for that very parental love.

Jude's Desire to Show off Herself

The relationship between Mikal Zallman and Jude is solely that Zallman is a part-time math teacher and computer advisor at Jude's school. Jude secretly admires him, referring to him as "Mr. Z." However, Zallman is completely unaware of Jude's feelings, and as a result, she resents him and frames him as the culprit in Marissa's kidnapping. Here, by analyzing the relationship between Jude and Zallman, I will explore whether Jude's desire to show off herself is actually a reflection of her deep longing for genuine love as an adolescent girl.

Jude's feelings for Mr. Z are expressed as follows:

> Mr. Z.! Maybe he'd smelled her underarms. She hoped he had not smelled her crotch.
>
> Mr. Z. in computer lab . . . she'd have liked to catch his eye and exchange a knowing smirk but Mr. Z. never seemed to be looking toward her and then she was stricken with shyness, blood rushing into her face as he paused above her to examine the confusion on her screen and she heard herself mutter with childish bravado *Guess I fucked up, Mr. Zallman, huh?* wiping her nose on the edge of her hand beginning to giggle and there was sexy/cool Mr. Z. six inches from her not breaking into a smile even of playful reproach giving not the slightest hint he'd heard the forbidden F-word from an eighth grade girl's innocent mouth. (Oates, 2011, pp. 31-2)

As can be seen from this, it is no exaggeration to say that Jude is in love with Zallman. However, when she realizes that her feelings will not reach him, Jude undergoes a drastic change.

> Mr. Z. she'd sent an e-message *you are a master mister z….* But Mr. Z. had not replied.
>
> So easy to reply to a fucking e-message! But Mr. Z. had not.
>
> Mr. Z. did not exchange a knowing smile/wink with her as you'd expect.
> Ignored her!
>
> Like he didn't know which one of them she was.
>
> Like he could confuse her with *those others* her inferiors.
>
> And so something turned in her heart like a rusty key and she thought calmly, *You will pay for this mister asshole Z. and all your progeny.* (Oates, 2011, pp. 32-3)

In this way, having grown up without her parents and without knowing the love of adults, Jude briefly desires to be noticed and acknowledged by her teacher, Zallman, who is a close presence in her life. However, Zallman never hears Jude's inner cry. Zallman's impression of Jude is as follows:

> Afterward vaguely he would recall *you are a master mister z* but of course he'd deleted it. So easy to delete an e-message.
>
> Afterward vaguely he would recall the squirmy girl at the computer with the frizz hair and glassy staring eyes, a startling smell as of unwashed flesh wafting from her (unusual at Skatskill Day as it was unusual in the affluent suburban village of Skatskill) he had not known at the time, this was January/February, was Jude Trahern. (Oates, 2011, p. 33)

To Zallman, Jude is not a particularly memorable student. He does not see Jude as an individual, but rather as an unstable adolescent girl.

> And so he joked, "Here's the famous hacker, eh?—he knew it was the kindest as it was the wisest strategy to make a joke of the audacious/inexplicable behavior of adolescents, it wasn't a good idea to confront or embarrass. Especially not a girl….

> Eyebrows and lashes scanty, near-invisible. She was so fiercely plain and her unbeautiful eyes stared at him so *rawly*.… He felt sorry for her, poor kid. Bold, nervy, but in another year or so she'd be left behind entirely by her classmates, no boy would glance at her twice.… He laughed and dismissed her with a wave of his hand. Had an impulse, out of character for him, to reach out and tousle that frizzed floating hair as you'd rub a dog's head partly in affection and partly to chastise.
>
> Didn't touch her, though. Mikal Zallman wasn't crazy. (Oates, 2011, p. 34)

Zallman says it was wise of him not to have touched Jude, but if he had gently patted her on the head and offered her a few kind words, Jude might not have committed such a crime.

Education scholar Toshiyuki Kasugai (2006) describes what is important when interacting with adolescents.

> Various troubles that adolescents experience during their growth, such as school refusal, bullying, and disruptive behavior, can be seen as "crises." At the same time, depending on how adults engage with them, these crises can become opportunities for growth. Children's troubles are an SOS to the adults and friends around them, and understanding the children begins by considering who they are reaching out to and what kind of help they are seeking. In this way, interactions that make use of the roles of parents and teachers can help turn children's "crises" into opportunities for growth. (p. 189)

If there had been adults around Jude who approached her with this kind of attitude, her behavior might have been very different. It can also be interpreted that the indifference of the adults around her led to Jude's reckless actions.

Furthermore, Kasugai (2006) highlights three important points regarding the attitudes of parents and teachers towards children: (1) the reaffirmation that "there is nothing more important than life" (p. 189), (2) the importance of offering "unconditional love" (p. 190), and (3) the need to consistently convey the message "I am on your side no matter what" (p. 191). For Jude, who could not expect "unconditional love" or the assurance of "being on her side no matter what" from her parents, Zallman was likely the only adult she could turn to for that. Although Zallman was chosen as an adult by Jude, he failed to recognize this. Rather, it can be said that he had no intention of genuinely engaging with any of his students, not just Jude. In contrast, the love Leah pours into Marissa can be seen as "unconditional love." Oates emphasizes the importance of having an adult nearby whom children can consult by portraying Marissa, who receives unconditional love from her mother, and Jude, who seeks love from her teacher after being deprived of parental affection.

It is inevitable that Jude, who lacks parents and has a tenuous relationship with her grandmother, has developed a personality that struggles to form connections with others. It is also not difficult to imagine how challenging it has been for such a person to establish her own identity. Erik H. Erikson (1968) states that an individual's identity is formed through intimate relationships with others:

> It is only when identity formation is well on its way that true intimacy—which is really a counterpointing as well as a fusing of identities—is possible.… The youth who is not sure of his identity shies away from interpersonal intimacy or throws

himself into acts of intimacy which are "promiscuous" without true fusion or real self-abandon.

Where a youth does not accomplish such intimate relationships with others—and, I would add, with his own inner resources … he may settle for highly stereotyped interpersonal relations and come to retain a deep *sense of isolation*. (pp. 135-6)

Jude is an American girl born into a prestigious family and is currently in the eighth grade. However, there is a crucial element missing: she does not have the identity of being "someone's daughter." In other words, Jude's lack of parents may contribute to her uncertainty about her own identity. Therefore, it is possible that Jude lives without fully understanding what interpersonal intimacy is, rather than hesitating to engage in it. Growing up without parental love, Jude may have entered adolescence feeling lost about who she is, becoming frustrated, and resorting to the drastic act of kidnapping Marissa as a way to cope with that frustration. The kidnapping of Marissa might have been Jude's attempt at self-expression in her effort to establish her identity.

Jude's kidnapping of Marissa is an act of self-expression directed at Leah and Zallman, who leave no room for Jude's existence. Leah, who demonstrates unconditional love for her daughter, and Zallman, who completely ignores Jude, symbolize the "love" that Jude knows she can never attain. Growing up in a unique family environment and being in the midst of adolescence, Jude has misdirected her way of seeking that "love."

Conclusion

As seen so far, Oates illustrates the importance of true love given by others in life through the character of Jude, a troubled adolescent girl. When Jude ultimately realizes that her attempt to sacrifice Marissa fails, she resorts to self-immolation; this impulsive act can be attributed to her being a girl experiencing adolescence. Anna Freud (1958) discusses the challenges of dealing with adolescents:

While an adolescent remains inconsistent and unpredictable in his behavior, he may suffer, but he does not seem to me to be in need of treatment. I think that he should be given time and scope to work out his own solution. Rather, it may be his parents who need help and guidance so as to be able to bear with him. There are few situations in life which are more difficult to cope with than an adolescent son or daughter during the attempt to liberate themselves. (p. 276)

As Freud suggests, the world in which Jude lives, while going through the most challenging period of life—adolescence—is a very small one centered around school and home. If she could just overcome this difficult stage of adolescence, her world might expand significantly, and she might even forget what she was dissatisfied with. It can only be considered unfortunate for Jude that there are no adults to teach her such things. Through this work, Oates appears to emphasize the importance of "unconditional love" provided by adults for adolescents striving to grow into adulthood.

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The Role of Rural Aesthetics and Cultural Practices in Promoting Active Ageing in Northern Thai Community

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of rural aesthetics and cultural practices on fostering active ageing in a case study village of Baan Pong Nuea, a rural community in Northern Thailand. Focusing on a high proportion of elderly residents, the research explores how the physical environment, cultural traditions, and social structures contribute to health and well-being among older adults. Active ageing in rural contexts is underrepresented in the literature, particularly concerning how aesthetic and cultural elements create supportive environments that foster physical health, mental resilience, and social inclusion. Using a mixed-methods approach, this study gathered quantitative data through structured surveys with 144 elderly residents, complemented by qualitative insights from in-depth interviews and site surveys. Quantitative findings revealed that well-maintained communal spaces and natural landscapes significantly correlated with self-reported health measures, and participation in cultural practices was positively associated with mental and emotional well-being. Qualitative findings underscored the sense of place attachment among elderly residents, with community spaces and cultural practices fostering a sense of purpose and social connection. This research offers essential insights for policymakers, urban planners, and community leaders, advocating for culturally and aesthetically sensitive approaches in rural planning to promote active ageing. By highlighting the importance of the physical and cultural environment in supporting the well-being of elderly residents, this study contributes to a broader understanding of active ageing in rural contexts.

Keywords: Ageing Health, Active Ageing, Rural Aesthetics, Cultural Traditions, Environmental Design, Rural Communities

1. Introduction

As global populations age, rural communities face unique challenges in fostering well-being and quality of life for elderly residents. Unlike urban centres, which often have structured healthcare facilities and social programs tailored for the elderly, rural areas are frequently limited in resources and infrastructure. However, these areas possess distinctive features, such as communal spaces, natural landscapes, and cultural practices, that may provide supportive environments for older adults. Active ageing, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), is the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation, and security to enhance the quality of life as people age (WHO, 2002). While extensive research has examined active ageing within urban settings, the role of rural environments in supporting this process remains less understood, especially in non-Western contexts where cultural practices are deeply embedded in community life.

In Northern Thailand, where rural communities hold high proportions of elderly residents, the need for sustainable, community-focused strategies to promote active ageing is exceptionally pressing. The case study village of Baan Pong Nuea in Chiang Mai Province exemplifies a traditional rural Thai community with a notable elderly population and a lifestyle centred on agricultural activities, communal spaces, and cultural rituals. The physical environment includes communal areas like temples and a village centre, while local traditions, such as annual festivals and religious ceremonies, serve as regular events that integrate elderly residents into community life. These cultural and environmental features create a unique setting for exploring ageing and well-being dynamics.

1.1 Research Background and Relevance

Prior studies on active ageing have emphasised physical health, mental well-being, and social engagement as critical elements that enable elderly individuals to live fulfilling lives (Bowling & Dieppe, 2005). Research has also shown that access to communal spaces and natural landscapes can improve well-being by providing opportunities for physical activity and social connection (Sugiyama et al., 2008). However, most existing studies focus on urban or suburban contexts, which offer more organised healthcare services and social infrastructure. There is a significant gap in understanding how rural aesthetics, such as open landscapes, natural features, and cultural sites, contribute to active ageing in rural communities. These communities often have elderly populations that experience greater social cohesion but face fewer healthcare resources.

For elderly residents in the case study village, the aesthetic quality of communal spaces and the ability to participate in cultural practices may offer alternative pathways to well-being that are not typically accounted for in urban-centric research on ageing. Given the limited access to healthcare and social services in many rural Thai communities, understanding these alternative supports is crucial. This study, therefore, aims to explore how the physical and cultural environments in the case study village contribute to active ageing, shedding light on the potential of rural areas to support elderly well-being through unique, culturally rooted approaches.

1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1) To assess the impact of communal spaces and natural landscapes on physical and mental health among elderly residents in the case study village.
2) To explore the role of cultural practices in promoting social cohesion, identity, and emotional well-being.
3) To provide practical recommendations for age-friendly rural planning and community development, informed by the case study village findings.

Through these objectives, this study seeks to address the gap in the literature on rural active ageing and offer insights that can inform policies to support elderly well-being in rural settings. Focusing on the physical environment and cultural practices, this research provides a holistic perspective relevant to Thailand and rural communities facing similar demographic shifts worldwide.

2.   Literature Review

The concept of active ageing has gained significant attention in recent decades, especially as global populations experience rapid ageing. Active ageing highlights the importance of longevity and quality of life as people age, emphasising the need for an environment that fosters physical, mental, and social well-being (WHO, 2002). Although much research has focused on active ageing in urban settings, there is a growing recognition of the need to explore how rural environments influence elderly well-being. This literature review examines the foundational theories and empirical studies on active ageing, rural aesthetics, cultural practices, and their roles in supporting elderly well-being, focusing on rural contexts like Northern Thailand.

2.1 Active Ageing: Definitions and Frameworks

Active ageing, as defined by the WHO, is a framework that seeks to maximise the opportunities for health, participation, and security as people age, enabling them to enhance their quality of life (WHO, 2002). The framework is often discussed in urban settings, where access to healthcare, social services, and structured recreational facilities is readily available. However, the application of active ageing principles to rural areas remains less studied. The WHO's framework is adaptable and can be enriched by considering factors such as cultural practices, environmental aesthetics, and community engagement in rural settings (Plouffe & Kalache, 2010).

Rowe and Kahn's (1997) model of successful ageing aligns with the WHO's framework, focusing on the importance of physical, cognitive, and social engagement. Their model emphasises that ageing should not be solely about disease prevention but also about sustaining meaningful participation in life. While Rowe and Kahn's model has significantly influenced active ageing research, it is predominantly based on Western, urban-centric perspectives, often overlooking rural areas' distinct social and cultural dynamics (Bowling & Dieppe, 2005). This gap highlights the need to adapt and contextualise active ageing frameworks to include the cultural and environmental characteristics of rural communities, as they play a vital role in shaping the experiences of elderly residents.

2.2 The Role of Rural Aesthetics in Elderly Well-being

The concept of "therapeutic landscapes," introduced by Gesler (1992), highlights how rural aesthetics influence health and well-being. These environments provide restorative

experiences that improve physical, mental, and emotional health. Gesler's work emphasises that natural landscapes, religious sites, and community spaces can facilitate healing and well-being. In rural areas with limited healthcare facilities, natural and community spaces often serve as primary sources of mental and physical rejuvenation for elderly residents (Wiles et al., 2009). Research indicates that exposure to green spaces, like forests and mountains, can reduce stress and enhance mood and cognitive function in older adults (Hartig et al., 2014). Therefore, the aesthetic quality of rural environments offers therapeutic benefits that help address healthcare access challenges.

Sugiyama and Ward Thompson (2007) further explored the link between outdoor environments and elderly health, finding that well-maintained, accessible green spaces encourage physical activity and social interaction among older adults. Their findings support the notion that rural aesthetics are not merely decorative but contribute to essential health outcomes. In the case study village context, rice paddies, orchards, and forested areas provide physical activity and relaxation opportunities, underscoring the potential for natural landscapes to act as supportive, therapeutic spaces for active ageing.

2.3 Cultural Practices and Social Engagement in Rural Settings

Cultural practices play a significant role in the lives of elderly individuals, especially in rural areas where cultural heritage and traditions are deeply embedded in community life. Kitayama and Markus (1999) emphasised the importance of cultural identity and continuity in shaping mental and emotional well-being. In rural Thailand, cultural practices such as festivals, religious ceremonies, and traditional crafts foster a sense of identity and belonging, essential to active ageing. These activities provide elderly residents with opportunities for social engagement, which has been shown to reduce isolation and improve mental health (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010).

Koenig (2001) highlighted that participation in religious and cultural activities contributes positively to mental health, particularly by offering social support and fostering community bonds. In the case study village, the elderly actively participate in events such as temple gatherings and annual festivals, providing them with a sense of purpose and connection. Such practices reinforce social cohesion, enhancing mental and emotional well-being by creating a supportive network around the elderly, thus facilitating active ageing in a culturally specific manner.

2.4 Social Inclusion and Place Attachment in Rural Ageing

Place attachment, or the emotional bond people form with their surroundings, is another critical factor in rural ageing. Wiles et al. (2009) found that older adults in rural areas often experience a profound sense of attachment to their environment, contributing to their quality of life and mental health. This attachment is influenced by both the environment's physical characteristics and the community's social relationships. The aesthetic beauty and cultural familiarity of rural settings like the case study village foster a strong place attachment among elderly residents, reinforcing their sense of identity and continuity.

Social inclusion is also a crucial determinant of well-being for older adults. Menec et al. (2011) found that communities that foster inclusion through accessible spaces and opportunities for participation in social activities promote a higher quality of life among elderly residents. For instance, in rural areas where formal healthcare and social services may

be lacking, inclusive communal spaces become vital for maintaining mental and physical health. Baan Pong Nuea Village exemplifies this by providing accessible communal spaces and cultural events where the elderly feel valued and included.

2.5 Research Gap and Implications

While existing literature provides insights into active ageing, much is limited to urban contexts, where formalised healthcare and social services are available. Studies that focus on rural areas often emphasise the limitations of these communities, overlooking the positive role that rural aesthetics and cultural practices can play in supporting active ageing. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining how the unique features of the case study village, including its natural landscapes and cultural practices, contribute to active ageing. Focusing on a rural setting with limited formal healthcare but rich cultural traditions, this research provides insights into how environmental and social factors work together to support elderly well-being.

3.   Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to examine how rural aesthetics and cultural practices promote active ageing within Baan Pong Nuea Village, Northern Thailand. Combining quantitative and qualitative data enables a comprehensive understanding of how physical, social, and cultural factors support elderly well-being in rural contexts (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

3.1 Quantitative Component

The quantitative component involved administering a structured survey to elderly residents aged 60 and above in Baan Pong Nuea Village. A sample of 144 participants was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. This sample size represents the elderly population of the village, ensuring statistically robust findings.

The survey included closed-ended questions addressing various well-being indicators such as physical health, mental health, social well-being, and life satisfaction. Additionally, participants rated their perceptions of communal spaces, natural landscapes, and engagement in cultural activities. Measurement scales were adapted from established gerontological research to ensure reliability and validity (Bowling, 2005; Pallant, 2016). Trained local researchers conducted face-to-face interviews, facilitating accurate responses despite participants' potential literacy or vision limitations.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics to summarise demographics and well-being indicators, while regression analysis examined relationships between environmental factors and well-being outcomes. This analysis identified significant predictors of well-being, offering insights into how the village's rural environment influences active ageing.

3.2 Qualitative Component

The qualitative component aimed to capture the elderly residents' experiences and perspectives on their environment and cultural engagement. In-depth, semi-structured

interviews were conducted with the same 144 participants to ensure data consistency and depth. Interview questions explored interactions with communal spaces, natural landscapes, cultural practices, and feelings of inclusion. This approach allowed participants to share insights into the social and emotional dimensions of ageing in a rural context.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse the interview data, identifying recurring themes related to place attachment, community inclusion, and the perceived benefits of cultural practices. This structured analysis provided a nuanced interpretation of the qualitative data, revealing patterns and contextual insights that complemented the quantitative findings.

3.3 Site Surveys for Town Planning Illustration

Site surveys were conducted to document and map the physical layout of Baan Pong Nuea Village, focusing on key communal spaces, natural landscapes, and residential areas. The surveys gathered spatial information for a town planning illustration, capturing essential village elements such as the temple, community centre, residential zones, and agricultural landscapes. Photographs and field notes provided a visual foundation for the illustration, ensuring it accurately reflects the village's spatial organisation and significant features. This illustration aids in understanding the village's layout, highlighting environmental and structural characteristics that shape community life.

3.4 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The mixed-methods approach enabled an integrated analysis, cross-referencing regression results with interview themes. This integration provided a holistic view of how physical and cultural environments impact elderly well-being, emphasising the interplay between rural aesthetics, cultural practices, and ageing. This approach also underscores the importance of culturally and environmentally responsive rural planning to support active ageing, particularly in regions with limited formal services.

4. Findings

The findings from this study reveal that both the physical environment and cultural practices within Baan Pong Nuea Village contribute significantly to promoting active ageing among elderly residents. Through a mixed-methods approach that combined survey data with in-depth interviews and site observations, the study identified key elements within communal spaces, natural landscapes, and cultural practices that foster physical and mental well-being, social cohesion, and feelings of inclusion. This section outlines the quantitative findings from the survey data and qualitative insights from interviews. It concludes with a synthesis emphasising the interwoven nature of environmental and cultural factors in supporting active ageing.

4.1 Quantitative Findings

The quantitative data analysis examined relationships between physical health, mental well-being, social engagement, and perceptions of communal and natural spaces among elderly residents. Descriptive statistics revealed that, on average, elderly residents rated their physical and mental health moderately high, with high levels of life satisfaction and feelings of value and inclusion within the community.

1) Communal Spaces and Physical Health

Regression analysis demonstrated a positive association between the perceived quality of communal spaces and physical health outcomes. Higher ratings of communal spaces were significantly linked with better self-reported physical health scores ($\beta = 0.196$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that the accessibility, maintenance, and appeal of these spaces may encourage physical activity among elderly residents. In the absence of formal fitness facilities, communal areas like the village temple and community centre serve as key sites for physical movement, offering ample space for activities such as walking, stretching, and traditional exercises. This aligns with studies showing that age-friendly public spaces enhance well-being by providing opportunities for physical engagement (Sugiyama & Ward Thompson, 2007).

2) Natural Landscapes and Mental Health

The analysis also showed that the quality of natural landscapes was positively correlated with mental health outcomes ($\beta = 0.514$, $p < 0.01$). Elderly residents who rated their natural surroundings, such as rice fields, orchards, and forested areas, highly reported better mental well-being. These natural landscapes offer aesthetic beauty and a tranquil environment that contribute to stress relief and mood enhancement, findings supported by research demonstrating that exposure to natural environments can improve mental health (Hartig et al., 2014). The therapeutic value of these green spaces, where residents can walk, sit, and enjoy nature, appears central to mental health maintenance in this rural setting.

3) Participation in Cultural Practices and Social Cohesion

Another significant finding is the strong positive correlation between participation in cultural practices and social well-being ($\beta = 0.733$, $p < 0.01$). Activities such as temple ceremonies, annual festivals, and traditional dance provide a sense of purpose and foster a shared identity among residents. Participation in these practices encourages social cohesion, reduces feelings of isolation, and strengthens bonds within the community. This finding echoes Koenig's (2001) research on how cultural practices enhance social support networks, which are essential for elderly well-being.

4) Feelings of Value and Inclusion

Regression analysis revealed that feelings of value and inclusion within the community were positively associated with life satisfaction and lower levels of depressive symptoms. Residents who felt valued and included showed significantly higher self-reported life satisfaction ($\beta = 1.024$, $p < 0.01$), underscoring the importance of social inclusion in elderly well-being. The data suggest that the village's community-driven planning efforts, where elderly input is considered in decision-making processes, contribute to these positive outcomes. This is consistent with Menec et al. (2011), who noted that inclusive environments promote mental well-being by fostering a sense of belonging.

4.2 Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data from interviews provide deeper insights into how elderly residents perceive their interactions with the physical and social environment. The themes emerging from the interviews highlight the importance of communal spaces, natural landscapes, and

cultural practices in fostering active ageing. The findings reveal a complex interplay between place attachment, social networks, and cultural engagement that supports the physical, emotional, and social needs of the elderly.

1) Perceptions of Communal Spaces

Elderly residents frequently described the village's communal spaces as essential to their daily lives. The temple grounds, community centre, and village square were particularly valued for their accessibility and social function. Many residents reported using these spaces daily for various purposes, from physical exercise to informal gatherings. For example, one participant noted, "The community centre is a place where I feel safe and connected. I can meet friends, exercise, and relax in this environment." Such spaces offer elderly residents a safe and familiar setting to stay physically active and socially engaged.

The importance of communal spaces also emerged in discussions about inclusivity. The village's design and maintenance ensure that spaces are accessible to residents of all abilities. Shaded areas, seating, and accessible paths make it easy for elderly individuals to navigate these spaces, promoting physical health and social inclusion. These observations align with Sugiyama and Ward Thompson's (2007) research, emphasising that well-maintained communal spaces are crucial for elderly physical and social well-being.

2) The Impact of Natural Landscapes on Mental Well-being

Natural landscapes were consistently cited as a source of peace, relaxation, and mental rejuvenation. Interviewees described the rice fields, forests, and orchards surrounding the village as "therapeutic" and "comforting," with several participants mentioning that simply seeing these landscapes reduced their stress levels. One resident shared, "Being near the rice fields gives me a feeling of calm. It reminds me of my childhood, of simpler times. It's like therapy for me." This sense of connection to the land enhances psychological resilience, particularly for those who have spent most of their lives in rural settings.

Therapeutic landscapes (Gesler, 1992) are relevant here, as the rural environment provides restorative experiences that promote mental health. The interviews suggest that these natural surroundings allow elderly residents to engage in reflective practices, further contributing to mental well-being. These findings support previous research on the psychological benefits of natural settings (Hartig et al., 2014) and highlight the unique role that rural landscapes play in elderly mental health.

3) Role of Cultural Practices in Social Engagement and Identity

Cultural practices emerged as a central theme in the qualitative data, with residents expressing pride and satisfaction in participating in rituals, ceremonies, and traditional events. These practices are anchors of identity and continuity, essential for older adults who may face challenges adapting to change. For example, one participant described the village's annual festival as "A time when the whole village comes alive. It's like we're all one family." Such gatherings provide opportunities for social connection, emotional support, and shared cultural expression.

Many elderly residents also highlighted the psychological benefits of these cultural practices, noting that they provided them with a sense of purpose and social connectedness.

Participating in traditional events and rituals reinforces community bonds and fosters a sense of belonging. These insights align with studies by Kitayama and Markus (1999), which demonstrate that cultural practices support mental health by fostering social cohesion and identity, which is essential for elderly well-being.

4.3 Town Planning Illustration

The town planning illustration findings highlight the spatial arrangement and environmental characteristics in the Baan Pong Nuea Village community planning that supports active ageing. Key communal spaces, including the village temple, community centre, and primary residential areas, are shown to be strategically located within accessible distances for elderly residents. These areas facilitate daily social interactions and physical activities, promoting physical and mental well-being. Natural landscapes, such as rice fields, orchards, and forested areas surrounding the village, enhance aesthetic value and provide tranquil environments for relaxation, contributing to reduced stress and improved mental health among the elderly. The illustration (see Figure 1) also emphasises the connectivity between communal spaces and natural landscapes, underscoring the importance of integrated, accessible design in rural town planning to foster a supportive and cohesive community for ageing populations.

PUBLIC / GOVERNMENT BUILDING

1. OFFICE OF BAAN PONG MUNICIPALITY
2. FOOTBALL FIELD
3. BAAN PONG SCHOOL
4. VILLAGE HEADMAN'S OFFICE
5. FARMERS GROUP OFFICE
6. VILLAGE COMMUNITY CENTRE, LIBRARY
7. BAAN PONG HEALTH PROMOTING HOSPITAL
8. DISTRICT OFFICE
9. POST OFFICE

PUBLIC / GOVERNMENT BUILDING

10. SRIMUANGPONG INTERNATIONAL MEDITATION CENTRE
11. ARUNYAVASA TEMPLE
12. SRIMUANGPONG EMERGENCY RESPONSE CENTRE
13. BAAN PONG EXTRACURRICULAR EDUCATION PROMOTION CENTRE

BUSINESS BUILDING

14. VERANDA RESORT CHIANG MAI
15. HERNLHIN NATURAL RESORT

Figure 1: Spatial Arrangement and Environmental Characteristics in the Community Planning
of the Baan Pong Nuea Case Study Village (Source: Author, 2024)

4.4 Synthesis of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings illustrates that the physical and cultural environment in the case study village plays a vital role in promoting active ageing. While quantitative data provide evidence of significant associations between environmental factors and well-being outcomes, qualitative data reveal the subjective experiences and emotional connections that underpin these relationships.

The synthesis of both data types underscores that active ageing in the case study village is supported by an accessible and inclusive environment rich in cultural traditions and natural beauty. Communal spaces and cultural practices enhance social cohesion and reduce isolation, while natural landscapes offer therapeutic benefits that contribute to mental well-being. This holistic approach to active ageing, where physical, social, and cultural dimensions intersect, highlights the importance of culturally and environmentally sensitive rural planning.

5. Discussion

This study reveals the essential role of rural aesthetics and cultural practices in promoting active ageing among elderly residents in Baan Pong Nuea Village. The findings provide insights into how elements like communal spaces, natural landscapes, and cultural practices contribute to well-being in rural settings, offering implications for rural development and community planning to support ageing populations.

5.1 Communal Spaces With Physical and Social Well-being

The quantitative data revealed that higher ratings of communal space quality are associated with better self-reported physical health among elderly residents. Communal areas, such as the temple grounds and community centre, serve as multifunctional spaces encouraging physical activity and providing social support. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that well-designed, accessible communal spaces are critical to the well-being of older adults (Sugiyama & Ward Thompson, 2007). The findings suggest that age-friendly communal spaces facilitate physical health, social interaction, and a sense of belonging, which are critical components of active ageing (Rowe & Kahn, 1997).

In rural areas with limited healthcare, communal spaces serve as informal support networks for elderly residents, enabling them to engage in light exercises like walking and stretching. This promotes physical activity, which may lower the risk of chronic diseases, aligning with McPhee et al. (2016) on age-related health. Additionally, the maintenance of these spaces fosters social cohesion, helping reduce isolation and loneliness, key risk factors for mental health issues in older adults (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010).

5.2 Natural Landscapes and Mental Health Benefits

Natural landscapes emerged as a key factor positively influencing mental well-being, with elderly residents reporting that exposure to green spaces and scenic views provides them with relaxation and stress relief. This finding supports the "therapeutic landscapes" concept introduced by Gesler (1992), which posits that specific environments foster mental and emotional health. Rice fields, orchards, and surrounding forests in the case study village

provide residents with daily interaction with nature, improving mood, reducing anxiety, and enhancing cognitive function (Hartig et al., 2014).

Natural landscapes in rural areas offer significant psychological benefits, especially where formal mental health services are limited. The tranquillity of these settings helps elderly residents feel calmer, acting as a buffer against stress and enhancing resilience. This supports Kaplan's (1995) theory that nature aids psychological recovery by fostering reflection and reducing mental fatigue. Overall, rural landscapes not only provide beauty but also serve as vital informal mental health resources.

5.3 Cultural Practices and Social Cohesion

Participation in cultural practices, such as temple ceremonies and annual festivals, was strongly linked with higher levels of social well-being. The qualitative findings revealed that these cultural practices create regular opportunities for social interaction, reinforcing social bonds and shared identity among residents. The social engagement fostered through these cultural practices is essential for active ageing, as it contributes to a sense of continuity and purpose, which is particularly valuable for older adults (Kitayama & Markus, 1999). This aligns with Koenig's (2001) study, which suggests that cultural and religious activities provide social support and foster a sense of community, both of which are vital for mental health.

In the case study village, cultural practices help elderly residents maintain their cultural heritage, enhancing their identity and sense of belonging. For rural seniors, engagement in culture fosters support networks that boost psychological well-being and resilience. This aligns with findings that cultural continuity and community involvement are vital for mental health and life satisfaction among older adults (Plouffe & Kalache, 2010). Such practices offer a predictable and fulfilling rhythm of life crucial for psychological stability and contentment in later years.

5.4 Feelings of Value and Inclusion

The study found a positive association between feelings of value, inclusion, and overall life satisfaction. Elderly residents who felt valued and included in community life reported higher life satisfaction, consistent with Menec et al. (2011), who emphasised the importance of inclusive communities for quality of life in elderly populations. In the case study village, participatory planning and decision-making processes foster a sense of respect among elderly residents, enhancing their well-being.

Inclusive design elements in communal spaces, such as accessible pathways and seating areas, allow for active participation in community life. Such inclusivity reflects Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, where belonging and esteem are essential for overall well-being. Involving elderly residents in community planning meets their physical needs and fosters a sense of ownership and pride, reinforcing mental and emotional health.

5.5 Broader Implications for Rural Planning and Active Ageing Policies

The findings of this study contribute to an emerging body of literature that advocates for age-friendly rural planning. Unlike urban areas, where ageing support often depends on formal services, rural communities rely heavily on environmental and cultural resources to foster

well-being among the elderly. Policymakers should recognise the unique strengths of rural areas, including natural landscapes, communal spaces, and cultural practices, and integrate these into strategies that promote active ageing.

By preserving rural aesthetics and facilitating cultural practices, planners and policymakers can enhance well-being without solely depending on formal healthcare infrastructure. This is particularly relevant in regions with limited resources, yet the cultural and environmental features can provide a foundation for active ageing. Creating inclusive, accessible communal spaces and supporting cultural engagement may help bridge the gap in health services, as these initiatives contribute to physical, social, and mental well-being (Plouffe & Kalache, 2010).

6. Conclusions

This study highlights the integral role of rural aesthetics and cultural practices in promoting active ageing within the case study village of Baan Pong Nuea, revealing that these environmental and social elements significantly support elderly residents' physical, mental, and social well-being. Through a mixed-methods approach, the research identified that well-maintained communal spaces contribute to physical health by encouraging social interaction and physical activity. At the same time, natural landscapes provide mental health benefits through their calming and restorative qualities. Additionally, participation in cultural practices fosters social cohesion and a sense of identity, which are vital components of psychological well-being for the elderly.

The findings underscore the importance of creating age-friendly rural environments where physical and cultural characteristics are leveraged to support active ageing. In contexts where formal healthcare resources may be limited, rural aesthetics and cultural engagement offer accessible, community-driven avenues for enhancing the quality of life among older adults. This approach aligns with global ageing trends, emphasising inclusive, place-based strategies that respect the unique characteristics of rural communities.

This research contributes to the field of active ageing by demonstrating how non-urban environments can be optimised to meet the physical, emotional, and social needs of ageing populations. It highlights the need for policymakers and planners to prioritise rural environments, encouraging the integration of natural landscapes and cultural practices in rural development strategies. By preserving rural spaces' cultural heritage and aesthetic qualities, these communities can foster active, connected, and healthy ageing for their elderly residents. This offers a sustainable model for age-friendly development worldwide.

7. Acknowledgements

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Visual Semiotics of Javanese Cultural Signs in Indonesia's Popular Horror Film Titled "KKN Di Desa Penari"

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Abstract

The rapid development of horror films in Indonesia provides a perspective on the increasing trend and global interest in the entertainment industry. Many Indonesian filmmakers have gained attention from audiences and achieved viral status in 2022. One such example is the horror film titled "KKN DI DESA PENARI," which is among the most popular horror films in Indonesia in the last five years and has been screened in the United States. There is still limited research in Indonesia that explores horror films from the perspective of visual semiotics, directly analyzing the visual signs within them, including those related to Javanese culture. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method, utilizing Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, focusing on examining visual signs associated with traditional Javanese culture in Indonesia. The research aims to provide an analysis of visual signs related to traditional Javanese culture found in the film "KKN DI DESA PENARI."

Keywords: Film, Semiotics, Javanese, Cultural Sign

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Introduction

Horror films hold a special place in the history of Indonesian cinema. As one of the most popular genres, horror films have become a reflection of the nation's rich culture, beliefs, and local traditions. The roots of horror films in Indonesia can be traced back to the early era of national cinema in the 1930s. One of the first horror films, *Doenia dalam Bahaja* (1934), introduced mystical and supernatural elements that have since become defining features of the genre in the country.

In the 1970s and 1980s, horror films reached the peak of their popularity with the emergence of legendary works such as Giving Birth in the Grave (1972) and Servant of Satan (1980). These films blended terrifying stories with local myths such as pocong, kuntilanak, and genderuwo, which enhanced their appeal to Indonesian audiences. Additionally, filmmakers like Sisworo Gautama Putra and Tjut Djalil played pivotal roles in solidifying the genre's place in the national cinema landscape. Although the quality and popularity of Indonesian horror films declined during the 1990s, the genre experienced a resurgence in the 2000s, driven by young directors adopting more modern approaches. One notable figure is Joko Anwar, who directed the 2017 remake of Servant of Satan (*Pengabdi Setan*). The genre has continued to evolve, featuring more complex narratives, improved visual effects, and influences from global trends, all while preserving its local roots. Indonesia has experienced a surge of high-quality horror films in the last five years, with many horror works by Indonesian filmmakers gaining significant attention from local audiences. This is evidenced by a film titled KKN Di Desa Penari, directed by Awi Suryadi and produced by MD Pictures. The film was released on April 30, 2022, and achieved great success as the highest-grossing film in Indonesia with over 9 million viewers. This marks the second-largest achievement after Avengers: Endgame, which was screened in 2019 with more than 11 million viewers (Fikri, 2022). Film is a medium of moving images that not only serves as entertainment but also as a means of communication capable of conveying messages visually. In the context of visual communication studies, films can be interpreted and analyzed through various elements, such as composition, color, camera movement, lighting, and symbols that appear within the narrative. These elements work together to construct meanings that can influence the audience's perceptions and emotions (Prasetyo, 2021). Through a visual communication approach (Hafidz, Muchammad, 2017), film becomes an intriguing subject of study as it allows researchers to uncover how messages and symbols are effectively conveyed through the cinematic medium.

Through this long journey, horror films have become more than just a form of entertainment; they also serve as a reflection of collective fears and the cultural identity of Indonesian society. This genre continues to grow, producing works capable of competing on an international level while maintaining the distinctive essence of local traditions. Javanese culture, as one of the largest cultural heritages in Indonesia, holds a rich symbolic and visual wealth that reflects philosophical, social, and spiritual values. The diversity of visual expressions in Javanese culture can be found in various forms of art, ranging from architecture, batik, wayang, to performing arts, each carrying its own distinct meaning. These visualizations not only function as a means of communication but also as representations of the understanding of the world, the relationship between humans and God, as well as social interactions within the community (Dite, 2023).

This study focuses on the exploration of Javanese cultural visuals within the context of art and symbolism used in Javanese society. Based on Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, which

emphasizes the significance of sign and symbol interpretation, this research aims to uncover how visual elements in Javanese culture convey deeper meanings, both in terms of denotation, connotation, and the myths that develop. Using a semiotic visual approach, this study will explore how Javanese culture is depicted through various media, including film, which has become an increasingly popular medium for introducing culture to a wider audience. As time progresses, Javanese culture continues to adapt to social and technological changes, yet the core values in these visual traditions remain preserved. In this context, film becomes an effective medium for maintaining and spreading Javanese cultural symbols. Through the visuals displayed in films, audiences can experience and understand the meanings embedded in these symbols, which not only represent traditions but also raise awareness about the importance of preserving local culture. Therefore, this study is expected to provide new insights into the role of Javanese cultural visuals in strengthening the national cultural identity and the importance of cultural preservation through mediums relevant to contemporary developments (Agustin, 2022). It is important to highlight research that discusses cultural preservation (Ahmad et al., 2018).

Figure 1: "KKN Di Desa Penari" Film Poster
[Source: imdb.com, 2022]

This is evident from a film titled *KKN di Desa Penari*, directed by Awi Suryadi and produced by MD Pictures. Released on April 30, 2022, the film achieved tremendous success as the highest-grossing Indonesian film, attracting over 9 million viewers. This achievement ranks second only to *Avengers: Endgame*, which was released in 2019 and garnered over 11 million viewers (Fikri, 2022). Indonesia has a strong tendency to be drawn to mystical or horror-themed stories. It can be said that this film went viral first through social media, with people everywhere talking about its story. This created a powerful sense of curiosity about the film *KKN di Desa Penari* (Arief & Imanuel, 2019). Since September 23, 2022, the film *KKN di Desa Penari* has even managed to be screened in cinemas across the United States (Kompas.com, 2022).

The visual element is an effective means of delivering messages to the audience (Mahatmi & Medyasepti, 2024), In the field of visual communication design, the application of design principles to visuals has a significant impact on achieving better and more effective design outcomes (Natasya et al., 2022). Composition is the placement of the point of interest within

a frame in moving images to provide an appropriate visual perspective (Prasetyo et al., 2022). Of course, determining the composition first requires identifying the main point in the film that will be highlighted hierarchically. Visuals can influence the development of the audience's perception (Akyuwen et al., 2024). Traditional culture has always played a vital role in shaping the character and identity of societies, including in Indonesia. As a nation with diverse ethnic groups, cultures, and traditions, Indonesia has long been a wellspring of inspiration for various art forms, including cinema. One notable example within the Indonesian film industry is *KKN di Desa Penari*, a horror film that delves into the richness of Javanese culture and weaves it with the mystical elements typical of the genre.

Released in 2022 and directed by Awi Suryadi, the film follows a group of students participating in a Community Service Program (KKN) in a remote Javanese village. During their stay, they experience a series of supernatural events involving spirits and rituals tied to traditional Javanese beliefs. Not only did *KKN di Desa Penari* achieve immense success, garnering over 9 million viewers in Indonesia, but it also sparked a renewed interest in horror films that incorporate local cultural values.

Javanese Culture as the Central Theme

In *KKN di Desa Penari*, Javanese culture serves not merely as a backdrop but as a core element of the narrative. A key example of this is the film's focus on mystical beliefs that continue to permeate the everyday lives of the villagers. The belief in spirits like pocong, kuntilanak, genderuwo, and ritual dancers is deeply rooted in Javanese tradition. These elements transcend mere horror symbols, representing the ongoing tension between modernity and tradition in an increasingly advanced world.

The characters in the film engage in various traditional rituals such as offerings and taboos, showcasing how Javanese beliefs remain integral to the village's way of life. These rituals not only enhance the dramatic tension within the story but also offer an authentic portrayal of Javanese culture, where the worldview encompasses both physical and spiritual dimensions. The depiction of these rituals and the underlying mythology in the film helps connect the audience with cultural heritage that is rarely encountered in modern urban settings. As a result, *KKN di Desa Penari* functions not just as entertainment but as an educational tool, reminding viewers of the importance of preserving long-standing traditions.

Figure 2: Scene "KKN Di Desa Penari"
[Source: layar.id, 2020]

After surveying respondents who watched the trailer before seeing the movie *KKN Di Desa Penari*, the majority of the audience stated that they found it more terrifying, shocking, and intriguing compared to other Indonesian horror films. This is attributed to the importance of the application of composition (Linando & Prasetyo, 2022), the effects of editing transitions and camera movement in the trailer. The author is interested in conducting an analysis of the film's trailer to understand how the interpretation of Javanese tradition symbols is applied in the film titled "KKN Di Desa Penari". The author develops the research based on a previous study titled "THE MYSTICAL VALUES AND MYTHS CONTAINED IN THE NOVEL *KKN DI DESA PENARI* BY SIMPLEMAN" (Maulinda, 2021), dan penelitian terdahulu yang sudah dilakukan penulis dengan judul "The Aesthetic Meaning of Visuals in the Trailer of *Suzzanna Malam Jumat Kliwon* 2023 Production". This research only discusses the visual meanings that emerge from Javanese cultural symbols, analyzed through semiotic interpretation.

Methods

The research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative approach (Dr. Eko Murdiyanto, n.d.), This research was conducted using a qualitative approach with a descriptive nature, focusing on interpreting Javanese cultural symbols in the film (Ahmad Toni, 2017). This method was chosen because it allows researchers to analyze Javanese symbols and the meanings embedded in the research object in depth, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The descriptive qualitative approach is also suitable for exploring and explaining various aspects of the research object, while semiotics is employed as a method of interpreting signs to understand how Javanese symbols appear in each scene of the film *"KKN DI DESA PENARI."*

Data Collection Methods

The observation was conducted by repeatedly watching the film, holding focus group discussions with several lecturers from Film and Visual Communication Design programs to analyze visual signs using semiotic methods, and testing theories derived from film literature studies.

Theoretical Framework

The theory used in this research applies Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, analyzing visual signs from Javanese cultural symbols present in the film. Roland Barthes' semiotic model provides a framework for analyzing cultural elements within popular culture and mass media. Barthes introduces two key concepts: denotation and connotation. Denotation represents the first level of meaning, focusing on the direct relationship between the signifier and the signified, which conveys the most literal interpretation of a sign. Connotation, in contrast, refers to the second level of meaning, encompassing subjective or intersubjective interpretations. Essentially, denotation explains what an object or sign represents, while connotation delves into how it is represented and the associated meanings it conveys (Shalekhah et al., 2021).

Semiotics of Roland Barthes

Table 1: Barthes *Signification Process*

1. Signifier penanda	2. Signified petanda
3. Denotative Sign Tanda Denotatif	
4. Conotative signifier Penanda Konotatif	5. Conotative Signified Petanda Konotatif
6. Conotattive Sign Tanda konotatif	

Roland Barthes, a prominent figure in semiotics, expanded on Ferdinand de Saussure's concepts of the *signifier* and *signified*. Barthes introduced additional layers of meaning through the concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth, which provide deeper insights in visual analysis (Yuwandi, 2018). Denotation represents the direct or literal meaning of a sign, connotation adds emotional and perceptual dimensions, and myth refers to meanings shaped by specific social and cultural contexts (Prasetyo et al., 2023). This study applies these concepts to analyze fan-made posters, uncovering multiple layers of meaning within the designs.

Results and Discussion

Figure 3: Movie Scene, "KKN Di Desa Penari"
[Source: "KKN Di Desa Penari", 2022]

Denotation	Connotation
A beautiful atmosphere in a village in the morning with a backdrop of mountains. A stretch of rice fields and green trees. The village is located in the Gunung Kidul region, Central Java, Indonesia (2009).	Natural beauty, the traditional atmosphere of a Javanese village.
Myth	
The village atmosphere is a comfortable, serene, and cool place. It serves as a text rich in mythology and symbolism, offering deep insights into the lives of its people.	

Figure 4: Movie Scene, "KKN Di Desa Penari"
[Source: "KKN Di Desa Penari", 2022]

Denotation	Connotation
This gate symbolizes access and openness. It serves not only as a physical barrier but also as a symbol of acceptance for visitors, such as students coming for a community service program. The gate also indicates hopes for positive change and collaboration between the students and the villagers. In this context, the gate invites observers to understand that the students' arrival is not merely an academic activity, but also an opportunity for cultural and knowledge exchange.	In this context, the gate carries strong connotations of transition and connection. While it serves as a physical boundary, it also symbolizes a threshold between two worlds: the academic life of the students and the daily life of the villagers. The act of opening the gate signifies a welcoming gesture, representing not just access but the potential for mutual understanding and cooperation. It implies that the students' arrival is an invitation to bridge cultural gaps, fostering a sense of community, exchange, and growth. The gate, therefore, becomes a metaphor for opportunity, emphasizing the possibility of positive change and collaboration through shared experiences. The connotation here is that the gate is not merely an entry point but a symbol of new beginnings and collective effort.

Myth
In village culture, the gate is often regarded as a transition point from one world to another. In this context, the students passing through the gate enter a different realm—the world of a community that possesses rich traditions, values, and stories. The gate functions as a symbol of the transformative journey, where students not only give but also receive valuable life experiences from the local community.

Figure 5: Movie Scene, "KKN Di Desa Penari"
[Source: "KKN Di Desa Penari", 2022]

Denotation	Connotation
Sesajen is an offering consisting of various foods, flowers, and sacred objects arranged neatly on a mat. In this context, the visual representation of sesajen depicts physical objects such as rice, cakes, fruits, and leaves arranged aesthetically. It is a concrete representation of the rituals performed in Javanese culture, aimed at honoring the spirits of ancestors and deities.	**Sesajen** carries deeper and symbolic meanings. The food in sesajen not only serves as a physical offering but also symbolizes gratitude, respect, and hopes for blessings. The colors, shapes, and types of food can have specific meanings; for example, the color yellow often represents prosperity, while flowers symbolize beauty and life. In this regard, the visual representation of sesajen can be seen as a reflection of profound cultural values, such as respect for ancestors and harmony between humans and nature.
Myth	
Sesajen can be viewed as a symbol of the relationship between humans and the spiritual world. By presenting sesajen, the Javanese people believe they establish communication with the supernatural realm and receive protection and blessings from their ancestors.	

Figure 6: Movie Scene, "KKN Di Desa Penari"
[Source: "KKN Di Desa Penari", 2022]

Denotation	Connotation
The visual of a Javanese grave draped in black cloth represents a physical object in the form of a tomb covered by black fabric.	A grave draped in black cloth carries deeper meanings, such as sorrow, respect, and loss. The black cloth itself is often associated with sadness and death, symbolizing the mourning process experienced by the family and community left behind.

Myth
A Javanese grave draped in black cloth can be viewed as a symbol of the relationship between life and death. The Javanese people believe that the spirits of their ancestors remain present and play a role in their daily lives. The black cloth covering the grave is not only a sign of remembrance but also a connection between the physical and spiritual worlds. This practice creates a myth about the continuity of life after death, where the deceased still hold a place in the memories and rituals performed by their families. In this context, the grave serves as a bridge connecting the visible world with the invisible world, as well as a reminder of the cycle of life.

Figure 7: Movie Scene, "KKN Di Desa Penari"
[Source: "KKN Di Desa Penari", 2022]

Denotation	Connotation
The Javanese buffet feast is a communal dining event held during important occasions, such as weddings, circumcisions, or other traditional celebrations. In this context, the buffet visual includes a variety of foods served in a buffet style, such as rice, side dishes, vegetables, and desserts. The diverse and abundant arrangement of food reflects the richness of Javanese cuisine and serves as a symbol of the tradition of sharing within the community.	The buffet feast carries deeper meanings, such as a sense of togetherness, hospitality, and mutual respect among community members. The food served not only fulfills physical needs but also serves as a medium to strengthen social and cultural relationships. This activity symbolizes gratitude for the blessings received and expresses love and support for the individuals or families being celebrated. In this regard, the buffet becomes a symbol of the spirit of cooperation and closeness within Javanese society.

Myth
The Javanese buffet feast creates a narrative about cultural identity and the continuity of tradition. This myth illustrates that food is not merely for consumption but also holds ritual significance that binds the community together. The act of dining together symbolizes a harmonious social life, where each individual contributes to creating a warm and loving atmosphere. In this way, the buffet feast not only celebrates specific moments but also passes cultural values to future generations, demonstrating that tradition lives on and is preserved through togetherness.

Figure 8: Movie Scene, "KKN Di Desa Penari"
[Source: "KKN Di Desa Penari", 2022]

Denotation	Connotation
Dancing in a crowded gathering within Javanese tradition refers to the physical activity where a group of people moves together in sync with a specific rhythm of music or song.	Dancing in a crowded gathering carries deeper meanings, such as a sense of togetherness, cultural identity, and collective expression. The act of dancing is not merely a physical movement but also a symbol of unity and harmony within the community. Through dance, individuals express their feelings, hopes, and cultural values. In this context, dancing becomes a way to strengthen social bonds, celebrate traditions, and preserve cultural heritage. A crowd dancing together creates an atmosphere of solidarity, where each individual feels like part of something larger.
Myth	
Dancing in a crowded gathering creates a narrative about the eternity of culture and the relationship between individuals and the community. This myth emphasizes that dance is a universal language that connects generations, creating continuity in cultural heritage. Dancing together also fosters a spiritual feeling and a deeper connection with ancestors and existing traditions. In this way, the act of dancing is not only viewed as entertainment but also as a ritual that reinforces cultural identity and the continuity of tradition.	

Figure 9: Movie Scene, "KKN Di Desa Penari"
[Source: "KKN Di Desa Penari", 2022]

Denotation	Connotation
A set of Javanese gamelan instruments consists of various instruments, such as gongs, kenong, ketipung, and saron, arranged in one ensemble.	A set of gamelan instruments carries deeper meanings, such as cultural identity, harmony, and community unity. Gamelan music is not merely entertainment; it also reflects the values highly esteemed in Javanese society, such as cooperation and togetherness.

Myth
A set of Javanese gamelan instruments creates a narrative about the eternity of tradition and the continuity of culture. This myth illustrates that gamelan is not merely a musical instrument but also a symbol of the collective identity of the Javanese community. Each instrument in the gamelan ensemble has a specific role and meaning, creating a harmony that represents balance in life. Additionally, gamelan performances are often associated with ceremonies and rituals that connect generations, preserve cultural heritage, and strengthen the sense of identity. In this way, gamelan becomes a medium that reinforces social bonds and conveys cultural messages to future generations.

Figure 10: Movie Scene, "KKN Di Desa Penari"
[Source: "KKN Di Desa Penari", 2022]

Denotation	Connotation
The Javanese funeral platform, or "kurung batang," is a structure made of wood or bamboo used to transport the deceased. This platform typically has a rectangular shape with a removable cover and is often adorned with traditional ornaments. The kurung batang serves as the final means of transport for the deceased before burial.	The Javanese funeral platform carries deeper meanings, such as respect, transition, and spirituality. The funeral platform not only serves as a means to transport the deceased but also symbolizes the final journey of an individual. The decorations and ornaments on the platform reflect the respect and love from family and the community for the deceased. In this context, the kurung batang also indicates the mourning process and sorrow, serving as a medium for the family to express their feelings of loss.
Myth	
The Javanese funeral platform creates a narrative about life after death and the relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds. This myth illustrates that the platform is not merely a tool for carrying the deceased, but also a symbol of the journey toward the afterlife. In Javanese tradition, there is a belief that the spirits of the deceased continue to exist and play a role in the lives they left behind. Therefore, the kurung batang serves as a bridge between the visible and the invisible worlds, fostering awareness of the cycle of life and death. In this way, the funeral platform acts as a reminder of the importance of honoring and remembering ancestors, as well as maintaining a connection with those who have passed away.	

Conclusions

The visual signs that appear in the film *KKN Di Desa Penari* showcase the strong cultural traditions of Central Java, manifesting not only as props in a film but also enriching the narrative and storyline. This horror film conveys messages and evokes sadness through various Javanese cultural visuals, such as the black cloth symbolizing mourning and the kurung batang serving as a place to lay the deceased. However, there are also messages of

gratitude and communal welcome that reflect the noble values of Javanese culture. These are represented in visuals like the entrance gate (gapura) to the village, the buffet feast, symbols of cooperation and togetherness, and the gamelan musical instruments. These are the noble values of Javanese cultural traditions.

Roland Barthes' semiotics analyzes symbols and signs visually, linking them to deeper meanings through denotation, connotation, and myths that occur in areas with strong customs and traditions. Javanese culture is one of the ancestral cultures of the Indonesian nation, often depicted in films that are sacred and full of messages, leaving a lasting impression on viewers. This is utilized as a form of preservation of Indonesian cultural heritage.

This research can certainly be further developed and continued, particularly in terms of discussing the technical aspects of visuals in films, as well as the narrative structure that can be expanded. It is hoped that future studies will further explore the semiotics of symbols and signs appearing in the film *KKN Di Desa Penari*. The same method could also be applied to conduct similar research with different film genres as the object. Visually, the signs that become symbols serve as a language of communication to the audience, creating an impression of reality in the film. Horror films, in particular, are capable of creating a sense of terror, surprise, and mysticism through the visual properties presented, enhancing the atmosphere of the film and making it more chilling.

Acknowledgements

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Forensic Linguistics: Deception and Defamation of Digital Discourse

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Abstract

This study aims to review published research articles that studied digital text crimes, which are deception and defamation based on forensic linguistic point of view. The authors developed three inquiries: linguistic aspects, the selection of research design, and the trend of studies that discussed deceptions and defamations within published scientific articles. The data were twenty published articles on deceptions and twenty on defamations. The authors selected the data from Harzing's Publish or Perish and Mendeley Reference Manager. The descriptive qualitative research method was applied in this study. For deception, 60% of the articles utilized a morphosyntax perspective of analysis, and the trend shows that deception studies were frequently implemented by email (40%) from 2018 to 2021. The findings capture that deception acts through email were investigated with linguistic morphosyntax aspect. This shows that people are getting deceived by word-tricks. Whereas, for defamations published studies, it is observed that the mix of semantic and pragmatic was most selected (50%), and 75% of defamation cases in digital discourse occurred on social media platforms from 2019 to 2022. Thus, the findings reveal that defamation acts through social media were studied from a pragmatic perspective, this shows that defamation acts generally appear in a language interaction. Both deception and defamation studies mostly applied the qualitative descriptive design. Conclusively, this present study is accomplished in portraying the trend of digital crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the significance of linguistics analysis in forensic investigations.

Keywords: Digital Discourse, Deception, Defamation, Forensic Linguistic, COVID-19

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Introduction

Virtual internet-based communication has been selected widely for today. The concept of globalization or a borderless universe puts people in high demand and need of mobile technology devices with all the consequences (Burak, 2020). Committed to the outer world easily had been delivered perfectly by computer technology in recent decades, but mobile internet-based devices have replaced that role. Sending messages, chatting with friends, booking hotels or flights, and attending a long-distance conference can be applied through the smartmobile phone in hand (Actoriano & Riadi, 2018). Eventually, this circumstance causes people to misconduct in using language to communicate through internet-based media (Askurny & Syihabuddin, 2022). Based on the Indonesia Police (POLRI) report, they proceeded with 162 defamation cases in early 2022, elucidating that defamation cases have increased to 37% in Indonesia (Pusiknas Bareskrim Mabes Polri, 2022).

Moreover, deception cases have been reported to the Indonesia Police (POLRI), at the beginning of year 2023 for more than 700 cases (Pusiknas Bareskrim Polri, 2022). These imply that the interaction of people by language through digital media generates violations. This study attempts to deliver the two main misconducts of language use through internet media which has dragged people to the crime, are defamation and deception. As those two dealt with legal issues that involve language, linguistic expertise is emerging to stand with its discipline to assist legal persons in solving such cases. Therefore, the authors categorize crimes of digital discourse into deception and defamation.

Present Study

Investigation of crimes that occur over an Internet connection is known as cybercrime, digital crime, or digital forensic inquiry. Previous scholars, experts, and practitioners have analyzed and studied those crimes based on various disciplines. The salient disciplines that contributed to this inquiry are information technology and computer science. A literature study has reviewed studies of the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) machines to be employed in law investigation and enforcement (Faqir, 2023). In addition, a literature review of articles discussed the use of NLP (Natural Language Processing) in detecting phishing emails (Salloum et al., 2022). Moreover, a literature study of cybercrime investigation exercises more complex engineering and intelligence over multiple surface, deep, and dark intelligence analysis levels (Cascavilla et al., 2021). This present study aims to review the trend of linguistic application to investigate criminal conduct in the digital discourse. To present and explain linguistics, language study contributes to legal investigation and enforcement.

Digital Text, Crime, and Forensic Linguistics

Text or discourse on the internet is digitally manufactured. Digital technology is transmitting information at a simpler, more effective, cheaper storage cost, utilizing computer technology, and data transmission (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2019). Hence, digital interaction through text or discourse means written and spoken language that generates specific features based on the situational expression of the interaction between users. Thus, digital text is a specific variation creatively built by mobile users with identical characteristics within internet settings (Crystal, 2006). The digital space allows people to meet others through internet connections. Digital messages, videos, and content bridge people into intangible physical assemble places

to not only send messages and social interaction but also to attack other people in the form of hate speech and bullying conduct (Miró-Llinares et al., 2018).

Forensic linguistics is the interface of language study, crime, and legal investigation. The two main studies in forensic linguistics are the language of law and language examination as law evidence. Therefore, forensic linguistics is defined as three areas of study, that are; 1) examination of the language of law in the form of writing; 2) examination of the process of law, the measurement of each element in an emergency calls up to the verdict establishment; and 3) work description of a linguist as the expertise witness (Coulthard et al., 2021). Briefly, forensic linguistics concerns three practical practices, that are written legal language, spoken legal language, and delivery of evidence. Written legal language is about how forensic linguists work on legal documents and papers to make those texts comprehensible.

The practice of linguistic expertise in spoken legal language, embracing the analysis of language interaction between the policeman and suspect, defendant and the judges in a courtroom, and so on. Linguists as expert witnesses also contribute to providing evidence in a crime or legal abuse acts by advising the police in an investigation (Hassan & Ali, 2020). Additionally, the types of texts commonly studied in forensic linguistics in previous times were; emergency calls; ransom demands, and other communication of threats; suicide letters; and final death row statements (Umiyati, 2020). In its development, crimes have occurred in the digital text of the internet-based communication world. Therefore, this literature study was conducted to outline the application of linguistics to crimes of digital texts.

As we recognize that activity through the internet connection encompasses interaction between people in an online way. If physical acts apply to ordinary crimes, language crimes are caused by language practices, such as bullying, hate speech, slander, deception, hoaxes, scams, etc. Moreover, language crimes that occur without any physical acts of perpetrators, but electronically require linguistic examinations in the investigation. For example, in examining linguistic features of fraudulent emails, defamation contents, and trademark disputes, as well as detecting threat and hate speech messages detection, which happens in digital space (Sousa-Silva, 2023). The language of cyber or digital crime can be written and spoken. When that is written, the evidence is on the provided documents with all of the variations, while, it is spoken, the evidence is usually in the form of a recording of audio or video (Shuy, 2005).

Considering the characteristics of crimes in the digital environment, cybercrimes, replicating traditional crimes, are categorized into four types. First is trespassing ownership of digital data and identity, like access to passwords, and identity theft. The first is violations of ownership of digital data and identity, such as access to passwords and identity theft. The second is fraudulent attacks or cyber fraud, illegal access to online information and materials, such as intellectual property and digital piracy. The third is cyber-porn such as pornographic content, unauthorized use of nudity, sexual exploration, and so on. Then, the last is cyber-violence which may cause physical and emotional suffering, defamation, and threatening conduct on the internet and can disseminate dangerous and harmful content, like cyberbullying, cyberstalking, and speech spreading (Sousa-Silva, 2024). In line with the previous explanation, the authors of this study selected two main digital crimes (cybercrimes), which represent the five types of cybercrime, that are related to linguistic practices, namely digital deception and defamation.

Deception (Fraud)

Deception or fraud is defined as an act of speech or a statement of untruth, lie, or false statement, intentionally to obtain an advantage over the innocent (Wells, 2010). In the context of digital text, phishing and scam terms are well-known for indicating acts of deception. Phishing and scams are regularly applied through email, text message apps, and social media (I. M. Chiluwa et al., 2017; Holtgraves & Jenkins, 2020). Hoax and Fake are defined as 'false information' or 'lie'. Experts do not have a perception of hoaxes and fake, however, 'false information has been distinguished as follows (Zannettou et al., 2019):

a) *Fake News,* There are four types of Fake News, that are: 1) 'fabricated', or a fiction story, it is a tale whose elements are delusional; 2) Propaganda, which is an artificial or fake story to attack the opponent in terms of political purpose, this story even changes the track record of somebody; 3)imposter, a tale written by a disguised writer (pseudonym) with the misleading purpose; and 4) Confirmation, the stories which are attempting to explain a situation by requiring confirmation, generally it is about illegal acts conducted by the executives.

b) *Bias,* inaccurate news. This refers to a news story that is disingenuous but relates to the fact of truth. It is divided into; 1) *Hoax*, news without determination of true or false, but is presented as the truthful facts; 2) *Hyper-partisan*, in the political field, this refers solely to one-side clarified; and 3) *Fallacy*, which is a story that use invalid reasoning to generate arguments.

c) *Ambiguous News,* a euphemistic story inside the news, is categorized into three types, are: 1) *Rumour*, rumor is an ambiguous story that will never be confirmed; 2) *Clickbait*, the use of a news title or small image on the web content, intentionally to misguided people; 3) *Satire* News, is the story that comprises a humor and ironic story.

Defamation

Defamation is a violation or a crime caused by malicious language. Use of language with a negative intention to humiliate somebody's pride, dignity, and reputation, by spoken act or slander, written or libel, moreover a technospeak, in public (Nieto, 2020). Defamation acts traditionally took place in physical interaction. Insulting, humiliating, and intimidating are actions to lower other people's self-esteem and reputation. However, nowadays, defamation actions happen in nonphysical interactions, internet information technology has inspired people to perform several actions, including to defame someone else' good name. Slur, hate speech, and slander become frequently conducted on internet media platforms, notably, in social media (Mohammed Nusairat, 2022; Titahena & Prihadi, 2023). Moreover, hate speech is a general term for implementing acts of defamation. Hate speech, and so forth, has been noticed as a social misdemeanor conducted through language. Hence, this underlines the worth of linguistic analysis as a tool or way to obtain an understanding of the attributive, performative, and interpretative role of language which is not only to articulate how hate speech exists but also to explain how the target can perceive it as hateful (Irimba et al., 2021).

Bullying is another language act of defamation, exercised overtly or covered. Overt bullying is an identically physical attack on somebody like punching, kicking, rejection, and sexual touch. Meanwhile, covered bullying is an act of isolating, intimidating, and gossiping, by peer friends (Shariff & Hoff, 2007). Further, bullying recently applied through the internet media. Cyberbullying is identically delivered by a person who hides himself, by libel, posting mocking on social media, sending threats through email, websites, blogs, and so on (Chan &

Yew, 2015). Bullying is applied when a more powerful person or group, normally, within a peer group, intends repeatedly to cause distress or harm and attacks with words, physical contact, or gestures, and intentional exclusion from a group over a person who cannot able to defend himself.

Research Problems

The authors formulated the research problems to drive this study to uncover deception, and defamation inside digital text, as follows; 1) What linguistic aspects are found in the deception and defamation published studies; 2) What linguistic aspect appears frequently? 3) What research design is most often chosen for deception and defamation? and 4) What is the trend of deceptions and defamations studied in published studies?

Method

This research is a literature study to reveal linguistic practices in the legal field to study criminal cases in digital communication. Therefore, the researchers have collected some published journal articles that analyzed and found linguistics as an aspect of examination in terms of forensics. So, this study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a quantitative approach to present, explain, and elaborate on the phenomenon to answer the research questions.

Data Collection

The authors collected twenty journal articles discussing deception and twenty articles that discussed defamation. Deception in this study varies in the form of the title of the article, such as fraud, scams, and deception. On the other hand, articles with defamation, entitled Defamation, Hate Speech, and Swear Words. This study attempts to promote linguistic discipline in law investigation and enforcement. Therefore, this study observes those articles on the characteristics of data, research designs, digital media employment, and linguistic aspects, which indicates that those discussions genuinely place linguistics.

The researchers obtain articles by utilizing *Harzing's Publish or Perish* to narrow the search. The search keywords for deception were fraud, scam, digital media, and linguistic analysis. After selecting the articles, the researchers read the abstract, media, digital data, and research methods, then make the choices. From observing the digital media data and research methods, the authors can see the linguistic aspect used for the study. For defamation, the keywords were bullying, hate speech, social media, and linguistic analysis. After obtaining 20 articles about deception and defamation, the researchers worked with Mendeley, Elsevier's programming server, to manage and share the research paper.

Data derived from language use proves that the research is the linguistic area, method or design would explain the path of data examination, and the salient linguistic perspective would clarify that the issues within the articles are the linguistic inquiry (Osman et al., 2020). The descriptive quantitative procedure is chosen in this study to present the calculation of the data, which aims to show the patterns, connections, and trends of the data from time to time. Quantitative description as a social-scientific inquiry can be employed in any substantive field, such as; the rising or falling number of democracies; the correlation of citizens' views on economic policy and social policy, etc. (Munger et al., 2021).

Digital deception occurs formerly by email (I. Chiluwa, 2019). Then, it develops into more sophisticated methods, such as spam, phishing, and scamming. Previous studies have proposed and accomplished linguistic analysis to detect and examine deception acts. The researchers collected twenty (20) published articles that discussed linguistic perspectives for analyzing deception. So, the twenty published research studies of deception are becoming the data of this present study. And, then, the researchers collected twenty (20) published articles that discussed defamation. Defamation, hate speech, and complaints are the identical words included in the title of a published article.

Data Analysis and Findings

The data analysis and findings are divided into two trends that are deception and defamation.

Deception Research Trends

The research findings on deception are classified into three: digital media platforms across linguistic analysis; research design selection across digital media; and digital media usage trends.

Digital Media Platforms Across Linguistic Analysis. Of the 20 published studies that have been collected, it was found that six digital media contain deception cases, that are; Instant message apps, Emails, Online News websites, commercial web reviews, and social media posts. The result shows that the linguistic aspects applied are morphosyntax, lexical semantics mixed with pragmatic, pragmatic, and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The findings showed that morphosyntax was the dominant linguistic aspect studied with a 12 or 60% frequency. Morphosyntax aspects were analyzed in four digital media, except social media platforms. On the other hand, the pragmatic aspect appears the least, namely only once, or 5%, in the instant messaging apps. Moreover, SFL (20%) and Semantic plus pragmatic (15%) were taken in the studies sequentially. The data description shows that Email, followed by Instant message Apps, were the most pertinent digital media platforms for deception purposes. The description of the findings is captured in the following table.

Table 1: Digital Media Across Linguistic Analysis in Deception Studies

Digital Media / Linguistic Feature Analysis	Morphosyntax	Semantic Pragmatic	Pragmatic	SFL	Freq of Digital Media Use (%)
Instant Message Apps	4	1	1	0	6 (30)
Email	3	1	0	3	**7 (35)**
Commercial Webs Reviews	2	0	0	0	2 (10)
Online News Webs	3	0	0	0	3 (15)
Social media	0	1	0	1	2 (10)
Ling Feature Analysis (%)	**12 (60)**	3 (15)	1 (5)	4 (20)	

Research Design Selections Across Digital Media. The data findings explained that the studies of deception selected 7 (seven) research designs. Those were; Qualitative; Quantitative; Mixed- Quantitative and qualitative; Content Computational linguistics; SFL; Game Design Development; and Corpus Linguistics. The greatly selected research design was Qualitative (30%). in which *case study approach* selection was the most chosen alternative to qualitative designs. A qualitative design was employed to analyze several types of deception data text, including instant Message Apps; Email; Consumer reviews; and social

media. Again, Email was the most applicable digital application to deliver deception purposes. The findings are described below.

Table 2: Research Design Across Digital Media in Deception Studies

Digital Media /Research Design	Qual	Quan	Mix	Computational Ling	SFL	Game Design Developm	Corpus Linguistic	Freq of Digital Media (%)
Instant Message Apps	2	0	2	1	0	1	0	6 (30)
Email	2	1	1	1	2	0	0	**7 (35)**
Consumer Reviews	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2 (10)
Online News Text	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	3 (15)
Social media	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	3 (15)
Freq of Res Desi Selection (%)	**6 (30)**	2 (10)	4 (20)	4 (20)	2 (10)	1 (5)	2 (10)	

Trends of Digital Media Usage for Deception Studies. From the 20 (twenty) published articles, it was observed that five digital media of communication were used for deception purposes, Commercial website reviews (Hotel), Email, Online News Media, Instant Message apps (WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger), and social media (Instagram and Facebook). Then, it also found that 'email' was the most used by the deceivers (40%), and email was applied, in the years 2018, 2019, mostly 2020, and 2021. Moreover, it was noticed that the use of various digital media occurred in the year 2020. It means deception cases happened considerably in that year, or before. The findings are described as follows.

Table 3: Trends of Digital Media Usage for Deception Studies

Digital Media / Res Design	Qual	Quan	Mix	Computational Linguistic	SFL	Game Design Development	Corpus Ling	Freq of Digital Media (%)
Instant Message Apps	2	0	2	1	0	1	0	6 (30)
Email	2	1	1	1	2	0	0	**7 (35)**
Consumer Reviews	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2 (10)
Online News Text	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	3 (15)
Social media	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	3 (15)
Selection (%)	**(30)**	2 (10)	4 (20)	4 (20)	2 (10)	1 (5)	2 (10)	

Defamation Research Trends

The research findings on defamation are classified into three: digital media platforms across linguistic analysis; research design selection across digital media; and digital media usage trends.

Digital Media Platforms Across Linguistic Analysis. The data collection of published articles on defamation found that four main kinds of digital media frequently contain defamation cases: Instant message apps, Video-social media (YouTube and TikTok), News

Websites, and social media (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter). The findings show that social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and so on contribute the most to acts of defamation, with a 60% frequency.

Linguistic aspects analyzed from the collected data are Semantic and Pragmatic, Pragmatic, Semantic (Grammatical) and Appraisal Function, and Semantic (lexical and grammatical. The table shows that the mix of Semantic and Pragmatic is the most selected (50%) by the article's authors in observing the defamation act. It is followed by Pragmatic (40%), Semantic (10%), and a mix of Semantic and Appraisal Functions (5%). Then, from the findings, it can be noticed that lexical and grammatical features (semantics) along with the speech act of pragmatics were applicable in the study of defamation texts. Thus, it captures that the study of the meaning and intention of the speaker is aroused from linguistic features. The visual description of the findings can be seen in the following table.

Table 4: Digital Media Across Linguistic Analysis in Defamation Studies

Digital Media / Linguistic Analysis	Instant Message Apps	Youtube &Tiktok	News Websites	Social media	Freq of Ling Analysis (%)
Semantic Mix Pragmatic	2	1	2	5	**10 (50)**
Pragmatic: Speech Act	1	2	0	5	8 (40)
Semantic and Appraisal Theory	0	0	0	1	1 (5)
Semantic: Lexical and Grammatical	0	0	0	1	1 (5)
Freq of Digital Med Use	3 (15)	3 (15)	2 (10)	**12 (60)**	

Research Design Selection Across Digital Media of Defamation Studies. From the data findings, it is found that five types of research designs were selected, Descriptive Qualitative, Case study qualitative, Corpus Study Qualitative, Discourse analysis and CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis), and descriptive quantitative. Descriptive Qualitative was the most chosen research design (65%), followed by the others. In general, Qualitative methods were applied preferably to study defamation text on digital media, in the form of descriptive, case study, and corpus study. In comparison, the quantitative descriptive method was the least selected. It can be understood, that the defamation text of digital media was the discourse study to reveal the meaning and intention of the speaker, in which semantic and pragmatic aspects were the consideration perspective of investigation. In addition, interestingly, the Shuy model of Discourse analysis and the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Model of van Dijk were also selected to analyze defamation on social media. The visual description can be seen in the following table.

Table 5: Research Design Selection Across Digital Media of Defamation Studies

Digital Media/Res Design Selection	Instant Message Apps	Youtube and Tiktok	News Websites	Social media	Freq of Res Des Selection (%)
Descriptive Qualitative	2	3	1	7	**13 (65)**
Case Study Qualitative	0	0	0	2	2 (10)
Corpus Study Qualitative	1	0	1	0	2 (10)
Discourse Analysis	0	0	0	2	2 (10)
Descriptive Quantitative	0	0	0	1	1 (5)
Freq Of Digit Media Use (%)	3 (15)	3 (15)	2 (10)	**12 (60)**	

Trends of Using Digital Media of Defamation Studies. Defamation cases discussed in published articles can be seen from the selection of digital media. Starting from 2019, we can observe that 15% of defamation cases have occurred in instant message apps. Continuing the data in the year 2021, shows 40% of defamation cases have happened in the four digital media, that were social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram), News websites, Social Media Video (YouTube and TikTok), and Instant Message Apps. The trend decreased in 2022 (20%), in which defamation cases were found only in social media. Then, in 2023, the trend got a bit higher (25%) where defamation cases occurred in social media; instant message apps; and mostly in social media videos (TikTok and YouTube).

Two main findings that occurred here, are the most used digital media for defamation acts is social media. Then, the trend of using social media video uploaders (YouTube and TikTok) for conducting defamation, arose in the year 2023. The visual description of the findings can be seen in the next table.

Table 6: Trends of Using Digital Media of Defamation Studies

Digital Media Used /Year	Instant Message Apps	Youtube and Tiktok	News Websites	Social media	Freq per year (%)
2019	1	0	0	2	3 (15)
2021	1	1	1	5	**8 (40)**
2022	0	0	0	4	4 (20%)
2023	1	3	1	0	5 (25)
Freq Of Digital Media Use (%)	3 (15)	4 (20)	2 (10)	**11 (55)**	

Discussion and Conclusion

According to the findings of this study, it is captured that the experts or authors of linguistics and crimes, generally utilized morphosyntax aspects to examine language features of digital deception texts. As has been studied in the previous literature, the characteristic of the untruth in the text is recognizable from the salient features. For example, congratulatory words, prizes, gifts, and grants words frequently occur in the deception text in the digital

communication world (Alghazo et al., 2021; I. Chiluwa et al., 2019; Feresa et al., 2014). Then, the emergence of deceptive lexical and syntactic styles, such as the number of words, syllables, and short sentences; and the frequency of function words, and punctuation, can be identified. Also, the use of salutation, request sentence, and discourse initiation of the deceiver can be recognized from the deceptive text (Afroz et al., 2012; Olajimbiti, 2018).

The qualitative study was preferable to utilize in examining digital deceptive texts, regarding qualitative research design aims to answer the question upon specific phenomenon to reconstruct and understand the phenomenon, then to build a model or theory (Daniel, 2016; Park et al., 2020). An increase in literature examining digital frauds was observed from 2019 to 2020, and the digital media platform that deceivers preferred to use was email. It is reasonably related to the chaotic situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, where many people must stay at home, and even lose their jobs, in consequence, cybercrime such as phishing and scam emails, become a concern (Alawida et al., 2022).

Defamation cases, based on the data in this study, were examined by employing Semantics and Pragmatics (45%) and followed by Pragmatics (40%) by the previous experts. In general, Pragmatics was the preferable linguistic aspect of analyzing defamation in digital texts. Considering that acts of defamation of spoken or written material give rise to allegations of defamation, a linguist is required who can examine and explain the locution, illocution, and perlocution of the speaker (Nieto, 2020). In studying defamation of digital media platforms, most of the authors selected the descriptive qualitative research design (60%), as well as the deception studies that this study elaborated on earlier, qualitative is an approach to reconstruct, explain, and develop a new understanding of the phenomenon. The findings show that from 2019 (15%), the trend of defamation cases has been rising, reaching the culmination in 2021 when 40% of defamation cases had been researched and published. Until 2022, generally, the digital media platforms in which defamation acts took place were Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (social media). Social media provide a space for public, internet users to express opinions, feelings, and thoughts freely, this causes people to violate other people's self-honor, through hate speech, bullying, and hoaxes (Kusno, 2021).

The findings capture three descriptions and explanations due to digital deception and defamation. Deceptions were applied mostly through instant message apps, where text messages become the data of the fraud. Therefore, linguistic features, that is morphosyntactic, analysis was applicable. The trend shows that digital fraud mostly occurs in the 2019-2020. It then explains the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and deception acts. While, defamation regularly happens through a speech on social media, where speech acts in a conversation become the data of defamation studies. Consequently, pragmatic and discourse analysis was relevant. The trend shows that defamation cases in digital media significantly appeared in 2021, which was still the COVID-19 pandemic from 2019 to 2021.

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Ceramics as a Medium for Social Critique:
Artistic Reflections on Freedom and Marginalization

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Abstract

Modern life often generates various forms of personal anxiety, which, in turn, contribute to a broader social unease. This anxiety can stem from multiple sources, including feelings of alienation and injustice experienced by individuals within contemporary social structures. Within this conceptual framework, the author draws inspiration from the experience of caring for rescue dogs living in their home, which prompts profound questions concerning freedom and the rights of marginalized beings in society. This research aims to address such anxieties through the creation of an artistic work utilizing the medium of ceramic art. The selection of ceramics as the primary medium is based on its ability to explore a range of dimensions and textures, thus creating a deep tactile experience for the audience. The artwork is designed to represent the struggles and aspirations for freedom of rescue dogs, while also fostering a broader discourse on the rights of living beings as individual entities within the social order. By emphasizing physical dimensions and textures in the ceramic work, the author seeks to convey a message about the resilience and uniqueness of each living being. This artistic endeavor is intended not only to produce visual aesthetics but also to invite the audience into a process of critical reflection on the relationship between humans and other living beings. The anticipated dialogue from this artwork revolves around how society might enhance its appreciation and protection of the rights of other living beings. Through this artistic approach, the author seeks to evoke a deeper awareness of the ethical issues related to the treatment of animals. Thus, this research represents not only an artistic effort but also a manifestation of social and ethical concern for the voiceless beings within our society. In this context, ceramic art serves as a bridge for conveying this message, with the aim of inspiring positive change in the way we treat other living beings, granting them the freedom and dignity they deserve.

Keywords: Visual Communication, Culture, Artistic, Ceramics

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Introduction

Anxiety in modern life often arises as a response to personal discomfort, which evolves into social anxiety. This phenomenon can stem from feelings of alienation and perceived injustice experienced by individuals within contemporary social structures, where their freedoms and rights seem restricted. From a phenomenological perspective, this anxiety is understood as a meaningful subjective experience rather than merely a psychological reaction. Phenomenology emphasizes the importance of direct experience and an individual's subjective understanding of the surrounding world (Hasbiansyah, 2008).

In this study, ceramic art is employed as a response to social anxiety, given its capacity to explore dimensions and textures that offer a profound tactile experience for the audience. A phenomenological approach is applied to create a more reflective and personal experience, allowing the audience to sense the meaning and anxiety arising from their interaction with the artwork. Based on the idea that art can serve as a medium for social critique, this study draws inspiration from the author's experience caring for rescue dogs living freely in their home. The presence of these dogs raises fundamental questions about freedom and individual rights, particularly for living beings who are often marginalized in society. Through ceramic art, this research seeks to represent the struggles and aspirations for freedom of these dogs, inviting the audience to reflect on the relationship between humans and other living beings within the social order.

Every month, hundreds of dogs are abandoned by their owners across the Jabodetabek area, primarily due to financial constraints or relocation challenges. This situation has encouraged animal activist groups like the Jakarta Animal Aid Network (JAAN) to conduct adoption campaigns and free sterilization programs aimed at controlling stray dog populations in specific areas. Through collaboration with the government and volunteers, JAAN strives not only to reduce the number of abandoned dogs but also to focus on their welfare by providing shelters, medical care, and responsible adoption options. With programs like free sterilization and public education on animal rights and welfare, JAAN aims to sustainably address the issue of stray animals in urban areas (Gromico, 2016).

The closeness between humans and animals highlighted in this research aligns with Ugo Untoro art exhibition titled Poem of Blood. In this exhibition, Ugo Untoro presented the story of his beloved horse that had passed away, which became a source of inspiration for his artworks. The loss of a beloved animal led Ugo to reflect on the meaning of closeness, freedom, and loss in his life. This concept illustrates how art can be an effective medium for conveying complex feelings, such as anxiety and emotional attachment (Aurelia , 2020).

In this context, ceramic art using molding techniques is an ideal choice as it allows for the creation of three-dimensional works that deliver strong visual effects and textures. Three-dimensional forms in ceramic art, such as reliefs with varying levels of depth contrast, can convey diverse expressions. High-contrast reliefs can create rich storytelling, where audiences can feel the emotions implied in the work. The sharpness and variation of textures in ceramic art create a visual depth that allows the audience to emotionally connect with the artwork, as if the story intended is brought to life before their eyes (Sumadi, 2018).

Furthermore, through art, artists or designers can capture the details of everyday life and symbolic objects that refer to troubling issues. This is consistent with Galuh Paramithasari's (Paramithasari, Suminto, & Maryani, 2017), view on scanography art, which presents object

details with strong emotional depth. This method allows artists to capture emotional aspects and hidden meanings behind simple objects, adding a personal touch to the resulting artwork. In a similar way, this approach can be applied to ceramic art design processes, where the depth and texture of the artwork help the audience reflect on the social issues raised.

The main objective of this research is to produce an artwork that is not only visually appealing but also capable of conveying meaningful messages both emotionally and intellectually. By using cues of depth and motion in visual communication, this artwork is expected to influence the way audiences perceive form, space, and the meaning of each element presented (Tinarbuko, 2017).

Through this artistic approach, this research aims to engage audiences in a process of critical reflection on the protection and appreciation of the rights of other living beings. In an increasingly advanced world, we often overlook the voices that go unheard, especially those of living beings deemed low or insignificant in society. By making rescue dogs the central subject, this artwork intends to remind us all of the value of freedom and dignity that every living being deserves.

Moreover, ceramic art is chosen as the primary medium due to its unique ability to provide a profound tactile and visual experience (Akbar, 2014). The texture and dimensions of this ceramic work help build an emotional bond between the audience and the object presented, which in turn facilitates a dialogue about the rights of living beings. It is hoped that this dialogue will awaken a deeper ethical awareness about how we treat other living beings. This research is not merely an artistic endeavor but also a manifestation of social and ethical concern for the voiceless beings in society.

In this context, ceramic art serves as a bridge to convey this message, with the aim of inspiring positive changes in how we treat other living beings. Through molding and relief techniques with various depths and textures, this artwork strives to raise awareness of the diversity, strength, and uniqueness of each living being. Every curve and detail in the ceramics will reflect struggle and hope, creating a piece that the audience can experience physically and emotionally.

Overall, this research seeks to utilize ceramic art as a tool to express critical perspectives on the relationship between humans and other living beings. By depicting the feelings and experiences of rescue dogs, this artwork not only presents visual aesthetics but also invites the audience to reflect on the ethical values underlying this relationship. Through ceramic art, it is hoped that society will better appreciate and protect the rights of other living beings, granting them the freedom and dignity they deserve. Therefore, this research is not only an artwork but also a call for deeper social reflection, bridging collective awareness about the importance of protecting and respecting the life of every living being.

Methods

Practice Led Research: An Innovative Approach in Ceramic Art Creation

Practice-based research is a crucial methodology in the evolution of art and design, placing emphasis on the direct involvement of practitioners in the creative process (Mäkelä & Nimkulrat, 2011). This methodology centers on exploring various ways of processing information to produce interrelated visual and textual fragments. In this framework, the

creative process often follows a circular or spiral pattern, where data and information directly influence the visual work and accompanying text created by the artist or designer. A pivotal phase in this research involves the collection of data and selection of content, which defines the direction and focus of the study, making the relationship between theory and practice a key element. This form of artistic research not only generates new insights that are relevant to the fields of art and design, but also delves into the core of artistic practice itself.

This practice-based research underscores the principles and methods that artists or designers need to address contemporary challenges in art and design. It can develop through an active experimental approach, enabling the creation of tangible works that serve to test and demonstrate practical findings. The aim of artistic research is not only to produce new insights but also to clarify emerging definitions in the art and design landscape. Consequently, this research acts as a valuable guide for artists and designers in honing their skills and approaches, while also offering new directions for artistic practices in today's context.

A concrete example of this creative research can be seen in the author's ceramic work, which employs printing techniques using a dog's paw print. This printing process can be carried out directly by pressing the dog's paw onto the ceramic surface, creating unique patterns that reflect the distinct characteristics of the paw. Alternatively, an indirect method can be used, where the pattern emerges when the dog accidentally steps on the clay, resulting in a unique and intriguing imprint.

The uniqueness of this ceramic work lies not only in the materials and printing techniques used but also in the inspiration drawn from the author's environment, particularly the texture of the floor in the author's home. The abstract forms created reflect the interaction between the pet and the author's living space, creating a narrative that links everyday life, interactions with pets, and artistic practice. This demonstrates that art and design are not simply the results of individual creativity, but also the complex interactions between various elements, including the environment, materials, and personal experience (Hery & Martyastiadi, 2020).

This practice-led research highlights the principles and methods that artists must employ to navigate artistic challenges through experimental development of work methodologies. This approach is expected to result in works that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also meaningful, providing practical examples for methodological testing and showcasing research outcomes. Thus, this research contributes to defining artworks that assist artists in creating meaningful works rooted in real experiences and sustainable practices (Kenna, 2012).

In practice-based research, art is regarded as a legitimate form of research, where creative processes, experimentation, and critical reflection play essential roles in generating new knowledge. The focus of the author's creative research lies not only on the final product, in the form of ceramic art, but also on the creative process behind it. This includes exploring printing techniques (molding) using a dog's paw, as well as investigating concepts and contexts related to the author's life with rescued street dogs and the interaction between the artist and the audience during exhibitions of these works. In this way, artistic practice becomes a tool for raising questions, challenging assumptions, and examining complex societal phenomena, particularly concerning the sustainability and freedom of all living beings.

This approach allows for a redefinition of the roles of art and design in a contemporary context, where the boundaries between disciplines are increasingly blurred. Art is no longer viewed as separate from science or technology but rather as an integral part of an interdisciplinary dialogue that enhances our understanding of the world. By utilizing artistic practice as a research tool, the author can contribute meaningfully to both academic and social discussions while preserving the uniqueness of artistic expression.

Practice-based artistic research bridges theory and practice, linking creative processes to broader social and cultural contexts. This enables artists to produce works that are relevant to their time while playing an active role in shaping contemporary cultural and intellectual discourse. The contribution of artistic research influences new understandings of art and design, emphasizing the importance of experimental practice within the research process. Artistic research not only enriches academic discourse with new insights but also offers a uniquely in-depth perspective on art and design practices, underscoring the role of experimentation as a key component of research.

Design Process

To improve the quality of both the concept and the final outcome of ceramic art, the design process must be carried out systematically. This process involves three key stages: inspiration, ideation, and implementation (Tanrere, April 2023). In the inspiration stage, the research draws from the author's experience of caring for rescued dogs, raising questions about freedom and individual rights for marginalized living beings.

In the ideation stage, using a phenomenological approach, ceramic art is employed as a medium to explore social anxiety. The work aims to represent the struggle for freedom through tactile, three-dimensional forms. Various visual concepts are then formulated and developed in line with the creative objectives. After these concepts are selected and refined, the process moves into the implementation stage, where the creation of the ceramic artwork takes place. This process begins with mixing water and clay, followed by shaping the outer form of the ceramics using various mediums for molding. The author uses molding techniques, both by directly imprinting the dog's paw onto the clay and allowing the dog to step on clay placed in excavations made on the floor of the author's home.

The process of creating ceramic art using molding techniques to depict the story of a dog rescued by the artist from the streets, living freely and peacefully in the artist's home, consists of five main stages, from preparation to the final evaluation. The first stage is material and tool preparation. In this stage, the artist selects the appropriate clay, choosing a natural color that resembles traditional pottery from eastern Indonesia. Additionally, the artist prepares the mold, which is a cake mold, along with tools such as clay knives, sponges, and smoothing tools. This stage also involves conceptualizing the artistic vision, including determining the size and design of the ceramic work.

The second stage is forming the base shape. At this stage, the clay is poured into the mold to create an accurate three-dimensional form. This molding technique allows for the creation of intricate and repetitive designs while staying true to the artistic concept. The uniqueness of this ceramic work lies not only in the technique and materials but also in the inspiration drawn from the artist's environment. For example, the texture of the floor in the artist's home and interactions with their pet dog inform the abstract patterns left by the dog's digging in the earth, which are then incorporated into the ceramic form. These patterns reflect the

relationship between the artist's living space and the pet, creating a rich artistic narrative. This emphasizes that art is not just the product of individual creativity but also the result of interactions with the environment, materials, and personal experiences. This approach is evident in the ceramic work that uses dog paw prints as molds. The imprinting process is carried out either directly by pressing the dog's paw onto the clay or indirectly when the dog steps on the clay naturally, resulting in a unique and meaningful imprint.

The third stage is drying. After the clay is shaped, it is left to dry to ensure its structural integrity before the firing process. The drying is done gradually to prevent cracking or deformation caused by the rapid evaporation of moisture.

The fourth stage is firing. This process aims to transform the clay into durable, strong ceramic. Firing typically occurs in two stages: the first firing, called bisque firing, removes any remaining moisture, and the second firing is used to apply glaze, if needed.

The fifth and final stage is finishing and evaluation. At this stage, the ceramic is thoroughly inspected for any defects. If necessary, glaze or pigment is applied to enhance texture and color. A comprehensive evaluation is conducted to ensure the piece meets the desired artistic and aesthetic standards before being presented to the audience.

Results and Discussion

Selection of Materials and Tools: Choosing the Right Clay

The process of creating ceramic art begins with selecting the materials, a crucial first step in realizing the artist's creative vision. In this context, the artist has chosen clay with a natural color that resembles traditional pottery from eastern Indonesia. The off-white clay with a yellowish undertone evokes the earth and rocks from the artist's homeland and ties to longstanding local craft traditions. This choice of color is not solely for visual aesthetics but carries deeper meaning, as it symbolizes the artist's connection to the land and local traditions that are an inseparable part of their daily life.

This naturally colored clay evokes warmth and tranquility, reminiscent of traditional ceramics from eastern Indonesia and Aboriginal art, which also use natural materials in similar hues. Philosophically, this clay color symbolizes a profound connection to the earth, forming a bridge between traditional culture and contemporary artistic expression. For the artist, it is also a way to communicate their identity as someone from eastern Indonesia, where pottery and ceramics hold a long, culturally rich history imbued with the values and life of the community.

As an artist, they consider not just the color and form of the material but also the social meaning conveyed through their work. Along with material selection, the artist draws inspiration from the story of rescued street dogs living in their home. This aspect inspires the work to generate broader discussions about freedom, rights, and justice for marginalized beings in society. Ceramic art is chosen for its ability to explore various dimensions and textures, offering a profound tactile experience for the audience. Through this medium, the artist seeks to respond to social anxieties about the injustices often faced by marginalized beings.

The artist then prepares the necessary tools for the creation process, including baking molds for shaping and tools such as clay knives, sponges, and smoothers. The use of these tools demonstrates the artist's adaptability in utilizing everyday objects that are not only functional but also contribute to interesting artistic effects. The baking molds provide a clear and accurate base shape for the clay, while also allowing for the creation of more free and expressive patterns, especially when combining elements of beauty and unpredictability in each molding process.

The artist's choice of materials aims to portray their life journey and emotional connection with their surroundings. The chosen clay represents the artist's existence in space and time, serving as a medium to convey deeper personal stories and experiences.

Paw Print Technique: Bringing Freedom to Every Mark

A distinctive aspect of this ceramic artwork is the use of a paw print technique, which evokes a sense of freedom and dynamic life. The artist uses dog paw prints as direct molds, pressing the dogs' paws onto the clay, or indirectly as the dogs jump or run, leaving unplanned imprints. This process results in unpredictable patterns imbued with deep meaning, representing the interaction between humans and pets in daily life.

Image 1: The Author's Dogs Were Rescued From the Streets and Live Free at Home

The clearly stamped paw prints give the impression that the dogs are standing firmly in their home, portraying an image of harmonious and peaceful freedom. Deeper impressions indicate that the dogs feel safe and comfortable, as if they have space to move freely without constraints. Meanwhile, accidental prints created during play or jumping add an element of spontaneity and wilder freedom. These patterns enrich the narrative of the work, illustrating that life in this home is not just about calmness but also about joy and boundless energy.

By using paw prints as a central element, the artist creates not only patterns but also a story. Each print symbolizes the shared life with the dogs, who have become a significant part of the artist's existence. These paw prints are more than just marks, they are symbols of a supportive relationship in which the artist and their pets walk together through life's dynamic

journey. This technique successfully conveys the value of freedom in everyday life, reflected in the dogs' unrestricted presence in the home.

This printing process also reflects the philosophy of freedom and openness. In each pattern, it is evident that the dogs are not confined by space or time, moving freely according to their instincts. This implies that life at home is a space where freedom can be found, for both pets and humans. This piece demonstrates that freedom can be present in daily routines, even in small, simple things like dog paw prints in clay.

Image 2: Creation Process

The patterns from these paw prints also speak of a life full of unexpected interactions. Each print represents an unplanned moment, reminding us that life is often filled with surprises and uncertainties. Yet, despite their unpredictability, each print holds profound meaning, showing that in every step, there is an unbounded sense of freedom and self-expression.

Image 3: Ceramics After the Drying Process Before Being Fired

Firing and Finishing: Creating Balance and Strength in the Artwork

Once the printing stage is complete, the ceramic piece moves to the firing stage, where the formed clay is hardened and made permanent. The firing process is done in two stages: the first to remove residual moisture from the clay and harden the basic shape (bisque firing), and the second to apply glaze, which adds a protective layer and desired visual effects. This

process is essential to ensure that the ceramic not only has the correct form but also possesses long-lasting quality and durability.

During the firing stage, the artist chooses to apply a glaze that provides a natural shine and vibrant color nuances to the ceramic surface. The glaze creates a warm off-white color with a yellowish tint, harmonizing with the clay's base color and evoking a natural and warm look. This color is reminiscent of traditional ceramics from eastern Indonesia, known for their natural hues inspired by the surrounding environment. This warm off-white symbolizes the artist's connection to their homeland, a reminder of their closeness to local culture.

The work, with its resulting color and texture, represents the depth of the artist's experiences, rooted in eastern Indonesia. The warm off-white color not only embodies the earth and culture but also symbolizes a balance between freedom and peace in daily life. Each piece created is an achievement in harmonizing materials, techniques, and the artist's personal journey.

Image 4: While Glazing Ceramics After Firing Stage 1
at Tommy Studio Keramik Jakarta Indonesia

In the finishing stage, the artist carefully inspects each detail to ensure the quality and perfection of the ceramic work. Meticulously applied glaze creates a smooth texture that enhances visual appeal and adds dimension to the piece. This finishing touch gives a polished final impression where color and shape merge beautifully, creating a piece that is visually stunning and carries a strong message of freedom, shared life, and peace found at home.

Image 5: The Social Media Learning Kit Preparation for an Exhibition in Tangerang
Indonesia With the Marjinalia Group and an Exhibition at the Indonesia Photo Fair
at Taman Ismail Marzuki Jakarta Indonesia

Thus, the firing and finishing process is not just about achieving aesthetic results but also about how the artist successfully creates a piece that not only tells a story but invites viewers to feel the meaning embedded in each step and process. Every element in this work, from material selection and printing technique to final color and texture, collaborates to create a work rich in meaning and emotional resonance.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this research indicates that ceramic art can effectively serve as a medium for expressing social anxiety and issues related to freedom and justice, particularly in the context of marginalized living beings, such as rescued street dogs. Through the use of paw print techniques and the selection of natural-colored clay that reflects a connection to tradition and the artist's homeland, ceramic art can create an emotional narrative that highlights the values of freedom, identity, and the relationship between humans and other living beings. The creative process in this research involves systematic stages, from material preparation, shaping, drying, to firing and finishing, all designed to produce artwork that is not only aesthetically pleasing but also rich in meaning. The findings of this study affirm that ceramic art has the potential to facilitate ethical reflection and raise social awareness, reminding society of the importance of respecting and protecting the rights and dignity of all living beings.

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From Isolation to Understanding:
Leveraging Transmedia Storytelling to Foster Empathy for Infertility in Indonesia

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Abstract

Due to deep-rooted mythical and societal beliefs, infertility in Indonesia is heavily stigmatized, leaving affected couples feeling isolated and impacting their well-being. Although storytelling is recognized as a powerful medium for fostering empathy, it faces challenges such as shortened attention spans across generations and the cognitive effort required for empathetic engagement. This study explores the effectiveness of a transmedia storytelling experience, tailored to hook users according to their preferred channels, in enhancing empathy towards infertility. An intervention involving Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 20 women was conducted to determine which storytelling approaches captured their attention and evoked empathy. The findings indicate that offering multiple channels and a variety of storytelling formats enhances understanding of infertility. However, the study also reveals that infertility is still perceived as a minor inconvenience by women who have already given birth, compared to the more profound impact recognized by women who have not yet experienced childbirth. These results underscore the importance of diverse and engaging storytelling methods in addressing stigma and fostering empathy towards individuals facing infertility.

Keywords: Empathy, Infertility, Stigma, Transmedia Storytelling, Indonesia

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Introduction

Infertility is one of the stigmatized issues in Indonesia. It is rooted in cultural, religious beliefs, and societal values revolving around newlywed couples. Once a couple gets married, there is an immediate expectation to have offspring, and any delay in doing so often raises questions within the community. The first question typically asked is: "Is the woman fertile enough to bear a child?". In modern society, where some couples may struggle to conceive immediately or choose to delay pregnancy for financial or personal reasons, societal values often fail to understand these decisions (Harzif et al., 2019). This can lead to significant stress and impact the couple's well-being (Damayanti et al., 2022). Although the root causes of infertility vary, societal norms frequently place the blame on women when the issue arises within a marriage. As a result, women often become the target of intense social scrutiny, leading to emotional distress and social isolation.

Traditional beliefs and practices further amplify the stigma around infertility (Purvis, 2015). Although infertility is a medical issue that requires professional aid, society still believes that the act of seeking medical help will further complicate the situation. The trust issue towards medical treatment remains high among non-urban societies, and they rely heavily on the help of shamans and religious figures, hindering couples from seeking immediate help for their conditions (Bennett, 2018). Furthermore in a non-urban area, where medical help is rare, society relies on the rescue of traditional approaches: massage, herbal drinks, shaman, and prayer. To amplify the mental burden, Women, in particular, bear a disproportionate share of this burden, as societal views often portray childbearing as their ultimate responsibility (Bennett, 2018; Harzif et al., 2019; Novrika, 2018; Panggabean, 2014).

Despite the availability of treatments that may help couples address infertility, one crucial aspect often remains overlooked: well-being. Couples grappling with infertility frequently experience profound loneliness and alienation from society (Gusti Agung Istri Teresna Anindhita et al., 2021; Latifah, 2023). Many withdraw from social interactions for a variety of reasons, such as feeling envy when friends or family share pregnancy news, despair over repeated failures to conceive, sadness from monthly disappointments, and anger or frustration from the relentless pursuit of parenthood. A pervasive sense of inferiority compounds these emotions within a society that expects childbearing. The complex interplay of these feelings can intensify feelings of isolation. Infertile couples often report loneliness stemming from a lack of understanding among friends and family; only those who have faced similar struggles seem able to empathize truly. However, connecting with others who share these experiences is often hindered by the shame associated with seeking out support, as the stigma surrounding infertility discourages open discussions and engagement in community forums (Bennett, 2018).

In this context, fostering empathy towards individuals experiencing infertility could relieve some pressure and contribute to a more supportive social environment. However, empathy is not easily given (Cameron, 2018); it requires cognitive effort and emotional investment, which many people may be reluctant to expend, particularly in fast-paced digital environments with limited attention spans. This cognitive cost makes empathy challenging to achieve on a large scale.

Storytelling, however, offers a promising approach to bridging this gap. Storytelling can engage audiences more effectively by embedding empathetic narratives about infertility in various media formats catering to diverse preferences (Pinasthika, 2023). However, the

challenge remains: In a world saturated with brief, fragmented content, how can narratives be crafted to capture and sustain attention, allowing for the emotional depth needed to foster genuine empathy?

This study explores the potential of transmedia storytelling to foster empathy for infertile couples in Indonesia. By adapting storytelling formats to match users' media consumption habits, this approach addresses the cognitive cost of empathy and the cultural nuances of infertility stigma. It aims to answer crucial questions about how stories can be tailored to engage audiences and inspire a compassionate response, ultimately creating a foundation for broader societal understanding and support.

Theoretical Framework

Empathy is an essential yet complex response, requiring both cognitive and emotional engagement (Cameron et al., 2019; Shen, 2010). Given that empathy encompasses both understanding and affective connection, it can be intentionally evoked through structured narrative and storytelling that introduces audiences to the fundamental struggles faced by others (Carmel-Gilfilen & Portillo, 2016). In today's digital age, characterized by high volumes of media and diminished attention spans, maintaining such engagement has become increasingly challenging (Pinasthika, 2023).

Empathy theories highlight the importance of narrative immersion, where storytelling enables audiences to experience the perspective of another, fostering a sense of emotional understanding (Getchell et al., 2023). Transmedia storytelling enhances this process by delivering narratives across multiple formats, each providing unique entry points that align with audiences' varied media preferences (Jenkins, 2007). This multi-platform approach helps to lower the cognitive demand required to engage empathetically, making the experience more accessible and better suited to contemporary media consumption habits (Guadaña, 2021).

Indonesian societal values strongly emphasize family as a cornerstone of identity and success. Infertility is therefore not only seen as a personal shortcoming but a disruption to social order (Bennett, 2018). Research has shown that stigmas associated with infertility lead to social exclusion and affect psychological well-being. Such stigma disproportionately impacts women, who are often regarded as the primary party responsible for childbearing (Komalasari & Septiyanti, 2017; Panggabean, 2014). Comparative studies in other high-context cultures reveal similar patterns, highlighting the role of traditional beliefs and societal expectations in shaping perceptions around infertility (Purvis, 2015).

Studies on narrative empathy indicate that storytelling is uniquely suited to foster empathy by providing structure and context, essential for readers to engage emotionally (Getchell et al., 2023). Story structures that incorporate real-life experiences or relatable fictional characters can evoke empathy by bridging the gap between the audience and stigmatized groups (Batson et al., 1997; Frijda et al., 2000). However, research has shown that the cognitive effort required can act as a barrier, particularly when stories are lengthy or complex (Pinasthika, 2023).

Transmedia storytelling—distributing a narrative across different media formats—allows for a layered, immersive experience that can accommodate varied audience preferences. In recent years, this approach has gained popularity as a solution to engagement challenges,

particularly with young audiences who prefer interactive and visually engaging content followed by active engangement (Heilemann et al., 2017; Satyagraha & Hutapea, 2023; Soderlund et al., 2021). By offering diverse entry points into the narrative, transmedia storytelling fosters a deeper emotional connection with the content while addressing barriers related to cognitive load and attention span.

Despite the recognized potential of storytelling to foster empathy, there is a gap in applying transmedia approaches specifically to stigmatized issues like infertility within culturally sensitive contexts. This study seeks to address these gaps by examining how transmedia storytelling can be tailored to reduce the cognitive cost of empathy, making it accessible and meaningful within an Indonesian cultural framework.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design, utilizing Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to explore the impact of different storytelling formats on empathy towards infertility. The research is divided into three experimental groups, each exposed to distinct storytelling interventions tailored to their preferred media channels.

The first group consisted of 6 women aged 19 to 23. They were presented with a long-form narrative blog detailing the real-life infertility journey of a couple. The narrative was divided into three separate blog posts, culminating in an unresolved, emotionally charged conclusion where the couple's second attempt at intrauterine insemination (IUI) fails.

The second group, comprising 9 women aged 21 to 52, was guided through a transmedia experience under the premise: "You just met me, and you try to find out things about me through social media." Participants engaged with the story through Instagram, where they encountered posts, stories, and interactive quizzes that mimicked a natural person's account. The narrative journey included links to related YouTube content and quizzes, offering an immersive experience. The story's outcome depended on how thoroughly participants engaged with the content; a detailed exploration led to a happy ending where the couple successfully conceived, while a superficial engagement left them with a less satisfying conclusion.

The third group involved 5 women aged 23 to 37, who were introduced to a fan-fiction story. This narrative, written in a classic Indonesian style, depicted a fictional couple's challenging journey toward in vitro fertilization (IVF), which ultimately ended in disappointment.

Each group was carefully constructed to ensure diversity in terms of marital status, with both married and single women included, as well as a mix of participants who had experienced childbirth and those who had not.

Participant Selection

Participants were selected based on criteria designed to capture a broad demographic spectrum. The 20 women involved in the FGDs ranged from 19 to 52 years. Selection criteria did not include prior experience with infertility, allowing for a more diverse range of perspectives. Participants were drawn from various cultural backgrounds, with the majority

identifying as Muslim, reflecting the predominant religious demographic in Indonesia. This diversity was crucial in understanding how different women perceive and react to narratives about infertility.

Data Collection

Data was collected through FGDs, with each group exposed to a specific storytelling intervention. The interventions varied in narrative format and media channels, tailored to align with the participants' preferred modes of information consumption.

- **Group 1:** Participants engaged with three blog posts, written in an accessible, everyday language, narrating a real-life couple's infertility journey. The narrative was straightforward, providing a detailed account of the couple's struggles, culminating in a somber ending where their second IUI attempt fails.
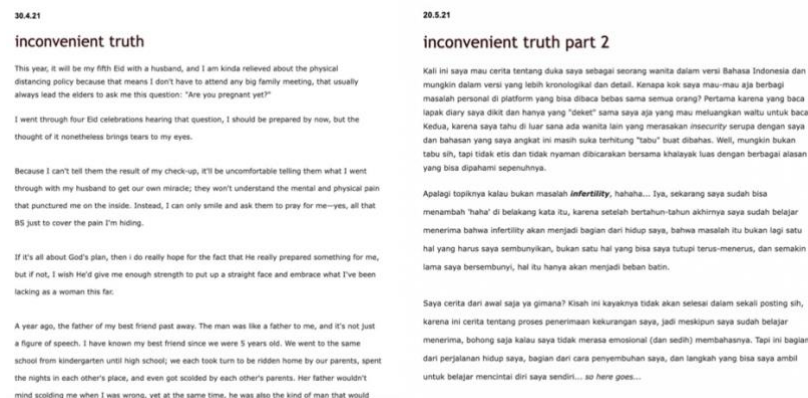

Figure 1: Long Blog Narration

- **Group 2:** Participants were introduced to the same infertility story through a transmedia storytelling approach, primarily via Instagram. The narrative was fragmented into 30 posts, supplemented with Instagram Stories and interactive quizzes. The content was designed to mimic a real-life social media presence, with links directing users to additional content on YouTube and blogs. The experience was dynamic; those who fully engaged with the story journeyed to a positive resolution, while those who skimmed through missed the deeper narrative layers.
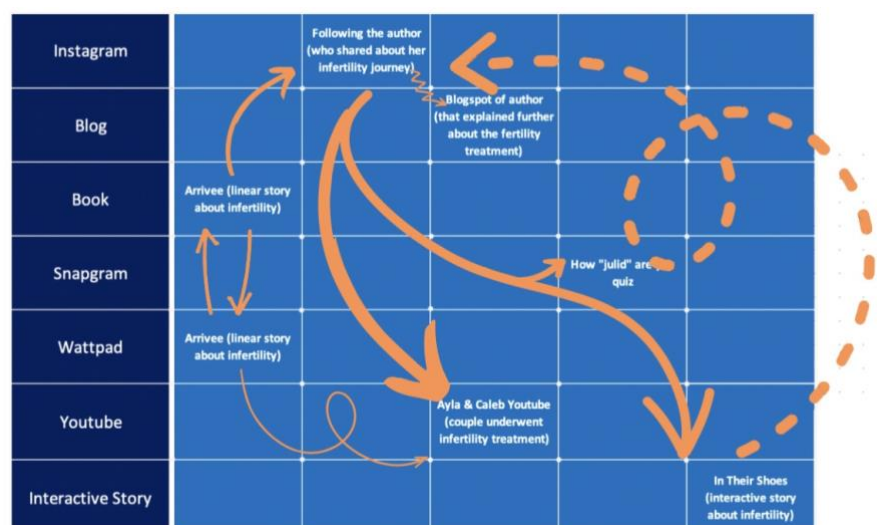

Figure 2: Transmedia Storytelling Map

- **Group 3:** This group read a fan-fiction story in a traditional Indonesian narrative style, starring Cho Kyuhyun (of Super Junior) as the main character who struggled with infertility with his wife. The fictional tale follows a couple's journey through IVF, failing. The narrative was crafted to resonate with the cultural and emotional sensibilities of the participants. To ensure engagement, the participants chosen were fans of the idol who enjoyed reading fan fiction in their free time.
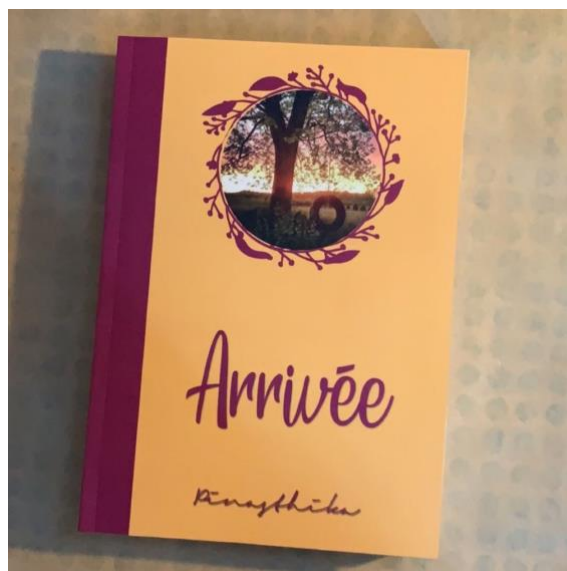

Figure 3: Fan Fiction Approach

The storytelling was not tailored to the demographic preferences of the participants but was instead based on various forms of storytelling typically encountered in their daily lives. Group 1 received a comprehensive, text-heavy narrative reflective of traditional blog content. Group 2's experience was designed for a more interactive, visually-oriented engagement typical of social media consumption, integrating English language and multimedia elements. Group 3 was presented with a story rooted in classic Indonesian fiction, appealing to those who favor narrative depth and cultural familiarity.

Results and Analysis

Narrative Engagement

The analysis revealed significant differences in engagement levels across the three groups, primarily driven by the format and length of the storytelling medium. Participants' responses indicated that narrative structure, medium, and length significantly influenced their ability to connect with the content.

- Group 1 (Blog Format): Participants in Group 1, consisting primarily of Gen Z women, reported challenges in maintaining focus throughout the long-form narrative. A recurring theme was the struggle with attention span, with participants expressing sentiments like, "The story was too long" and "I skimmed through parts." This suggests that lengthy narratives may need to be more compelling for audiences accustomed to consuming shorter, more fragmented content, such as social media posts.
- Group 2 (Instagram Format): In contrast, Group 2, which engaged with a transmedia storytelling experience via Instagram, showed higher levels of engagement,

particularly among the younger participants. Comments like, "It felt like a real person's account" and "I liked that I could explore the story in different ways" highlight the effectiveness of this format. The ability to interact with various media formats (posts, stories, quizzes) allowed participants to engage more deeply with the narrative, reflecting their typical information-seeking behavior on social media. However, the older participants found this approach less engaging, with some expressing difficulty following the narrative through multiple platforms.

- Group 3 (Fan Fiction): Group 3 participants who read a fan-fiction narrative acknowledged the emotional depth of the story. However, many reported difficulties in relating to the content. Unmarried participants, in particular, noted that they "could not relate" to the theme of infertility, with some stating that they did not believe a man could be "so understanding" about such matters. This reflects the cultural skepticism regarding male empathy in the context of infertility and suggests a gap between the narrative's intended emotional impact and the audience's perception.

Cultural Relatability

Cultural norms and expectations were crucial in shaping participants' responses to the storytelling formats. The analysis indicated that personal experience and societal beliefs significantly influenced the degree of empathy participants could muster toward the characters in the stories.

Relatability and Cultural Expectations: Participants' ability to relate to the narrative was heavily influenced by their experiences with infertility and the cultural context surrounding the issue. For instance, those who had not experienced infertility or were unmarried found it challenging to empathize with the characters. This was particularly evident in Group 3, where participants expressed disbelief in portraying a male character's empathy. Comments such as "I do not think men are that understanding" reflect entrenched cultural expectations regarding gender roles and emotional expression.

Impact of Personal Experience: The narratives resonated differently with participants depending on their experiences. Women who had given birth tended to view infertility as a minor inconvenience, as indicated by feedback like, "It is sad, but it does not affect me." In contrast, women who had not yet experienced childbirth were more likely to express a deeper understanding and empathy towards the characters, suggesting that personal experience with childbearing influences one's ability to empathize with infertility.

Empathy Responses

Empathy responses varied significantly across the groups, highlighting the interplay between narrative format, cultural relatability, and personal experience.

Cognitive Effort and Empathy: The findings suggest that participants' willingness to engage emotionally with the narratives was influenced by the perceived cognitive effort required. In Group 1, where the narrative was long and complex, participants appeared less willing to invest emotionally, reflecting the challenge of fostering empathy in audiences with limited attention spans. In contrast, Group 2's transmedia approach reduced cognitive load by breaking the narrative into digestible pieces, resulting in higher empathy levels among younger participants.

Cultural Skepticism and Empathy: Group 3's responses indicated a cultural skepticism toward certain narrative elements, particularly portraying male empathy. This skepticism hindered participants' ability to fully empathize with the characters, suggesting that cultural beliefs and stereotypes can hinder effective empathy-building through storytelling.

Conclusion

This study illuminates the profound impact of culturally attuned transmedia storytelling in fostering empathy toward couples struggling with infertility in Indonesia. Infertility in Indonesian society is intertwined with deeply rooted cultural expectations regarding marriage and childbearing, which often lead to intense social stigma, particularly toward women. The pressure and isolation experienced by these couples underscore the need for an empathetic societal response. However, empathy is a complex emotional and cognitive process, further challenged by the rapid consumption habits shaped by modern media.

Through this study, we explored how transmedia storytelling could serve as an effective empathy-building tool tailored to various media consumption preferences to engage audiences with limited attention spans. Distributing the narrative across different media channels—from long-form blogs to interactive social media stories and traditional fan fiction—allowed participants to engage according to their preferred formats. The results indicate that transmedia storytelling can mitigate the cognitive cost of empathy by breaking down narratives into more accessible and engaging pieces, thus fostering a more profound emotional connection with the content.

Findings reveal significant variations in empathy responses based on media formats and individual demographic factors, such as marital status and personal experience with infertility. Younger participants, particularly those with social media, demonstrated higher empathy when engaging with transmedia formats that allowed interaction and discovery, aligning with their everyday media behaviors. Conversely, older participants or those less familiar with infertility found it challenging to relate to the content, reflecting both the emotional distance created by cultural beliefs and the influence of life experience on empathic engagement.

Academically, this study contributes to empathy research, storytelling, and cultural studies by demonstrating how transmedia storytelling can be strategically applied to address stigmatized topics within specific cultural frameworks. By reducing the emotional and cognitive costs associated with empathy, transmedia storytelling offers a promising approach to facilitate more compassionate societal attitudes toward stigmatized groups, such as those affected by infertility.

Future research could expand on these findings by exploring transmedia storytelling's effectiveness in different cultural contexts and with other stigmatized issues, providing a broader understanding of its potential to foster empathy. Moreover, incorporating longitudinal studies could offer insights into the lasting impact of empathy built through transmedia storytelling on audience attitudes and behavior intentions, thus contributing to developing more sustainable, empathy-driven communication strategies.

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Redefining Art Spaces: Interactive Features in Digital Art Exhibitions

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Abstract
Art exhibitions held in digital spaces not only function as an alternative when art exhibitions cannot be held in physical spaces. Exhibitions in digital spaces offer a high level of accessibility and affordability, thus having great potential to connect individuals from different parts of the world. Digital platform art exhibitions provide artists and their creations more visibility and extend their lifespan beyond a fixed display period. The benefits of digital technology also extend to visitor-artist interaction, which can enhance visitors' comprehension and experience of enjoying art. However, there are currently no exhibitions of works of art in digital spaces that facilitate interaction between artists and visitors and between visitors. This article describes the design of an art exhibition in a digital space equipped with interaction features between artists and visitors. Utilizing these interactive elements will be useful not only for improving the function of art exhibitions in digital spaces but also for user experience for both visitors and artists.

Keywords: Art Exhibition, Interactions, Visitors, Artists

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Introduction

The online art exhibition has been developed since 1994 by Douglas Davis under the title *The World's First Collaborative Sentence*, and many were held during the pandemic to replace physical art exhibitions that could not be conducted at the time. Today, online exhibitions are less common due to the resurgence of conventional art exhibitions. Although online art exhibitions cannot rival conventional exhibitions for several reasons, such as the inability to experience the exhibition atmosphere, the layers that limit visitors from engaging directly with the artwork, the loss of artwork details, and the lack of interaction (Widjono, 2021, 97), conventional art exhibitions offer distinct benefits. While online exhibitions may not provide the same visual impact as conventional exhibitions, they are particularly useful for gaining exposure since not all visitors can attend physical exhibitions. Thus, online art exhibitions are not intended to replace conventional exhibitions but to complement them, as both offer different advantages.

The first online art exhibition, *The World's First Collaborative Sentence*, was a text-based online exhibition. Visitors were able to collaborate in creating art by freely and indefinitely adding words or sentences. This exhibition, which involved emotions and creativity, relied on user participation. Users were not only present to view the artwork but also contributed to its creation. This participatory model serves as the foundation for the development of the online art exhibition *Jalirupa*.

Jalirupa is a platform for online art exhibitions that emphasizes the importance of interactive features, which are essential in the context of online art exhibitions. The primary focus of the interactions designed on this platform is not on the relationship between the visitor and the artwork or the exhibition space, but on interactions between users, which are considered the central element of digital art exhibitions. It is hoped that these interactions can enhance the intensity of the online art exhibition experience, as interactions between users can be optimized in social media spaces. The use of interactive features within this digital ecosystem is expected to bridge the gap between artworks and the wider public. Thus, this intense and inclusive interaction is anticipated to facilitate the formation of a solid art-loving community within society, both in online and conventional realms.

The development of the *Jalirupa* platform adopts a human-centered design approach, adapted from IDEO methodology, which emphasizes a deep understanding of users' needs and preferences as the primary foundation for designing relevant and effective solutions. This approach aims to ensure that each feature developed provides an optimal interactive experience aligned with user expectations. In this context, human-centered design is applied systematically to guide the development process, with a focus on creating a more inclusive and adaptive experience for diverse user dynamics. This article is written to present the latest developments of the *Jalirupa* platform up to the ideation stage, recognizing that this project is still in the early stages of development and exploration.

Methods

The development of the Jalirupa platform utilizes the Human-Centered Design (HCD) method, adapted from the IDEO approach, which consists of three main stages: inspiration, ideation, and implementation. The development of Jalirupa began in 2021, starting with research to explore user experiences in appreciating artwork while visiting online art exhibitions (Rina, 2021) and the experiences of artists as participants in online art exhibitions

(Rina, 2022). These two studies are marked with the number 1, as shown in Image 1, which relates to the research flow.
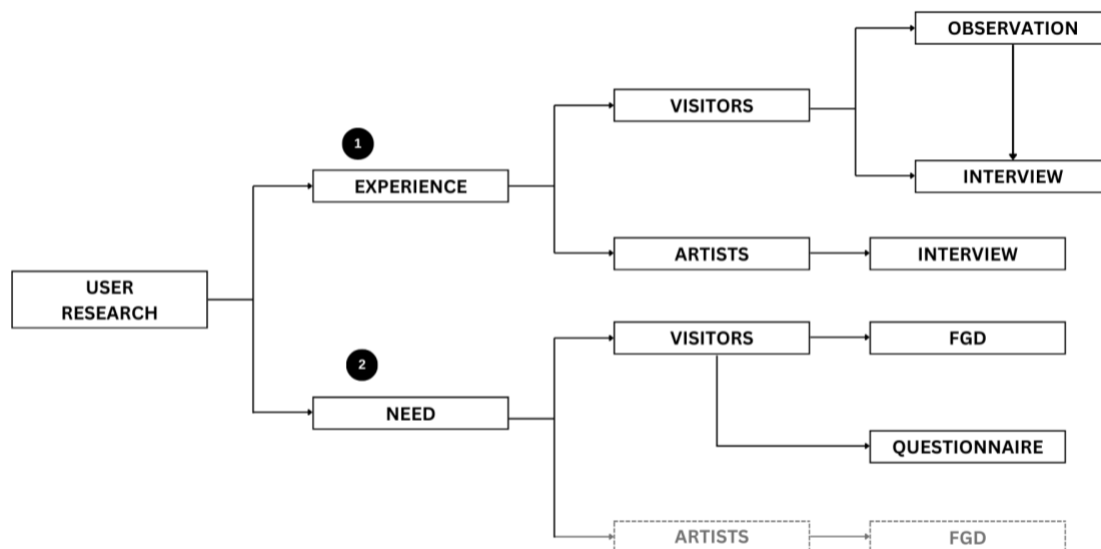

Figure 1: Procedure

This article discusses the ideation phase in the development process of Jalirupa, where ideas for solutions are formulated based on research findings and an understanding of user needs, as indicated by the number 2 in Figure 1. The development of the Jalirupa platform applies a Human-Centered Design (HCD) approach, which is not linear but iterative, while still following the stages of inspiration, ideation, and implementation (IDEO, 2015, p.11). This indicates that, during the development process of Jalirupa, further data exploration may be undertaken as needed to generate ideas at the ideation stage.

Data on user experiences and needs serves as a foundation during the ideation phase for designing a customer journey map, which begins with defining user personas. This journey map is crafted to trace user actions and emotions at each stage, thereby identifying areas requiring further development to optimize the quality of experience in the online art exhibition.

User Experience

Online art exhibitions became increasingly common during the pandemic as substitutes for conventional art exhibitions, which could not be held due to large-scale social restrictions imposed in Indonesia. Examples of online exhibitions conducted during this period include *Art Jakarta 2020* and *Manifesto VII Pandemi,* each adopting distinct strategies. These two exhibitions were the focus of Rina's (2021) study, which explored visitor experiences. *Art Jakarta 2020* featured a 3D exhibition space designed to mimic physical gallery spaces, while *Manifesto VII Pandemi* utilized digital platforms to showcase exhibited works.

Rina used the Art Jakarta 2020 exhibition as a digital observation tool by studying visitor behavior as they navigated the virtual exhibition space. This research aimed to understand how art appreciation could be achieved by visitors in an online exhibition. The results indicated that visitors had trouble navigating the exhibition space, hindering their ability to reach a stage of full art appreciation.

Based on these observation results, interviews were conducted with three respondents involved in Rina's (2021) study to understand their experiences visiting online art exhibitions. The information obtained includes the following:

1. Visitors to online art exhibition platforms recognize that the experience offered by digital exhibitions differs significantly from that of conventional art exhibitions. In a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted, one participant mentioned that the experience felt like being in a game. This aligns with Widjono's findings, where visitors reported that attending an online art exhibition was novel and exciting (Widjono, 2021). However, excitement toward something new is not a permanent state, as after adaptation, the intensity of this excitement tends to decrease (Haidt, 2005, p. 86).

2. Rina's (2021) research indicates that respondents observed during interactions with online exhibitions had trouble navigating the exhibition space. This difficulty imposed a dual burden on respondents: they had to navigate the exhibition space while also attempting to appreciate the artworks. Rina concludes that this appreciation did not occur within the scope of her study (2021).

3. In online art exhibitions, there is no direct interaction among visitors. In conventional art exhibitions, visitors are physically present in the gallery space with friends or other visitors, creating a collective experience that fosters social interaction. Online art exhibitions that replicate the conventional gallery space, such as Art Jakarta 2020, generally do not provide features for interaction. However, in the Manifesto VII – Pandemic exhibition, which served as an observation tool in Rina's research (2021), interaction among visitors could occur through a chat box that appeared while playing the exhibition video. This exhibition was presented in video format similar to a YouTube platform, not only displaying artworks but also showcasing concepts, processes, or other aspects the artists wished to communicate.

4. One of the participants in the focus group discussion emphasized the absence of a focal point in the online art exhibition, as the works were displayed with the same visual pattern, lacking a piece that would serve as a surprising element, such as an installation or a main artwork placed in strategic locations within conventional gallery spaces to create a climactic experience during the exhibition visit. These main works or installations are generally large in scale, as seen in physical exhibitions. However, the information regarding the dimensions of the works displayed in the online art exhibition appeared uniform on the screen, offering no variation in size except in textual form.

In the context of the online art exhibition platform developed on Jalirupa, users are not limited to visitors but also include artists who actively participate. A deep understanding of the artists' experiences as users of the online art exhibition platform is crucial to enhancing the quality of interaction and their overall satisfaction. In interviews conducted with three artists during the early stages of the Jalirupa platform's development, Rina (2022) identified several key points related to the artists' experiences as users of this online exhibition:

1. The process of shipping artwork has become easier and more cost-effective. In conventional exhibitions, shipping and handling costs are considerable, particularly when the exhibition is held in a city or country different from the artist's place of

residence. These costs can double if the artwork on display does not sell and needs to be returned to the artist. This expense is especially significant for large-scale artworks.

2. There is no direct interaction between the artist and the visitors, particularly in art exhibitions that mimic the concept of conventional exhibition spaces. Two out of the three artists stated that interaction between the artist and the visitors plays an important role in the exchange of ideas and a deeper understanding of the artwork, which can enhance the knowledge of both parties. However, one artist disagreed, arguing that such interaction does not hold significant value. According to this artist, the presentation of the artist's work can be conveyed through video media documenting the creative process, as was done in the Manifesto VII: Pandemi exhibition.

3. All artworks are given an equal opportunity to be displayed. In conventional art exhibitions, the primary artworks are placed at key points within the exhibition space, which draws attention to the surrounding pieces as well. Based on interviews conducted, artists expressed concerns about their works being placed in less strategic locations, potentially causing them to be overlooked by visitors.

4. There are no significant differences or advantages in the aspect of artwork sales between online art exhibitions and conventional exhibitions. Art transactions generally occur after potential buyers view the works in person, allowing for a deeper visual and emotional appreciation of the artwork's details. In conventional art exhibitions, special time is typically allocated before the official opening for collectors and enthusiasts, during which purchasing transactions often take place. For artists, online exhibitions primarily serve as a platform for gaining wider exposure rather than directly driving artwork sales.

The findings from the studies conducted by Rina (2021) and Rina (2022) indicate that online art exhibitions offer a new experience for users, both through the imitation of physical exhibition spaces and the full utilization of digital spaces. These online exhibitions provide convenience for visitors and artists to interact with the exhibition space and the displayed artworks. However, these exhibitions have yet to offer opportunities for visitors to interact with each other.

User Needs

Based on the research on the experiences of visitors (Rina, 2021) and artists (Rina, 2022) in online art exhibitions, a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of user needs. The FGD involved six participants who had previously visited online art exhibitions and six artist participants. Several key points from the FGD results can be noted as directions for the development of the Jalirupa platform, including:

1. Visitor Interaction: Such interactions provide opportunities for visitors to exchange ideas with one another, enriching their experiences, broadening their perspectives, and deepening their understanding of the artworks on display. This process has the potential to enhance the comprehension of art through reciprocal interactions. The understanding of the artwork may diverge from its original intent, leading to various

interpretations. In Blumer's symbolic interaction theory, he suggests that these variations contribute to and create new meanings (1986, 87).

2. Artists benefit from engaging with visitors, as this interaction provides valuable feedback and fosters deep, reciprocal dialogue. Through these exchanges, artists gain insights into how their work is received, evaluated, and perceived by visitors, which can stimulate new creative ideas. Blumer explains that the diverse perceptions held by visitors can enrich not only the visitors' understanding but also that of the artists themselves.

3. Visitors' choice not to interact: Not all visitors wish to engage with other visitors, although nearly all are interested in interacting with the artist or gaining the artist's perspective. This indicates a shared need between the artist and visitors; however, visitors vary in their desire to interact with fellow visitors.

4. Artists require a space to convey the creative process and various aspects related to their work. Although each piece in an art exhibition is typically accompanied by an artist statement, there are often additional elements the artist wishes to communicate. This opportunity to share is a valued aspect of exhibitions for artists; however, in online art exhibitions, this is not always feasible. Some artists, even if they may not favor in-person meetings with visitors or discussions centered directly on their work, still see it as important to share the creative process, perspectives, and other integral elements of their art. In this context, while direct interaction may sometimes feel uncomfortable, technology can offer an alternative means for artists to share their story and insights, albeit in a more controlled and limited format.

5. Curation plays a crucial role, particularly in conveying the creative process, perspectives, and other elements that shape a work of art. As a process of selection and interpretation, curation not only organizes artworks in an exhibition but also facilitates a deeper understanding of the conceptual and technical aspects related to these works. In this context, the curator is responsible for determining a specific subject focus to present to the public at a particular moment. Through the arrangement and interpretation of artworks, the curator creates a dialogue between the artist and the audience (George, 2015, p. 10).

6. Considering the relationship between visitors' self-perception and the need for interaction in online art exhibitions, visitors who identify as extroverts tend to be more open to engaging with others, showing a desire to actively participate in the exhibition's social dynamics. In contrast, visitors who view themselves as introverts are more likely to wait for others to initiate interaction, reflecting a tendency to avoid interactions that are not externally prompted or encouraged by others.

Understanding the tendencies of visitors to view themselves as either extroverted or introverted, and how this self-perception influences their motivation to interact with other visitors, is a compelling topic for further research. Based on survey results collected from 108 respondents, it was found that visitors were more open to responding to interaction invitations from others compared to initiating interactions themselves or ignoring others' initiation attempts. The survey data shows that 37 respondents (34.3%) indicated they would initiate a conversation, while 71 respondents (66.7%) indicated they would not. However, if another visitor initiated a discussion about an artwork, 82 respondents (75.9%) said they

would respond, whereas 26 respondents (24.1%) would not. These findings provide valuable insights into the dynamics of visitor-to-visitor interaction and can serve as a reference in developing the Jalirupa platform, which needs to consider these motivational factors to design a more inclusive and engaging interaction experience.

Interactive Features

The JALIRUPA concept centres on fostering a sense of community through direct, face-to-face interaction rather than digital engagement. This concept highlights the importance of creating spaces where visitors and artists can connect and interact, thus enabling active participation and dialogue. The exhibition aims to cultivate meaningful relationships and a collaborative art experience. Through interactive features, visitors can discuss the artworks with both fellow visitors and the artists themselves. Such interactions are intended to lay the foundation for community building; however, sustained interaction must first be established to realize this sense of community. The following interactive features proposed for the Jalirupa platform are based on research findings regarding user experiences and needs.
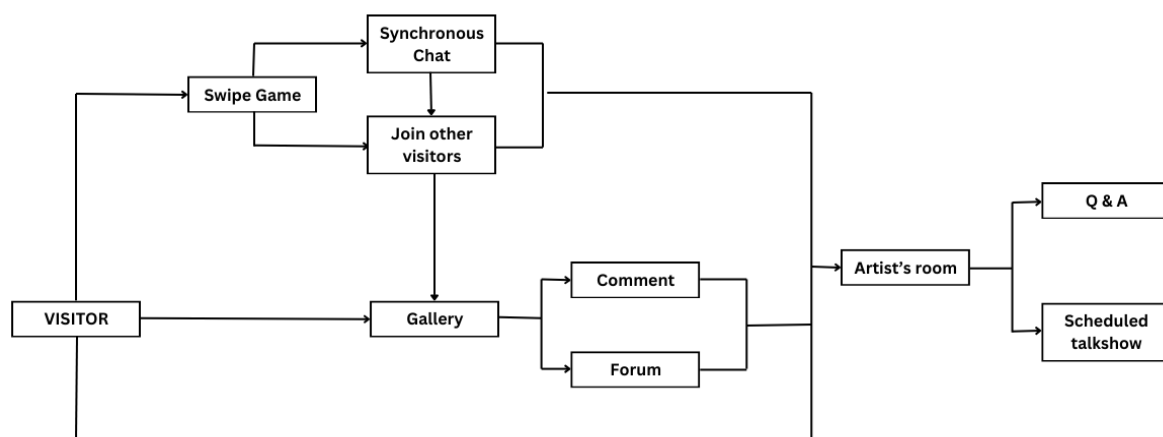

Figure 2: Visitor Flow

Figure 2 illustrates the proposed visitor flow, where visitors can directly enter the gallery or artist's space, or opt to try the swipe game. This swipe game can facilitate visitors in meeting and then interacting, either through direct chat or by visiting the gallery or artist's space together. This shared experience is expected to alleviate feelings of solitude when visiting an online art exhibition.

Swipe Game

The development of interactive features in online art exhibitions faces challenges in creating a vibrant and engaging community atmosphere. In this context, interactive features have the potential to enhance opportunities for communication among visitors. However, these features are often less effective without initial user engagement to initiate conversations. Therefore, to address participation barriers, an additional feature in the form of a swipe game has been designed as a social meeting mechanism that helps users connect with others who share similar interests or goals. This feature facilitates initial matching and provides a stimulus for the development of more meaningful interactions.

This initial matching resembles dating apps like Tinder, Bumble, and OK Cupid, which connect individuals with similar interests or goals. However, in this context, it relates to shared tastes and styles in visual arts as a preliminary form of bridging social capital. Noviani, Manasika, and Anggrahitaa (2024, p. 46) found that dating app users leverage digital intimacies as resources to expand their networks, enabling them to gain certain benefits. The purpose of the swipe game as a feature of this virtual exhibition is to connect individuals with shared interests or goals, with the hope that these encounters will stimulate productive interactions within Jalirupa.

Synchronous Chat

The synchronous chat feature in online art exhibitions serves as a medium for interactive communication among visitors within the virtual exhibition space. Through this feature, real-time conversations can take place between visitors who happen to be in the same booth. These virtual booths may encompass multiple artworks grouped based on the similarity of artists or artistic styles, providing visitors with the opportunity to share perspectives and engage in direct discussions. With this feature, visitors are made aware of the presence of others in the space at the same time, fostering a collective experience that closely resembles the dynamics of a physical art exhibition.

This synchronous chat feature serves as a facility with the potential to encourage meaningful interactions, although many visitors' express hesitation in initiating it. However, when visitors decide to utilize this feature, it can become an effective means of expanding interactions between visitors and other individuals, as well as with the artists. The interactions that occur within this context have the potential to create a more constructive dialog space and enrich both the social experience and aesthetic understanding for all parties involved.

Aynchronous Chat

Asynchronous chat refers to communication that occurs with a time gap between participants, allowing them to interact or discuss without the need for direct or real-time interaction. Several forms of asynchronous chat are proposed as follows:

1. Forum. The forum functions as a virtual space where visitors can engage in discussions about specific artworks, styles, or artists. This platform allows users to share opinions, ask questions, and provide feedback related to the style, works, and artists. Active participation of visitors is recognized through mechanisms such as badges, which acknowledge their contributions and engagement within the community. As their involvement increases, users may gain certain rankings or privileges, enabling them to moderate discussions and exercise greater control over content and interactions within the forum.

2. Q & A with the Artist. Visitors can ask the artist questions on the Artist's Page regarding the exhibited work, concepts, processes, or other projects. These questions will initially be answered by an AI system to reduce the artist's workload in answering them individually and to ensure no questions are overlooked. Questions requiring specific responses can be answered directly by the artist asynchronously, depending on their available time.

Both forms of asynchronous chat provide greater time flexibility for both visitors and artists. They allow visitors and artists to interact without the need for both to be present at the same time. The use of AI technology to respond to more general inquiries addresses the curiosity of visitors and enhances work efficiency for artists, while still maintaining a personal touch when visitors ask about specific matters that are answered directly by the artist. This use of AI technology also facilitates multilingual question-and-answer exchanges.

Artist's Page

In this feature, the artist can convey their point of view regarding the artwork, process, concept, and other aspects they wish to communicate in a curated manner through various media. The artist can utilize media such as videos, photo collages, interactive media, or others. The curatorial process, in this context, is crucial to ensure that the elements communicated by the artist accurately reflect the ideas and meanings they intend to convey.

This feature allows artists to hold live chat sessions through platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, or a calendar for either online or in-person discussions. These sessions can be conducted from before the exhibition's opening until after it ends, at least until the next exhibition takes place. This approach aims to maintain engagement between visitors, the artwork, the artists, and the exhibition, as community building will not succeed without continuity. Theory.

Conclusion

Based on the Human-Centered Design approach, this platform is developed with a focus on the interaction needs of users, both visitors and artists. Both visitors and artists demonstrate a need for mutual engagement, despite the barriers to initiating these interactions. The development of the Jalirupa platform marks the initial step towards creating a more interactive and inclusive digital art exhibition experience. Its online implementation complements conventional exhibitions, offering broader exposure and overcoming geographic limitations. However, the development of Jalirupa is still ongoing, and the proposed features have not yet been proven to fully meet the interaction needs of users in online art exhibitions.

The interactions facilitated on the Jalirupa platform need to be continuous, considering the importance of fostering close relationships between visitors and artists. In this context, consistent and open interactions can create space for discussions, the exchange of ideas, and a deeper understanding of the exhibited artworks. Thus, the platform functions not only as a digital exhibition space but also as a medium for building a more inclusive community, where visitors can engage more deeply in the artistic creation process and critical reflections on the art itself. Such a community has the potential to bridge, or at least reduce, the gap between society and art, opening opportunities for broader participation in the art world, while enriching the aesthetic experience more comprehensively.

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Enabling Children as Disaster Risk Communicators by Using Social Media Learning Kit

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Abstract

Children are widely recognized as one of the most at-risk groups from disasters but can also play a significant role in disaster risk reduction, including as effective communicators. Involving children in these activities and decision-making processes is crucial for enabling proactive measures and effective risk communication within families and communities. Social media can be a useful tool for teaching children about disaster preparedness. This study uses the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method to engage children in disaster risk communication via social media learning. A total of 175 children aged 13-15 (95 girls, 80 boys) from two middle schools in Jakarta, Indonesia, participated in exploring ideas and producing social media content on disaster preparedness. Effectiveness was measured through surveys, participant observation, focus group discussions, and teacher interviews. Results showed that most children used social media to learn or seek information (95%), shared positive content with peers (92%), and were interested in creating and sharing disaster-related content (78%). Teachers viewed social media positively as an educational tool. Practical approach by combining learning media engagement, practical training, and access to credible information has been proven to be an effective way in enabling children to become active agents of disaster risk communicators. The next research stage is to measure the reach and engagement of media produced by participating children.

Keywords: Children, Risk Communicator, Social Media, Disaster, Participatory Action Learning

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Introduction

Children are a particularly vulnerable group during disasters; they often have limited access to food sources and health services and are at risk of being separated from their families (Peek, 2008). According to WHO (2020), as many as 30–50% of deaths due to natural disasters are children. To minimize the risk of disasters to children, they need to be involved in disaster preparedness efforts (UNISDR, 2009). Children can contribute to disaster mitigation, preparedness, and response by serving as an important resource in building community resilience, where they have the capacity to influence community preparedness effectively so that they can strengthen their response to future disasters (Bessaha et al., 2021). Thus, the involvement of children in disaster management contributes to creating more inclusive policies that improve overall community preparedness and resilience (Ridzuan et al., 2022). Children's participation in disaster preparedness is essential because they can be risk communicators for their families and peers (Mohammadinia & Mohammadinia, 2020; Pfefferbaum et al., 2018) and agents of change that can strengthen the impact of risk communication (SFDRR, 2015).

One way that children can contribute is through education, which must be aimed at equipping children with the knowledge and skills needed to recognize, respond to, and recover from disasters. Effective disaster education can significantly improve children's understanding of risks and the ability to take appropriate action during emergencies (Karisa, 2023; Seddighi et al., 2021; Yildiz et al., 2022). However, several challenges must be faced, such as limited integration into the school curriculum, inadequate teacher training (Amri et al., 2017), low awareness and disaster preparedness in school children (Nur'aeni, 2023), lack of conventional disaster education materials and methods, causing the process of involvement and children's learning outcomes about disaster mitigation to be ineffective (Pranata, 2022). Teaching children about natural hazards encourages their active participation in preparedness, response, and recovery efforts (Morris & Edwards, 2008). Because of their imaginative, enthusiastic, and motivated nature, children can become strong advocates for preparedness through sharing information (USDHHS, 2017), which can help inform and prepare their families and friends (FEMA, 2015). This, in turn, builds resilience and recovery for themselves, their families, and their communities (Peek, 2008).

This paper shows how integrating social media into disaster education presents a promising avenue for enhancing awareness and preparedness among children. Social media platforms can effectively disseminate information, engage students, foster a culture of preparedness (Gupta, 2015), and can be used to create engaging content (Karisa, 2023). Moreover, social media facilitates peer-to-peer learning and community engagement. Children can share their experiences and knowledge about disaster preparedness through social media, fostering a collaborative learning environment (Cumiskey et al., 2015). This peer engagement can effectively reinforce the lessons learned in formal educational settings. For example, schools can encourage students to participate in online discussions or challenges related to disaster preparedness, thereby promoting active involvement and ownership of their learning (Cumiskey et al., 2015). By providing platforms for sharing stories and experiences related to disasters, social media can help normalise discussions about risks and preparedness, reducing anxiety and fear associated with disasters and building resilience among children (Gupta, 2015; Houston et al., 2014).

Methods

This study uses the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology by Stringer in 2015, focusing on disaster education in a school-based setting, emphasising a transformative approach that empowers children to engage in their preparedness actively. PAR is a qualitative research methodology emphasising collaboration between researchers and participants, aiming to address specific community issues through a cyclical process of reflection, action, and learning (MacDonald, 2012). By fostering collaboration between researchers and participants, children contribute their perspectives and experiences, helping to create more relevant and effective disaster education programs that resonate with their realities (Zeng & Silverstein, 2011; Delicado et al., 2017).

This study proceeded along three phases: "look," "think," and "act." During the "look" phase, interviews were conducted with government agencies, disaster practitioners, and schools to get a current idea about disaster education. The target of the study involved students aged 13-15 years old in middle school, in which children are at a time of being both cognitively mature and active in communal life, as advanced (Berk, 2015). In the "think" phase, by using Hart's Ladder of Participation (2015), which involves children being consulted and informed, and culminates in a collaborative decision-making process where children actively contribute to decisions affecting them (Warraitch, 2023; Arunkumar et al., 2018). In the final "act" phase, children created social media content about disasters with support from adults. This phase describes the design and results of a workshop on disaster preparedness education through social media content development that consisted of the "think" phase, in which content and media strategies were designed. The efficiency of their involvement was measured through participatory observation techniques during the activity, whereas reflection sessions were organized to analyze the workshop result.

The PAR Project Workshop

The study followed all three phases of PAR based on Stringer (2014), which began with the "look phase" to understand stakeholders and define the problem within the community context. Here, the author identifies and analyses the target audience for disaster mitigation education and how to enable them as a risk communicator. The primary target audience is Indonesian middle school students aged 13 to 15 years. Children in this age range were chosen because they can think in a complex way and are more active in communal life (Berk, 2015). The author conducted interviews with stakeholders from The National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB), PREDIKT (disaster practitioners), and teachers from two middle schools in Jakarta, respectively Hati Kudus Grogol Private Middle School and Taman Siswa Kemayoran Private Middle School. We also conducted a literature review to gain an overview of disaster preparedness content provided by BNPB, UNICEF, and the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (MENDIKBUD) to understand the fundamentals of disaster education in schools.

Based on the initial data collected during the "Look Phase," the project moved to the "Think Phase." During this phase, content and media strategies were developed and prototypes were designed to implement instructional materials for the PAR workshop. Building on the insights gathered in the previous phase, social media was selected as an alternative medium for disaster preparedness education. Social media increases student engagement, promotes collaborative learning, and provides access to a wide range of resources. It also creates a platform for active learning by building a virtual community of peers who explore and learn

together (Rampai, 2015). In addition, social media connects students with experts and resources outside the classroom, enriching their learning experiences (Hiranyachattada & Kusirirat, 2020). The PAR workshop project developed a social media learning kit to help teachers and children teach and learn disaster preparedness. The kit includes disaster preparedness book, brochures, activity cards, video examples, and manuals. These materials aim to enhance and support the learning experience and encourage active participation in disaster preparedness education.
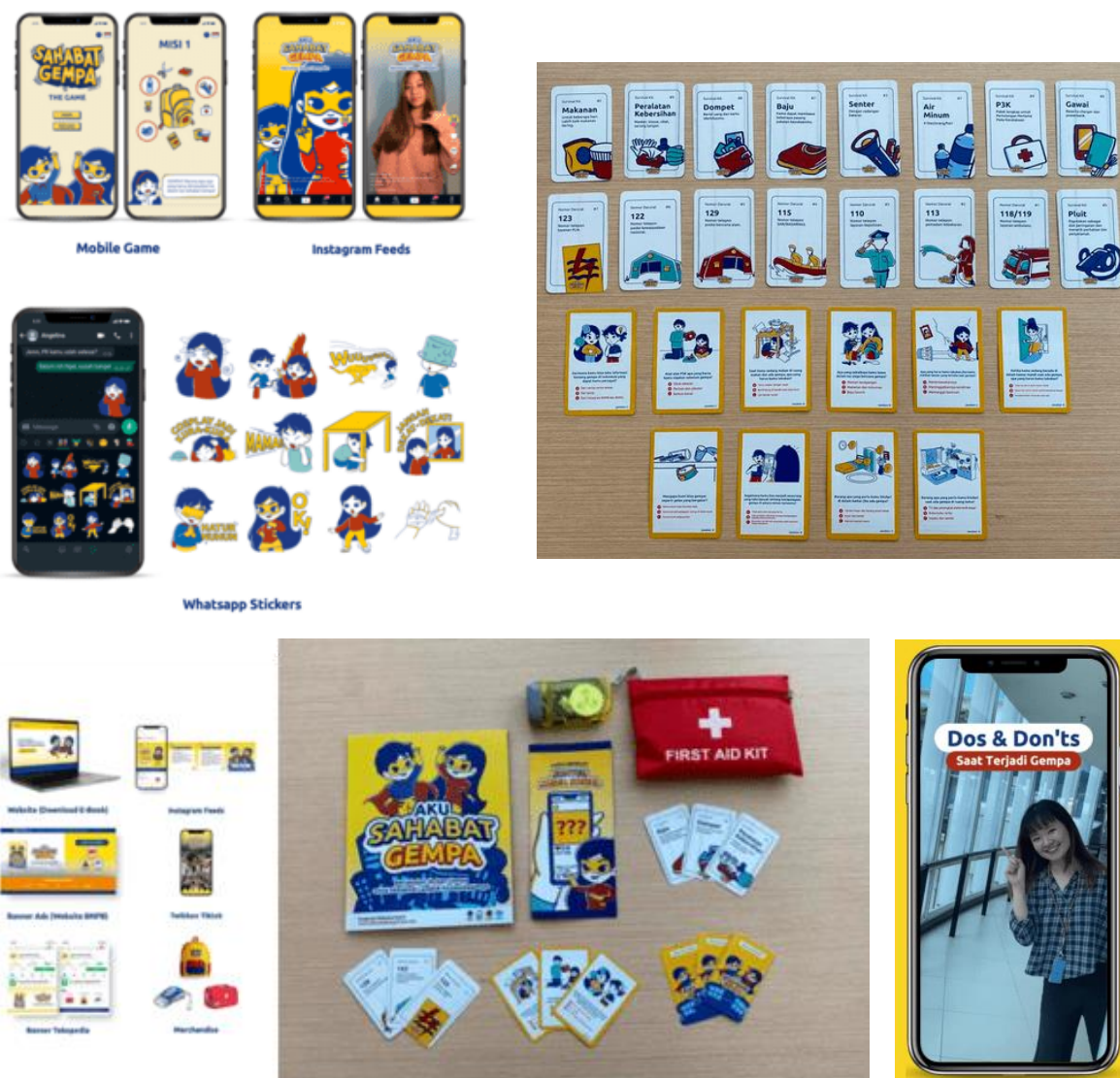
Figure 1: Social Media Learning Kit

The PAR research workshop was conducted in two middle schools in Jakarta, Indonesia. The first was Hati Kudus Grogol Private Middle School, with 90 participants (47 girls and 43 boys) in June 2023, and the second was Taman Siswa Kemayoran Private Middle School, with 85 participants (48 girls and 37 boys) in October 2023. The participants from both schools were between 13 and 15 years old. Based on Hart's Ladder of Participation (2015), the workshop began with a session on disaster preparedness in collaboration with PREDIKT (a disaster practitioner). The second session focused on using social media for education and content creation about disasters while being taught proper ethics for its use. A training kit was provided as an additional alternative educational medium to help equip the children with the knowledge and skills to effectively communicate about disasters and use social media for

advocacy and education. This approach served as a bridge between identifying issues and taking action, ensuring that subsequent steps were informed by comprehensive data analysis and collective insights (Rämgård et al., 2015).

Figure 2: PAR Workshop Project for Middle Schoolchildren

In the final "act phase," the workshop project progressed to the next step, where children took complete control of the decision-making process while adults supported and facilitated their initiatives. Based on the insights given and obtained by the participants, they were asked to join small groups and create content related to disasters for implementation on social media; this aimed to empower participants by giving them agency in decision-making. Mandoh et al. (2020) emphasise that when children implement policies and guidelines, they develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for the outcomes. In this activity, they had the freedom to experiment, choose the type of content, and select their preferred language and visual style. Additionally, we documented the actions taken and reflected on the process using participatory observation methods, as documentation is crucial for understanding participation effectiveness and planning future initiatives (Shier, 2001). At the end of the workshop, we conducted reflection and evaluation sessions with the participants to gather insights on the activity's effectiveness, leading to further reflection and the potential for new cycles of inquiry.

Result and Findings

Several findings have been identified on the PAR research project. Based on interviews with disaster preparedness education stakeholders and literature studies we get the result as follows:

Table 1: Key Findings From Interview and Literature Studies

No	Category	Key Findings
1.	Importance of Disaster Risk Education	Disaster risk education should be integrated into school curricula. Schools play a key role in disaster preparedness knowledge and risk communication.
2.	Children as Agents of Change	Educating children enables them to share information and engage in risk communication. They can be empowered as agents of change in their communities.
3.	Challenges in Integration	Disaster risk education is not prioritized in the general educational environment, resulting in students' lack of awareness and preparedness.
4.	Curriculum Gaps	Disaster mitigation education is integrated into various subjects, leading to fragmented and less effective learning.
5.	Teacher Preparedness	Many teachers feel unprepared to teach disaster risk education and rely on conventional teaching methods.
6.	Material and Support Deficit	There is a lack of adequate disaster preparedness materials, and institutions do not provide sufficient support.
7.	Case Study Insights	Interviews with middle schools in Jakarta highlighted reliance on outdated methods and a lack of proper preparation and resources among teachers.

Incorporating disaster risk education into school curricula is essential for equipping children to become effective risk communicators. Nonetheless, there are challenges like low prioritization, unprepared teachers, and a lack of adequate resources. Enhancing the content to make it more engaging and accessible can increase disaster awareness and preparedness for everyone.

Several interesting ideas emerged during the PAR workshop: participants were very active in asking questions, all of them had social media accounts and were active in using them, and they showed great enthusiasm when presented with material on creating social media content; this is in line with our goal to integrate social media as a learning tool in educational contexts. The results of the reflection phase showed that although educational media about disasters already exist, there is potential to improve them by using more familiar, interactive, and accessible formats. This approach will make the content more understandable not only for children but also for other stakeholders. By developing more comprehensive, accessible, and easily digestible content about disaster preparedness and selecting appropriate media and narratives, we aim to accelerate children's ability to become effective risk communicators.

Table 2: The PAR Research Project Reflection Survey Results

No	Statement	Results	
		Hati Kudus Grogol	**Taman Siswa Kemayoran**
		90 Responden	*85 Responden*
1.	Children prefer social media as learning advice the most.	97,8	97.64%
2.	Social media platforms that most interest children.	Tiktok (74,4%)	Tiktok (91%)
3.	Children want to share content with their friends	97,8%	92.93%
4.	The amount of time children spends on social media each day.	<2 hours (14.4%) 2-5 hours (51,1%) >5 hours (34.4%)	<2 hours (28.23%) 2-5 hours (43.52%) >5 hours (28.23%)
5.	Children like to upload content to social media.	54,4%	51.75%
6.	Children like to create content that aligns with social media trends.	53,3%	67.05%
7.	Children usually follow certain types of content.	Gaming (44.4%) Memes (19.8%) Dance (18.5%) other activities (17.3%)	Dance (30.6%) Gaming (18.8%) other activities (50.6%)
8.	Children enjoy learning from social media.	97.8%	95.30%
9.	Children understand the material from the disaster mitigation workshop.	93,3%	88.23%
10.	Children understand the material from the social media learning workshop.	95,5%	78,83%
11.	Children like creating content about disasters.	67.8%	44.69%

Data shows that children at both Hati Kudus Grogol Private Middle School and Taman Siswa Kemayoran Private Middle School predominantly prefer social media as a learning tool (97.8% and 97.64%, respectively). TikTok is the most popular platform among them, with 74.4% interested at Hati Kudus Grogol Private Middle School and 91% at Taman Siswa Kemayoran Private Middle School. They also show much interest in sharing content with friends (97.8% and 92.93%). Most children spend 2-5 hours on social media daily, with students at Hati Kudus Grogol Private Middle School spending slightly more time on it. While over half enjoy creating content (54.4% and 51.75%), students Taman Siswa

Kemayoran Private Middle School are more likely to engage in dancing and other activities, while gaming and memes are more popular at Hati Kudus Grogol Private Middle School. Both schools show great enthusiasm for learning from social media, although understanding from workshops and creating content about disasters varies, with students from Hati Kudus Grogol Private Middle School showing slightly higher engagement.

Discussion

This study demonstrates the potential of integrating disaster preparedness education into school curricula through innovative, participatory methods such as social media, empowering students to become active risk communicators within their communities. By involving middle school students in content creation and leveraging the interactive nature of digital platforms, the PAR approach enhanced their understanding of disaster risks and stimulated essential communication and collaboration skills. The findings suggest that when children can create and share disaster-related content, they take on a more active role in their education, contributing to a greater sense of ownership and responsibility. However, the success of such initiatives relies heavily on the support of teachers and disaster practitioners, as well as careful consideration of ethical issues related to social media use. The study also highlighted challenges such as limited access to social media platforms and the need for better teacher training in disaster preparedness education, suggesting that future efforts should focus on building more robust support systems for educators and expanding disaster education efforts to diverse communities for long-term sustainability. Also, due to time limitations, this study could not measure the efficiency of the content created by the workshop participants.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the potential of integrating disaster preparedness education into school curricula through PAR methods like social media, enabling middle school students to actively engage as risk communicators in their communities. By fostering content creation and leveraging digital platforms, children gained a deeper understanding of disaster risks and developed vital communication and collaboration skills. Despite challenges such as limited teacher training and resource access, this approach demonstrates the potential to enhance community resilience and preparedness through education. Future research should focus on measuring the reach and engagement of the media produced by participating children to assess this educational approach's broader impact and effectiveness.

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Exploring Emotional Engagement in Augmented Reality Simulation of the Seven Dyslexia Visual Distortion

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Abstract

Dyslexia is a phonological learning difficulty that affects an individual's ability to process linguistic codes despite having high cognitive ability and keen vision. People with visual dyslexia also experience seven visual distortions in reading: words that jump out of the page, melt away, blurry, shaky, and others. Regardless of dyslexia's high prevalence rate (1 out of 5 people), awareness of dyslexia is inadequate, which results in misperception and discrimination in society as they cannot perceive or imagine the visual distortion that people with dyslexia face every day. The lack of understanding of dyslexia has become the root of the issues of empathy and equality in society. This concern is explored through this research project in the form of an augmented reality simulation of the dyslexic's seven visual distortions. This research examines the effectiveness of augmented reality as an unconventional medium to put participants in dyslexics' shoes in a more memorable manner. Guided by the event sampling method, the simulation's impacts were explained through a measurable approach by exploring participants' engagement, comprehension, and perception levels. This research project also demonstrated the potential of multi-sensory and interactive media in provoking emotion and generating profound experiences in learning about indescribable issues, such as dyslexia.

Keywords: Dyslexia, Augmented Reality, Engagement, Comprehension, Perception

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Introduction

Although plenty of definitions exist, dyslexia can be simply addressed as a multi-faceted neurological disorder that affects the development of phonological understanding (Mather & Wendling, 2012). Based on the interview with Dr. Eng. Sumarsono, S.T., MT, OCP (2021), most cases of dyslexia don't occur alone, as dyscalculia, dysgraphia, ADHD, and dyspraxia most probably accompany dyslexia. The symptoms of dyslexia such as reading, word recognition, writing and spelling, memory, and motor difficulties were not conclusive considering external and internal factors that occurred or changed through the years. The individual must exhibit a collection of the following behaviors, continually, over time, in various situations to be addressed potentially having dyslexia (Shannon, 2006).

Reading Experience of Dyslexia

Although the prevalence rate of dyslexia in Southeast Asia is remarkably high and keep increasing year by year, the awareness and understanding of the true nature of dyslexia is still inadequate (Oga &. Haron, 2012). In general, there are three types of dyslexia: *dysnemkinetic* (writing and printing), *dysphonetic* (an auditory problem in reading and spelling), and *dyseidetic* (a visual problem in reading and spelling). Among those three, visual/ surface dyslexia (*dyseidetic*), commonly known as Meares-Irlen syndrome, exhibits the most distinct symptom called visual perceptual distortion (Hermijanto, 2016). There are seven observable distortions in the reading experience of people with this type of dyslexia: halo (multiplying), blurry (overlapping), rivers (irregular), shaky (trembling), wash-out (fading), swirl (twisting), seesaw (bouncing over or out of the page). These distortions worsen if the environment or the media are not friendly: small font size, narrow kerning and line spacing, extreme lighting, excessive contrast, and noisy ambiance (Stein & Kapoula, 2012).
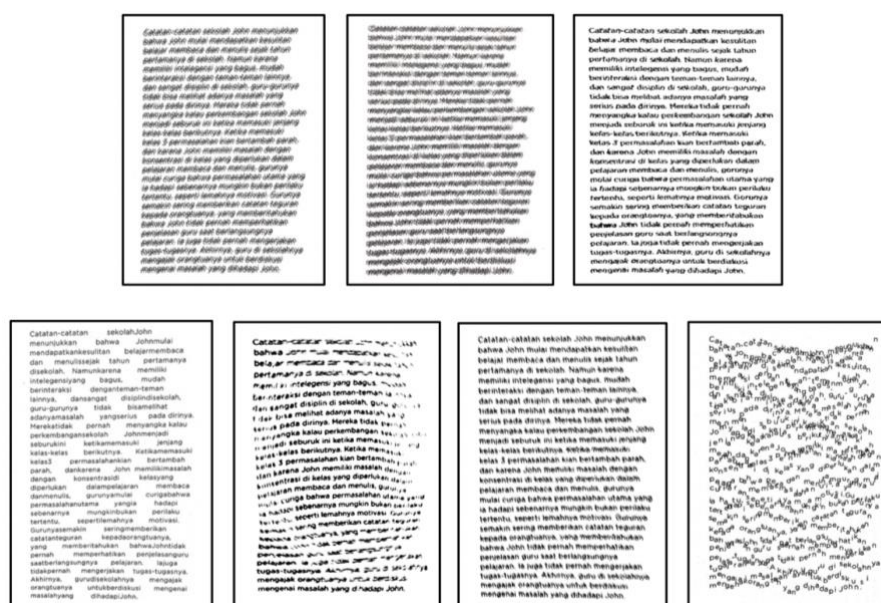

Figure 1: The Seven Visual Distortions of Dyslexia

Experience in Augmented Reality

In raising people's level of engagement, a simulated environment can be one of the alternatives. Using the visual aspects and immersive media enables them to generate personal

experiences, which later enhance motivation, attention, engagement, and enjoyment in the learning process (Lilian, Lee, Dolah, & Bakhir, 2018).

Nevertheless, the effects can differ because the personal experience that results from this process is linked to experience and environment, such as local culture, gender, area, education, etc. Based on Wright, a visual image is examined by an internal and an external narrative. An internal narrative is the content of an image, which each individual may perceive differently depending on their perception. In contrast, an external narrative can be considered factual context, such as where, when, and how it is situated (Lynn & Susan, 2005).

Augmented reality (AR) is not simply a new technology but a concept that combines internal and external narratives to create real simulated/ synthetic project images and information (Furht, 2018). Edgar Dale's Cone of Experience illustrated the importance of concrete experience and direct participation to provide the foundation of permanent learning and communication. Based on this, augmented reality is considered capable of enhancing the information level, so users can have more engaging perceptions and interactions by gaining experiences virtually (Peddie, 2017).

Augmented Campaign of Dyslexia

An augmented campaign is a new approach to empathizing with dyslexics by developing a more profound comprehension and bringing a virtual experience of how people with dyslexia see the world through the augmented reality-based exhibition. The main display consists of 24 AR pages, animated and compiled in the form of a giant book (1.5x2 meter) where visitors can experience the seven visual distortions of dyslexia through each page of the book. The utilization of storytelling highlighted the journey and experience of people with dyslexia in perceiving words and sentences. The story revolves around a character who adventures in search of his true identity. He decided to wander to seven locations, which are related to the seven symptoms of visual distortion, to collect the hints of himself. From the beginning to the end of the story, the character is in silhouette to point out the message that it can be anyone.

Each illustration was composed of animated text according to the seven distortions that can be seen through AR. The text was presented as a poem to emphasize the dyslexic's weakness in spelling and reading rhyming words. This approach is expected to facilitate people to grasp the core of this campaign which aims to educate, entertain, and raise engagement of people toward dyslexia. According to the research of Rello (2012), the most difficult colors to perceive by dyslexics are black and yellow so in order to highlight the difficulties experienced by dyslexics, the primary colors of this project are black, yellow, and white.
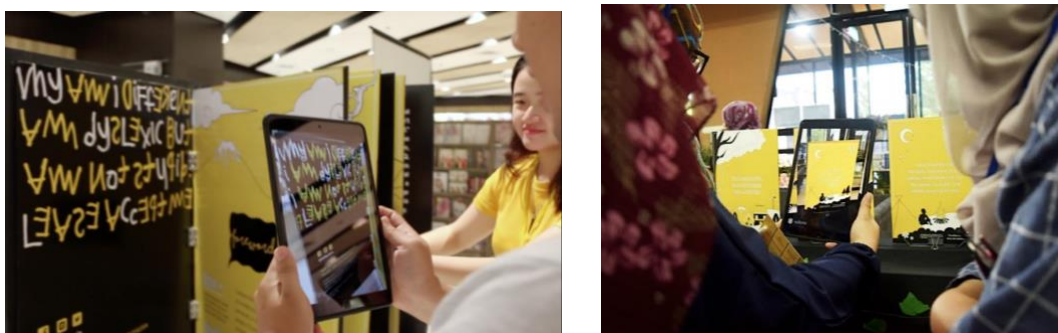

Figure 2: Dyslexia Campaign Exhibition

Results

The exhibition's journey could be divided into three phases: pre-test, AR simulation, and post-test. There were 215 purposive samples from visitors that were heavily related to the dyslexia family and the education field. Firstly, the samples were asked demographic questions (age, gender, marital status) and basic knowledge of dyslexia in the registration corner. Next, they were invited to experience the visual distortion simulation through each page of the AR book. An installed device was provided, so the participants didn't have to download and install the application to participate in this project. Lastly, they were asked to answer three questions about dyslexia and two questions about the experience in the exhibition. Based on the results of the tests, three statistical formulas of the impact rate were calculated and analyzed using the evaluation method for the survey by Krosnick and Presser (Kroscnick & Presser, 2010).

Principally, this research project endeavors to find an alternative method of a social campaign by transferring the conventional descriptive manner to a contemporary interactive manner and verifying its potency through a measurable method. Throughout the process, there were several shifted variables found which were grounded on existing studies, observation, interviews, and surveys of the exhibition. Those differences can be either a beneficial factor or an unfavorable factor depending on the aim and execution of a specific social campaign.

Referring to the exhibition flow, there were several possible scenarios of the participation which were caused by internal factors (such as preferences, motivations, perceptions, behaviors, feelings, abilities, and knowledge) and external factors (such as time, location, crowd, technical issues, social-cultural issues). In this case, the event sampling method was performed to provide an objective parameter of the 'success' and 'failure'. In this research parameter, there are three quantitative findings:

1. Engagement Rate
   This rate measured the level of people's interest and excitement throughout the exhibition which could be seen in how engaged the participants were in the simulation.
2. Comprehension Rate
   Based on the post-test given, there were questions about dyslexia with different levels of difficulty to test the participants' knowledge after taking part in this campaign project.
3. Perception Rate
   In this calculation, participants were asked to fill in two questions about their experience in this research project, ranging from 1 to 4 (1 is poor and 4 is high).

Engagement Rate (Activities Q) $((X1\times0)+(X2\times0.5)+X3)/n$	0-50% Failure 50-70% Success >70 Satisfactory	Comprehension Rate (Dyslexia Q) $((X1\times0)+(X2\times0.5)+X3)/n$	0-50% Failure 50-70% Success >70% Satisfactory

Perception Rate (Exhibition Q) $((X1\times0)+(X2\times0.5)+X3)/n$	0-50% Failure 50-70% Success >70% Satisfactory

Figure 3: Engagement Rate

Engagement Rate

Engagement Rate Formula = (Σ Xi) / n
Xi is (X1 x 0) + (X2 x 0.5) + (X3 x 1)
X1 is participants who engaged as observers only
X2 is participants who engaged partially with the AR book
X3 is participants who engaged fully with the AR book
Engagement Rate (4 x 0) + (108 x 0.5) + (103 x 1)/ 215 = 73.02%

Based on the stated results, the Engagement Rate is above 70%, considered 'satisfactory'. Most of the participants who showed a high Engagement Rate and contributed to all activities were young adults (20-29 years) at 45,68%, followed by adults (30-39 years) at 25,93%. This data confirmed that people in this maturational phase exhibited higher curiosity and deeper engagement toward social, parental, and developmental issues, making them a perfect target. At this stage, they tended to become more adept at complex thinking, expressing emotions, showing empathy, and taking responsibility when making decisions independently.

As seen in the chart above, the number of thoroughly engaged participants is considerably high. The number implied that interactive media such as augmented reality was advantageous in attracting people's interest and curiosity.

Comprehension Rate

Comprehension Rate Formula = (Σ Xi) / n
Xi is (X1 x 0) + (X2 x 0.5) + (X3 x 1)
X1 is participants who answered 0-1 question correctly
X2 is participants who answered 2 questions correctly
X3 is participants who answered 3 questions correctly
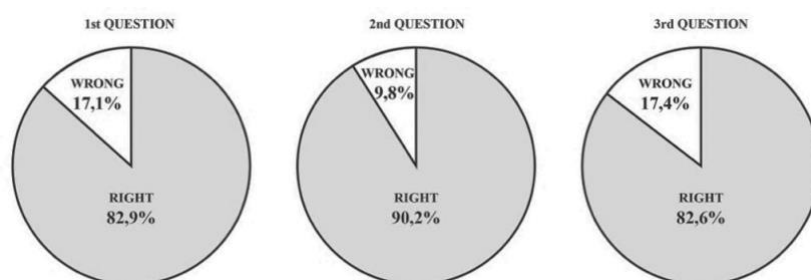***Comprehension Rate (13 x 0) + (59 x 0.5) + (143 x 1)/ 215 = 80.23%***

Figure 4: Comprehension Rate

In the pre-test, the participants were asked three basic questions about dyslexia, and the rate was 52.62% using the same formula above. After experiencing the AR simulation, the participants went through the post-test, which consisted of questions about dyslexia awareness month, seven visual distortions, and false-true statements. All of the questions aimed to verify the depth of their understanding before and after the experience.

The comparison data between the pre-test and post-test showed a significant rise (27,61%). Based on this data, the relation between Engagement Rate and the number of correct answers conducted in the post-test was examined. The result was proportional to the Engagement Rate.

Perception Rate

Perception Rate Formula = (Σ Xi) / n
Xi is (X1 x 0) + (X2 x 0.5) + (X3 x 1)
X1 is participants who stated this campaign was poor
X2 is participants who stated this campaign was ordinary and good
X3 is participants who stated this campaign was great
Perception Rate Indonesia (0 x 0) + (50 x 0.5) + (165 x 1)/ 215 = 88,4% (C)
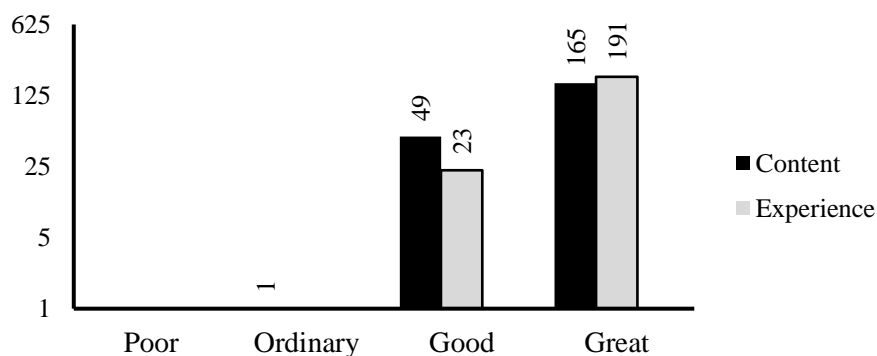*Perception Rate Indonesia (0 x 0) + (24 x 0.5) + (191 x 1)/ 215 = 94,4% (E)*

Figure 5: Perception Rate

Based on this sampling method, the participant's level of satisfaction was remarkably positive, which is also proven by the spoken opinion of the visitors. As seen in the calculation above, most participants gave a higher score for interactivity and experience than the content, which was undeniably a strong point of this campaign project.

Discussion

According to this research project, a visual-based approach and interactive media enhanced 215 participants' motivation, attention, engagement, and enjoyment in the learning process to a certain level in the augmented exhibition. Below are the findings from this project:

- Young adults (18-35) were the most appropriate group for a social campaign, especially in social, education, parental, and self-improvement issues.
- Based on the Engagement Rate, young adults, teenagers, and kids are more enticed to things that provoke curiosity and generate experience, which is considered more valuable than material things or cognitive information.
- Based on the Comprehension and Perception Rate, being exposed to multi-sensory and interactive media enhanced participants' motivation, attention, engagement, and enjoyment in the learning process.
- Regarding the research process, fact-based illustration to describe dyslexic perspective was essential to avoid misconceptions about visual dyslexia. In this regard, direct observation and participatory design were highly favorable.
- An adequate campaign period should be considered proportional to the engagement and awareness inflicted.

Table 1: Discussion

Descriptive Social Campaign (Common)	Interactive Social Campaign (BOOX)
Focusing on content, such as comprehensive information and persuasive message.	Focusing on visual and interactivity with motivational messages.
Depending mainly on how the campaigner interacts and persuades the participants.	Depending mainly on the user experience design and flow of the exhibition.
Offering general knowledge to help participants understand the real meaning of visual dyslexia.	Offering an intimate personal experience of visual dyslexia to evoke participants' empathy.
More focusing on cognitive (facts and concepts) and affective (value and response).	More focusing on psychomotor (perception and adaptation) and affective (value and response).
Targeting a specific age group at one particular event as the content must be adjusted suitably.	Reaching several age groups at one time as the content is more visual-based.
The participants need no particular capability.	A sufficient amount of ability to operate interactive media or devices is needed.
A longer duration is needed to comprehend. Further course of action is complementary.	A shorter duration is needed to comprehend. A further course of action is necessary.
Initial interest in visual dyslexia leads to participation and ends with a more profound comprehension of dyslexia.	An initial curiosity of the interactive media (AR) leads to participation and ends with a deeper understanding of visual dyslexia.

Referring to this summary, augmented reality-based media holds a noticeable potential to provoke curiosity and long-term experience, compared to the conventional approach. This is aligned with Wadlington's statement (Wadlington, Elliot & Kirylo, 2008) that putting people in a place where they could never be through immersive simulation rather than just explaining a series of information and directing them to do a particular action in a social campaign excites the participants in a more impactful and meaningful way.

Conclusion

Although the research had reached its aims, there were some avoidable limitations. Firstly, due to the time limit of the study, this research was limited to a small sample from a representative country, Indonesia. Other limitations of this research were primarily the limited source of the literature and expertise, the validity of the statistical data, and how it affected the research outcome. In this regard, this project was hoped to be able to encourage academicians, researchers, educators, and experts to carry out more research and resolve the issue of dyslexia.

In summary, this research has the potency to be developed and improved in many ways to be an unconventional alternative manner of a social campaign. To fulfill that, I would like to recommend refining and testing this method on a larger scale and various perspectives in collaboration with several practitioners and academicians from different fields.

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Semiotic Analysis of Fan-Made Illustrations in Film Parasite Posters: Visualizing Social Inequality

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Abstract

The movie *Parasite* (Bong, 2019) made history as the first Asian film to win the Academy Award for Best Picture, inspiring fans to create unique posters. Despite the popularity of these fan-made posters, limited research in Indonesia examines them from a visual semiotics perspective. In fields like visual communication and film, posters are crucial promotional tools, and fan-made posters can enhance a movie's popularity and expand its reach. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach and Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to analyze design choices in fan-made *Parasite* posters, focusing on visual elements like color, typography, illustration style, and graphic composition. This approach reveals how these design elements convey the film's message to viewers. The goal is to illustrate how fan-made posters capture the film's social and economic themes, providing a useful reference for future studies in poster design and encouraging designers to communicate layered meanings through visuals.

Keywords: Semiotics, Fan-Made Posters, Social Inequality, *Parasite* Film

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Introduction

The Korean film industry has grown significantly, making it very popular in many countries, including Indonesia. This phenomenon, known as the Hallyu Wave or Korean Wave, began in the late 1990s when South Korean TV dramas started to gain popularity in East Asia, especially in China, Japan, and Taiwan. In the early 2000s, this wave reached Indonesia through popular dramas like Winter Sonata and Autumn in My Heart, which captivated audiences with emotional stories and impressive acting. The success of these dramas not only opened the door for Korean films to enter the Indonesian market but also helped spread Korean culture globally, creating a large fan base in many countries (Christy, 2023).

Korean films gained even more international recognition with the release of *Parasite* (2019). At the international level, *Parasite*, directed by Bong Joon-ho, strengthened the global influence of Korean cinema by winning prestigious awards, including the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2019 and four Academy Awards, one of which was for Best Picture (Festival de Cannes, 2020). The film addresses themes of social inequality and economic hardship, telling the story of the poor Kim family as they work in the wealthy Park family's home through a series of deceptions. *Parasite* moved audiences with its strong social commentary and became the highest-grossing Korean film in Indonesia at the time of its release (CNN Indonesia, 2023).

The success of *Parasite* also led to a fan art phenomenon, especially in the form of fan-made posters with various visual styles. These posters reflect the creativity of fans inspired by the themes of the film, and they serve as a way for fans to engage with the film on a deeper level (Wangi, 2023). This study aims to build on previous research by Fahdel Muhammad and Bayu Paksi (2021) in their work Interpretative Analysis of Fan-made Posters for the Film *Parasite* 2019, which looked at one fan-made poster from a design perspective, focusing on elements such as typography, color, and layout. Further research is needed to explore the visual meanings in other fan-made posters, using a semiotic approach to understand the complex impressions and messages conveyed through visual elements in these works. In the field of visual communication design, a poster, as a medium for conveying messages to the audience with a specific purpose, must have visual meaning and essence that are appealing as an attraction to the audience (Prasetyo et al., 2023). Visual design in movie posters plays a crucial role in shaping first impressions and attracting the audience's attention. As one of the most effective marketing tools, a movie poster functions not only as a promotional medium but also as a visual representation of the content and theme of the film itself. In this context, the poster design is not merely a decorative element but also a key component that can create anticipation, spark interest, and even influence the audience's decision to watch the film.

With the growth of the film industry, poster design has evolved beyond simply being an attractive image or illustration. Movie posters now incorporate various design elements, such as typography, color composition, and image selection, all of which serve to convey the message visually. Each of these design elements holds significance that can shape the audience's perception of the film, whether it concerns the genre, atmosphere, or the themes explored in the story. For example, the use of dark colors with mysterious elements might signal a horror genre film, while bright colors and comedic elements can suggest a lighter, more humorous genre.

The importance of visual design in movie posters lies in its ability to communicate information and emotions quickly and effectively. In today's world, where the audience is

often flooded with visual information, they typically have only a few seconds to grasp the essence of a message. Therefore, the poster design must be able to establish an emotional connection with the audience, convey the essence of the film in a concise yet powerful manner, and stimulate curiosity and interest in watching the film.

Research on visual design in movie posters becomes increasingly relevant in understanding how these visual elements work within the context of visual communication. In this case, an analysis of movie posters can provide deeper insights into how design elements such as symbols, colors, typography, and images are used to build a visual narrative that supports the overall movie-watching experience. In visual communication design, the visual experience encountered by the audience in conveying the aims and objectives of the visual (Mahatmi & Medyasepti, 2024). Thus, the visual design of a movie poster serves not only as a marketing tool but also as a reflection of the identity and message the film aims to communicate to the audience (Akbar & Patria, 2016). Visual representation in films can be used to reveal the presence of myths within the narrative structure (Arpan, 2023). The film's narrative can certainly be interpreted by describing the visual signs in the design of the movie poster.

Through this analysis, a deeper understanding can be gained regarding how movie posters leverage visual design to grab the audience's attention, create expectations, and depict the story behind the scenes. Additionally, this understanding opens up opportunities to explore the relationship between graphic design and cinema art, as well as how both aspects influence each other in creating a strong and memorable visual experience.Thus, the urgency of this research is not only related to the development of graphic design aspects but also serves as a tool to understand how films communicate with audiences through visuals. The results of this research are expected to make a positive contribution to the development of the film industry and graphic design, as well as assist filmmakers and graphic designers in creating more effective and communicative posters.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to understand social realities through how people interpret visual phenomena. This method aims to explore how people make sense of issues or events in natural social contexts, with a focus on how reality is constructed through social interaction (Prasetyo et al., 2023). In this study, Roland Barthes' semiotics theory is used as an analytical tool to examine the visual meaning in fan-made posters for the film *Parasite*. Barthes, who continued Saussure's ideas on signifier and signified, introduced concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth, which help analyze both implicit and explicit meanings in visual works (Nikmatus Shalekhah et al., 2021). Denotation refers to the literal meaning that can be sensed, connotation involves more emotional and subjective meanings, and myth connects meaning to broader social and cultural contexts (Devi & Lilith, 2020).

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected through direct observation of fan-made posters for the film *Parasite* and related literature review. Observation was done to identify the main visual elements in the posters that fans use to convey messages, while the literature review included references from Visual Communication Design theory and past research in this field. Thus, this method combines observation with literature sources to deepen the researcher's understanding of the research subject (Natasya et al., 2022).

Theoretical Framework

This section serves as the theoretical foundation for this study. Here, the main theories used for analysis include Roland Barthes' semiotics and film poster design theory, providing a framework for understanding how messages are conveyed through visual elements.

Semiotics of Roland Barthes

Roland Barthes is a key thinker in semiotics, who built upon Ferdinand de Saussure's ideas of signifier and signified. Barthes developed these ideas by introducing denotation, connotation, and myth, which add deeper layers of meaning in visual analysis (Nikmatus Shalekhah et al., 2021). Denotation refers to the literal or direct meaning, connotation adds emotional and perceptive layers, and myth is meaning shaped by specific social and cultural contexts (Devi & Lilith, 2020). This analysis will be applied to the fan-made posters to reveal different layers of meaning in the work.

Table 1: Barthes *Signification Process*

1. Signifier penanda	2. Signified petanda	
3. Denotative Sign Tanda Denotatif		
4. Conotative signifier Penanda Konotatif	5. Conotative Signified Petanda Konotatif	
6. Conotattive Sign Tanda konotatif		

Film Poster Theory

Film posters are effective media for communicating a movie's promotional message and narrative to a wider audience. Film poster design theory helps explain how visual elements like composition, color, typography, and layout can influence the audience's perception and interest in a movie (Eka & Prayoga, 2021). In this study, this theory is used to analyze the visual elements that attract audiences to the film *Parasite*, with a focus on how these elements are applied in posters created by fans (Akbar & Patria, 2016).

Results and Discussion

In this section, the author presents the results of the visual analysis of each fan-made *Parasite* poster. Each poster will be analysed in detail, starting with elements such as color, typography, composition, visual hierarchy, and illustration. Using Barthes' semiotic approach, the author also explores deeper layers of meaning through the concept of myth, showing that each visual element in the posters serves not only as an aesthetic work but also as a medium for social critique against class inequality and the existing social structure. This analysis aims to reveal how these posters reflect the main themes in the *Parasite* film story.

Poster 1: By Marie Bergeron

Marie Bergeron's illustration poster is a fan-made poster showing a visual of the rich family's house at the top and the poor family's house at the bottom, in a dirty, flooded

environment. This poster clearly separates the top and bottom spaces to show the difference in social class, a main theme in the film *Parasite*.
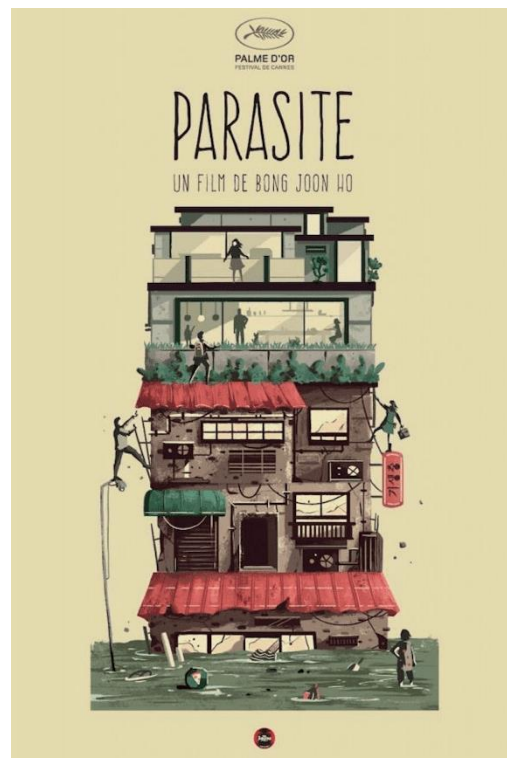

Figure 1: Poster 1 by Marie Bergeron
(Source: Hipwee, 2020)

Color: This poster uses soft pastel colors, creating a calm impression that contrasts with the theme of social inequality presented in *Parasite*. At the top, the pastel colors emphasize the luxury of the wealthy family, while the darker tones at the bottom add a gloomy feel, representing the harsh living conditions of the poor family.
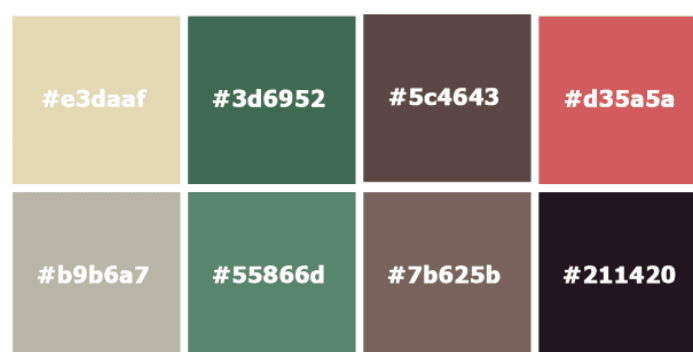

Figure 2: Color in Marie Bergeron's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

The colors used here lean towards pastels, which seems to be a choice aimed at attracting a younger audience and aligning with the comedic approach in *Parasite* (Nikmatus Shalekhah et al., 2021). Additionally, there is consistency in the color choice for the main title font. The use of black (#211420) on a pastel backgrond (#e3daaf) enhances readability and creates

clear contrast, adding a sense of irony where the soft, cheerful elements actually convey deep tension (Natasya et al., 2022).

Typography: The main text "PARASITE UN FILM DE BONG JOON HO" uses a handwriting font, which gives an informal and unstable impression. This font symbolically reflects instability, fragility, and weakness, with a shaky foundation, similar to the visual of tiered houses that seem to be sinking and are not strong enough, ready to collapse at any time. It also represents the relationship between the two families, filled with social tension hidden behind class differences. The use of handwriting, which is usually used to create a sense of personalization and romance (welleton.com, 2024), creates irony here, as the element that seems soft and warm actually holds deep tension and conflict.

Figure 3: Typography in Marie Bergeron's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Composition: This poster uses symmetrical balance, with the point of interest placed right in the center of the layout. The composition applies symmetrical balance with the point of interest positioned exactly in the middle. The visual hierarchy is consistent, starting from the top to the bottom: logo, movie title, subtitle, house illustration, and ending with the logo at the bottom. Additionally, the poster's composition is divided vertically, with the rich family's house at the top and the poor family's house at the bottom, emphasizing class hierarchy. This structure not only provides visual balance but also suggests the dominance of the rich family "on top" and the oppression of the poor family "below."

Figure 4: Composition in Marie Bergeron's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Hierarchy: This poster employs a vertical hierarchy, starting with the title *Parasite* as the dominant element at the top. The viewer's eye is immediately drawn to the largest text, followed by supporting text that flows naturally downward. The visual composition supports

the film's socio-economic narrative, with the wealthy family's house at the top and the impoverished, dilapidated house below, creating a contrast that reinforces the film's message. The placement of the wealthy family's house at the top signifies a higher position in the social structure, while the poor family's house at the bottom highlights their limited access to upward mobility. This arrangement strengthens the depiction of social inequality, which is central to the conflict in the film.

Figure 5: Hierarchy in Marie Bergeron's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Illustration: The illustration style used in this poster is conceptual art, which is a subcategory of illustration art and a metaphorical representation of visual ideas. In this type of art, the visual model does not have to resemble the actual object being represented. This is clearly seen in how the visual is designed with a clear concept, using the comparison of two types of houses: the "rich" house and the "poor" house, which is flooded and appears fragile.

Figure 6: Illustration in Marie Bergeron's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Myth: According to Barthes' theory, this poster creates a myth about the impossibility of social mobility. The rich family's house at the top symbolizes the dominance of the upper class, which appears unshakable, while the poor family's house below represents their

struggle to overcome economic limitations. Houses like the one at the top are typically owned by wealthy or upper-class individuals, representing success and power. Meanwhile, in Korea, houses like the one at the bottom are usually rented or owned by individuals from lower economic classes who are struggling. The soft pastel colors cover this visualization of injustice, suggesting that a social system that seems stable actually hides the underlying structural inequality.

Poster 2: By Igor Madelt and Vicente Niro

This poster is a collaboration between Igor Madelt and Vicente Niro. It features four figures arranged vertically and symmetrically. Each figure covers the eyes of the figure in front of it with a different object, creating a symbol of social hierarchy where each level presses down and controls the one below. This composition reminds us of how social classes are often shaped by forces that block, control, and limit each other.

Figure 7: Poster 2 by Igor Madelt and Vicente Niro
(Source: Hipwee, 2020)

Color: The black color in this poster symbolizes mystery, the unknown, and things that are hidden (Color Psychology, 2024). On the other hand, red suggests violence and danger, while blue represents feelings of coldness and depression (Mediapsikologi, 2023). This combination of colors creates a strong mix of emotions, enhancing the mysterious and tense impression of the poster.

Figure 8: Color in Igor Madelt and Vicente Niro Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Typography: The use of a title in Korean strengthens the local culture and suggests a connection between the film's story and the social reality in South Korea. According to Aiello (2020), elements relevant to the local culture can enhance a sense of authenticity and emphasize the visual connection to a specific cultural narrative. This typographic choice also

shows that the theme of the film *Parasite* is deeply rooted in the social and cultural background of South Korea.

Figure 9: Typography in Igor Madelt and Vicente Niro's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Composition: The symmetrical vertical arrangement of the figures creates visual harmony, yet is filled with tension. Each figure is controlled by the one above it, suggesting that each social layer exerts pressure on the class below. This structure portrays an organized hierarchy, yet one full of constraints.

Figure 10: Composition in Igor Madelt and Vicente Niro's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Visual Hierarchy: The placement of the figures in a vertical formation from top to bottom forms a hierarchy that highlights the connection between social classes, with each figure obstructing the view of the one beneath it. This emphasizes the social limitations where each class appears constrained by the one above it.

Figure 11: Hierarchy in Igor Madelt and Vicente Niro's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Illustration: The illustration style shows figures blocking each other's view, symbolizing the interdependence between classes that hinder freedom. Each figure is confined within visual boundaries, strengthening the impression of social limitations within the class structure.

Figure 12: Illustration in Igor Madelt and Vicente Niro's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Myth: The poster reflects the myth of oppression, where different social classes structurally obstruct and control each other. The figures blocking each other's eyes indicate that each class is bound to the one above it in a way that restricts freedom and mobility, creating the illusion of an interconnected, pressure-filled reality that is hard to escape.

Poster 3: By Andrew Bannister

This poster depicts the recurring scene of ascending and descending stairs in *Parasite*, where the wealthy family climbs the stairs to their home, while the poor family must descend to their residence in a cramped slum below. The stairs in this poster serve as a symbol of the social class divide.

Figure 13: Poster 3 by Andrew Bannister
(Source: Hipwee, 2020)

Colors: The combination of cyan, red, teal, and orange creates a sense of tension. Cyan gives a calm impression, red evokes a sense of danger, teal suggests hidden tension, and orange adds urgency. These colors emphasize the contrasting atmospheres between the two social classes in the poster.

Figure 14: Color in Andrew Bannister's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Typography: The sans-serif font on the text "PARASITE" is arranged upside down, creating a dramatic effect that highlights the social instability between the two families. This clean yet dramatic typography contrasts with the theme of social hierarchy represented by the stairs in the visual.

Figure 15: Typography in Andrew Bannister's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Composition: The composition of the poster focuses on the element of stairs, placing the wealthy family at the top and the poor family below, creating a stark positional contrast. The

stairs become a visual symbol of social stratification, demonstrating the dominant position of the wealthy family.

Figure 16: Compositon in Andrew Bannister's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Visual Hierarchy: This hierarchy is reinforced by the visual positioning, where the wealthy family is at the top of the stairs and the poor family is at the bottom. This visual structure clearly shows the separation of status between the two social classes.

Figure 17: Hierarchy in Andrew Bannister's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Illustration: The semi-realistic illustration highlights the social distance between the two families. The visual of the stairs symbolizes the physical and metaphorical barriers that prevent upward social mobility.

Figure 18: Illustration in Andrew Bannister's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Myth: This poster portrays the myth of the struggle to achieve higher social status. The stairs in the visual represent that while there is a path to the upper class, the journey for the lower class to reach it is filled with nearly insurmountable obstacles, emphasizing the myth of social mobility as a difficult and often impossible challenge.

Poster 4: Imagery and Reality by Greg Things

Poster by Greg Things portrays Kim Ki-taek (Mr. Kim), the father of the Kim family in *Parasite*. The poster features Mr. Kim's face, with the top of his head representing a luxurious house, while the rest of his body reflects the dilapidated home of the slums.

Figure 19: Poster 4: by Greg Ruth
(Source: Hipwee, 2020)

*Colors***:** The poster uses brass, brown, and gray to convey stability and the hardships faced by Mr. Kim. Brass symbolizes the desire for stability, brown represents simplicity, while gray signifies the harsh reality of life.

Figure 20: Color in Greg Ruth's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

*Typography***:** The minimalist font is placed at the corner to keep the focus on Mr. Kim's face. This typeface gives a simple yet effective impression, ensuring that attention remains on the internal struggle and aspirations of the main character.

Figure 21: Typography in Greg Ruth's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Composition: The composition of Mr. Kim's face resembles that of a king on a playing card, creating a balance between aspiration and reality. The top of his head depicts the luxurious house, while his body shows the humble slum home, emphasizing the duality of the life the main character leads.

Figure 22: Composition in Greg Ruth's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Visual Hierarchy: Mr. Kim's face is placed at the top, symbolizing his aspirations, while his body, representing the slum home, reflects the limitations of his challenging life. This visual structure highlights the gap between dreams and reality.

Figure 23: Hierarchy in Greg Ruth's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Illustration: The realistic illustration conveys Mr. Kim's emotions and economic condition. His calm yet hopeful expression reflects the internal struggle with his social limitations.

Figure 24: Illustration in Greg Ruth's Poster
(Source: Personal data, 2024)

Myth: This poster communicates the myth of social limitations, where aspirations for a better life are hindered by existing social conditions. The division between Mr. Kim's face and body suggests that social status is often hard to change, reinforcing the message of inequality embedded in the film.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the fan-made posters for the film *Parasite* (2019), it is evident how designers successfully created various interpretative versions that still share a strong visual hierarchy, depicting the stark differences between the rich and the poor, as well as the contrast between hope and reality. Each poster not only conveys a message about social inequality but also critiques the existing societal structure, reflecting the struggles of life within a broader context.

The first poster, Detailed Illustration by Marie Bergeron, uses pastel colors and a vertical composition to portray a divided world. The calmness of the pastel colors conceals the hidden social conflict, where the upper class remains in a comfortable position, while the lower class is trapped in limitations. The second poster, Closing Eyes by Igor Madelt and Vicente Niro, with its dark color palette and the structure of figures closing their eyes, creates an image of social classes that depend on each other but are separated by invisible barriers.

The Scenes of Ascending and Descending Stairs in the third poster symbolize an imbalanced social journey, where one family climbs the stairs toward luxury, while the other descends toward alienation. This poster depicts social stratification that hinders mobility. Finally, the Imagination and Reality poster by Greg Things showcases Mr. Kim's face, with his head filled with dreams of a luxurious home, while his body represents the slum house. This visual highlights the impossibility of reaching a better life in a society that is tightly structured.

Referring to Roland Barthes' concept of myth, these posters are not just visually appealing but also carry profound messages about the social conditions in various economic layers. The *Parasite* posters go beyond mere promotional tools; they function as media for social critique, illustrating how cultural myths shape our understanding of social stratification and the struggles individuals face within that system. By leveraging symbolic power, each poster plays a role in reshaping our perception of inequality, making *Parasite* a mirror of a social reality that appears beautiful on the surface but is full of injustice beneath.

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Subterranean Encounters: Speculative Tension and the Underground Space in Takano Fumio's "Swan Knight" and Nazlı Eray's "Orpheus"

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Abstract

John L. Hennessey defines speculative fiction as a literary canon that mixes familiarity and radical alterity, utilising unrealistic elements to explore hypothetical scenarios or bring aspects of the reader's world into sharp belief (2024). This paper reads Takano Fumio's *Swan Knight* (2024) and Nazlı Eray's *Orpheus* (2006) as speculative fiction, contending that both works approach underground spaces as sites of enigmatic encounters and cultural exchange, breaking down the boundaries between popular myths and contemporary realities with the aid of speculative tension. *Swan Knight* is an imaginative narrative of the biography of Ludwig II of Bavaria. Addicted to binge-watching television and listening to Wagner, Ludwig II visits a labyrinthine subterranean city beneath Munich, where Wanger's Festspielhaus is located. During his underground adventure, Ludwig confronts Wagner's dubious legacy and the ambiguous boundary between media, myth, and reality. Similarly, Nazlı Eray's *Orpheus* relocates the popular myth to a modern-day Turkish coastal town, where Eurydice searches for Orpheus's house near an ancient archaeological site. Eray's use of the fantastic creates an underground world that connects intertextual references and suggestive details, bridging the mythical realm and Turkey's contemporary social realities. Drawing on Homi Bhabha's cultural hybridity theory and Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, this paper aims to understand the speculative tension surrounding the underground space in the two novels and to bring new insights to the scholarship on the rapidly expanding literary canon.

Keywords: Speculative Fiction, Comparative Literature, Japanese Literature, Turkish Literature, Adaptation Studies

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Speculative Fiction: A Brief Introduction

It can be broadly said that speculative fiction lies in the intersection of science fiction, para-literature and the 'fantastic'. Speculative fiction ('sf') does not always need to involve scientific or futuristic elements; rather, as John L. Hennessey puts it, sf as a literary canon mixes familiarity and radical alterity, utilising unrealistic elements to explore hypothetical scenarios or bring aspects of the reader's world into sharp belief (2024). According to Gwilym Lucas Eades, the two main aspects that form seminal components of current sf productions are the *weird* and the *ecological*. The *weird* modalities generate 'strange, terrorising, post-sublime senses of worlds askew, operating across and between bounded senses of taken-for-granted categories of literary production' (Eades, 2024). Notable fiction that can be considered as sf include Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, and Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Space, is often vital to the narrative economies of speculative fiction. To put it plainly, sf takes readers on journeys through space and time. As Eades asserts, spatiality is a 'quality of spaces that inheres in speculative fictions', and such spatiality often characterises speculative fiction's particular quality of newness (2024). The likes of Hennessey have used the concept *concurrences*, coined by historian Günlog Fur, to understand the subtle structures of power that organise the narratives in speculative fiction, whether through notions of gender, race, coloniality and beyond. The term *concurrences* illuminates the fact that these structures of power become 'most apparent in liminal spaces between cultures or in contacts between societies' and describes 'separate, parallel worlds or cultures that operate according to different internal logics, but come into contact, generating complicated relations of agreement and/or competition' (Hennessey, 2024).

Swan Knight and *Orpheus*: A Comparative Perspective

This paper compares two contemporary and relatively understudied works of sf, Takano Fumio's *Swan Knight* (2024) and Nazlı Eray's *Orpheus* (2006), contending that both works approach underground spaces as sites of enigmatic encounters and cultural exchange, breaking down the boundaries between popular myths and contemporary realities with the aid of speculative tension. *Swan Knight* is an imaginative narrative of the biography of Ludwig II of Bavaria. Addicted to binge-watching television and listening to Wagner, Ludwig II visits a labyrinthine subterranean city beneath Munich, where Wanger's renowned Festspielhaus is located. During his underground adventure, Ludwig confronts Wagner's dubious legacy and the ambiguous boundary between media, myth, and reality. Similarly, Nazlı Eray's *Orpheus* relocates the popular myth to a modern-day Turkish coastal town, where Eurydice searches for Orpheus's house near an ancient archaeological site. Eray's use of the fantastic creates an underground world that connects intertextual references and suggestive details, bridging the mythical realm and Turkey's contemporary social realities. I contend that there are considerable common grounds between *Swan Knight* and *Orpheus*, particularly in the ways the two texts blending cultures from different temporal and geographical realms, employing elements of the "fantastic" and the "weird" to challenge the audience's perception of reality. In addition, in both *Swan Knight* and *Orpheus* the subterranean space is the epicentre of speculative tension, where the unknown and unexpected occur. *Swan Knight* and *Orpheus* bridge popular myths and popular culture, prompting new understandings of familiar tales and relevant social realities.

Theoretical Framework

Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (2006) is a rich volume of essays on cultural hybridity, postcolonialsm, postmodernism, race, and civility. *The Location* also poses the concept 'in-between' space, where the 'borderline work of culture' demands an 'encounter with "newness"' that does not belong to the continuum of past and present (2006). Such 'in-between' space renews the past and innovates and disrupts the performance of the present (2006). As Bhabha puts it, the 'past—present' is now part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living (2006).

Another theoretical perspective that I propose is the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope ('time-space'). Bakhtin initially inceptionised in 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics' and 'The Bildungsroman and its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historic Typology of the Novel). Bakhtin defines the literary chronotope in the following passage from 'Forms of Time':

> In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. The intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. (Bakhtin, 1987)

As chronotope was originally borrowed from Einstein's theory of relativity, it seemed natural for Bakhtin to compare literature to science: 'Literature, as a historical phenomenon, is – like older stages of science – the repository of sedimented designs, of answers given to coercing questions of reason' (Bakhtin, 1987). The literary chronotope, seen as an assessment of narrative genres, contributes to a theoretical tradition that underlines the 'cognitive functionality of literary genres'; fixed poetic and narrative structures should be understood as 'means for storing and conveying forms of human experience and knowledge' (1987).

Swan Knight

Swan Knight reimagines a few historical and mythical characters, which include the renowned 'Swan King'—Ludwig II of Bavaria (1845-1866). Historically, Ludwig II was known for his artistic sensitivity, in particular his obsession with the works by the composer Richard Wagner. Several facts could be taken into consideration to explain the association between Ludwig II and his appellation 'Swan King': he had a profound fascination with swans as he grew up in a castle featured with swan motifs; furthermore, Ludwig II was captivated by the medieval Swan Knight tale circulated in Wagner's *Lohengrin WWV 75* (1850). Takano relocates the above context in a subterranean, labyrinthine space that secretly exists below the city of Munich. Withdrawn from his tiresome royal duties, Ludwig II becomes addicted to watching Wagner's music-dramas on television and longs to visit his idol Wagner in person. One night, Ludwig II walks into the underground world through the deserted shed of the Linderhof Palace to look for Wagner. The underground world features distinct steampunk iconologies: for instance, Ludwig notes that there are 'clangs and clunks of metal'; 'Fumes mingled with the gloom and the caverns began to resound with din'; 'Tiny rooms and bars were squashed into the tangled labyrinth: a multitude of television screens glowed here and there' (Takano, 2024). These imageries recall canonic Japanese steampunk works such as Miyazaki Hayao's *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004) and Tsukamoto Shinya's *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* (1989).

Takano's design of the underground Munich not only encapsulates the technological anachronisms characteristic of steampunk, but also delves into deeper cultural and psychological themes. Ludwig II's own time collides with the inception of steampunk in Europe—the popular 'self-presentations of the encounter between technology and the human' (Beard, 2014). David Beard has identified the 'countercultural, counterinstitutional, countercorporate impulse' in such encounter in steampunk (2014). It is also important to know that steampunk is sometimes associated with antimodernism, as many of steampunk works reveal the horrors of machinery that could occur without care and tending (Birmingham, 2014). *Swan Knight* joins the antimodern element of steampunk to the history of *fin-de-siècle* Bavaria: in the beginning of the novella, Ludwig II dreads upon his kingdom's insignificance compared to emerging German Empire, and he resorts to his daydreaming and binge-watching the television to forget the dismal realities (Takano, 2024). Takano's intended manipulation of time and technology, relocating the invention of the likes of television to *fin-de-siècle* Bavaria intensifies the sensational and uncanny elements in the encounter between the human and technology, recalling Bakhtin's emphasis on the 'cyclical everyday time' and the 'saturation of experience' in chronotope.

Takano's mastering of speculative tension also lies in her unique approach to intertextuality in *Swan Knight*. The novella begins with a quote from Wagner's *Lohengrin*: 'You must not unmask me; never ask me whence I came, my rank, or my name!' *Lohengrin* is based upon medieval German romance, particularly notably the *Parzival* of Wolfram von Eschenbach, and its sequel *Lohengrin*. Wagner's opera tells the love story between Elsa, the late Duke of Brabant's heir, and the mysterious 'Swan Knight' Lohengrin, who is summoned by Elsa to fight in a duel against the scheming Friedrich Telramund. Elsa has previously dreamt of Lohengrin arrive in a boat drawn by a swan. As Lohengrin and Elsa fall in love, the pair decide to get married on one condition: Elsa must never ask Lohengrin's name. In the underworld of *Swan Knight*, the 'Swan King' Ludwig II disrupts the production of a new version of *Lohengrin* and experience a serious of surreal encounters: he first sees his own doppelganger singing on television; the king also meets an androgynous knight called Parsifal, who protects Ludwig from danger in the underworld. In Eschenbach's oeuvre, Parsifal is Lohengrin's father; like Lohengrin, Parsifal's story is also transformed into an eponymous music drama by Wagner. All these interconnected intertexts amplify the mythic ambiance of subterranean Munich, intensifying the speculative tension.

Overwhelmed by all the strange encounters in the underworld, Ludwig II feels a 'strong sense of déjà vu' and disorientation. These sentiments are heightened when the king finally meets Wagner in the Festspielhaus deep down in the underworld. Wagner's unnamed servant, who initially greets Ludwig II, challenges the king's perception of fiction of reality: 'We can't begin without first defining reality. If your reality is not clearly defined, meeting Wagner "in reality" might not mean anything to you' (Takano, 2014). A cognitive tension between the aboveground Munich and the underground Munich arises; Takano's vision of the two Munichs might instantly recall Arthur Schopenhauer's seminal work *The World as Will and Representation* (*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*), which identifies a division of the world into two metaphysical aspects (Jacquette, 2005). Nonetheless, I contend that *Swan Knight*'s approach to spatiality, reality and fictiveness could be better understand under the framework of Bakhtin's chronotope, in which the world of "eventness" is not only an 'attribute of consciousness', but a 'real entity endowed with concrete historical meaning'. Hence, while the subterranean Munich initially appears to be a space of fantastic imagination, it is, in fact, vital to the novella's structure of temporal and historical experiences.

Orpheus

Eray's *Orpheus* is comparable to *Swan Knight* in many ways. Like *Swan Knight*, *Orpheus* unfolds in a mysterious subterranean realm, where the boundaries between the underworld and the surface are left deliberately unclear. It is well known that the eponymous myth of Orpheus and Eurydice also takes place in the underworld, namely Hell or the realm of Hades. Orpheus, a famous musician in ancient Greece, follows his dead wife Eurydice to the underworld and persuades Hades and Persephone to let her return, on the condition that during the journey out of hell Orpheus never turn back to look at Eurydice. As they are about to reach the living world, Orpheus looks back at Eurydice, and she vanishes back to the underworld forever. The speculative tension in *Orpheus*, comparable to the one in *Swan Knight*, appears in the fantastic, unexpected encounters that exist beyond our perceived reality.

Eray's version radically overturns the myth. The story is set in a Turkish coastal town on the Mediterranean, whose massive urbanisation is literalised through the arrival of the capital city, Ankara. A sickly and anxious Eurydice arrives in the town looking for the missing Orpheus, who drives a red Alpha Romeo race car and lives in house up in the hills. There are also indications that the town might be Hell, as suggested by repeated descriptions of the overpowering and growing heat in the town and by hints that the path to Orpheus' house might be the way leading to an archeological site, or the underworld (Erol, 2009). Eray's vision of the popular myth also problematises language. This is not only true in the obscure conversations exchanged between Eurydice and other characters, but also in Eurydice's impression of Orpheus' house, which seems to come alive by turning its lights on and off—in Eurydice' words, forming a language that cannot be understood (2009).

Similar to the underground Munich in Takano's *Swan Knight*, the coastal town in *Orpheus* is a product of the author's intended manipulation of historical facts, intertexuality and fantastic imagination. Eurydice receives letters from the statue of Emperor Hadrian, the Roman emperor who once travelled through Anatolia between AD123-124. Here the issue of time and the limits of history are problematised, as while Hadrian claims to 'know everything' in his letters, he only knows historical events up till his own time (2009). The historical developments in Eurydice's present include the ongoing coup in a fictional place called Talza. Critics have read this as a reference to the coup that took place on 12 September 1980 in Turkey, which occurred after conflicts between leftist and rightist factions caused the deaths of more than 600 people in July and August of 1980 (Erol, 2009). Hadrian, along with other characters in the story, challenges the limits of the reader's 'suspension of disbelief' and becomes the 'test cases of fictiveness' (Erol, 2009).

The rich tapestry of historical facts and speculative narratives recall the aforementioned term *concurrences*, which refers to 'disparate spheres of existence and meaning that are interlinked', and the nature and evolution of these power-relations raise 'questions of historical study of context' (Hennessey, 2024). In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha asserts: 'The place of difference and otherness, or the space of the adversarial […] is never entirely on the outside or implacably oppositional. It is a pressure, a presence, that acts constantly, if unevenly, along the entire boundary of authorization' (Bhabha, 2006). The coastal town in Eray's *Orpheus* is, indeed, a place of difference and otherness; it is also a space of the absurd and the fantastic, where Eurydice visits Orpheus' house on the hill every night and releases her story from the 'frozen and disembodied time' (Erol, 2009).

Conclusions

To summarise, Takano's *Swan Knight* and Eray's *Orpheus*, two texts that I read as canonic speculative fiction, are comparable in the ways that they employ intertexuality, speculative fiction and fantastic elements. *Swan Knight*'s renarrative of the biography of Ludwig II and the myth of the medieval Swan Knight, against the cultural backdrop of steampunk, invents an underground Munich that challenges the limits of our perception of reality, media and imagination. Eray's *Orpheus* also reinvents the popular eponymous myth into a captivating story that takes place in a fast-growing Turkish coastal town. By telling the story from Eurydice's perspective, *Orpheus* prompts the reader to reflect upon the rich possibilities of interpreting mythical narratives. In both stories, the unsettling yet sensational underground space becomes the site of ominous and fantastic encounters between past and present, different cultures, history and imagination.

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Cartoonization Practices: The Visual Perspective of Learners With Intellectual Disabilities in a Participatory Learning Environment

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Abstract

Participatory learning is known as a form of teaching method that focuses on the learner, deemed suitable for learners with intellectual disabilities as it encourages engagement, attention, and flexibility in nurturing creativity, critical thinking, and awareness as a part of their cognitive ability. This mental ability can be sharpened through practice that involves the repetition process of observation, recognize, remembering, and interpreting, which interestingly can be found in cartoonization practice, as it is the practice of reconstructing a real-life image into a cartoon-like representation. The purpose of this research is to study the use of teaching cartoonization for intellectual disabilities learners in a participatory learning environment by analyzing the learner's drawing process and visual perspectives, such as how they receive and process information, identify, comprehend, and define the distinctive features of a person to finally execute it in a form of a painting. Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) and observation are used in this research with 13 young adults with intellectual disabilities, aged 25-30, as the main subject. The final results show that teaching cartoonization in the participatory learning environment tends to be effective in empowering their cognitive ability due to its enjoyability, attentive communication, and meaningful connection between the tutor and learners as they tend to be more patient in observing the real-life portrait to determine which unique characteristic they are going to maintain and which they can explore. Findings also suggest that they tend to understand instructions more by using a straight forward visual examples.

Keywords: Cartoonization, Visual Perspective, Participatory Learning, Intellectual Disabilities

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Introduction

Intellectual disability (ID) is a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by limitations in intellectual and adaptive functioning, commonly associated with an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) below 70, often facing challenges in learning and processing new or complex skills. Based on the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), intellectual disability is recognized by below-average IQ and adaptive behavioral disorders which are seen through conceptual, social abilities, and adaptive practices (Ningrum et al., 2020). According to the National Socioeconomic Survey's data results, there are 22.97 million people with disabilities in Indonesia, with 6.1 million people with severe disabilities (Bestianta, 2022). This significant population emphasizes the importance of Indonesia Law No. 8 Article 1 number 1 of 2016 which discusses the fulfillment of equal opportunities to support a standard of life for persons with disabilities of higher quality, justice, physical and spiritual prosperity, as well as dignity (Nurdin, 2022), highlighting the case where learners with intellectual disabilities require equal access to proper education in developing cognitive (cognitive means relating to the mental process involved in knowing, learning, and understanding things) and practical skills, enabling them to achieve greater independence, self-reliance, and active social participation with confidence.

Empowering people with intellectual disabilities in creative businesses provides opportunities for skill development, meaningful employment (a sense of purpose and fulfillment that creates a sense of accomplishment, impact, and overall well-being), and financial autonomy, due to its significant potential with an average annual growth of around 6.33%, offering a dynamic sector that welcomes individuals from diverse backgrounds. This industry promotes innovation, drives economic growth, and provides inclusive opportunities, pushing individuals to bring unique ideas and cultural expressions into the marketplace and fostering entrepreneurship (Sri Isnawati et al., 2023). Within Indonesia's creative industry, certain communities actively support members with intellectual disabilities, fostering their artistic talents and teaching them to monetize their work to support their economic independence, as well as highlighting their creative expression. These communities usually consist of intellectually disabled learners, their caretakers, and tutors. Implementing a conducive learning environment is substantial for learners with intellectual disabilities as it provides positive reinforcement accordingly. To increase learning conduciveness, conventional classroom teaching methods must be replaced with more dynamic approaches that incorporate students' learning needs for their transformative development and meaningful connection with their interests, environment, and even their community culture.

Presents diverse teaching practices underscores learners' participation in analyzing and understanding what is to be learned, hence increasing their creativity and problem-solving skills (Obadiegwu, 2012). Participatory learning is a peer-based learning process, derived from the word participation, which refers to the action of partaking in activities and projects to encourage mutual learning. This type of learning uses collaboration as a tool in mediating active communication between the students and educator. In this case, participatory learning can empower intellectually disabled learners as it focuses directly on the learners, emphasizing a learning-by-doing approach that encourages engagement, attention, and flexibility, thus nurturing creativity, critical thinking, and awareness as integral parts of developing cognitive abilities in learners with intellectual disabilities, fostering both personal growth and academic achievement. In addition, activity that applies repetition practices is proven to improve task performance due to continuous memory recollection. Cartoonization is a practice that involves the repetition process of observation, identifying, remembering,

and interpreting a real-life image so that it can be simplified and reconstructed into a cartoon-like, often exaggerated, yet recognizable illustrative representation.

The relationship between cartoonization as a repetition-based activity in a participatory learning environment and intellectual disabilities learners' creative process highlights a promising area for further exploration. Analyzing the visual perspective of learners with intellectual disability may also provide an in-depth examination of cartoonization's potential as a learning tool, which unfortunately remains under-researched and rarely discussed in existing literature.

Research Methods

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), a qualitative method widely used in research involving local communities or groups, is used for this research. PLA consists of approaches to utilize the power relations between communities or insiders and outsiders, in order to analyze, understand, and gain insights of a community's situation as well as enable the community to understand their current conditions, determine the best approach to address their challenges, and empowered to take a move. The PLA method is conducted with the full and active participation of community members, ensuring inclusivity by intentionally amplifying the voices and opinions of the most marginalized communities and individuals. Tools and techniques are applied in a participatory manner, fostering collaboration and engagement throughout the process, often involving a series of hands-on exercises carried out directly in the field, promoting practical and context-specific solutions. Due to its participative nature, it implies that a fixed methodology or process is neither feasible nor preferable. Therefore, the approaches need to be flexible, adaptive, and innovative, emphasizing the value of seeking out multiple perspectives and embracing diversity so that the objectives of PLA can be accepted by the targeted community culture and condition (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014).

The method procedure for this study:
1. Tutors prepare a brief explanation related to Cartoonization.
2. Cartoonization exercise that involves simple instructions and practices, assisted by tutors and caretakers.
   a. Exercise 1: Learners will observe and cartoonized two portraits chosen by the tutors on paper using markers.
   b. Exercise 2: Learners will be asked to cartoonized a portrait of their own choosing on a canvas using markers.
   c. Exercise 3: Learners will then color Exercise 2 using acrylic.
3. Observation during the whole Cartoonization process.
4. A forum group discussion is conducted with the members after the exercise.

The participants for this research are 13 intellectually disabled young adults aged 25-30 years old learners as the main subject, 13 adults or caretakers accompanying each learner, 3 tutors with arts and graphic design backgrounds, as well as 3 facilitators.

Findings and Discussion

Creating a cartoonized portrait for intellectually disabled learners is conducted through clear, straightforward, step-by-step instructions, while simultaneously demonstrating it for the learners to mimic. The first step is to observe the shape of the model's face in the portrait and

have them outline the face, using a simple half-ovalled shape or semi-circle for the head, continued by adding two large eyes. The learners need to decide the shape of the eye based on the characteristics of the model. They will question whether the model has a round-shaped or monolid eye and try to simplify the shape accordingly as instructed. The learners are then guided to identify the model's expression to decide the shape of the mouth. A simple curved line for the mouth facing upward to display happiness, while downwards to represent a more negative emotion. The nose and ears are next and they resume to draw the hair. Next, they are guided to draw the hair either straight, curly, or spiky. Illustrating the face is especially challenging, as it is an integral visual element in identifying a person's traits in a drawing.

According to the drawing results, seen in Figure 1, most of the learners tried to imitate the shape of the face and nose according to what the tutors demonstrated. On the other hand, the learners explored more shapes when drawing the eyes, adding intricate details and bringing out a more unique approach, and tried to apply the same practice when drawing the hair.

Figure 1: Cartoonization Using Marker on Canvas

Proceed to cartoonized the body, instructing them to draw basic shapes namely a rectangle, trapezium, or oval for the torso, with a neck connecting to the head. For the arms, they are directed to draw two straight lines extending from the body, then add simple triangle shapes to represent the fingers, following the legs by extending two lines downward and using rounded shapes or ovals for the feet. Lastly, the learners will add details by pointing out more meticulous characteristics of the model, such as accessories, patterns, and so on, finalized by coloring the illustration using acrylic paints, which is a more flexible step and prioritizes more on the learners's imagination and creativity. Each learners have their own freedom in choosing colors and decorating their drawings.

As seen in Figure 2, some learners decided to draw a different figure as they were not quite satisfied with the earlier results and drew the new illustration by repeating the same steps that were instructed in the previous exercise. Most of the learners chose colors according to the portrait they tried to cartoonized, while some used whatever they perceived as suitable,

empowering their decision-making ability and creating a unique color combination. In addition, although they color the illustration patiently, some learners have difficulties in their soft motoric skills, creating wriggling or rough edges and unbalanced paint spread.

Figure 2: Cartoonization Final Results

Based on the above discussion, it can be seen that the children's ability to interpret the same instructions in different ways is a prime example of problem-solving and divergent thinking, deemed as a good way to foster uniqueness in visual language, a reflection of their individuality, which is a valuable skill in creative fields and a potential asset for commercial purposes. In addition, teaching cartoonization using a participatory approach to community members provides valuable insights into creative instruction. It fosters an understanding of how diverse individuals interpret and express visual concepts, highlighting the importance of personalized guidance, and promoting constructive communication within the community. Learners tend to be happier, relaxed, less pressured, active, and motivated to interact more with their peers. They also learn to communicate their thoughts and compromise with the tutors and caretakers related to their ideas and visions, hence producing a more engaging environment and nurturing personal connection.

Conclusion

Cartoonization in a Participatory Learning environment affects intellectually disabled learners' creative process, indicating its differentiation and how their individual interpretations of a given task can lead to unique and marketable artistic outcomes, offering opportunities in the creative industry, such as merchandising. By embracing their individuality, these learners can gain confidence, develop artistic skills, and potentially achieve economic independence, contributing uniquely to the creative economy and expanding their career prospects. Unfortunately, due to PLA's time-consuming methods, there are some research tools that are yet to be applied, consequently, this research may lack quantitative data that could help in creating more comprehensive results. PLA methods also propose that PLA works better if facilitated by multi-disciplinary teams, therefore it is

advised to include people with different skills so that different viewpoints are recognized. Future research suggested a thorough visual language interpretation of the final cartoonization artworks.

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"Dao" and "Brahman": A Brief Comparison of Cultivation Beliefs in China and India

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Abstract

The highest category in Chinese philosophy is DAO, while in Indian philosophy, it is BRAHMAN. Belonging to Eastern thought, there is a certain consistency in the concepts of cultivation in China and India: since Plato, the Western philosophical tradition has been enthusiastic about the pursuit of BEING; in contrast, the concept of DAO in Chinese philosophy and the concept of BRAHMAN in Indian philosophy both embody the Eastern emphasis on BECOMING. The goal of Chinese cultural cultivation is "harmony between heaven and man", or "harmony between Tao and man", while in India, it is "union of Brahman and self". To achieve their respective goals, Indian culture uses YOGA as its primary practice, while Chinese culture has developed QIGONG. These cultural elements are distinct from the West world. However, the developing directions of Chinese and Indian cultures also differ significantly. From a morphological perspective, BRAHMAN is associated with GROWTH, while DAO is associated with WALKING. It is important to emphasize that the original meaning of the word DAO is simply ROAD (as a noun), and later it acquired the meaning of WALKING (as a verb). Therefore, we can consider that the characteristic of Chinese philosophy emphasizes "walking in the world, developing in motion", while the characteristic of Indian philosophy is "transcending the human world, reaching towards the higher world". Chinese philosophy and Indian philosophy are two major representatives of Eastern philosophy. In contrast to the philosophical tradition of ancient Greece, they both emphasize practice and realization while downplaying argumentation and reasoning.

Keywords: Dao, Brahman, Cultivation Beliefs, Yoga, Qigong

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Introduction

For Westerners, "Dao" and "Brahman" are two abstract and mysterious concepts from Eastern culture. For many Chinese people, however, due to the elusive nature of "Brahman", they tend to regard it as a concept on par with "Dao". This simplistic comparison may lead to overlooking the differences between "Dao" and "Brahman". Clearly, these two concepts have different connotations. More importantly, due to the differing understandings of "the highest existence" in Chinese and Indian cultures, they also have different thoughts and methods regarding the practice of spirituality.

What is "Dao"?

In the Chinese language, "Dao" is a concept with very rich connotations: it can function as both a noun and a verb; it can refer to concrete objects as well as abstract concepts. This is a concept that is difficult to be translated into Western languages. On the other hand, many ordinary Chinese people may not fully understand its most fundamental meaning.

In fact, the original meaning of "Dao" is "road" or "path". In today's Chinese characters, this word consists of two parts: one part represents walking, while the other part represents a person's head. We cannot definitively determine whether the original meaning of this character is related to "head", but it is undoubtedly connected to "walking". Clearly, the concept of "Dao" as "road" is very concrete, and initially, it did not carry any religious or philosophical connotations. For example, in the *Analects*, there is a phrase "任重而道遠", where "道遠" refers to "the long journey". In the *I Ching*, there is a line that says "履道坦坦", meaning "the path is broad and smooth". In both of these examples, "Dao" simply refers to "road", without any abstract meaning. In these instances, "Dao" can refer to both "the path a person walks" and "the course of flowing water".

Additionally, in ancient Chinese, "Dao" has two verb usages: first, "Dao" can mean "to guide", a meaning derived from its association with "road"; second, "Dao" can also mean "to express" or "to narrate". Since both "walking" and "expressing" are process-oriented actions, "Dao" can be used not only to indicate "physical movement" but also to signify "the act of verbal communication".

By the Spring and Autumn period, the Chinese began to refer to the orbits of stars as "Tian dao" (the Way of Stars) and the principles governing human activities as "Ren dao" (the Way of Humanity). In this way, "Dao" evolved from its original meaning of "the path of walking" to encompass meanings such as "orbit" and "principle". The connotations of orbit and principle involve the rules of change in things, leading to the emergence of philosophical significance in the concept of "Dao" (Wang, 1987).

During the pre-Qin period, Daoism was the school that discussed "Dao" the most, which is why it derives its name from this concept. However, it is important to note that "Dao" is not exclusive to Daoism; in Confucian thought, "Dao" also occupies the highest level. For early Confucians, represented by Confucius, their starting point was "Li" (ritual propriety), and their core idea was "Ren" (benevolence). While "Dao" can be regarded as "the highest existence", it was not the concept most frequently discussed by early Confucians. This began to change only after the transformation of Confucianism during the Song Dynasty.Confucius stated in the *Analects*, "To hear the Dao in the morning is enough; I could die in the evening."

In this statement, "Dao" refers to "the highest truth". However, during the pre-Qin period, Confucian scholars tended to focus on tangible aspects of the world, such as how to govern society and improve interpersonal relationships, rather than discussing transcendent existence extensively. As a result, discussions of "Dao" among pre-Qin Confucians were relatively limited. This may lead to some misunderstandings, but historically, "Dao" has never been a concept monopolized by Daoism.

Buddhism is an external religion, and it originally did not have the concept of "Dao". However, during the development of Buddhism in China, translators, in order to help followers better understand Buddhism, awkwardly translated certain concepts from Indian thought into "Dao". For example, the concepts of "Bodhi" and "Nirvana" were difficult for ancient Chinese people to comprehend, so ancient translators directly translated them as "Dao". In Buddhist thought, the term "Bodhi" is closer to "awakening" or "wisdom", making its translation as "Dao" clearly inappropriate. "Nirvana", on the other hand, originally means "extinguishment", and in Buddhism, it refers to a special state achieved after stopping the cycle of "rebirth", which also does not have a strong connection to the concept of "Dao" in Chinese culture.Later Buddhist scholars gradually recognized the errors in this translation. For instance, Master Kuiji expressed quite directly that "the ancient idea that Bodhi is Dao is incorrect". However, on one hand, this "incorrect" translation is not entirely undesirable, as it helped the Chinese accept Buddhism more quickly; on the other hand, certain Sinicized Buddhist sects, such as Zen Buddhism, favor the use of the concept of "Dao". This may be because Zen thought is closer to Daoist teachings (i.e., those of Laozi and Zhuangzi) and further away from ancient Indian thought. In fact, many Chinese Buddhist researchers believe that the frequent appearance of "Dao" in Chinese Buddhism may not necessarily relate to Indian culture; rather, it could be a borrowing from the thoughts of Laozi and Zhuangzi by Chinese Buddhists (Li, 2015).

Chinese scholars generally believe that by the Song Dynasty, the development of Chinese philosophy increasingly exhibited the characteristics of "convergence of Three Teachings". This means that after the Song Dynasty, Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism mutually absorbed and utilized each other, ultimately forming a situation where "you have me within you, and I have you within me". Among these, the transformation and development of Confucianism is particularly noteworthy. Specifically, the new Confucianism that emerged during the Song Dynasty was especially keen on discussing the concept of "Li" (principle), and in the tradition of Chinese philosophy, "Dao" and "Li" are two closely related concepts. Chinese thinkers typically regard "Dao" as the highest level of existence, while "Li" is a secondary level of existence; "Dao" is the more abstract "Li," and "Li" is the more concrete "Dao". Therefore, in the early stages of its development, "Li xue" was also commonly referred to as "Dao xue". We can also say that after the Song Dynasty, the core concept that Confucians focused on was no longer "Ren" (benevolence), which Confucius emphasized, but rather "Dao" or "Li", concepts that were not extensively addressed by pre-Qin Confucians. This shift is certainly related to the influence of Daoism and Buddhism on Confucianism. On the other hand, at the inception of Confucianism, "Dao" was regarded as "the highest truth", although early Confucians did not place much emphasis on this concept.

In summary, throughout the history of Chinese philosophy, Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism all have placed great importance on the concept of "Dao". Moreover, there is a consensus among "Three Teachings" that "Dao" represents the "highest existence" in Chinese philosophy. Clearly, in the context of Chinese philosophy, the status of "Dao" is akin to that of "being" in Western philosophy or "Brahman" in Indian philosophy.

What is "Brahman"?

If a person has not grown up in the soil of Indian culture, it may be difficult for him/her to fully understand the connotation of "Brahman". This presents a similar dilemma for both ancient and modern Chinese people. From the perspective of Chinese culture, we may only be able to simply understand it as "the highest existence", because there are almost no concepts in our culture that correspond to it. "Dao" and "Brahman" represent the "highest existence" in their respective cultures, and in this regard, they can indeed communicate. However, on the other hand, "Dao" and "Brahman" reflect the differing ways of thinking in Chinese and Indian cultures in various aspects. While they may be equivalent in status, they differ in many details.

Although Buddhism originated in India and, as a branch of Indian culture, has profoundly influenced Chinese culture, it is undeniable that Buddhism did not bring the concept of "Brahman" into Chinese philosophy. As a heterodox tradition within Indian religion, Buddhism's understanding of "Brahman" differs significantly from that of mainstream Indian religions. Moreover, it has never explicitly claimed that "Brahman" is the "highest existence".

We cannot claim that Buddhism represents the entire thinking of Indian people, nor can we assert how closely Chinese Buddhism is related to traditional Indian meditative thought. The key point is that Chinese Buddhism is a highly localized sect of Buddhism, and concepts that are difficult for the Chinese to understand have been filtered out by translators and practitioners. In this context, it becomes relatively challenging for Chinese people to grasp the meditative thinking of the Indian tradition.

For Indians, the goal of spiritual practice is to strive for unity with "Brahman". According to Indian thought, achieving this state allows one to transcend the cycle of rebirth. This way of thinking can be found throughout the Upanishads, which also provide methods for their spiritual practices, including yoga. However, it is important to note that the yoga described in the Upanishads differs significantly in form from the contemporary practice of yoga as a form of exercise.

According to the Indian populace, there are a total of 108 Upanishads; however, scholarly research indicates that many of these "Upanishads" are not strictly considered as such, and only thirteen are regarded as ancient and reliable. Upanishads emphasize two key concepts: "Brahman" and "Atman". The thought of the Upanishads posits that "Brahman" is the origin of the universe, while "Atman" is often synonymous with "Brahman". The Upanishads also assert that "the universe is Brahman, and Brahman is the true self." The goal of human spiritual practice is to realize that "I and Brahman are one", meaning that the soul of individual life and the essence of the universe are fundamentally the same. If one can achieve this realization, liberation can occur immediately in this life, rather than waiting until after death.This concept of "liberation" appears quite similar to the notion of "Nirvana" in Buddhism. We can also argue that the goal of Buddhist practice is not far removed from the state indicated by the Upanishads. However, Buddhists are generally reluctant to acknowledge the similarities between the two, which is why the Upanishads and mainstream Indian religious thought hold little significance in Chinese Buddhism.

In the thirteen Upanishads, according to my own research, at least five of them discuss yoga. The yoga described in these texts is not about physical postures but rather refers to a meditative practice. From the perspective of the authors of the Upanishads, yoga serves as a

method to help individuals achieve unity with "Brahman". This meditative activity is seen as a means to transcend the individual self and realize the oneness with the ultimate reality.

After the thirteen Upanishads, another significant text in Indian religious history emerged: the *Bhagavad Gita*. This work introduces three types of yoga, among which "Jnana Yoga"specifically explains the method of achieving unity with "Brahman". In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the divine instructs humanity that "Jnana Yoga" leads to liberation through the realization of the oneness of "Atman" and "Brahman".The divine states that yogis employ various methods; they do not become elated by the attractive qualities of external things, nor do they feel dejected by the unpleasant. They come to understand that "Brahman" is complete, flawless, and equivalent to all. By realizing this, they attain unity with "Brahman", transcending the cycle of rebirth and achieving eternal happiness.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the divine also presents necessary means for achieving this state. For instance, it advises humanity to strive for tranquility and to work towards overcoming emotional disturbances. Through a state of calmness, practitioners can gradually reach a condition of "desirelessness", which, in the eyes of the divine, signifies the preliminary achievement of "Jnana Yoga".As for the methods to attain tranquility, the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita* are largely consistent with those found in the Upanishads. The essence of this method involves first adjusting the body to a proper state—stable and still. Following this, the practitioner uses their mind to control their senses, ensuring that the various sensory perceptions are not disturbed by external objects. At the same time, one must manage various thoughts, leading to a diminishing of desires. In this way, the practitioner's mind can ignite the spark of wisdom, much like a convex lens igniting a match, allowing "Brahman" to manifest. This process embodies the essence of "Jnana Yoga".

Regarding the concepts of "Brahman" and "yoga", Buddhism and mainstream Indian religions have different understandings. Buddhism does not emphasize yoga in the same way; however, its meditation practices can be viewed as a form of "Buddhist yoga". In Buddhism, "Brahman" is not considered a "Supreme Being", which distinguishes it from mainstream Indian religions and also from traditional Chinese thought. In brief, I personally believe that the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama do not recognize a supreme existence akin to "Brahman". However, in the later development of Buddhism, many sects introduced concepts that can serve as substitutes for "Brahman". In this sense, they somewhat diverged from the original teachings of the Buddha.Chinese Buddhism, particularly represented by Zen, appears to be quite unique. While it may stray further from the original thoughts of Siddhartha Gautama, it has also been influenced by early Buddhist ideas. Of course, my perspective is not based on any particular religious belief.

A Comparison of "Dao" and "Brahman"

We can assert that the concepts of "Dao" and "Brahman" embody two different tendencies pursued by Chinese and Indian philosophies, respectively. In this context, we need to pay attention to two aspects: on one hand, as Eastern philosophies, both Chinese and Indian thought present characteristics that are distinctly different from Western (particularly ancient Greek) thinking. On the other hand, it is crucial to emphasize the clear distinctions between Chinese thought (Dao) and Indian thought (Brahman). These differences can be interpreted through their unique ways of character construction. We will discuss this issue in the last section, where I will utilize the differences in character/word formation to explain the varying

concepts of practice in Chinese and Indian philosophies. In this section, I will first attempt to compare the differences between Eastern and Western philosophies.

As we all know, the mainstream tradition of Western philosophy was founded by Plato. However, in this regard, history seems to have played a small joke on us. In Greek, the term "philosophy" literally means "love of wisdom". In its original sense, "wisdom" is something that is constantly changing, and any activity can produce "wisdom", meaning that "wisdom" is not necessarily a systematized "thought". Unfortunately, almost simultaneously with the emergence of the term "philosophy", the Greeks confused "wisdom" with "universal knowledge". As a result, although philosophy nominally remains a discipline of "loving wisdom", it has gradually transformed into a discipline of "pursuing knowledge". This shift has led Western philosophy to increasingly focus on the accumulation of knowledge and the construction of theories, while neglecting the dynamic and practical nature of wisdom. This phenomenon has, to some extent, influenced the direction of Western philosophy, creating significant differences between it and Eastern philosophy, particularly the thinking patterns found in Chinese philosophy.

This cannot be regarded as a "mistake" on the part of Western thinkers, as the reason lies in the fact that "wisdom" often exists in a state of "concealment". One can "sense" its presence, but it is difficult to express it clearly in words or thoughts. Therefore, the question of "what exactly is wisdom" is almost one without an answer. Fundamentally, "knowledge" and "wisdom" are different: "knowledge" is relatively fixed and concrete, capable of being clearly articulated, while "wisdom" itself cannot be expressed through language. Wisdom can manifest as "knowledge", but it is not "knowledge" itself. We can have "knowledge about wisdom", but "knowledge about wisdom" is merely a form of "knowledge"; it does not equate to "wisdom itself".

The ancient Greeks equated the "love of wisdom" with philosophy, which indicates that from the very beginning, they recognized the distinction between "wisdom" and "knowledge". It is said that "in their language, episteme denotes knowledge, while sophia and phronesis represent wisdom." Furthermore, Plato even expressed that "wisdom... is, in any case, related to movement." We can sense that the ancient Greeks may have had a distinction between "knowledge" and "wisdom": "wisdom" is concealed and elusive, while "knowledge" serves as something that reveals or provides a pathway to "wisdom". This nuanced understanding reflects their deeper philosophical inquiry into the nature of these concepts and their interrelationship (Yu, 2005).

Plato believed that the goal of philosophers is wisdom; however, due to the elusive nature of "wisdom" itself, he inevitably equated "wisdom" with "knowledge" in his writings. Aristotle continued Plato's line of thought and further categorized "knowledge" into different levels, thus transforming the essence of philosophy from "the love of wisdom" into "the pursuit of universal knowledge". This shift fundamentally shaped the basic form of Western philosophy. It is well-known that the core of Western philosophy is ontology, which is the study of Being. Undoubtedly, this represents a form of "static knowledge", rather than "dynamic wisdom". This distinction highlights a significant divergence between Western philosophical inquiry and the more fluid and experiential understanding of wisdom often found in Eastern philosophies (Yu, 2005).

I agree with many Chinese scholars who argue that ontology is a unique aspect of Western philosophy. While there are also forms of "first philosophy" in Chinese and Indian

philosophy, these do not manifest as ontology. The Chinese and Indians are not particularly enthusiastic about exploring Being; instead, they are more concerned with the dynamic nature of Becoming.

I do not wish to judge the merits of Eastern versus Western philosophy. However, the Western philosophical tradition since Plato has been keen on exploring Being, which may have significant implications for the development of Western culture. In the history of Chinese philosophy, there is a prominent slogan "knowledge and action should be unified" which emphasizes that knowledge should serve the purpose of practice, suggesting that independent knowledge holds little value. In contrast, such an attitude may not be a consensus in Western culture. If Platonic thinkers are pursuing "static knowledge", how do they confront this "moving" world? Clearly, Western thinkers require some form of strength to help them navigate reality, and this strength is difficult to derive from "static knowledge". Consequently, throughout Western history, philosophy and religion have become two mutually supportive yet relatively independent systems. They function like two legs helping individuals move forward, with philosophy addressing the problem of "knowledge" and religion addressing the problem of "action". Religion, centered around faith, does not prioritize the pursuit of knowledge as its highest aim, while philosophy focuses on the quest for knowledge but leaves a space for faith. At least on the surface, it appears that the two can coexist without interfering with one another. This dynamic reflects a complex interplay between the pursuit of knowledge and the need for practical guidance in the lives of individuals within Western culture.

In the Eastern world, however, such a situation does not exist. If we are sufficiently familiar with Eastern culture, we can easily observe that Eastern philosophy and religion are often difficult to distinguish. When discussing Confucianism, it can be challenging to determine whether it is primarily a philosophy or a religion. Returning to the differences between Eastern and Western cultures, the pursuit of Eastern philosophy (and religion) is not about "static knowledge"; its fundamental aim is "cultivation" or "practice". Whether in Chinese philosophy or Indian philosophy, both share a commonality in contrast to Western philosophy: individuals must engage in continuous self-cultivation throughout the process of seeking knowledge. The ideal person is not merely a scholar rich in knowledge but someone who embodies transcendence. A transcendent person may not necessarily possess extensive "static knowledge", but they certainly possess "wisdom".

In summary, Eastern philosophy (and religion) pursues a form of "dynamic wisdom", which determines that in Eastern culture, philosophy and religion cannot exist as entirely separate domains. Throughout Chinese cultural history, scholars have held varying views on the relationship between "knowledge" and "action", but there is a consensus that "knowledge" and "action" are inherently interconnected and cannot be divided.

Cultivation Beliefs of Chinese and Indian People

We can basically say that any civilization has some kind of pursuit of "transcendence", but Eastern and Western cultures have different understandings of "how to achieve transcendence". According to many Chinese scholars, the transcendence pursued by Western culture is an "external transcendence", while the transcendence pursued by Chinese culture is an "internal transcendence". In this regard, we can consider that Indian culture is similar to Chinese culture. That is to say, both Indians and Chinese tend to believe that a person can seek a connection with the divine through their own efforts, and that a person can realize their

transcendent aspirations from within themselves; whereas Westerners need to first acknowledge an "external" God, and then rely on His power to be liberated from suffering. Of course, our judgment of Western culture may seem somewhat simplistic and arbitrary; in reality, the mystical currents within Western religions may also have tendencies toward "internal transcendence". However, this issue is not of great significance; we can generally confirm that both Chinese philosophy and Indian philosophy belong to the category of philosophies that pursue "internal transcendence".

Western religions have a tradition of "expecting a savior", especially for grassroots believers, where an "external" God is very important, and they entrust their ultimate happiness to this "external" God. However, in Eastern religions, well-educated followers generally have the awareness that only you can save yourself, meaning that you must establish a connection with the divine through your own efforts, and that the "sacred existence" is originally one with mortals, or at least, they may potentially be one. This kind of belief is relatively common among both Chinese and Indian people. So, within Eastern culture, are there several differences between China and India? How do we understand these differences? Below, this article will attempt to clarify the different connotations of "Brahman" and "Dao" from the perspective of word formation, and on this basis, I will strive to explain what the differences are in the concepts of practice between China and India.

From the perspective of word formation, "Brahman" is derived from the Sanskrit word "Brih", which means "to grow". (Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1989) We can associate the dual connotation of "Brahman": first, it is related to movement; "Brahman" is associated with Becoming rather than Being, which distinguishes this concept from Western philosophical concepts. Second, since "Brahman" develops from the meaning of "growth", if humanity seeks to connect with Brahman, their efforts may be directed vertically rather than horizontally.

If we compare "Dao" and "Brahman", we arrive at an interesting conclusion: "Dao" is related to "walking", so the Chinese pursuit of "Dao" unfolds on a horizontal plane. To be more specific, when Chinese people pursue "transcendence", they cannot disregard the human world. In contrast, "Brahman" is related to "growth", so the Indian pursuit of "Brahman" resembles an elevation in a vertical direction. This is reflected in reality, as Indian practitioners throughout history have tended to leave their families, viewing various worldly matters merely as shackles and bonds, without any substantial meaning.

For the Chinese, the Indian attitude towards the worldly life is difficult to accept. This is precisely why Indian Buddhism faced significant resistance when it first entered China, as it required practitioners to leave their families and shave their heads. For the Chinese, shaving one's head and leaving one's family are seen as disrespectful to Confucian ideals. Confucianism has a characteristic focus on human relationships; while it also emphasizes the importance of "transcendence", the "transcendence" pursued by Confucianism is always based on interpersonal relationships. In other words, according to Confucian ideals, a person must first manage their relationships with others and become a moral exemplar through this process before they can achieve transcendence over the worldly life. Clearly, this way of thinking is quite different from Indian traditions. However, even after Buddhism "conquered" China, this concept within Chinese culture did not change. Even the Zen patriarch Huineng expressed in his writings: "If you leave the world to pursue enlightenment, you will ultimately gain nothing".

In my view, the excessive emphasis on worldly affairs in Chinese culture is one reason why yoga did not gain popularity in ancient China. For ancient Chinese people, the most important practice was "Qigong". Literally, "Qigong" refers to practitioners using certain techniques to achieve a form of communication between the "qi" within themselves and the "qi" of the external world. Clearly, the "qi" here belongs to the worldly realm. In terms of form, Yoga and Qigong have some similarities, but their underlying philosophies are completely different. As a term, "yoga" fundamentally means connection, primarily referring to the connection between the practitioner and the "Supreme Being", which in this context refers to "Brahman" (Wen, 2018). In simple terms, "Yoga" seeks connection, while "Qigong" seeks communication. These two practices reflect the different understandings that Chinese and Indian people have regarding the concept of the "Supreme Being" within their cultures.

Conclusion

Chinese people understand the "Supreme Being" as "Dao", while Indians interpret it as "Brahman". Based on these different understandings, practitioners in China and India exhibit distinct styles of practice. The Chinese pursuit of "Dao" resembles a form of "horizontal movement", as they will not abandon their attachment to worldly matters (perhaps only Zhuangzi is an exception). In contrast, the Indian pursuit of "Brahman" resembles a form of "vertical transcendence", where they aspire to establish a connection with a higher existence. We can also appreciate the differences in their styles of practice through two common forms of practice in China and India. The most common ancient Chinese practice is "Qigong", where "qi" exists in the human world or Nature, and concepts like "Brahman", which are ethereal and abstract, do not appear in Qigong. On the other hand, the most common form of practice in India is yoga, which fundamentally refers to the connection between the individual and Brahman. This concept has almost never existed in traditional Chinese practices, and Chinese people are generally reluctant to accept such an idea.

Acknowledgments

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The Socio-Environmental Impact of Angklung Paglak as Cultural Artifacts in Agriculture in Kemiren Village, Banyuwangi, East Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

This research examines the role of agriculture in shaping human civilization, focusing on Indonesia as an agrarian nation. Centering on Angklung Paglak, a bamboo musical instrument from Banyuwangi, East Java, performed atop bamboo towers to celebrate the rice harvest, the study uncovers the complex indigenous knowledge linked to this practice. Angklung Paglak embodies traditional agricultural wisdom and significantly impacts local life. Despite being tacit and often overlooked in the modern era, this knowledge holds potential for addressing contemporary socio-environmental challenges. This study uses the Research about Design approach, integrating historical, perceptual, and theoretical analyses to explore normative design applications. Data collection employs the 'designing a living' strategy, focusing on ethnographic observations and interviews from 2021 to 2024, to examine the relationship between Angklung Paglak, local agriculture, and indigenous lifestyles. The analysis identifies relationships between *mono-koto-imi* (things-activity-value) aspects to elucidate Angklung Paglak's role in the community. The findings reveal that Angklung Paglak offers valuable techniques and wisdom of traditional agriculture in Kemiren Village. This research underscores the strong spiritual and philosophical aspects of this cultural artifact, highlighting its role in expressing local people's happiness and gratitude for abundant crops. Angklung Paglak exemplifies community involvement and proactive environmental engagement, linking strategies, and social structures that adapt to environmental dynamics. The study concludes that future sustainability solutions may be rooted in Angklung Paglak practices and emphasizes the importance of preserving and integrating such indigenous knowledge into contemporary socio-environmental strategies.

Keywords: Angklung Paglak, Indigenous Design, Designing Living, Agriculture, Musical Performance

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1. Introduction

Indonesia, with its tropical climate and largely agrarian society, relies deeply on agriculture as a cornerstone of daily life. Rice cultivation, especially prominent in Java and Bali, is the backbone of Indonesian agricultural practices, shaping the rhythm of life in these regions. The rice farming cycle, which repeats two to three times a year, drives local social and cultural structures as it moves through stages: from transplanting seeds, nurturing growing crops, to harvesting, burning, and resetting fields, followed by soil preparation for the next planting (Watson & Davis, 2020). This agricultural cycle not only sustains the economy but also nurtures a robust traditional culture that evolves alongside it.

In response to this cycle, communities have developed rich traditions, including seasonal festivals, indigenous knowledge systems, social structures, and artistry that celebrate and honor the agricultural process. One of the most prominent cultural expressions is the use of the *angklung*, a bamboo instrument traditionally played to pray for fertility and a bountiful harvest (Joyodiharjo et al, 2020). The instrument produces resonant pitches and symbolizes the agrarian harmony of land and community. Historically rooted as far back as the 7th century, the angklung has been integral to rituals honoring Dewi Sri, the goddess of rice, fertility, and prosperity in Hindu (Joyodiharjo et al, 2020).

Across Indonesia's diverse archipelago, variations of angklung have developed, each with unique regional characteristics. In Banyuwangi, East Java, Angklung Paglak is emblematic of Kemiren Village, inhabited by the Osing, the indigenous people of Banyuwangi. This study focuses on Angklung Paglak's role in Kemiren, where it embodies the socio-environmental values and cultural traditions linked to the local agricultural cycle.

1.1 Research Focus and Methodology

This research focuses exclusively on Angklung Paglak (Figure 1) as a cultural and agricultural artifact in Kemiren Village, Banyuwangi Regency, East Java. Angklung Paglak is a unique musical performance featuring angklung instruments played atop bamboo towers standing 5 to 10 meters tall in the middle of rice fields (Utomo et al, 2018). Performed during the rice harvest season, it serves both as an expression of gratitude for the harvest and a way to gather and entertain farmers working in the fields from morning until dusk. With the rise of modern farming, Angklung Paglak is increasingly rare, yet it represents valuable knowledge and values from the past that may offer insights for future generations.
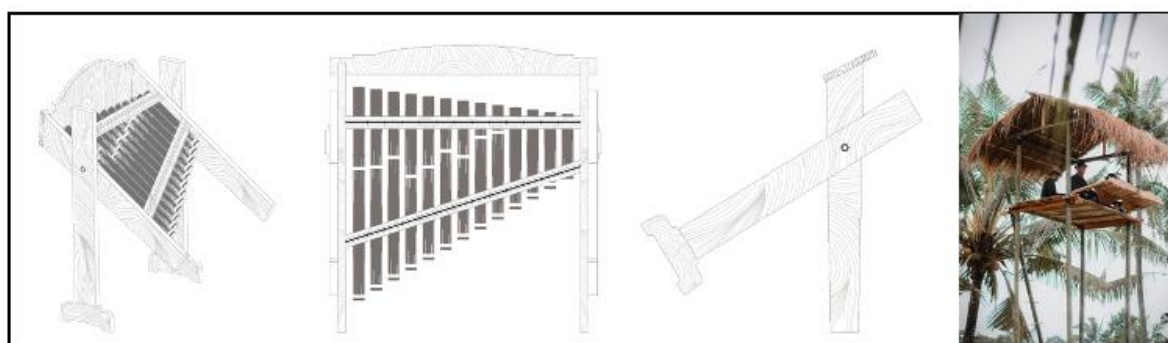

Figure 1: Isometric View, Top View, Side View of Angklung and
Angklung Paglak Performance

The aim of this study is to uncover the indigenous knowledge embedded in Angklung Paglak and examine its socio-environmental impact within the community. This research adopts a design research perspective, positioning Angklung Paglak as an indigenous artifact—an object created and designed by local human experience. As a foundational step in design research, this study is exploratory, seeking to understand the artifact deeply through ethnographic methods and a Research about Design[1] approach (Frankel & Rachine, 2010). This ethnographic inquiry, conducted through participant observation and interviews, investigates the cultural artifact's enduring impact on local life, sustainability practices, and social structures in Kemiren Village.

1.2 Data Collection Process

Data collection was conducted from 2021 to 2024, using a design ethnography approach involving observations and in-depth interviews (Muller, 2020). *Snowball sampling* (Goodman, 1961) were adapted for interviews with local residents, allowing each participant to refer additional informants closely tied to the topic. Observations were also conducted to validate and deepen insights from interviews.

The objective was to understand local traditions, cultural practices, community dynamics, and environmental interactions. Data collection methods included location surveys, stakeholder interviews, community observations, social gatherings, immersion in community life, and activity-based experiments (Figure 2). These techniques provided a holistic view of the community's engagement with Angklung Paglak and its broader socio-environmental context.

Figure 2: Data Collection

2. Research Findings and Discussion

The research findings reveal three key aspects of Angklung Paglak that illuminate its significance within the socio-environmental and cultural framework of Kemiren Village.

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[1] Preliminary research in design which focuses on theory and epistemology. This research area includes history of design, aesthetics and design theory, as well as the analysis of design activity.

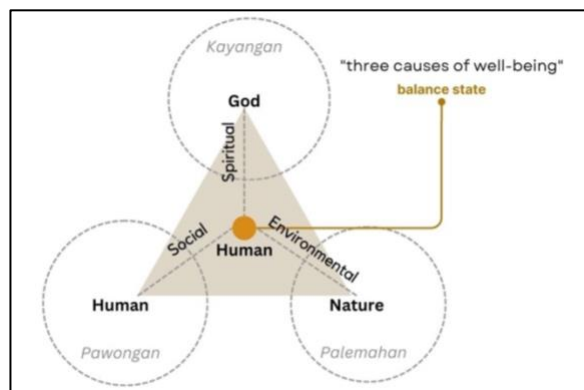## 2.1 Local Philosophy of Tri Hita Karana

Figure 3: The Concept of *Tri Hita Karana*

The people of Kemiren are deeply guided by the philosophy of *Tri Hita Karana* (Figure 3), an ancient Hindu concept meaning "three causes of well-being" (Khrisna, 2008). This philosophy emphasizes the need for harmony between humans and the divine (spiritual), humans and nature (environmental), and humans and each other (social). Despite the community's shift away from Hinduism, this philosophy has persisted through generations, becoming a core part of the local cultural identity. This worldview shapes their agricultural and cultural practices, fostering a balance that is essential for both societal and environmental harmony.

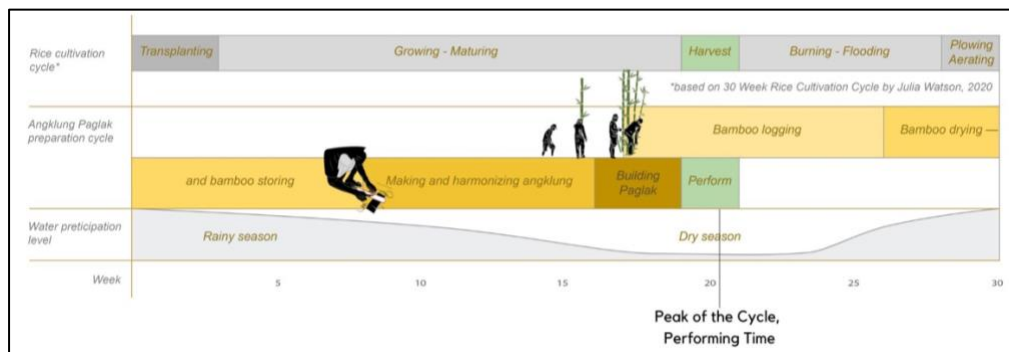## 2.2 Synergized Agricultural Cycle and Local Taboos

Figure 4: Synchronization of Angklung Paglak Craftsmanship and Rice Cultivation Cycle

The craftsmanship of Angklung Paglak is tightly interwoven with the agricultural cycle, aligning with each phase from bamboo cultivation to instrument construction and ultimately to performance during the rice harvest. Local artisans begin gathering and preparing bamboo while the rice crops grow, culminating in performances during harvest—a season of communal hope and gratitude for abundant crops. This cycle is upheld by a community-wide collaboration where each person plays a role; men typically handle the physical aspects of construction, while women support by preparing food and other essentials. Local taboos also regulate bamboo harvesting, which is allowed only on *Pahing* day—specific days in the Javanese calendar when bamboo is believed to become "bitter" and less susceptible to pests (Utomo et al, 2018). Additionally, logging is avoided from December to February, when bamboo is believed to be "nurturing" new shoots. These beliefs preserve bamboo resources, ensuring sustainable use over time.

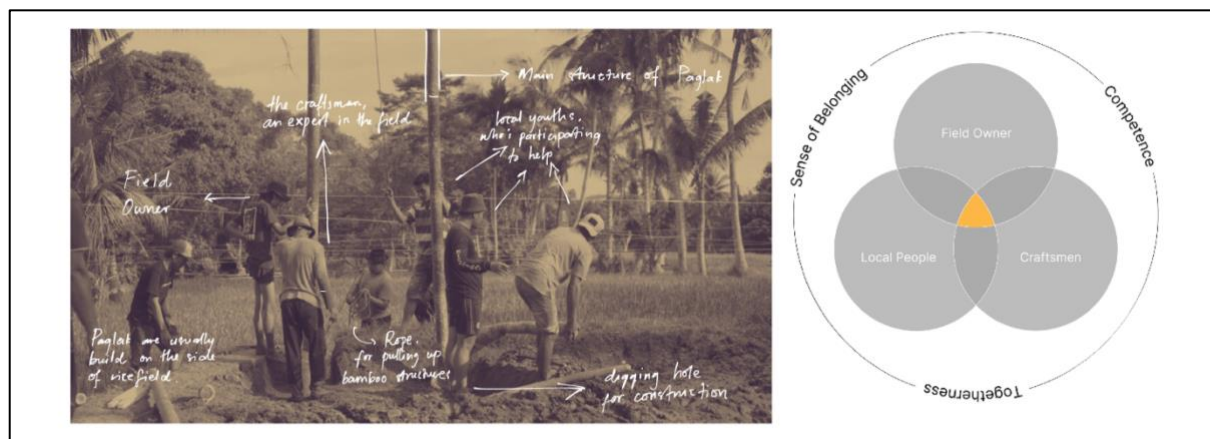## 2.3 Community Involvement and Environmental Engagement

Figure 5: Social Role and Proactive Community Efforts

Angklung Paglak embodies a deeply collaborative practice that reinforces community ties and collective environmental responsibility. Every aspect of its production and performance involves diverse community members—experts and non-experts, men and women, adults and children. While women often support by providing meals, men engage directly in the construction and performance. This shared responsibility cultivates a sense of belonging, competence, and togetherness, uniting the community around a common cultural purpose. Three primary social roles drive this involvement: the field owners, local residents, and the craftsmen, each contributing uniquely to the success of Angklung Paglak. This inclusive structure strengthens social cohesion and fosters a proactive approach to sustaining both cultural and environmental resources.

2.4 Designing Living Concept

The concept of *Designing a Living* or the *Mono-Koto-Imi* framework (Figure 6) offers a useful perspective for analyzing Angklung Paglak and its role in shaping community life. Originating from Japanese terms, "mono" (thing), "koto" (activity), and "imi" (meaning), this framework suggests that an artifact within a community can "design" or significantly influence the daily lives of those who engage with it regularly (Suzuki and Miyazaki, 2007).
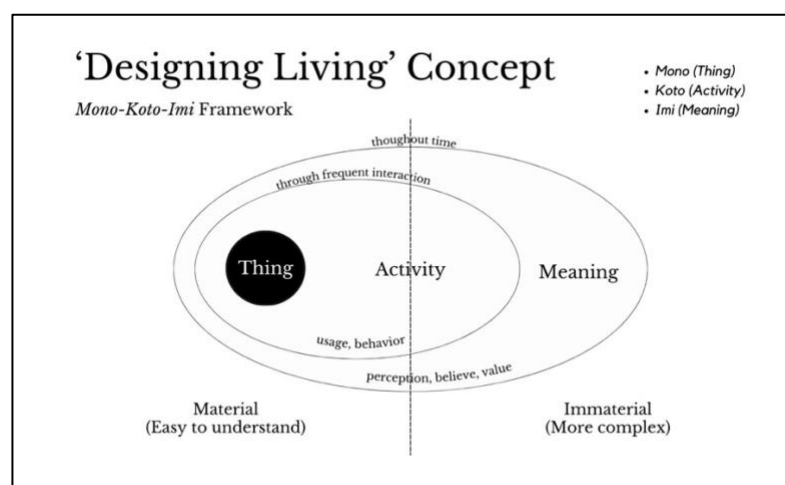

Figure 6: Designing Living Concept

Unlike contemporary human behavior design, where artifacts often shape isolated behaviors or activities, traditional artifacts such as Angklung Paglak embody deeper, enduring values. Their function within a tradition creates not just actions but a cohesive cultural identity, fostering a strong, intergenerational bond among community members. This framework aligns well with this research, as it enables an artifact-centered approach to exploring the interactions and behaviors that arise from continuous engagement with the artifact. Over time, the repeated use and communal experience of Angklung Paglak foster layers of meaning that contribute to the cultural and social structure of Kemiren Village. Through this process, Angklung Paglak transcends its role as a mere musical instrument, becoming an influential component of the community's socio-environment.

2.5 Indigenous Knowledge of Angklung Paglak for Modern Challenge

Traditional practices like Angklung Paglak provide valuable solutions to modern environmental and social challenges by fostering ecological balance, community unity, and sustainable resource management. First, through *Ecological Balance and Sustainable Resource Management*, the practice of harvesting bamboo for Angklung Paglak is guided by local taboos and agricultural cycles. For instance, bamboo is harvested only on specific days, like Pahing, when it is believed to be bitter and pest-resistant. This approach prevents over-harvesting, promotes sustainable bamboo growth, and reduces ecological disruption, showing how traditional knowledge aids in sustainable resource use.

Second, *Community Unity and Social Cohesion* are reinforced during Angklung Paglak performances, which bring the community together to celebrate and express gratitude for the rice harvest. This fosters social cohesion and a collective sense of responsibility, building resilience and strengthening social support networks vital for handling environmental or economic challenges. Finally, the *Integration of Indigenous Knowledge in Modern Agriculture* allows Angklung Paglak practices to guide the agricultural calendar, aligning planting, harvesting, and resource use with environmental rhythms. This approach offers a model for incorporating indigenous knowledge into modern farming, supporting culturally adaptive and ecologically sound agricultural practices.

3. Conclusion

Through this research, findings reveal Angklung Paglak as a profound example of how spiritual beliefs, communal traditions, and agricultural knowledge intersect to create a sustainable cultural system. These practices not only support ecological harmony but also strengthen social bonds, illustrating a deeply integrated approach to sustainability. Recognizing and preserving this traditional knowledge offers valuable insights for addressing today's environmental and social challenges. By adapting these lessons, we can incorporate a holistic, community-centered perspective into modern socio-environmental strategies, demonstrating that traditional wisdom remains a relevant and impactful resource for contemporary sustainability efforts.

Acknowledgements

knowledge of Angklung Paglak until the end of his life. I am deeply grateful to Mas Edi, Mas Pani, Mas Rio, and the Pokdarwis Kemiren team for their invaluable assistance in data collection during my field research. Their insights and contributions have been essential to this study.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

In the preparation of this manuscript, generative AI and AI-assisted technologies were utilized to enhance language clarity and readability. These tools were employed solely to refine the text and did not contribute to the generation of substantive content, interpretation, or conclusions presented.

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The Enigma of the Recurring "Bodies" From Si Spencer's Adaptation

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Abstract

Finding forensic science analogically revealing of conceptual or textual analysis, this paper investigates (punned intended) the concept of movement as enunciated by Yuk Hui's *Recursivity and Contingency* by alluding to the extraordinary 2023 limited series created by Paul Tomalin, a titular adaptation of Si Spenser's 2015 graphic novel. The title does not merely remind us of the implied investigative procedural but more importantly the notion of *habeas corpus* (the corpse as evidence of murder) upon which the law insists when putting homicidal cases on trial. Of key import are these research inquiries: what role does the enigmatic cadaver the four detectives discover at Whitechapel past, present and future play? How does Yuk Hui's 2019 *Recursivity and Contingency* which articulates the three movements of linearity and non-linearity (tracing the systemic development from the feedback of first-order cybernetics to the recursion of second-order cybernetics) permit the allegorical working through here of the anatomical recurrences of Gabriel Defoe? Significantly the Ariadne thread that tie the mystery within the four timelines of 1890, 1941, 2023 and 2053, this thesis asserts that Tomalin's 2023 *Bodies* figuratively reworks these mirror-like encounters (also the adaptive possibilities given by Spencer's 2015 version) to evoke not just the reflexivity necessitated by analytical thought (or detective work) but also the digital co-creation promised by Web 3.0 when aesthetically examined with cinematographic postulation. Thus the Deutsch particle mentioned is arguably underscored by the shared etymology of commute and communication, with paradigmatic emphasis shifting to the computation and communication implied by Tomalin's time machine, the Throat.

Keywords: System Science, Quantum Science, Si Spenser, Tomalin's 2023 Bodies, Graphic Novel and Allegory

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Introduction

Paul Tomalin's 2023 titular adaptation is not merely a science-fictional Netflix original series, premised on Si Spencer's 2015 graphic novel, *Bodies*; it arguably symbolises the pertinent issues of informational capitalism. It also testifies to the importance of what Yuk Hui states during his presentation at a conference entitled "Artificial Imagination", a notion of which graphic or animated productions are instances. Hui himself has questioned the title used for this conference which is further intensified here since artificial intelligence has now taken digital culture by storm, designed to not only relieve us of our tedious chores but also aid the enhancing of our retentive possibilities. If our imagination is of any use within contemporary culture, we need to heed Friedrich Schiller's three drives, understanding how significant these drives are: the first being the formal drive, buoyed by logical postulations and the second material drive which indicates the import of our five senses when considering lived experiences. The cultural productions mentioned are examples of what Schiller calls "play drives", fusions of his formal and material ones, one indicative of intelligibility and the other sensibility, a merger arguably going beyond that of the deductive or the inductive with the transductive operations and structures described by Gilbert Simondon's oeuvre. This means that we are not only dealing with logical reflections but also transcendental ones: notwithstanding the messianic or embodiment (aligned definitively with the contextual and material dimensions that exceed the body as a physiological entity) underpinnings of Gabriel Defoe's bodies appearing at four different timelines, this thesis does not refer to out-of-this-world experiences. These transcendental reflections, when read with system science, are what Niklas Luhmann calls second-order or third-order feedback, recursive exercises leading to resolutions and/or improvements, self or otherwise, via communication (the heuristics elaborated later), comparable to the Simondonian emphasis on the transindividual reception of information when transducing.

More scope is given here to Schiller's notion of "play" here by indicating that these ludic manifestations of culture are transductive operations of which Si Spenser's 2015 *Bodies* is one instance. It recursively alludes to the strange complementarity between system and quantum sciences, one arguably a macrocosmic reflection of the other, which inheres microcosmically at subatomic levels. These sciences are also comparably discussed here not only because of their supersession of classical sciences and metaphysical realities but also because quantum computation is the most advanced technological manifestation to date, foregrounding the much-anticipated superintelligence that will move us beyond the current obsession with artificial intelligence. When I was in Japan last year presenting at IAFOR Kyoto 2023 conference, there was another supposed conference participation scheduled on sciences where I was going to speak on the recurring motifs of M. C. Escher's artworks, interpreted via system science. The abstract was written with the word "recursion" as the unarticulated key concept. Sometime early this year Hui's oeuvre was chanced upon and, most unfortunately, he has already published a 2019 book entitled *Recursivity and Contingency*. While discovering many similarities between Yuk Hui's philosophical research on technology and mine, there is a key difference between our approaches to computation and system science. His is an ontological and epistemological take on advanced computational science and mine, an aesthetic approach to the ontological and epistemological issues evinced by this postindustrial epoch and read with quantum and system sciences. I have always been intrigued by the progressive and creative aspects of science-fiction, a genre considered low-brow rather than high-brow, and decided that my approach to system and computer science should be a science-fictional one, despite the fact that one reviewer, Jason Lariviere, of Hui's *The Existence of Digital Objects* thought that "it is to Hui's credit that his work does not refer

to science-fictional imaginaries to goose the already fraught convergence" (2017, 131). My approach which is premised on science-fiction could help uncover the secret core of both quantum and computational sciences, here a direct allusion to the Derridian trace, since Luhmann (the renowned sociologist on system science to whom most of the thinkers referred when discussing system science) refers to deconstruction as an interpretative approach similar to his version of system science. Finding the systemic science of forensics *analogically reflexive* of quantum science, and also analogically revealing of conceptual or textual analysis, this paper investigates (punned intended) the concept of movement as enunciated by Hui's 2019 *Recursivity and Contingency* with allusion to the extraordinary 2023 limited series created by Tomalin, a titular adaptation of Spenser's graphic novel. The title does not merely remind us of the implied investigative procedural but more importantly the *habeas corpus* (the corpse as evidence of murder) upon which the law insists when putting homicidal cases on trial. Of key import are not only these research inquiries posed during the conference participation: what role does the enigmatic cadaver the four detectives discover at Whitechapel past, present and future play? How does Hui's *Recursivity and Contingency* which articulates the three movements of linearity and non-linearity tracing the systemic development from the feedback of first-order cybernetics to the recursion of second-order cybernetics permit the allegorical working through here of the anatomical recurrences of Gabriel Defoe? More important to this paper on quantum physics are these questions: what can an aesthetic approach to the sciences inform us about the core of these factual approaches and how artistic productions allegorically signify quantum and general sciences? This thesis insists that Hui's *Recursivity and Contingen*cy engagement with the Hegelian spiral misses the point due to the fact that the linear and nonlinear moves within his discussion do not encapsulate the quantum notion of non-linearity. Circular moves are still considered linear especially if they move from point to point progressively. Non-linear moves require backward and forward temporal jumps that go beyond clock time. The dialectical conception of the arts and the sciences within the Hegelian framework becomes not just visibly significant but epochally as well, where media ecology increasingly impacts us socially, politically and economically. Moreover, it affirms Spenser's adaptation as an allegorical visual expression of quantum computation, bringing to the fore what is lacking within Hui's 2019 *Recursivity and Contingency.* Significantly the Ariadne thread that tie the mystery within the four timelines of 1890, 1941, 2023 and 2053, this thesis also asserts that Tomalin's 2023 *Bodies* figuratively reworks these mirror-like encounters (pointing too to the adaptive possibilities given by Spencer's 2015 version) to evoke not just the reflexivity necessitated by analytical thought (or detective work), predicated on system science and its significance to the sciences for which systemic elaborations are necessitated, but also the enhanced digital co-creation promised by Web 3.0 when aesthetically examined through cinematographic postulation. Thus the Deutsch particle (named after the renowned particle physicist, David Deutsch, whose reputation rests on his innovative introduction of quantum computation) mentioned is arguably underscored by the shared etymology of commute (significantly reminiscent of "change", "exchange" and "route") and communication (and, by extension, the enhanced interactivity of Web 2.0 that prepares us for the advent of Web 3.0), with paradigmatic emphasis shifting to the computation and communication (also the redirected focus on "transmission" and "exchange" with the inferred "changes") implied by Tomalin's time machine, the Throat.

The Throat as Organically Symbolic of Communication

The Throat, oddly named for a time machine (although not that strange if we examine its function in line with commute and commun(e)icate), is the device that allows Elias Mannix,

the villain, the ability not just to travel back to the end of the 19th century so as to ensure his progenitor's existence; its looping design (also metaphorical of the self-reflexivity of the autopoiesis of first-order cybernetics) via a four-way neutrino split, two ways backwards and two ways forwards, aids his elaborate scheming so that a brave new world can be forged. Reminiscent of the totalitarian aspects of Aldous Huxley's universe, the cultish KYAL actually indicates the motivating factor upon which the entire plot is founded. More about motivations later because what concern us now are the definitions of "contingency" that may have profound consequences to heuristics. These can be discerned when Hui elaborates these three moves that arguably found his discourse on recursivity and contingency but become insignificant due to the insufficient emphasis given to them: "*Linear mechanical movement* with predefined finality linearly chained to causalities… for which contingency means error… *Non-linear movement with predefined finality*… [and] [N]on-linear movement with auto-finality…" (2019, 13-14, emphasis mine). Hui's elaborations of these three movements describe contingency as either error or occurrences inviting alteration. And it is with these descriptions of motion that the notions of repeatability such as iteration, repetition and reiterability (iteration is repeatability without any distinctions; repetition incurs identity for each repeated element with different spatialisation and reiterability is a type of repetition that imbues the repeated element with distinctive qualities due to differing conditions or contexts) are provided further notations by the author. These moves premised on the dichotomous pairing of linearity and non-linearity and symmetry and asymmetry are important to this age of information, especially when Hui points out that, after the mid-twentieth century, the thinker, Martin Heidegger calls the advent of the cybernetic epoch the end of metaphysics. The significance of cybernetics manifests when the circularity of its reflexiveness erases the dichotomies previously mentioned with a monistic self-referentiality. He cites the Hegelian spiral that aptly describe a looping which integrates the other, an alterity collected *en route* (hopefully not assimilated because I have always found the use of the word "integration" masking assimilative or mis-appropriative efforts) and synthetically fused, signaling the new science of second-order or third-order systemic reflection. Whether adaptive (necessitated by the new conditions of informational capitalism) or adoptive (again the unprecedented technological advancements enabled by digitisation and convergence require progressive inculcation of novel approaches to communication and technology, both notable keywords of system science), one should refer to Hui's 2020 publication, "Machine and Ecology" for his discursive emphasis on the "dualism of critique" (2020, 54) with the intent of philosophy on "overcoming dualism" (2020, 55). I shall refer to Hui's comprehensive definitions of "adaptation" and "adoption" when elaborating the relations between machine and its ecology with reference to Ernst Haeckel's ecological conception: "…to show that the environment is not only that which selects according to its physicality … but also that which is selected and internalized by the living being. The first type of selection may be called *adaptation*, meaning that the living being has to adapt itself to the milieu according to the available resources and physical conditions; the second type of selection may be called *adoption*, meaning that the living being has to select and to construct contexts from what is available to it as means of survival" (2020, 56). Thus, curation is definitely the key to adaptive or adoptive endeavours, signaling to us its parallel importance to media ecology in the communicative and technological areas of codification and datafication which require selection as a key operation.

The speed and moves when communicating or commuting are mirrored by the positionality, speed and movement when discussing the measuring processes of quanta. The dead body of Defoe, as a particle physicist from 2053, which mysteriously appears at four different timelines, prompts the investigative procedurals of Alfred Hillinghead, Charles Whiteman,

Shahara Hasan and Iris Maplewood at Longharvest Lane of Whitechapel: the many world manifestation within the graphic novel encapsulates that which Hui's conceptions of iteration. repetition and reiterability have not considered: albeit sharing the same space, differing temporalities are of paramount import to the recontextualisation of the aforementioned legal procedurals. This defies his previous denotations of repeatability which are founded on space rather than time. Defoe's scientific discovery of the Deutsch particle too helps create the Throat, wherein his material insertion temporally fractures embodied wholeness with multiple duplications, allegorical of the uncanny presences that refract and pose gaps as noted by one reviewer of Tomalin's 2023 *Bodies* who complained about the many inconsistencies (one of which is the inexplicable existence of the Throat) found within the Netflix series. Particle physics insists that particles, which materialise when wave functions collapse, are constituted by 6 quarks and 3 pairs of coils. Photons, which are the focus here, are both waves and particles (now simply considered as quantum states but their previous classifications are crucial to our reading of Spencer's graphic novel) and one exists due to the collapse of the other. When particles interact via long distances, quantum field theory has it that superposition occurs. System science speaks of the "horizon" that frames systemic interactions on a macrocosmic level; quantum science gestures to the many worlds that occur offering the multiple ontological possibilities before the calculation of the Lorentz invariance collapses the many waves. Spenser's graphic novel shows superb dramaturgy with appropriate research into the concept of superposition within quantum field theory. The Throat, dispersing Defoe's bodies to four different timelines through the four-way neutrino split, exemplifies the four-dimensional approach of quantum with a particle splitting by virtue of the four temporal vectors, similarly calculated both ways. It is a four multiplied by four as quantitatively described by quantum field multiplication. Thus this superpositional split led to multiverses that are found within the same space of Longharvest Lane at Whitechapel but at the different timelines of 1890, 1941, 2023 and 2053. Tomalin's *Bodies* renders clear the surpassing of the linearity and layeredness of classical sciences (extrapolated by Sonia Livingstone and cited by Terry Flew's introduction to his 2014 *New Media*) and metaphysics with the contemporary moves given by quantum computation. If we are examining movements that are adapted to contemporary situations of unprecedented technological progress then the movements that really matter are not the ones aligned with Cartesian mechanism but that of the organismic (Hui's Stieglerian discussion of organology is noteworthy), entailing *possibly asymmetry and definitely non-linearity* (and this of course implies increased decentralisation rather than the unfortunate centralisation of Web 2.0 that saw the rise of big-tech monopolies). Web 3.0 further enhances the interactive possibilities given by Web 2.0 with emphasis on decentralisation (especially with the introduction of blockchain technology) and increased collaboration, moving beyond the post-ownership of participatory culture with the advent of Web 2.0 to a more commercial and self-possessive strand of the digital and informational economies obvious today. The addition of artificial intelligence to digitisation also means greater customisation and personalisation together with increased digital speed and search engine optimisation, a forward move to more profound psychic individuation of the Web 3.0 users embedded within informational capitalism. The three "R"s of this epoch are no longer recycle, reuse and reduce but resourcefulness, resilience and resolution with more attention given to the integration of encountered contingencies.

Contemporary societies akin to life itself imply the necessity of contingency; it is necessary not just for variability (Gregory Bateson's cybernetic foundation on difference contrasts Simondon's more harmonious take on disparation) but also innovation and creation. Instead of Hui's three movements, I shall propose four moves: first, a linear deterministic *telos*

(similar to Hui's take on processes that consider contingency encountered as error); second, linear non-deterministic *telos* (contingency integrated via cybernetic processes so as to ensure adaptation to an ever-changing environment); third, non-linear deterministic *telos* (contingency encountered and determined via a circular reflection and aligned with Hui's third movement) and, four, non-linear non-deterministic *telos* (a doubly contingent instantiation scientifically known as chaos that requires us to take that quantum leap of not just integration but *resourceful adoption of idea*s). Movements defined as linear deterministic *telos* and non-linear deterministic *telos* can be classified under Paul Cilliers's conception of "complication" within system science (also known as Cartesian mechanistic processes) whereas linear non-deterministic *telos* and non-linear non-deterministic *telos* are classified under his notion of "complexity": complex systems theory, whereby Bergsonian organismic processes (his famed *elan vital*) actually reign, a science of communication that sees communicative technology as extensions of man rather than mere tools distinct from man. The Throat, as filmically featured, is not merely a vocal metaphor but also a figure of quantum, giving centerstage the temporal movements associated with interactive expressions enabled by digitisation and media convergence, not merely indicating the significance of communication in an age of information but also the retentive and protentive possibilities of computation, comparable to the memorious backward and anticipatory forward moves of our streams of consciousness, which artificial intelligence may someday emulate, according to Katherine Hayles.

System's Organising Inorganic Shifting to Quantum's Codifying Strings

Communication with its attendant accompaniments of projections (protentions) and memories technologically retained (retentions) when read with system science, attests to the connective and informational values upon which social systems are based; these potentialities also point to the rational and memorious operators enabled by neurons recursively updating the neural and cybernetic networks. With the key concept of system science as *communication* and the major premise of quantum sciences being *interaction* (the quantum concept of entanglement significantly contributes to the interactivity of particles existing on various existential planes, each influencing the others), one needs to heed both Luhmann's and Albert's and Bathon's extrapolations of the interactivity of system and environment and the speed as well as direction of the wave flows that lead to the positionality of particles when calculated.

Besides the organising premise of system and quantum sciences, one extrapolated as the "organising inorganic" of advanced communication technology and the other the codifying interactivity of entangled particles, both scientific approaches examine the engagements made between elements or entities with their environments. Luhmann's and Albert's and Bathon's scientific discussions on system and quantum cohere ecologically with the figure and ground pairing of Gestalt psychology. This pairing instantiates the "ecological reciprocity" of Hayles's "Technosymbiosis", bringing to mind the harmonious disposition of ecological thought (as always a dichotomous fusion rather than tension) but also Hui's allusion to how the figure and ground co-exist at the beginning of his book. Hui clearly thinks that the material aspect of technology is the figure, while global culture is the ground. Notwithstanding the physicality of the virtual support, after Deleuze's concept of immanence, the latter's *ground of virtual or ideational possibilities* does more than bring to the fore the materiality of the technological body, again the symbolic significance of Defoe's cadaver; the Deleuzian ground of thousand plateaus is reminiscent of the quantum potentialities as described under "wave functions" wherein only one possibility becomes materialised as

particle when measured. This indicates additionally Tim Gold's culture of invention that signifyingly points to us as *homo faber* rather than *homo sapiens* (also elaborated by Hui's chapter on Prometheanism, a legendary account on the ontological and epistemological premise of *techne* and by extension technology found within *Recursivity and Contingency*): we, as a species, do not only imitate or simulate; we actualize our potentials by *making*, a productive possibility given due attention by Bernard Stiegler's *Technics and Time* series, which too calls attention to the Simondonian *transduction*: cultural transformations that accompany transforming hybrid productions. Whereas Simondon is affirmative when it comes to innovation (most of us are when embedded within the current informational capitalism) we need to heed Heidegger's "caution" (S*orgen*) that we do not become merely ready-at-hand, a standing reserve that gives us only functional value and nothing more. While citing Marshall McLuhan at one point, Hui appears to have missed the point about technology and culture: the figure now has become the ground and the ground the figure. This inversion, according to Ernst Cassirer (2019, 39), may become perilous when technology as the ground cannot be figured; its omnipresence, and consequently omnipotence, erases the reflective sensibility that we, as a species, are known to possess. Jaron Lanier's *You are not a Gadget* indicates too the possible negative consequences of the technological overwhelming of man whose every function is tied to technology. What does this imply exactly? The recursive processes of system science mentioned within the book indicate man's increasing openness to both randomness and chance (encounters drastically different because one relies on luck and the other accident), contingent factors that require more reflective integrations via recursive engagements, placing greater emphasis on the import of the resolutions encouraged by heuristics.

The Cinematographic Split Mirroring the Neutrino Split

This non-linear non-deterministic movement (the quantum leap) proposed earlier *vis a vis* time travel as figured in Tomalin's *Bodies*, points to the overlapping analogical patterns detected as movements. Time travel via the Throat is analogically reflective of the quantum leap mentioned by many thinkers of *techne*, Gilbert Simondon and Heidegger being two of whom the "leap" gestures not only intensity of the movement but its underlying faith. The only deterministic feature when alluding to the Throat is the duplication of the temporal displacements effected by the machine with the same calculation both backwards and forwards, indicative of how quanta is etymologically the epitome of calculation. Allegorically, the neutrino split that defies natural law gestures to the indeterminacy underpinning the mysterious appearance of the same corpse at Longharvest Lane at four different timelines. Thus the key comparability between quantum mechanics and system science is their *probabilistic tendencies* by virtue of Cillier's concept of complexity rather than complication. System scientific address of contingency points to the indeterminacy encountered, what Hui called "non-linear with auto-finality" that has implications when referring to the *subjectively objective* approach of observation, whether from system or quantum sciences (within quantum science, this act of measuring ends with the erasure of all other possibilities and the materialisation of one particle). Mathias Albert's and Felix Bathon's take on "Quantum and Systems theory" speaks of the other similarities, one of which is *meaning* (both semiotically approached) and the other, *observation:* the strategies used to analyze empirically detected cues, whether engaged via scientific research or detective work.

The following allegorical "thinking through" of the anatomical recurrences of Gabriel Defoe surpasses Hui's 2019 *Recursivity and Contingency* articulation of the three movements of

linearity and non-linearity that traces the systemic development from the feedback of first-order cybernetics to the recursion of second-order cybernetics. Giving titular attention to the limited series, there are multiple symbolic roles that the enigmatic cadaver the four detectives discover at Whitechapel past, present and future play, a multiplicity reflecting the many Quantum potentials. First, it mirrors textually the adaptive qualities of the intertext, even as Defoe's body fragments and duplicates metaphorically as textual remakes. The fact that the cinematographer reworks the split screen to pay homage to its graphic beginnings is noteworthy given the democratic underpinnings of such a cinematographic technique. The split screen transitions between or among milieus (all four timelines with their concomitant subplots are illustrated and animated by different graphic artists for a varied feel) also bring to the fore the limited series' ideational dependency on quantum mechanics: a minutiae adjustment locally can have a substantial global impact. Defoe analogically figures Alberto Toscano's key Marxian (and paradoxical) concept of real abstraction, which sees possible changes from informational currency to the financial one, manipulated within Spencer's plot by Mannix, the monopolising capitalist. As an enigma, it too signifies the *habeas corpus* mentioned earlier, a body representing the *structured complexity* of law and order, the major plot premise of Tomalin's *Bodies*. This again mirrors the secret core of the sciences: the law that ensures their validity as purveyors of truth and fact. This law, by extension, is what Jacques Derrida calls "mystical foundation", a ground mystically founded by *an exception* from among many others, rendering clear the reason for the historical precedence of mysticism before science. As refutation of Lariviere's review Hui's *the Existence of Digital Objects* who criticized science-fiction as an inappropriate approach to general and quantum sciences, my reference to the Derridian take on the law further symbolises how we as *homo sapiens* are always already traced by the inhuman: the technological extensions are expansions that make us go beyond Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* to further explore what quantum computation can reveal about us. Most importantly, besides allegorically figuring the dark matter of Chaos Theory, Defoe's cadaver reenacts the collapse of the wave function of quantum field theory that turns photons to particles whenever measurements are made: the wave falls just as Defoe falls onto the ground of Longharvest Lane when he crosses the intervals of transmission via the temporal portal within the timelines of 1890, 1941, 2023 or 2053. Photons, as mentioned, can be both waves and particles unlike electrons. With a collapsed wave function, the resulting particle becomes part of a Poincare group. Henri Poincare theorises that the invariance of the scalar field representation, which is founded on the calculation of the mass of the particle that changes to and matches the speed of quantum commutation, evinces with the computation of the neutrino split: Spenser's plot accurately demonstrates this invariance formula of the four dimensions multiplied by four vectors giving us two backward temporal moves accompanied by two moves temporally forward, which then lead to the asymmetry and indeterminacy of quantum physics with the choices that the characters of the graphic novel make.

Conclusion

Not summing up intentionally the usual manner, I shall return to what was promised earlier: a discussion of the motivating factor that creates the Mannix self-referential loop and then intercepts and disrupts it. It is love, the lack of love in the first instance and thereafter the full effect of love that caused the demise of the male detectives and the survival of the female ones. Mannix's autopoietic loop that returns him to 1890 to genealogically reproduce himself so as to cause the 2023 detonation of a nuclear bomb wiping out half the population of Britain and leading to the creation of a world society known as KYAL. It is obvious that the other enactments by Hillinghead and Whiteman are underpinned too by love. Comparably,

Shahara Hasan, with the help of Iris Maplewood and Defoe (both also performing acts of love), actively halts the nuclear detonation that would end her son's life. This limited series mirrors this historiographically with the subsequent temporal fracture; it too genealogical reflect the rise of the contemporary sciences: the general science of system and the future science of quantum, a prodigious convergence leading to superintelligence. Thus this paper ends provisionally with that which comes alive as energetics; what animates the graphic novel and our televisual or portable screens; the meaning behind live events and lived experiences: how affect plays a significant role in our approach to what enlivens our thinking capacity, the dead enigma that starts all four plots.

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Space and Time Through the Lens:
A Cinematic Exploration From Lumière, Warhol and Keiller

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Abstract

To gain a deeper understanding of how space and time are depicted in cinematic movement-image, this paper analyzes five seminal films: Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat (1897) by the Lumière brothers, Empire (1964) by Andy Warhol, and Patrick Keiller's Robinson trilogy (London [1994], Robinson in Space [1997], and Robinson in Ruin [2010]). These films were chosen for their innovative approaches to representing time and space, each reflecting distinct historical and stylistic shifts in cinema. Using these films as case studies, the research examines how cinematic techniques shape viewers' perception of time and space, aiming to shed light on the role of film in capturing the intricacies of lived experience. The study is structured in several stages. First, a historical and theoretical context for each film is established, situating them within relevant cinematic and philosophical frameworks on realism, durational cinema, and spatial representation. Following this, a comparative analysis is conducted to identify the ways each film uniquely presents temporal flow and spatial depth, focusing on elements such as framing, pacing, and sensory composition. The study concludes by synthesizing insights from these analyses, demonstrating how cinema's moving images uniquely capture temporal progression and spatial immersion, thus providing a rich framework for understanding space and time as more than mere backgrounds for narrative but as integral elements of the cinematic experience. This exploration contributes to an under-explored area of film studies, illuminating how cinema's language shapes our understanding of the spaces and moments we inhabit.

Keywords: Cinematic Movement Image, Time and Space, Visual Perception, Realism, Durational, Spatial Representation, Temporal Progression, Lived Experience in Cinema

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Introduction

In an era where visual media increasingly shapes our perception of reality, cinema remains one of the most powerful mediums for exploring complex ideas of space and time (Bruno, 2002; Currie, 1995; Deleuze, 1986, 1989; Gill, 2000; Mulvey, 2007; Wood, 2012). Since the earliest days of film, directors and theorists alike have examined how cinema's unique capacity to manipulate temporality and spatiality creates immersive experiences that deeply resonate with audiences (Bazin, 2005; Deleuze, 1986, 1989; Mulvey, 2007; Tobe, 2016). Despite the critical role that time and space play in film, scholarly discussions often prioritize narrative over these fundamental elements, resulting in a relatively under-explored area within film studies. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing how cinematic movement-images capture and convey the dimensions of time and space, which are often experienced as dynamic, transformative forces in daily life.

Positioned within the frameworks of cinematic realism, durational cinema, and theories of spatial representation, this study builds on the work of film theorists such as André Bazin, Gilles Deleuze, and Henry Lefebvre who have argued that cinema not only represents but actively constructs our experience of space and time. By selecting historically significant films that span a range of styles and temporal frameworks—Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat (1897) by the Lumière brothers, Empire (1964) by Andy Warhol, and Patrick Keiller's Robinson trilogy (1994-2010)—this study examines how different cinematic approaches capture and reshape our understanding of spatial and temporal dimensions.

The urgency of this study lies in its potential to enrich contemporary film theory and practice by highlighting how cinematic techniques can create layered, immersive experiences that go beyond narrative structure. As digital media continues to evolve, and as cinema itself increasingly blurs the lines between reality and representation (Aytas & Can, 2022; Elcott, 2016), understanding the ways in which films depict space and time becomes essential for both scholars and practitioners. This research aims to demonstrate that cinema's portrayal of time and space is not merely an aesthetic choice but a means of framing, understanding, and even transforming everyday human experience.

Time and Space in Cinema: Movement and Perception

Cinema, as a medium of representation, uniquely captures the complex relationship between space, time, and human perception (Bazin, 2005; Bruno, 2002; Currie, 1995; Deleuze, 1986, 1989; Gill, 2000; Pallasmaa, 2007). The concept of realism in film underscores cinema's ability to authentically represent the world, often by presenting scenes in a continuous flow that mirrors real-life movement and temporality (Bazin, 2005; Deleuze, 1986; Mulvey, 2007; Tawa, 2022; Tobe, 2016; Tschumi, 1996; Wood, 2012). Techniques such as long takes, deep focus, and the unbroken continuity of action aim to immerse viewers in an experience that feels immediate and real (Monaco, 2000; Wood, 2012).

The "movement image" in film theory refers to how cinema depicts movement and change, capturing the passage of time as an unfolding, dynamic process (Deleuze, 1986). In contrast, the "time image" challenges traditional linear depictions of time, showing it as multifaceted and nonlinear, reflecting the fragmented and layered nature of our lived experience (Deleuze, 1989). This theory suggests that time, rather than being a simple sequence of events, can be represented as a complex, interwoven dimension (Till, 2009), where past and present overlap and influence each other.

In relation to realism, theories of multiple perspectives, such as David Hockney's concept of "joiner photography," emphasize how a combination of different viewpoints can create a more complete, dynamic representation of space (Demirtas, 2011). Hockney's technique, which merges multiple images to form a single composite, challenges the conventional notion of a fixed perspective, encouraging a more fluid, subjective understanding of space. This concept parallels the cinematic technique of creating immersive, layered realities through a combination of visual angles and temporal shifts (Hockney & Gayford, 2016; Monaco, 2000; Moreira Soares & Germana Gonçalves, 2022; Tobe, 2016; Wood, 2012).

The idea of "Death 24x a Second," as proposed by Laura Mulvey (2007), further complicates our understanding of realism in film. Mulvey's work highlights how film, by freezing a moment and allowing repeated viewing, creates an illusion of movement and time. The experience of watching a film is not simply a passive observation of time, but an active process of engaging with the cinematic representation of time, where the viewer's perception is influenced by the film's manipulation of movement and stasis. This illusion, though framed in the context of realism, suggests that what we perceive as "real" in film is, in fact, a constructed reality.

These theories—realism in film, movement and time images, multiple perspectives, and the illusion of movement—provide a foundation for this study's methodology. By exploring how these elements influence our perception of space, time, and reality, the study will examine how cinema constructs and manipulates the viewer's experience, revealing the complex interplay between the subjective and the real. Through this lens, the methodology will focus on analyzing how films use time and space to create immersive and dynamic representations of the world, challenging the boundaries between fiction and reality.

Historical Context, Cultural Ideas and Theoretical Framework of Case Studies

Each film examined reflects its historical moment and cultural concerns, offering insights into how cinematic space and time interact with societal values and technological advances.

In *Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* (1897), the Lumière Brothers capture the fascination with realism and movement at the dawn of cinema. Set during a period of rapid industrialization, the film reflects the era's awe toward technological progress, as the train represents modern mobility and the compression of space and time (Crous, 2019; Patrick, 2016). The film's direct depiction of a train arriving at the station plays with viewers' perception, creating a visceral experience that aligned with the novelty of early motion pictures.

Andy Warhol's Empire (1964) embodies the experimental spirit of the 1960s, where avant-garde cinema pushed the boundaries of narrative and time. Filmed in an era marked by rapid urban growth and a booming pop art movement, Empire transforms New York's iconic Empire State Building into an abstract symbol, subverting expectations by focusing on static time and anti-narrative form. Warhol's extreme minimalism reflects a critique of instant gratification, challenging viewers to engage with prolonged observation and monotony.

Patrick Keiller's The Robinson Trilogy (1994, 1997, 2010) explores Britain's shifting landscapes amid economic and political changes, spanning two decades of urban decline, globalization, and post-industrial identity. The trilogy combines observational and narrative cinema to explore the social and historical layers of British spaces, revealing the impact of

neoliberal policies on the physical and social fabric of the country. Keiller's depiction of neglected urban and rural spaces critiques transient, non-place environments that contrast with traditionally "lived" spaces, offering a poignant reflection on how economic shifts shape national identity.

This overview of historical and cultural context shows how each film anchors itself in the specific time and place of its creation, grounding the theoretical discussion in a broader social framework. These elements underscore the relevance of realism, movement-image, and time-image concepts and how they reveal cinema's power to reflect and reframe societal values and perceptions of space and time. This will form a key basis for analyzing each film's visual and temporal strategies in the following methodology chapter.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this study is a comparative case study analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Groat & Wang, 2013), which allows for a detailed examination of how different films depict space and time through their unique cinematic techniques. This approach is ideal for analyzing films that span different historical periods and stylistic approaches, such as *Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat*, Empire, and the Robinson trilogy. The research involves textual and visual analysis, focusing on key scenes that highlight the filmmakers' manipulation of space and time. These scenes are deconstructed to understand the role of framing, pacing, camera movement, and sound in shaping the viewer's perception of temporal flow and spatial depth. Additionally, the study applies thematic analysis to identify recurring cinematic elements, such as the portrayal of movement, duration, and sensory experiences, and how these contribute to the overall depiction of space and time. To contextualize these observations, the analysis is framed within relevant theoretical frameworks, particularly those of André Bazin's realism, Gilles Deleuze's time-image, and Henri Lefebvre's concept of lived space. This methodological combination of visual and theoretical analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of how these films, through their cinematic language, construct immersive and transformative experiences of time and space.

Cinematic Explorations of Space and Time

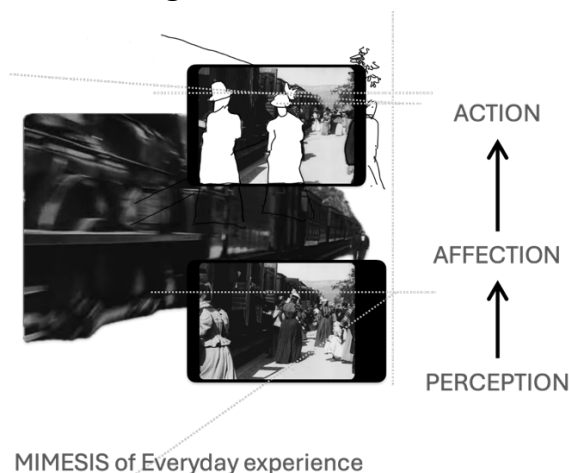### Case Study 1: *Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat*

Diagram 1: Experiencing Realism in Lumière's Arrival of a Train,
From Perception to Action

This section explores how the Lumière Brothers' iconic short film captures real-time movement and spatial immediacy. The use of static framing and depth of field immerses the viewer, evoking a tactile perception of motion. The train's approach symbolizes early cinema's fascination with realism, showcasing André Bazin's idea of unmanipulated representation of reality. The interplay of time and movement situates the film within Deleuze's movement-image framework, where time is perceived through visible action and spatial continuity.

Case Study 2: *Empire* by Andy Warhol

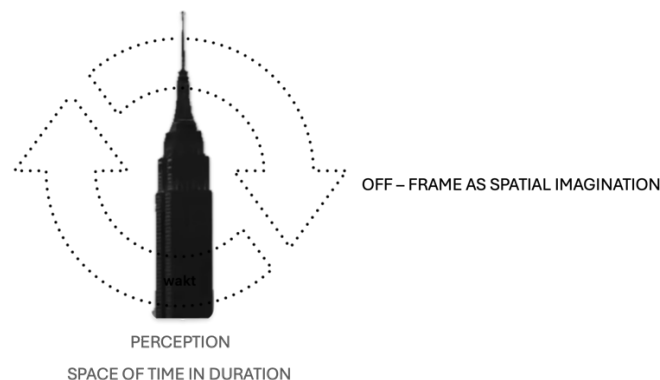OFF – FRAME AS SPATIAL IMAGINATION

PERCEPTION

SPACE OF TIME IN DURATION

Diagram 2: Time Stretched: The Space of Perception in Warhol's Empire

Warhol's *Empire* shifts focus from movement to duration, embodying the principles of durational cinema (Stoller, 1966; Warhol & Wolf, 2004). The prolonged, static shot of the Empire State Building transforms the structure into an almost abstract entity, critiquing conventional notions of narrative and spatial engagement. This approach exemplifies Deleuze's time-image, where time itself becomes the central experience, challenging viewers' perceptions of continuity and action. Warhol's minimalist treatment also resonates with Laura Mulvey's concept of "delayed cinema," urging the audience to confront the passage of time without the distraction of narrative progression.

Case Study 3: *The Robinson Trilogy* by Patrick Keiller

Fragments of Everyday experience   SPATIAL REPRESENTATION

ANY-SPACE-WHATEVERS   ANY-SPACE-WHATEVERS   ANY-SPACE-WHATEVERS   ANY-SPACE-WHATEVERS

MONTAGE   MONTAGE   MONTAGE   MONTAGE

NON-CHRONOLOGICAL TIME

DIAGESIS

SOUND
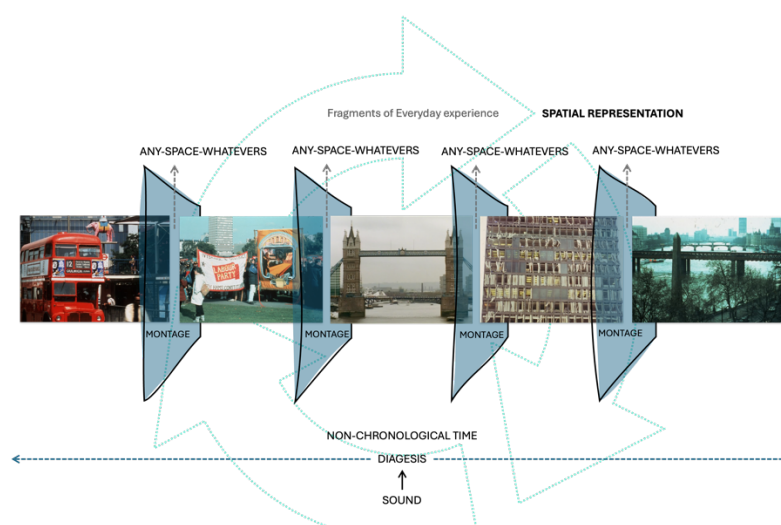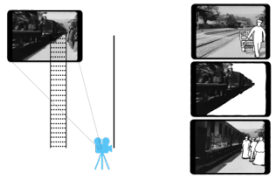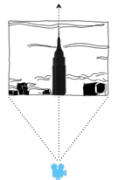
Diagram 3: Fragments of the Everyday: Urban Montage and Spatial Narratives
in *Robinson in London*

Keiller's trilogy combines narrated imagery with contemplative pacing to explore urban and rural landscapes (Izmir University of Economics & Özgün, 2016; Piskorz, 2021; Rattenbury, 2002). By layering historical, social, and economic narratives, the films critique the production of space within cultural and political contexts (Lef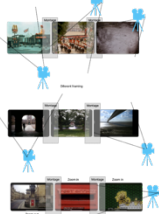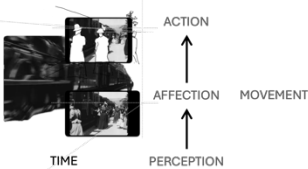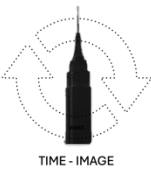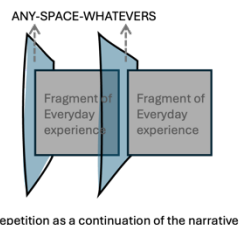ebvre, 1997, 2014; Rattenbury, 2002). Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's concept of lived space, Keiller connects physical landscapes with personal and collective memory, highlighting the tension between non-place and historical depth. The trilogy's reflective tempo situates it between movement-image and time-image (Deleuze, 1986, 1989), where fragmented imagery and narrated thoughts evoke temporal fluidity and spatial critique.

Comparative Analysis of Cinematic Techniques

The comparative analysis of cinematic techniques across the works of the Lumière Brothers, Warhol, and Keiller reveals distinct approaches to framing, pacing, sound, and the representation of time. In terms of *framing and composition*, the Lumière Brothers use static shots to evoke a sense of immersive realism, while Warhol strips away dynamism through static framing to create abstraction. Keiller, on the other hand, blends dynamic and static imagery to layer time and place. Regarding *pacing and duration*, *Arrivée d'un train* captures the immediacy of motion, *Empire* stretches temporal perception with its prolonged duration, and *The Robinson Trilogy* employs a reflective pace that layers various temporalities and histories. In terms of *sound and sensory perception*, *Arrivée d'un train* evokes auditory realism with its emphasis on movement, while *Empire* uses silence to foreground the experience of duration. *The Robinson Trilogy* incorporates voiceovers and environmental soundscapes to deepen its portrayal of space and time. Finally, when applying Deleuze's concepts of *movement-image and time-image*, *Arrivée d'un train* aligns with the movement-image by linking time to physical motion, *Empire* exemplifies the time-image by emphasizing the experience of duration over action, and *The Robinson Trilogy* bridges both modes, offering reflective meditations on space, time, and social critique.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Cinematic Techniques

	Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat (1897), Lumière Brothers	**Empire** (1964), Andy Warhol	**London** (1994), **Robinson in Space** (1997), **Robinson in Ruins** (2010), Patrick Keiller
Framing and Composition			
Pacing and Duration	immediacy of motion	Stretched perception; extreme Duration	reflective pace to layer temporalities and histories
Sound and Sensory Perception	evokes auditory realism, emphasis on movement	silence to foreground duration	integrates voiceovers and environmental soundscapes to enrich its portrayal of space and time
Movement-Image and Time-Image			

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study highlights the profound impact cinema has on shaping our understanding of space and time, demonstrating its ability to transform how we perceive the world around us. Through the analysis of Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat, Empire, and The Robinson Trilogy, we see how different filmmakers use cinematic techniques—such as framing, pacing, sound, and the manipulation of temporal flow—to create immersive experiences that resonate with viewers on both a sensory and intellectual level. By drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Bazin's realism, Deleuze's movement- and time-images, and Lefebvre's concept of lived space, this study reveals that cinema does not merely depict time and space but actively constructs and transforms them, offering a complex interplay between fiction and reality.

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Implementation of Public Relations Strategy to Increase Engagement Rate on Instagram at Lerep Tourism Village Indonesia

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Abstract

The lack of social media management in Lerep Tourism Village has resulted in weak branding and low marketing effectiveness, as reflected by an Instagram engagement rate of @desawisatalerep just 0.44% in March 2024. This study aims to design a public relations strategy to increase the Instagram engagement rate for Lerep Tourism Village. The target audience includes students ranging from kindergarten to university students. Using a four-stage methodology—fact-finding, planning, implementation, and evaluation—the study increased engagement by 1.20% over one month, based on 24 uploaded posts (from 9 May until 4 June 2024). Key factors include consistency in posting time (between 2-4 pm), content frequency (6 posts/week), and the use of informational content and Instagram Reels, which proved most effective in driving engagement. None of the content included a call to action (CTA), indicating further improvement potential in this area.

Keywords: Public Relations Strategy, Social Media, Lerep Tourism Village, Engagement Rate, Instagram

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Introduction

The rapid growth of digital technology and widespread internet penetration have transformed the way organizations communicate and engage with their audiences, particularly within the tourism industry. Social media platforms have emerged as indispensable tools, enabling destinations to showcase their unique offerings, build brand visibility, and foster direct engagement with potential visitors. Indonesia, a nation with over 221 million internet users and 104.8 million active Instagram users, stands out as one of the most digitally connected countries globally. This massive social media adoption presents significant opportunities for tourism entities to connect with diverse audiences, ranging from local explorers to international travelers. Among these platforms, Instagram, with its focus on visual content and interactive features, offers unparalleled potential for destinations to share their aesthetic appeal and cultural heritage while cultivating an active online community. Despite this opportunity, many destinations fail to optimize their digital presence, as evidenced by Lerep Tourism Village's low engagement rate on Instagram.

Located in Semarang, Central Java, Lerep Tourism Village is a culturally rich and naturally beautiful destination known for its traditional dances, nature trails, and educational tourism activities. However, despite its inherent appeal, the village has struggled to translate its physical attractions into digital engagement. Established on Instagram in 2017, the village's official account (@desawisatalerep) has experienced moderate growth in follower count but continues to face challenges in audience interaction, as indicated by a low engagement rate of 0.44% as of March 2024. This disconnection between content and audience suggests a lack of strategic planning in content creation and posting schedules. The inconsistent use of Instagram's interactive features, coupled with limited alignment between audience interests and posted content, has hindered the account's ability to effectively promote Lerep's tourism offerings. Consequently, potential visitors remain disengaged, and the village's digital footprint remains underutilized as a promotional tool.

Recognizing these challenges, this study aims to explore the implementation of a structured public relations (PR) strategy to enhance the engagement rate of Lerep's Instagram account. By leveraging the principles of PR, this approach seeks to address the underlying issues of inconsistency, lack of audience alignment, and minimal interactivity. Specifically, the strategy emphasizes the development of a comprehensive content calendar organized around four thematic pillars: educational, promotional, entertaining, and informative content. Additionally, the study integrates the use of Instagram's unique features such as Reels, Stories, and carousel posts—to provide an immersive and engaging experience for followers. Through consistent posting schedules, targeted hashtag strategies, and community-focused captions, the PR strategy aims to create a more dynamic and interactive digital presence that aligns with Lerep's cultural identity and audience expectations.

This paper positions the case of Lerep Tourism Village as an example of how structured PR strategies can transform digital engagement in the tourism sector. By bridging the gap between Lerep's rich cultural assets and its digital outreach potential, the study provides insights into how other destinations facing similar challenges can leverage social media to strengthen their brand visibility and foster audience connection. As tourism becomes increasingly reliant on digital platforms, understanding and applying strategic PR frameworks is essential for destinations to remain competitive. The findings of this research not only demonstrate the impact of an organized approach to content management but also underscore

the role of adaptability and audience- centered strategies in achieving sustained engagement on social media platforms like Instagram.

Literature Review

Prior Research on Social Media in Tourism Marketing

The influence of social media in tourism branding and audience engagement has been the subject of extensive research (Smith et al, 2023), with findings indicating that strategic management of social media accounts can profoundly enhance a destination's brand image and audience reach. A study on Bukit Indah Simarjarunjung and Batu City Tourism's Instagram marketing efforts demonstrated that PR-based engagement strategies significantly increase user interaction (Soleha et al, 2023). Key elements such as frequent posting, user-centric engagement strategies, and varied multimedia content all play a role in amplifying audience reach and creating a sustainable impact (Lie et al, 2023). Similarly, studies on the use of Instagram as a marketing tool in tourism highlight that structured content management, targeted use of interactive features, and regular posting schedules are vital components for engaging users and achieving substantial engagement metrics.

Visual-centric platforms like Instagram have proven particularly effective in enabling destinations to convey brand identity and interact with audiences (Kaplan et al, 2010), particularly through the use of multimedia elements that resonate with user interests. Instagram, a platform focused on visual content, is especially effective for tourism destinations seeking to showcase their aesthetic appeal. In Indonesia, where Instagram usage is among the highest globally, tourism entities have a vast potential audience. Studies have shown that features like Instagram Reels, Stories, and direct follower engagement (likes, comments, messages) strengthen brand-audience relationships, increasing the likelihood of actual visits. Consequently, a structured PR strategy on Instagram has the potential to elevate Lerep's digital reach and engagement, turning digital interaction into increased tourism.

Public Relations (PR) Strategy in Social Media Engagement

The theoretical framework guiding PR strategies in social media is rooted in the systematic approach developed by Cutlip & Center (Cutlip et al, 2006), which includes fact-finding, planning, action, communication, and evaluation. This model allows for an organized approach to content management that aligns with organizational objectives while maintaining audience engagement. Organizations must develop comprehensive social media strategies that align with their overall PR goals (Agarwal & Puppala, 2024). For tourism brands like Lerep Tourism Village, adopting a PR framework that includes consistent content posting, audience-targeted messaging, and frequent engagement allows for the development of a structured communication channel that fosters a deeper connection with followers. Social media allows for real-time interaction, enabling organizations to build trust and visibilitywith the public (Tasente, 2023). Through this model, tourism destinations can transform their social media presence into a dynamic promotional tool that continuously engages and informs audiences, ultimately driving brand visibility and visitor interest (Elfandri and Nuraryo, 2023).

Social Media Strategy and Instagram's Unique Role in Visual Engagement

Instagram, with its emphasis on visual storytelling, provides an ideal platform for tourism brands to capture and communicate the allure of destinations. Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) model of social media strategy underscores the importance of tailoring content to the specific attributes of each platform to maximize engagement (Kaplan et al, 2010). For Lerep Tourism Village, Instagram's variety of features such as Reels, Stories, and carousels provides opportunities to create engaging and interactive content that resonates with the platform's large and diverse user base. Instagram marketing significantly influences brand awareness and purchasing decisions, accounting for a substantial portion of variance in consumer behavior (Setiawati & Sirait, 2024). Through these features, tourism entities can share stories, announce events, and build brand affinity, ultimately fostering an interactive community and stronger engagement.

Engagement Rate (ER) as a Metric of Social Media Success

In social media marketing, engagement rate (ER) serves as a vital metric for assessing the effectiveness of content in capturing and maintaining audience interest. Defined as the ratio of total interactions (e.g., likes, comments, shares) to the number of followers, ER offers insight into how well a brand's content resonates with its audience (Smith and Gallicano, 2015). Low engagement rates, typically under 1%, suggest a disconnect between content and audience interests, while higher engagement rates indicate a strong, resonant social media presence (De Vries et al, 2012). Therefore, effective PR strategies target improvements in this metric by incorporating engaging content, consistent posting, and interactive features that invite active participation from followers. For Lerep Tourism Village, elevating the ER from its initial 0.44% requires a strategy that both appeals to follower interests and encourages more frequent interaction.

Methods

The methodology employed in this study was designed to address the engagement challenges faced by Lerep Tourism Village on Instagram by implementing a comprehensive public relations (PR) strategy. The approach was structured into four distinct phases—fact-finding, planning, implementation, and evaluation—each contributing to a systematic progression towards improved engagement. This phased methodology ensured that every aspect of the strategy was carefully aligned with the goals of increasing interaction, optimizing content delivery, and leveraging Instagram's platform-specific features. By breaking the process into clear stages, the study was able to tackle the root causes of low engagement and build a sustainable framework for future improvements.

Phase 1: Fact-Finding and Problem Identification

The first phase focused on identifying the fundamental challenges impeding Lerep Tourism Village's Instagram engagement. A thorough analysis of the account's Instagram insights was conducted, examining metrics such as post frequency, follower demographics, and existing interaction levels. The findings revealed several critical issues, including inconsistent posting schedules, minimal use of interactive features like Reels and Stories, and a lack of content that resonated with the audience's interests. For instance, while Lerep's cultural and natural attractions have strong potential, these strengths were underrepresented in the account's content. Audience analysis also indicated a preference for visually engaging and informative

posts, emphasizing the need for a targeted approach that aligns content with user expectations. This phase laid the foundation for the subsequent strategy by clearly defining the scope of the problem and identifying areas requiring immediate attention.

Phase 2: Planning and Program Development

Building on the insights from the fact-finding phase, the second phase involved developing a structured content strategy to address the identified challenges. A detailed content calendar was created, categorizing posts into four core themes: educational, promotional, entertainment, and informative. The content strategy to be implemented is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Content Strategy

Strategy	Description
Key elements of strategy	Consistent Posting Schedule:
	Upload time: 2 PM - 4 PM.
	Posting frequency: 6 times per week (Monday to Saturday, except Wednesday and Sunday; two contents on Monday).
Content types	Informational Content: Information about daily activities and attractions
	Entertaining Content: Behind-the-scenes (BTS), reels showcasing student activities like outdoor learning.
	Educational Content: History of the village, eco-tourism activities, and traditional performances.
	Promotional Content: Information about special event also discount
Content guidelines	Publish engaging content like reels, photos, and carousels.
	Use a consistent posting schedule (e.g., twice on Mondays, once on other days).
	Relevant hashtags (#Wisatasemarang, #Exploresemarang) to reach wider audiences.

Each theme was designed to cater to different audience preferences and maintain a balanced flow of content. For example, educational posts focused on the cultural history and unique aspects of Lerep, while promotional content highlighted events and tourism packages. Entertainment posts were crafted to provide visually appealing and engaging content, such as scenic photos or short videos, while informative posts updated followers on activities and improvements within the village. Additionally, specific posting schedules were planned to align with peak engagement hours (2–4 PM), ensuring that content reached the largest possible audience. The planning phase also included the development of a hashtag strategy and guidelines for writing engaging captions to encourage audience interaction.

Phase 3: Implementation – Content Creation and Communication

The implementation phase focused on executing the planned strategy with precision, emphasizing consistency, quality, and engagement. Content creation was prioritized to ensure that each post met the visual and thematic standards established during the planning phase. Posts were scheduled and published consistently at the pre-determined peak hours, with six posts per week ensuring regular visibility and interaction. Instagram Reels and Stories played a central role in this phase, as these features were identified as highly effective in driving

audience engagement. For instance, Reels showcasing Lerep's traditional dances or natural landscapes provided an immersive experience for followers, while Stories allowed for real-time interaction and updates. Captions accompanying each post were crafted to invite comments, questions, and shares, fostering a sense of community among followers. A targeted hashtag strategy further expanded the account's reach, attracting new followers who shared an interest in cultural and natural tourism.

Phase 4: Evaluation

The final phase involved a rigorous evaluation of the strategy's effectiveness through continuous monitoring of engagement metrics. Weekly tracking was conducted to measure interaction rates, follower growth, and the performance of specific content types. These metrics provided valuable insights into audience preferences, allowing for real-time adjustments to the content calendar and posting strategy. For instance, if educational posts on cultural traditions garnered higher engagement than promotional content, the focus would shift towards increasing the frequency of educational posts. Similarly, hashtags and captions were refined based on their performance in driving interaction. The evaluation phase also emphasized the importance of learning from both successes and challenges, enabling the team to make informed decisions about future strategies. By continuously refining the approach based on data-driven insights, the study ensured sustained improvements in engagement and laid the groundwork for long-term digital success.

Analysis and Discussion

Initially, Lerep's Instagram content strategy was characterized by sporadic posting and limited alignment with user interests, contributing to the low engagement rate of 0.44%. A detailed SWOT analysis highlighted that, while Lerep has strong cultural assets, its digital engagement strategies were not optimized, resulting in missed opportunities for audience interaction. The newly implemented PR strategy addressed these gaps by focusing on four core content pillars: educational, promotional, entertaining, and informative. Each content type was carefully designed to appeal to the specific preferences of the audience segments, ultimately creating a more dynamic and engaging presence on Instagram. This structure provided followers with a balanced mix of content, keeping them interested and encouraging them to engage with posts regularly.

Moreover, the PR strategy incorporated a systematic approach to content scheduling, ensuring that posts were shared during peak hours (2-4 PM), maximizing visibility and reach. The scheduling component of the strategy proved vital, as consistency in posting not only keeps the audience engaged but also signals reliability and active management of the account. For instance, Instagram Reels, Stories, and carousel posts were strategically utilized to increase interaction rates, given that these formats offer a more immersive experience and cater to Instagram's visual-centric audience. Reels and Stories, in particular, emerged as effective tools for driving engagement, as they allowed Lerep to share authentic moments, event highlights, and scenic shots that captivated followers. By focusing on these interactive elements, the strategy capitalized on the unique strengths of Instagram, ultimately aligning Lerep's online presence with best practices in digital PR.

A targeted hashtag strategy was also developed and integrated as part of the PR approach to broaden Lerep's audience reach and foster a sense of community among followers. Hashtags, when used effectively, not only categorize content but also make it discoverable to users

outside the immediate follower base. The selected hashtags were carefully curated to appeal to tourism enthusiasts, locals, and travelers interested in exploring cultural and natural attractions. This approach enhanced the account's visibility on the platform and increased the chances of reaching users who share a genuine interest in tourism-related content. Engaging captions accompanied each post, encouraging followers to leave comments, ask questions, or share their own experiences, thereby fostering a community-oriented atmosphere. This interactive component allowed followers to feel more connected to Lerep Tourism Village, leading to stronger engagement levels across posts.

Weekly evaluation and adjustments formed a critical part of the strategy, allowing for real-time optimization based on performance metrics. By continuously monitoring engagement metrics such as likes, comments, shares, and overall interaction rates, the PR team could identify which types of content were most resonant with the audience. For instance, if certain hashtags or types of content, such as educational posts on Lerep's cultural heritage, performed particularly well, adjustments could be made to incorporate more of these elements into the content calendar. This data-driven approach proved essential in refining the strategy and allowed the team to respond to engagement trends, effectively keeping the audience's interest over time. These insights enabled a proactive response to the audience's preferences and enhanced the overall impact of the PR strategy on Instagram. The results of the strategy implementation on the Lerep Tourism Village Instagram account are shown in Figure 1, which illustrates the increase in ER every week (from May 9 to June 4, 2024).
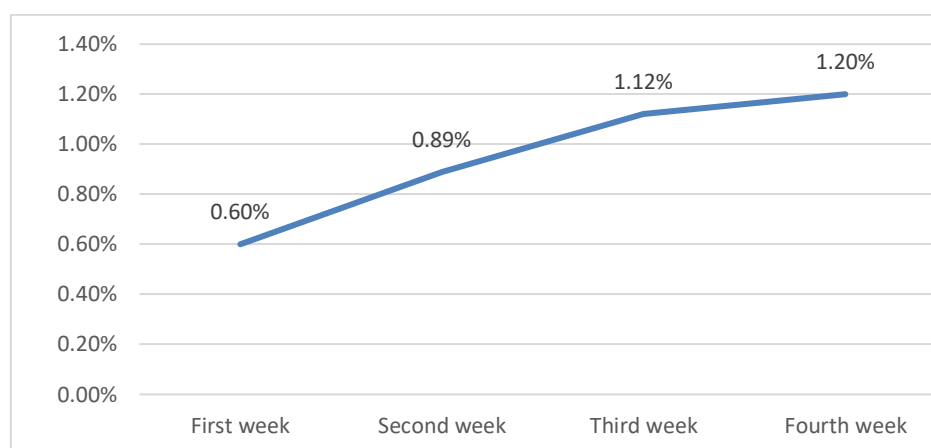

Figure 1: Instagram Engagemet Rate of @desawisatalerep From 9 May to 4 June 2024

Overall, within just one month of implementation, the structured PR strategy achieved a notable increase in engagement rate, from 0.44% to 1.20%, demonstrating the effectiveness of a well- organized content strategy and consistent community engagement. The combination of diverse content themes, interactive Instagram features, and optimized posting schedules contributed significantly to this growth. The increased engagement reflects the power of aligning content with user preferences and utilizing platform-specific tools to create a more immersive and meaningful experience for followers. This transformation illustrates how Lerep Tourism Village successfully leveraged PR strategies to connect more deeply with its audience and establish a more visible digital presence in the competitive tourism industry.

Conclusion

By transitioning from an unstructured approach to a data-driven PR model, Lerep was able to achieve a measurable increase in engagement, validating the importance of targeted,

audience- centric social media strategies. The PR strategy focused on three main pillars of engagement: thematic content variety, interactive engagement tactics, and real-time strategy refinement. Each of these pillars was essential in transforming Lerep's Instagram presence from a passive page into an interactive, community-oriented platform that invites followers to participate actively. Key success factors included the use of high-quality visuals, engaging captions, targeted hashtags, and regular posting, all of which contributed to maintaining audience interest and fostering a strong connection with followers.

Thematic content variety proved essential in catering to the diverse interests of the audience. By balancing educational, promotional, and entertainment content, the strategy was able to sustain followers' attention and keep them engaged with both Lerep's cultural and natural attractions. This approach ensured that the content was not only informative but also visually and emotionally appealing, enhancing Lerep's brand identity and encouraging user interaction. Interactive engagement tactics, including the strategic use of Instagram Reels, Stories, and carousels, further strengthened audience connection by allowing followers to experience Lerep's attractions in a more immersive way. These features effectively engaged followers, increasing their likelihood of sharing content or engaging directly with posts.

Real-time strategy refinement was another critical factor that contributed to the success of the PR strategy. Through weekly evaluations, the PR team was able to make timely adjustments to content types, posting schedules, and engagement strategies, optimizing each element based on observed engagement trends. This adaptive approach allowed the strategy to remain responsive to the changing preferences and behaviors of the audience, ensuring sustained engagement and relevance. By incorporating feedback from engagement metrics, the team was able to make data- informed decisions that directly improved the effectiveness of the strategy, showcasing the value of continuous evaluation in social media management.

In conclusion, the success of the PR strategy on Lerep Tourism Village's Instagram account highlights the significant impact that structured social media management can have on brand visibility and audience engagement (Jaakonmaki et al, 2017). The results of this case study provide a replicable model for other tourism destinations seeking to improve their digital presence through strategic PR efforts. By focusing on audience needs, utilizing platform-specific features, and maintaining flexibility through ongoing evaluation, tourism entities can achieve higher engagement rates and foster stronger relationships with their followers. Future strategies should consider incorporating emerging social media trends, such as augmented reality (AR) and live streaming, to further enhance engagement and continue adapting to evolving audience preferences. Through these efforts, Lerep Tourism Village has established a robust foundation for long-term digital engagement, setting a benchmark for social media excellence in the tourism industry.

Acknowledgments

Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

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Economics of Mediated Objective Time:
Filipino Digital Immigrants' Media Choice, Gratification, and Usage

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The Kyoto Conference on Arts, Media & Culture 2024
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Abstract

Media compete for our attention and time; regardless of age, critical credence in the evolving digital space is a must, specifically on how one's time is spent actively or taken passive-unconsciously. This quantitative study looked at the mediated time expenditure of Filipino digital immigrants (FDI), such as Baby boomers and Generation X, to various media technologies, which are traditional, convergent, and new media. Through the lens of Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study analyzed how FDIs communicated with their mediated time through looking at their media choice, perceived obtained gratification, and media use in terms of frequency, duration, consistency, and intensity. FDI respondents in the National Capital Region are inclined to migrate towards the use of digital media technologies such as the internet and social media. Both internet and social media sites are used for a minimum of 3 to 5 hours and above on a daily basis, which is more than twice the average global media consumption of 2 hours. FDIs as social beings use their preferred media form for information seeking, communicatory utility, and information sharing purposes. The intensity in active media usage is also high even though there are instances that FDIs utilize media passively due to work, home chores, and as a passive accompaniment. Through Pearson correlation test, educational background, instead of age, correlates significantly with media usage duration and intensity. Age does not determine digital learning of an individual. Context is a crucial factor in one's digital learning through the aspects of familiarity and immediacy.

Keywords: Digital Immigrants, Media Consumption, Uses and Gratifications

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Introduction: Time is a Crucial Resource

Looking at the economics of time, the chronological expenditure of a person in the global context has reached an average of two hours and 31 minutes on social media consistently since 2019 (Kemp, 2023). Most social media users based on number of hours spent on screen are teenagers (13-17 years old), who are Generation Z, with 8 hours and 39 minutes, followed by young adults (18-29 years old) with 5 hours, adults (30-49 years old) with 4 to 5 hours, and older adults (50 and above) with less than 4 hours per day (Georgiev, 2023). Apart from social media, with 151 minutes, as the third major media used, a person spends 397 minutes using the internet and 203 minutes watching television (Oberlo, 2023).

In the Philippines, an average user spends 4.06 hours a day on social media, which is above the global metrics (Buchholz, 2022, Newsbytes.PH, 2023), in fact, this has been consistent for the past six years (Licsi, 2022). Some of the main reasons why Filipinos use the internet are: finding information, staying in touch with friends and family, and researching how to do things (Howe, 2023). In calculation, if a person has 365 days in a year with 525,600 minutes, an average Filipino who spends at least 4 hours per day on social media alone, with an assumption that he/she utilizes other media forms as well, allots 87, 600 minutes or 16.7% of his/her life in a year.

Digital Immigrants and Their Accent

Generational cohort theory by Karl Mannheim (1952) forwards that generations such as *Silent Generation*, *Baby boomers*, *Generation X, Y-Millennials, Z-Genzers,* and *A-Alpha* have a shared identity drawn from their common temporal experiences and memory, which leads to similitude of their responses and movements in various events and contexts. The term *digital immigrants* was forwarded by Prensky (2001). This label was coined in relation to the labeling of digital natives. "Those of us who were not born into the digital world but have, at some later point in our lives, become fascinated by and adopted many or most aspects of the new technology are, and always will be compared to them, *Digital Immigrants*" (p.1-2). The digital singularity led the digital immigrants to adapt to the changes in the media and technology environment, however, the digital immigrant accent may affect the media choice and preference of Baby Boomers and Generation X.

The pronounced digital immigrant accent leads to concerns of susceptibility to predatory digital practice such as fake news (Pecho-Ninapaytan et al., 2021). In the context of teaching and learning, digital immigrant teachers need to work on their digital literacy and competence (Macale, 2019; Gallardo-Echenique, 2015) particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic (Anzari et al., 2021). However, Creighton (2018) contested that generation does not directly affect the digital learning and skills, but it would be the individual's context, which specifically points to (a) familiarity, (b) cost, and (c) immediacy through an immersive literature review.

The younger generations are branded by the term *digital natives* in relation to digital and media literacy and competency, in which they were born with. Digital natives like things fast; younger generations such as Generation Y, Z, and A are used to multitasking and parallel processing (Prensky, 2001). In comparison, the *digital immigrants* value social presence in face-to-face and formal communication more while the *digital natives* are more at ease with the online channel and evolving digital slangs (Ignatius et al., 2014; Venter, 2017). Such differences often lead to stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination through derogatory slangs

from the younger generations, such as *'ok, Boomer'*, Covid-19 as *'Boomer Remover'* (Meisner, 2021). Ageism in digital platforms through homophilic patterns of digital innovation teams, usability issues through CAPTCHA, biometrics security systems, and passive metering tools, and underrepresentation of older internet users in big data sets gathered through algorithms (Rosales et al., 2020). Another form of ageism in the Philippine context is through the emerging caption and hashtag of "*dapat talaga hiwalay ang Facebook ng matatanda*" (Maravilla, 2023), this pertains to the satirical call for separation of Facebook platform for geriatrics due to their perceived outdated and too conservative views for the younger generation values. This then opens a discussion on how digital immigrants convey their media accent and values through convergent and new media technological platforms such as Facebook. Another point to note is the *othering* of the older generations as expressed by the younger generations' stereotypes and discrimination.

There are limited studies on the involvement of age and consumption of media, in particular identifying fake news among baby boomers (Pecho-Ninapaytan et al., 2021). The underrepresentation of older people in communication and media research that are comprehensive and in-depth (Rosales et al., 2020; Creighton, 2018) calls for a study on digital immigrants being a vulnerable sector in the digital technology evolution. Critical understanding on how an individual spends concrete time in various media forms surfaces a sense of responsibility not only to the digital immigrants but to the younger social cohorts, digital innovators, media content producers and practitioners, and communication scholars. Ageism as a form of discrimination through limited data sets or exclusion of older generation data in digital algorithms and innovation negates the United Nations SDG 10, which advocates in reducing inequality through social inclusion of individuals and cultures in the peripheries, this includes the Filipino digital immigrants.

The study looked into the media choice, usage, and activity of the research participants through the lens of the Uses and Gratifications Theory of Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1960). Additionally, the study identified possible factors that affect Filipino digital immigrants' media use. The research inquired 'How do Filipino digital immigrants communicate with their mediated objective time? The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. Identify the top media choices of the Filipino digital immigrants
2. Identify the perceived gratifications of the Filipino digital immigrants in spending their mediated objective time
3. Determine the levels of media usage in terms of frequency, duration, consistency, and intensity
4. Test if age has a significant difference to the media usage of the Filipino digital immigrants

Media Gratification and Usage

Studies on media effects in communication theory take on various perspectives. Through the lens of Hypodermic Needle Theory, the audience is perceived as passive and conditioned to take in media messages instantaneously. In contrast, Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) according to Lazarsfeld presents an alternative view of media usage and audience agency through emphasizing gratification sought and obtained.

There are five assumptions in the Uses and Gratifications Theory:
1. People use media for their own particular purposes

2. People seek to gratify needs
3. Media compete for our attention and time
4. Media affect different people differently
5. People can accurately report their media use and motivation

Of the five assumptions, three and five emphasize the link between media and time. Assumption three claims that media compete for our attention and time, inherently, assumption five forwards that people can accurately report their media use and motivation (Griffin, et al., 2019). Additionally, Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) forwarded that "the audience is conceived of as active" (p. 510), however, in the similar discussion, they mentioned Bogart's (1965) study that contradicts UGT's assumption discussing that media experiences are more of pastime instead of a purposeful activity. This discussion was again highlighted in Ruggiero's (2000) elaboration that UGT in the new media landscape must address. Inherently, the initial medium focused in UGT is television; most of the earlier studies and extensions were geared towards television, which is a traditional form of media.

With the evolving media ecology, UGT thrives its way in the new media landscape. Several researches on usage of social media services or termed as SMS (Whiting, 2013) like Facebook (Hossain, 2019) and TikTok (Falgoust, et al., 2022) look at the typologies of new media use and provide an extension to Alan Rubin's typologies of gratification in viewing television (Ruggiero, 2000). Most of the studies utilizing UGT are focused on SMS and update the factors/reasons/typologies of media use. The study of Bahfiarti and Arianto (2022) about Covid-19 media content found that millennial Indonesians seek more influence from conventional media than the new media. The researchers looked at media usage through the layers of frequency, duration, consistency and reasons for usage.

Research Framework

The study explored the experiences of digital immigrants such as the Baby Boomer, and Generation X, in the continuously evolving landscape of convergent and new media in the Philippines through the lens of Uses and Gratifications Theory of Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1950). The research looked at the intersectionality of the UGT concepts of *active* and *passive* audience with Henri Bergson's (1950) concept of *la duree* or *pure duration* and how the Filipino digital immigrants spend their mediated objective time through the report of their media choice, gratification, and usage. Figure 1 represents the conceptual framework of the study.
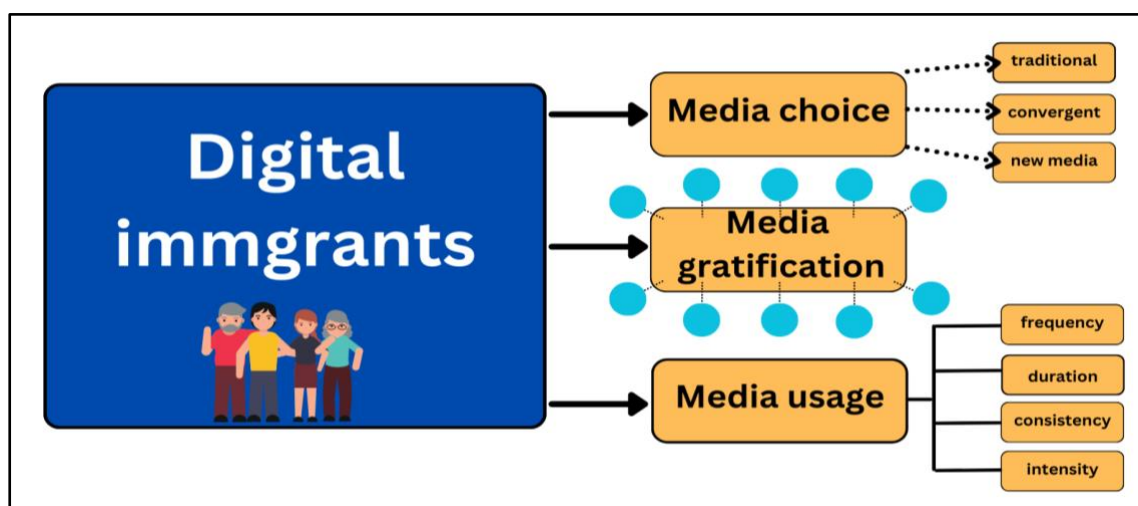
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The research focused on the Baby boomer and Generation X or more known as digital immigrants (Prensky, 2001). The study as anchored with the Uses and Gratifications Theory of Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) focused on the Filipino digital immigrants' media choice, gratification, and usage. Media choice is categorized through traditional (print newspaper, radio, TV), convergent (online newspaper, online radio, online TV), and new media (online games, social media, and internet). Traditional media were identified based on Mcluhan's media epochs as elaborated in Media Ecology Theory (Griffin et al., 2019). Convergent media categories were identified through the notions of technological, content, and cultural convergence as focus. While economic and political convergence are still considered on the peripheries. There were a lot of new and emerging media technologies, the study focused on the most used digital media based on Meltwater 2023 data, which are internet in general, social media, and online gaming (Howe, 2023). The study excluded online shopping as e-commerce discussions on marketing and mobile usage. Media choice as a variable of the study focused on media broadcasting and excluded telecommunications (Latzer, 2013) in order to sustain the focus of the research which is mediated objective time.

Media gratification was also identified through the typologies that emerged in the study of Whiting and Williams (2013) as it caters to convergent and new media as well. The identified ten uses and gratifications themes are: (1) social interaction, (2) information seeking, (3) pass time, (4) entertainment, (5) relaxation, (6) expression of opinions, (7) communicatory utility, (8) convenience utility, (9) information sharing, and (10) surveillance/knowledge about others. Media usage was quantified through the categories of (a) frequency, (b) duration, (c) consistency, and (d) intensity (Bahfiarti et al., 2022).

Methodology

The study used a quantitative approach in understanding the mediated objective time of Filipino digital immigrants. The study looked at the relationship of digital immigrants as the independent variable to the dependent variable which is media usage. A non-probability purposive sampling was applied through the following qualifications: age range (43-77 years old) for digital immigrant generational cohort; residency in National Capital Region for urban geographic consideration; and must be a legal Filipino citizen during the conduct of the study. Recruitment of the participants was implemented through word-of-mouth and online invitations. The survey questionnaire included provisions for informed consent which

emphasizes that their participation in the study was voluntary. It was clarified to the potential digital immigrant respondents that their sensitive personal information will be processed and disposed of with utmost confidentiality in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Instrument and Measures

Physical and online survey questionnaires through Google forms were distributed during the first two weeks of June 2023. The survey, with English and Filipino versions, consists of five parts which are: (1) demographics; (2) media choice; (3) media gratification; (4) media usage; and (5) intensity and passivity usage. Media gratification choices were based on the themes identified by Whitman and Williams (2013). Media usage has four sub-parts, which are frequency, duration, consistency, and intensity. Frequency and duration was measured through Likert-type scale while consistency and intensity were identified through ordinal measures. The fifth part inquired the possible passivity of the respondents' media use through the binary choice of 'yes' or 'no'. The media usage variable measure with 26 items was tested through Cronbach's Alpha Test of Reliability. The internal consistency of the measure is .834 which means that the media usage measure is good to acceptable.

Data Gathering and Analysis

The online and physical survey were implemented in the first two weeks of June 2023 with a total of 70 counts of data gathered. Afterwards, the researcher encoded 61 physical surveys for data collation together with nine online responses. After data cleaning, three samples were excluded due to incomplete responses in the media usage part. The 67 samples were analyzed using SPSS-Statistical Package for Social Science software for descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency count was applied in analyzing data for the respondents' demographics – age, gender, and educational background, media choice, and gratification. The Shapiro-Wilk test of normality reveals that the distribution of cases is non-normal, skewed, and kurtotic, hence the inferential statistics applied was non-parametric – Kruskal-Wallis H Test.

Results

Filipino Digital Immigrants in NCR

Most of the digital immigrant respondents are part of the Generation X cohort with 46 counts or a total of 69%, while the remaining 31% are Baby Boomers with 21 frequency count. In terms of gender, the sample cases are almost equally distributed with the following details: female – 32 (48%); male – 31(46%); gay – 1 (2%); and 5% of the respondents opted not to disclose their gender role and preference. The respondents educational background data show that 43% are college graduate with a count of 29; 22% are high school graduates with 15 counts; 16% have vocational degrees with 11 counts; partial college (8%) education background and post-graduate degree (8%) holders have 5 counts each, and 3% of the respondents are elementary graduates. In summary, most of the respondents are members of Generation X, female and male with the difference of one count (2%), and are college graduates.

Descriptive Statistics Results

Media Choice. In terms of their first media choice, respondents prefer internet sites (48%), social media (25%), and traditional radio (12%). The second media choice are social media

(52%), internet sites (16%), and online TV (9%). For the third media choice, respondents prefer online TV (43%), internet sites (15%), and 9% for social media, online gaming, and traditional TV equally. This reveals that Filipino digital immigrant respondents prefer new media such as internet sites and social media as their lead choice of media technology in spending their objective mediated time.

Media Gratification. Filipino Baby Boomers and Generation X respondents utilize their mediated objective time to (2) seek information with 53 counts (76%), (7) communicatory utility with 40 counts (60%), and (9) information sharing with 34 counts (51%). This forwards that respondents' spend their mediated objective time for the gratifying purposes of receiving and sending information and improve communication experience.

Media Usage. The dependent variable of the study consists of four sub-components which are (a) frequency, (b) duration, (c) consistency, and (d) intensity. This was adapted from the framework of the quantitative study of Bahfiarti and Arianto (2022) that utilized the lens of Uses and Gratifications Theory in analyzing the media exposure of Millennial in Indonesia. The respondents shared their media usage pertaining to their top media choice among traditional, convergent, and new media. Media usage of Filipino digital immigrants in the National Capital Region uses more of new media such as internet sites and social media with not less than three up to more than 5 hours a day. On the other hand, the least used media according to the respondents is online and print newspapers. This daily media usage routine report changes sometimes. In using their top media choice, their intensity rate is towards the upper bound of 8 points; they try to focus and be immersed with the media usage however, there are scenarios that lead them to passive usage such as disturbances from home chores and work tasks. Passive media usage was also reported as a form of accompaniment. Filipino digital immigrants obtain media gratification through seeking and sharing information and for the media's affordance of communicatory utility.

Inferential Statistics

The study identified if the independent variable of age of the Filipino digital immigrants has a significant difference with their reported media usage. Correlation between the variables are tested through a non-parametric statistical test of Kruskal Wallis using the SPSS software at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Age and Media Usage. The four sub components of media usage were tested with the age of the respondents. Results reveal that there are no significant differences with the age and frequency with p-values of 0.713 for traditional, 0.359 for convergent, and 0.255 for new media. There is no significant difference with age and duration with p-values of 0.762 for traditional, 0.951 for convergent, and 0.302 for new media. Additionally, age has no significant difference with the consistency of media usage with p-value=0.538. Interestingly, age is almost significant, but not quite, with the intensity of media usage with p-value of 0.068.

The researcher also tested other respondent demographics such as gender and educational background to see if these aspect characteristics of the digital immigrant user have significant causal relationship through the similar inferential statistics and degree of confidence.

Gender and Media Usage. Kruskal Wallis Test reveals that there is no significant difference with the gender of Filipino digital immigrants with the frequency of media usage with p-

values of 0.729 for traditional, 0.88 for convergent, and 0.742 for new media. There is no significant difference with age and duration of media usage as well with reported p-values of 0.449 for traditional, 0.388 for convergent, and 0.319 for new media. Consistency of media usage does not confer with the gender of the digital immigrant media use as well with p-value=0.639. On the other hand, gender has a significant difference with the intensity of media usage with a p-value of 0.058.

Educational Background and Media Usage. Results show that educational background has an almost, but not quite, significant difference with the frequency of media usage with the p-values of 0.083 for traditional, 0.148 for convergent, and 0.060 for new media.

Educational background has a significant difference with the duration of media usage with p-values of 0.004 for traditional and 0.046 for new media. Convergent media duration and educational background has no causal relationship with p-value=0.543. Likewise, consistency of media usage is not linked with educational background with p-value=0.129. Educational background has a significant difference with the intensity of media usage of the Filipino digital immigrants with p-value of 0.016.

Table 1: Summary of Kruskal Wallis Test

MEDIA USAGE	AGE	GENDER	EDUCATION BACKGROUND
Frequency	X	X	O (.060 – new media)
Duration	X	X	√ (0.004 – traditional) (0.046 – new media)
Consistency	X	X	X
Intensity	O (.068)	√ (0.058)	√ (0.016)

In summary as depicted by Table 1, age and gender of the Filipino digital immigrant-respondents have no significant difference to the frequency, duration, and consistency of media usage. Educational background has a significant relationship with duration, intensity, and almost with frequency. The intensity of media usage of Baby boomer and Generation X respondents have significant relationships with educational background, gender, and almost with age.

Discussions

The succeeding paragraphs elaborate the derived analysis points from the reported results of the study.

Digital Immigrants in a VUCA World

Results of the study opposes the stark compartmentalization of digital skills in relation to age. Several scholars (Ignatius, 2014; Venter, 2017) forward that media choice is dictated by the age of the user. However, the current study confirms the divergent claim of Creighton (2018) that generation is not the issue; age does not determine digital learning of an individual. Context is a crucial indicator of one's digital learning through the aspects of familiarity, cost, and immediacy. Findings of the study forward that educational background of the Filipino

digital immigrants is a crucial context in determining the duration of mediated objective time expenditure on traditional and new media.

Being in a new environment entails various adjustments for a newcomer. This has been common for Filipinos in various aspects, specifically for the Baby boomers and Generation X in the context of the digital world. They needed to adapt and develop their media literacy and skills to keep up with the evolution of the physical and meta world towards digital modernization (Macale, 2019; Gallardo-Echenique, 2015; Anzari et al., 2021). This entails for Filipino digital immigrants to learn how to use their preferred media choice such as the internet, social media sites, and even online television in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) world. Being on the peripheries, digital immigrants were also susceptible to predatory digital world experiences such as scams, fake news (Pecho-Ninapaytan et al., 2021); ageism and discriminatory remarks from the younger generations (Meisner, 2021; Maravilla, 2023) due to their pronounce generational accent (Prensky, 2001); and homophilic digital media patterns and services managed by young innovators (Rosales et al. 2020). Digital immigrants as Learners of Digital Era (LoDE) (Rapetti & Cantoni, 2013) should also be catered and included in media information literacy campaigns that will provide awareness and opportunities for learning about the meta digital space and territories in the VUCA world.

Black Mirror Is in – Parchment Is Out

In terms of media choice, even Filipino digital immigrants in an urban location prefer new media, such as internet sites and social media, over traditional media such as traditional radio and printed newspapers. With a duration report of more than five hours, this affirms the Meltwater data (Howe, 2023) that new media consumption of Filipinos is twice the average level of global consumption (Buchholz, 2022, Newsbytes.PH, 2023; Licsi, 2022). Too much reliance on new media conveys that Filipino digital immigrants' dominant sense receptors and skills are more keen on audiovisual stimuli delivered in a fast-paced manner over listening and reading. McLuhan on Media Ecology theory shared that digital age experiences revolutionizes the cerebral functions, values, and behaviors of media users (Griffin et al., 2019). One thing to consider in terms of critical thinking is the possible decrease in terms of the reading culture of Filipinos whether through printed and online newspapers. Thus, the fast-paced digital world may alter the depth of understanding of written texts, which may lead to detrimental interpretations of facts and skewed logic (Nwammuo et al., 2020). In terms of behavior, the digital age poses the possibility of shift from the global village to tribal warfare due to diverse beliefs and values afforded by the multiplicity of social realities and echo chambers in the digital space. In interpersonal relationships, internet and social media hyperconnectivity may lead people linked to the gateway of the world, yet heavy reliance in black mirrors indicates that people are connected yet alone (Turkle, 2012).

Digital Immigrants as Social Creatures

Filipino digital immigrants obtain individual and social gratification in surfing the internet and social media (Grossberg et al., 1998). They consume media for the purposes of getting information. This may include various specifications such as: gaining a sense of security through knowledge of relevant events in their immediate environment, learning through self-education on practical and personal matters, and satisfying one's curiosity. On a social level, information seeking through new media gratifies users through obtaining knowledge on crucial events and conditions of the society and the world. Information sharing relates to the

communicatory utility purpose on why Filipino digital immigrants use new media. Information obtained is used as means of facilitating social interaction and integration of oneself within their socialization circles such as family, peers, and community. This brings forth a sense of companionship and belonging, and accommodates for empathy and correlation, which is a crucial need on the perspective that humans are social beings. These social needs cut across temporal generations and digital adeptness. Filipino digital immigrants as *Homo temporalis* (Littlejohn et al., 2009) spend their mediated objective time on communicatory actions and interactions, which exhibits the distinct characteristic of digital immigrants as *Homo communicatio.*

The findings of gratifications obtained by Filipino digital immigrants relates to the call for revisiting the UGT gratification typologies in the traditional and new media context given the shift of media users and consumption towards the digital sphere (Whiting et al., 2013; Ruggiero, 2000; Bahfiarti et al., 2022) even in the global south such as Philippines. There should be a continuous investigation, critical use, and cautious application of the gratification typologies in the context of the research through the layers of media technology, users, and culture.

Digital Immigrants' Bargain

Elderly Filipinos in an urban situation spend at least 3 hours to above 5 hours of their objective time on the internet and social media. Through the significant relationship of educational background to the media usage duration and intensity, it would be noteworthy to reflect on the cascading of digital media information and literacy in terms of usage specially on the digital culture peripheries such as the older generations.

There should be a demand for knowledge dissemination of informed expenditure of mediated objective time. Mediated objective time is supposed to be spent in media wherein the emphasis of *agency* is on the individual, however, media technologies melts its way to the daily routine of Filipino digital immigrants where an alternative perspective is observed, in which, the *agency* can also be on the media technology through its accompaniment purpose, and real-life tasks at home and work are viewed as the disturbance in the expenditure of mediated time. This coincides with the idea that media also affects how people perceive and spend time, in fact "our use of technologies may itself have contributed to this experience of time" (Haddon & Green, 2009, p. 83). Through this angle, mediated objective time is intangible and budgeted. As a currency in a trade, it may be spent or taken away from the media users in exchange of consumption and gratification. This reinforces Neil Postman's extension of McLuhan's Media Ecology Theory extension: "a new technology always presents us with a Faustian *bargain* – a potential deal with the devil…Technology giveth and technology taketh away" (Griffin et al., 2019, p. 317). One must examine the juxtaposition of Faustian bargain and media consumption through mediated objective time expenditure, particularly on how one's life duration is spent or given. This adheres to the UGT claim that media competes for one's time against other media and against all other things that need to be done such as work tasks and home chores.

Conclusion

Filipino digital immigrants' media choice are new media – internet and social media. They use the preferred media form for information seeking, communicatory utility, and information sharing purposes. Filipino digital immigrants tend to use new media such as

internet sites and social media over traditional media like print newspapers. In detail, online gaming is used for 3-4 hours, and both internet and social media sites are used 5 hours and above on a daily basis. This daily media usage may change sometimes depending on the routine of the respondent. The intensity in active media usage is also high even though there are instances that they utilize media passively due to disturbances and passive accompaniment. Age has no significant relationship with the media usage of the respondents. However, findings reveal that educational background has a significant difference with the duration and intensity of media usage.

Implications

Based on the analyses, results and findings of the study social and theoretical recommendations are advocated.

Boomers and Generation X Deserve More

All digital citizens are susceptible to predatory and discriminatory acts in the new media epoch. Filipino Digital immigrants as part of the vulnerable peripheries in the meta digital space should be provided more opportunities for awareness and learning. This calls for a more inclusive approach to media information literacy advocacies with respect to digital immigrants as LoDE-Learners of Digital Era. Apart from recalibration of media and information literacy programs, digital media platform innovators and practitioners should revamp their business model for a more comprehensive and non-ageist new media mechanisms.

Critical Credence to New Media

With the prevalence of hyper mediatization, it is crucial to advocate for critical media consumption. In the era where disinformation and deterioration of logical ascendancy is rampant, all the more that media and communication academicians should emphasize the praxis of communication and media scholarship in the applied physical and digital spaces. It is vital to relay the sense of awareness on how the meta digital space works their business model through algorithm, social listening, and echo chambers. Not all LoDe are aware of the information that in the new media world, if the product is free it means they and their data are the product. With this, there should be a proactive advocacy on self-regulation in terms of new media consumption and informed expenditure of one's objective time.

UGT in the New Media

The UGT has much to offer in terms of further understanding the relationship dynamics of the media and the man. There should be continuous recalibration of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, specifically with the ever evolving landscape of media technology use and digital citizenship gratification. This study offered an in-depth possibility on how media users such as the digital immigrants spend and report their mediated objective time. Insights on how media compete with their work and home chores pivots the view on how the agency bounces back and forth to the media consumer – *I spend my mediated time*, and technology – *'I take your mediated time'*. This opens an avenue for further exploration on the possibilities for the theory in focus.

Recommendations

Further studies may consider expanding the study through various social cohorts including digital natives such as the Millennial, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha. Distinction between the urban and rural spaces and geographic culture would account for a holistic replication of the initial study. Additionally, it would be noteworthy to explore the intensity of media usage through the notion of mediated pure duration through qualitative research.

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Hearing Gender: Re-thinking Gender, Sound and Public Space Through a Female Soundwalk Project and a Sound Installation in Hong Kong

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Abstract

Over the past three years, we conducted two rounds of soundwalks with Chinese female immigrants in Hong Kong's public spaces. These soundwalks, designed to guide participants through diverse public spaces, facilitated deep listening, creative recording, and reflective practices. By documenting their auditory experiences and personal reflections, we observed the manifestation of gendered perceptions of safety, belonging, and identity within urban environments. Our analysis reveals how these gendered auditory experiences correlate with theories of gender performativity (Butler, 1990) and spatial dynamics (Massey, 2013). These interactions highlight the influence of gender on auditory perceptions in public spaces, underscoring the socially constructed nature of both gender and space. Building on these insights, we developed an interactive sound installation that aims to consider gender in auditory experiences. This installation processes all input sounds to produce "gender-reflective" outputs, enabling participants to hear each other's voices devoid of visual cues. This design compels the audience to engage with the content of speech rather than traditional auditory markers such as pitch or timbre, fostering a critical re-examination of the relationship between gender and sound. Our findings amplify the sounds of migrant women and challenge conventional, patriarchal frameworks within sound studies. By integrating participants' narratives and soundscapes, this project advocates for more inclusive urban planning and policies that acknowledge the auditory dimension of women's lived experiences, echoing the call for situated knowledge in feminist geography (Haraway, 1988).

Keywords: Gender, Sound, Hong Kong

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Introduction

Sound is one of the important ways we perceive and communicate with the world. World Soundscape Project (WSP) is the earliest soundscape research project, the WSP researchers defined soundscape as "the relationship of man and sonic environments of every kind[1]", exploring the dynamic links between people and sound environment. The concept of "gendered soundscapes" explores how sound environments both reflect and reinforce gendered dynamics. This idea integrates insights from the studies of acoustic ecology and feminist geography. Previous works have examined gendered soundscapes in various contexts. For instance, Salam Al-Mahadin's research focuses on how nationalist radio stations in Jordan reinforce a cultural division of dialects, marginalizing urban dialects used by women (Al-Mahadin, 2017). In a similar vein Christine Ehrick, analyses how women's voices were gendered in radio, examining the participation of women in the broadcasting field (Ehrick, 2015). Feminist scholars also developed a new type of sonic arts practice based on feminist theory and practice (Keeffe & Nogueira, 2022). Sound as a unique medium is widely used for feminist research and practice.

This study is born in the context of the first author's PhD research, which focuses on Chinese female immigrants' auditory experience in Hong Kong's public spaces. Over the past three years, we have engaged in various practices and fieldwork to explore how sound serves as a unique medium to reflect gender dynamics and identity issues. The soundwalk project discussed in this paper refers to an artist-led project which puts Chinese female immigrants at the centre of the creative soundwalking process in Hong Kong's public spaces. Following on and based on discoveries from the fieldwork, we collected diverse data and utilised sound data in artistic creations, such as soundscape compositions and sound installations, to explore gender and sound in different spaces. These experiences help us understand how gender is shaped and performed in different contexts. One of the attempts was an interactive sound installation created in 2024, which was exhibited at Tung Po Multi-Purpose Hall in Hong Kong on 26 August 2024.

In recent years, Hong Kong has seen a significant rise in female immigration including those who are joining the labour force. As a 2024 report notes: "The sex ratio (i.e. number of males per 1,000 females) of the Hong Kong population has decreased continuously. This arose as a result of the large inflow of female One-way Permit holders from the mainland of China joining their husbands in Hong Kong and the considerable number of female foreign domestic helpers working in Hong Kong.[2]" Immigrants from the mainland to Hong Kong have made an important contribution to the growth of the total population of Hong Kong. Chinese immigrant women live in Hong Kong in different ways and face different situations, in terms of culture, language, or social system. With similar but different experiences from native Hong Kongers, their unique identities also caused conflicts and contradictions at different levels, such as language barrier, unemployment problems ect.

This study begins with the auditory stories of Chinese female immigrants who face the challenges of negotiating their gendered identities within their cultural heritage and new urban environments. As they navigate the spaces, they offer a unique perspective on the interplay between sound and space. This paper aims to provide a unique lens for exploring

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[1] Truax, B. (1974). Soundscape studies: an introduction to the world soundscape project. Numus West, 5, 36-39.
[2] "Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics" 2024 edition by Census and Statistics Department
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region:
https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/data/stat_report/product/B1010003/att/B10100032024AN24B0100.pdf

the meaning of "Hearing Gender", which aims to capture the dynamic relationship between gender and auditory experience through listening, rather than simply focusing on the different identities of the listening subjects. By examining how these female migrants navigate public spaces through sound, we found that their unique auditory experiences uncover the nuanced ways in which gender is perceived and performed. Building on these insights, we developed the sound installation to further expand our understanding of gender and the auditory experiences, and invite broader engagement of gender and sound issues. Through this progressive exploration - from specific cultural auditory experiences to broader theoretical reflections, provides new perspectives for sound studies and feminist geography, and advocates rethinking the inclusivity of urban spaces, promoting the importance of diverse auditory experiences.

Soundwalk as a Feminist Methodology

Soundwalk practice began in the last century, developing from a methodological tool to include recent artistic approaches (Paquette & McCartney, 2012). The concept of "soundwalk" was first introduced by R. Murry Schafer, the leader of the World Soundscape Project, who argued that "The soundwalk is an exploration of the soundscape of a given area using a score as a guide[3]", a score consisting of sounds that attract the listeners' attention and ambient sounds in the vicinity. Soundwalking has also been used as a feminist methodology to explore females' sensory engagement and embodiment of hidden contexts (O Keeffe & Nogueira, 2018). In addition, Stephanie Loveless argues for listening as a feminist and ecologically oriented way of engaging with the world, highlighting the shift from eye to ear in soundwalking (Loveless, 2020). In our project, we developed the soundwalk methodology following Schafer's concept of "score guide", but granted the female participants more active roles, allowing them to design the "score/map" by themselves. Our focus was observing different specific listening modes, with a great level of performativity (Drever, 2020) through the sonic fabrics. By positioning soundwalk as a feminist practice in public space, we aim to capture the sensory engagement, the invisible dynamics, also the identities and memories through females' engagement in the public space.

We've conducted two rounds of soundwalk activities in Hong Kong from 2022 to 2024. Due to COVID-19-related restrictions, at the beginning of this project we interviewed 13 different Chinese female immigrants online about their situations and lives in Hong Kong, the interview questions including the personal identity and living experience, public space perception, and urban sound environment perception. Based on these, we drafted an initial analysis of our participants' identities and aural experiences in Hong Kong's public spaces.

According to their lifestyles, the interview outcomes revealed that the active public spaces for them are both daily routines they pass by and public spaces that align with their interests. Thus, we categorised their later soundwalk practice routes into "daily route" and "favourite route". Following the routes they chose by themselves, we conducted individualised soundwalks (under the researchers' guidance) in different areas in Hong Kong. During the process, we encouraged our participants to use their bodies as a medium for exploring the relationship between sound, space and identity, activating their auditory sense to feel, capture, and resonate with the environment. A Zoom H3VR audio recorder and headphones

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[3] Schafer, R. M. (1993). The soundscape: Our sonic environment and the tuning of the world. Simon and Schuster. p213

as the key equipment were provided to the participants, and during the soundwalk they followed these basic rules:

1. Aim to listen attentively and avoid speaking or talking during the soundwalk;
2. Control the pace and stopovers of each walk as they see fit, but ensure each route lasts for at least 30 minutes;
3. Capture the sounds during the walk if something catches their interest.

After the soundwalk, they were interviewed. A few weeks later, we invited them to listen to the recordings they had recorded before to carry out reflective listening. Throughout the whole process, we focused on their behaviour, found the differences between how they selected the recording locations, how they listened and interacted with the sound environment and how they reflected on their recordings.

During the soundwalk activity, the Chinese female migrants are not only listeners but also creators. David Ben Shannon defines four different ways within soundwalking practice to discuss the possibilities of feminist sound studies and give a self-assessment on how to judge a soundwalking project as a feminist project (Shannon, 2019). In our soundwalk process design, the identity of Chinese female migrants and their listening background are important elements to be considered. The soundwalk here is not only a medium for articulating the subjectivity of the female body but also a method for using sound to communicate women's lived experiences. This process facilitates reconfiguring their roles and positions through auditory engagement in different spaces, cultivating an "audible female" presence.

Gender, Sound, Public Space

Listening, as an important feminist practice within arts activism (Firth, 2020), it's more than just focusing on sounds, also requires expanding our sensory and perceptual engagement with the environment (O Keeffe & Nogueira, 2018). Feminist geographers apply feminist theory to geographical analysis to explore how gender influences space and place. For example, Doreen Massey claims that spaces and places, and our senses of them, are gendered through and through, and we are not dealing with essential things about women or men, but how they are constructed. (Massey, 2013). In our research, we take soundwalk as a feminist method, engaging the female body in the public space environment through listening. We aim to illustrate that listening, as a method, can uncover hidden dynamics within space, while embodied listening can also serve as a way of constructing both space and gender. Here, we would like to discuss the dynamics of gender performativity in public space with an engaging listening experience. Judith Butler considers gender as being performative (Butler, 2004), and gender is constructed through constant behaviour rather than innate nature. The auditory sense reflects gender as performative during the soundwalk project in different ways. Here what we would like to discuss is the "sound", not only from the sound itself and its material aspect but also within a multidimensional context related to sound, including women's voices, listening, and sound practice engagement.

The first thing to note is the relationship between gender and sound. As Marie Thompson pointed out, sound and gender are both inseparable from other things (Thompson, 2018). Here, we aim to discuss the dynamic relationship between sound and gender, which is interwoven within the complex context of the epistemology of the listening subject, the physical environment of sound transmission, and the interrelations between sound and technology. We consider sound, as a material attribute, to be neutral, but under the combined influence of other factors, a "gendered soundscape" is constructed. At the same time, sound

can also serve as a factor in gender performance, connecting people, sound, and the environment within different listening paradigms. Following on, the concept of space we discuss here is not only geometric, but also concerns linearized time and imaginary space which can be put in an open contextualization. Lefebvre divided the analysis of space into three levels or aspects: the "spatial practice", "representations of space" and "representation space" (Lefebvre, 1991). Sound inter-weaves in different layers of the "space", and plays different roles when shuttling through different subjects.

We would like to use an example from one participant's soundwalk experience to further illustrate this point in more detail. One of the soundwalk routes she chose was her regular running path, located in a district mostly built on reclaimed land along the Shing Mun River in Sha Tin. We stopped at different spots during the soundwalk. The first stop was near a tree with many birds singing. She mentioned that she liked the sounds of the birds, as it gave her a feeling of peace. Later, before we arrived at the next location, we could already hear some sounds ahead of us. It turned out to be a man singing a Cantonese song – something quite common in Hong Kong (often, elderly men or women sing karaoke in public spaces). Unexpectedly, the participant recorded the old man's singing and stood there for a long time, seemingly captivated by the sounds.

Figure 1: Soundwalk in Shing Mun River

"This is my dad's favourite song, 'Love in the Late Autumn' by Alan Tam, my dad really likes Hong Kong culture, he used to play some songs by Hong Kong singers at home when I was a kid, that's how I got some first impressions of this place, some fantasies about this place, so I ended up choosing Hong Kong myself when I took the university entrance exams, I think it's quite destiny and quite emotional."

After talking about the background of these sounds, I heard she was singing along to the song in a quiet voice. I asked why she was not singing louder, and she said she had gotten used to keeping her voice down in public space – she also mentioned she was educated to behave in this way – and did not feel that confident singing in front of people. During the playback of the recordings, the participant noticed that the bird sounds she had previously enjoyed during the walk no longer evoked the same sense of peace. Instead, she experienced a sense of irritation when listening to the mechanical reproduction of these sounds. This shift in emotional response prompted us to reflect on the influence of technology in mediating auditory experiences. In this case, the participant's soundwalk experience indirectly reflected the connection between her auditory habits and memories. At the same time, through listening in public spaces, we unexpectedly discovered how gender performativity manifests.

By interpreting this from a sonic perspective, we were able to gain insight into certain aspects of gender performance. Through this case, we can imagine how sounds shut in different layers of the space, the informative, fading, bouncing, and shaping characteristics, actively connected the human and environment.

A Sound Installation: Re-thinking

The sound installation, *Whispered Silhouette*, was created as an artistic exploration to further explore the interrelated dynamics between sound, gender and space. The exhibiting space is described as an acoustic environment where sound, space, and time intersect in intriguing and challenging ways for the audience (Bandt, 2006). The sonic aspect becomes the primary feature of the artwork, allowing the audience to explore the space in various ways. Sound can be understood as a triangulation of events: sonic vibrations, our bodies' culturally shaped capacity to receive these vibrations, and how we interpret them, all of which are constantly interacting and subject to negotiation (Eidsheim, 2011). We aim to use the sound installation to critically rethink the intersection of sound, space, and gender which can reveal culturally embedded listening practices, and challenge traditional perceptions of how bodies experience and navigate acoustic environments.

Figure 2: The Interactive Sound Installation, *Whispered Silhouette*, 2024

The installation consists of a discarded moving box with two metal horns—one for speaking and the other for listening. The visitors can sit down to listen or speak. Also the instructions encourage the visitors to interact with the box, the aim being to activate the ear, the body, and perceive the sound inside the space in a different way. The speaker's voice is transmitted through the horns and undergoes one of seven or eight pre-programmed sound transformations using the audio programming environment Max/MSP as it reaches the listener, and the effects change every minute. The input voices are altered using distortion, amplitude modulation (AM), ring modulation (Ringmod) and variable delay (VD) individually or in combination. An important feature of the installation is its unidirectional communication structure, whereby the speaker cannot hear the transformed sound and the listener receives two simultaneous inputs at the same time: a faint trace of the original unprocessed voice, and a more dominant transformed voice. This superimposed auditory experience creates a unique tension between clarity and distortion, requiring the listener to discern between the intelligibility of the original speech and the ambiguity of the sound distortion. The undeformed voice, although faintly audible, still reminds the listener of the speaker's original voice. In addition to the auditory component, this installation also emphasises the importance of physical interaction in sound perception. While speaking/listening is one of the main modes of engagement, the installation encourages participants to interact with the box through their bodies, generating sound through

movement and touch, encouraging the audience to engage in different ways in which sound is generated and perceived.

An influential feminist psychoanalytic tradition has regarded the voice as a crucial site of subjectivity, and it engages with gender as a fundamental and generative category of difference (Sterne, 2012). As Julia Kristeva has argued, the voice is not merely a tool for language but also a means of embodying desire and sensibility (Kristeva,1986). In terms of the sound itself, the installation transforms the raw human voice signal into a de-semanticized sound experience, where the sound processing effects change periodically through timers and stochastic modules, ensuring that the listener hears different sound morphing effects at different times of the day. In contrast, the ambient sounds (the sounds within the exhibition space) are fed into the system at a faint volume, but they pass through the same sound processing modules. They are joined by the participants' voices to undergo morphing, mirroring the fluidity of sound and serves as a metaphor for how technology influences our sense of identity and subjectivity. The design aims to disrupt the clarity of speech, and de-semanticizing sound can be seen as a strategy to defy gender norms and experience the texture and variation of sound solely through the senses and the body.

From a listening perspective, the installation evokes a layered auditory experience, where the dual auditory experience serves as a metaphor for rethinking the intersections of gender, sound, and public space. In this installation, we consider the transformation of sound in space as a process from the "authentic" to the "constructed", and we would like to convey that "listening" itself is full of uncertainty: it should not simply be categorised but should be seen as a multi-layered phenomenon in constant flux. In this way, the installation leads the listener to reflect on the diversity and complexity of the relationship between sound, space and gender, which takes on different meanings as they change socially, culturally and spatially. In the artistic practice of soundwalk project mentioned earlier, we emphasise the relationship between listening and space, arguing that women, as both vocalising and listening subjects, are not only passively receiving sound, but also experiencing the different dimensions of sound through the movement of their bodies and the transformation of space, and we hope to reinforce the participants' bodily involvement and interaction with space in this installation as well. By encouraging participants to physically and aurally engage with the installation, we hope to help listeners rethink the complex dynamics of sound, identity, and spatial issues.

Conclusions

In summary, this paper explores the fluid relationship between gender, sound, and public space through our soundwalk practices and interactive sound installations, with a particular focus on the auditory experiences of Chinese female migrants in Hong Kong. Discussing various sound-related projects, we advocate for a listening approach that captures the dynamic interplay between gender, identity, and the urban environment. This approach emphasises active, embodied participation and layered listening to reveal the fluid, mutually constitutive relationships among these elements, continuously shaped through the act of listening. The interactive sound installation further expands this exploration by removing sonic semantics and directional cues, prompting participants to rethink the relationship between sound and gender. Through this installation, we encourage a re-examination of how we navigate and interpret auditory environments, fostering a deeper reflection on the ways sound influences our understanding of space and identity. By combining artistic practice with insights from feminist geography, this research offers new perspectives on the experience and navigation of sound and space, highlighting the importance of diverse and situated auditory

knowledge. We call for not only a re-evaluation of inclusivity in public spaces but also a more nuanced understanding of how diverse auditory experiences can inform urban planning and contribute to more inclusive and responsive spatial designs.

Acknowledgments

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Acculturation and Ethnic Identity: The Case of Vietnam Around 17th-19th Centuries and Now Global Integration

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Abstract

Acculturation is a phenomenon that occurs when groups of people (communities, ethnicities) with different cultures interact and come into contact with each other, creating cultural changes in one or both groups. It is the combination of "endogenous" and "exogenous" factors that create richer, more diverse, and more progressive cultural development. However, the challenges and consequences brought about by cultural exchange and acculturation are not significant, in other words, there are many "gains" but also many "losses". Cultural globalization is an unprecedented opportunity to expand cultural exchanges, but can also lead to cultural similarity (homogenization), losing the identity of poorer, weaker peoples. Cultural globalization is an inevitable trend in which each nation must know "cultural self-reliance" to ensure cultural diversity (UNESCO, Declaration 2001). In the course of history, the Vietnamese people have had many successful acculturations when exposed to different cultures such as Chinese and Western culture while still retaining and enriching national identity. From there, the so-called "cultural bravery" is formed so that Vietnam can confidently integrate deeply with the world in the current globalization process. This article, from an interdisciplinary cultural-historical approach, wants to clarify the story of cultural acculturation, cultural bravery, and national identity through the case of cultural acculturation in Vietnam during the historical process. with a comparative perspective of the 17th – 19th centuries and the current period of global integration. This article hopes to present a case study to explain more interesting aspects of cultural adaptation and national identity in today's multi-trend, multi-color world.

Keywords: Cultural Acculturation, National Identity, Vietnamese Culture, Cultural Exchange

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Introduction

Cultural assimilation is an inevitable result when participating in the exchange and integration process of most countries in the world. Vietnam is no exception. In that process, as a matter of course, besides the positive aspects of "gaining a lot" are the negative aspects of "losing a lot". The problem is how to enhance cultural capacity and "filter" in order to maximize the enrichment of national culture and minimize negative consequences.

Acculturation is not a new concept in Vietnam and even more so in the world. This term refers to the contact between different cultures leading to internal changes in one of the two cultures. There is another understanding of acculturation: it is a process of cultural change and psychological change that is the result of the encounter between cultures. Acculturation is often associated with cultural exchange and integration.

The nature of acculturation is a dual process of cultural and psychological change that occurs as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and the individual members of those cultural groups. At the group level, acculturation often leads to changes in culture, customs, and social organizations. Notable group-level effects of acculturation often include changes in food, clothing, and language. At the individual level, differences in how individuals acculturate have been shown to be associated not only with changes in everyday behavior and treatment but also with a wide range of psychological and physical well-being.

Cultural assimilation often occurs in two ways: proactive and forced. Forced assimilation only occurs when culture A is enslaved by culture B with accompanying military, political, and administrative institutions (during the period of Northern domination, French domination, and American domination); voluntary assimilation is when both cultures actively integrate and exchange, and there are incentives and moves for cultural institutions to penetrate, exchange with each other, and absorb each other. This has been happening in Vietnam since the renovation and increasingly deep integration with the region and the world. However, regardless of the form of cultural assimilation, it always brings about impacts beyond the expectations of both cultural entities. These impacts can be positive or negative, or even both. This is clearly seen in the two contacts between Vietnamese culture and Chinese culture and Western culture in Vietnam in the past. Despite the persistent and vicious assimilation strategy of the Han people, after 1000 years of Chinese domination and resistance against Chinese domination, the Vietnamese people regained independence and created a brilliant Dai Viet culture, in which there were many elements belonging to or originating from Chinese culture but were Vietnamized to suit the Vietnamese soul, emotions, and thinking, of which the Confucian system, laws, and the model of governing the country were such products. Later, in the forced contact with Western culture (through missionary activities) and French culture, with the new slave mentality, the colonial regime could not have imagined that after nearly a century when the French withdrew, Vietnamese culture would have many more achievements; that is, a complete national language system with Latin characters that recorded Vietnamese pronunciation; a new stage art, painting, and romantic literature with a French romantic literary style. In particular, the infrastructure of houses in the Nordic style but containing the Vietnamese spirit is still located in the heart of Hanoi. It cannot be denied that without French culture, without the streams of thought of Saint Simon, Voltaire, Montesquieu, of the Enlightenment century, we could not have the patriotic thinking of Phan Chu Trinh, Phan Boi Chau, and without contact with French culture, we could not have the romantic literature, critical realism as well as the lyrical music that broke away from the conventional literary clichés and the previous pentatonic system to

form the most romantic music movement in Vietnam and still exists today, which we still call Bolero music.

Main Heading

Cultural Identity and Cultural Adaptation in Vietnamese History

Cultural Identity of Vietnamese People

Identity is a noun that refers to *"good elements that create a specific, general character"* (Lexicography Center, 2013, p. 42). When talking about identity, it means talking about the characteristics and unique marks as an identification of traditional cultural objects and phenomena that have been shaped in history, but that tradition is not "unchanged" but always in motion and development. Cultural subjects always create new cultural values on the basis of selective inheritance so that culture goes hand in hand with life but still maintains stability and consistency, that is, maintains the original nuances of culture. National identity individualizes Vietnamese culture, meaning that Vietnamese culture accepts changes and additions in the process of exchange and acculturation with world culture.

The connotation of creativity and invention is *"creating new material or spiritual values"* (Lexicography Center, 2013, p. 1091) and *"finding something meaningful and valuable for science and humanity"* (Lexicography Center, 2013, p. 990). If culture is understood as creativity, it includes material values and spiritual values created by human communities during their existence to suit the needs and purposes of that community in certain historical periods. Thus, human creative products are present in all social life, but the most important are spiritual values. Those values form the core, the cultural identity of the nation.

> *"The core of that vitality is culture in its most comprehensive and noble meaning, including a system of values: thoughts and emotions, ethics and qualities, intelligence and talent, the sensitivity to absorb new things from the outside, the awareness to protect the character and identity of the national community, the resistance and fighting power to protect itself and constantly grow."* (Pham V.D., 1994, p. 18)

Thus, the identity of any culture is resistance, the ability to purify cultural values when interacting with other cultures.

Culture represents the depth of a nation's development level. Talking about culture means talking about development. Therefore, talking about creativity in work as a good quality also affirms that culture is a manifestation of humans' creative ability and desire, helping people to perfect themselves. Vietnamese people are always conscious of preserving the national cultural identity, expressed through the appearance, character, personality, and creative ability of the cultural subject.

The manifestation of the national identity of Vietnamese culture is first of all in the passionate patriotism and the will to be self-reliant. Patriotism is the top quality, the most sacred value in the table of values of Vietnamese culture. Patriotism is the standard of value, the reason for living, and morality because for Vietnamese people, national consciousness develops very early. Patriotism is closely linked to love of home and love of the Fatherland because Vietnamese ethnic groups are all "children of one father, one family," sharing the same anniversary of the Hung Kings and the same bloodline as Lac Hong. Moreover, Vietnamese

people have a spirit of solidarity and a sense of community connecting individuals, families, villages, and Fatherland. These values are inseparable but always closely linked and blended. To love one's country is to unite to build and protect the Fatherland; that is a smart and profound choice. Besides, Vietnamese people are compassionate, tolerant, and value loyalty and morality. Benevolence is expressed in "humanity is based on peace for the people," always taking the people as the root. Vietnamese culture is a culture with strong national identity because "this country is a people's country—a country of the people, of folk songs and myths". Finally, Vietnamese people, past and present, all have good qualities, which are diligence, creativity in work, sophistication in behavior, and simplicity in lifestyle. Mentioning Vietnamese national identity is also expressed in all areas of material production of social life, in the way of production, thinking, in behavior with nature and society.

Customs and practices express national identity in the most profound and profound way. This is not only the habit and lifestyle of a community but also expresses a profound philosophy of the universe and human life. Culture is born in labor, becoming the driving force and development goal of society from low to high. Therefore, the culture and cultural identity of human communities are formed, nurtured, enriched, and developed throughout the development process.

The Process of Cultural Exchange and Assimilation in Vietnam-Historical Slices

Cultural exchange and acculturation is the process in which at least two or more cultures of different subjects meet and make contact with each other. In that process, there have been, or may be, internal changes in both the cultural model and method of each participating party, voluntarily or imposed. Cultural exchange and acculturation not only create the basis for the development of cultures, but that process also helps subjects to perceive, move towards the spirit of cultural tolerance and respect, and be more proactive in developing and preserving their own cultural heritage. Cultural exchange and acculturation transform and enrich the culture of each ethnic community and each country.

History has proven that no culture exists without at least one exchange with another culture. It is just that the level of exchange and the intensity of the exchanges lead to different cultural "transformations". Cultural exchange often leads to cultural assimilation, that is, the absorption and transformation of cultural elements imported from outside into ethnic cultural elements. To be accepted, newly imported cultural elements cannot contradict the traditional culture of the ethnic group. And during cultural assimilation, the receiving culture itself will also change in part to adapt and integrate with the new cultural elements. These are two positive effects of cultural exchange. In other words, it is thanks to cultural exchange that cultures and ethnic groups have more exogenous resources to self-adjust, innovate, and develop. If they exist in isolation, without cultural exchange with the outside world, cultures and ethnic groups not only cannot develop but also risk decline because the natural geographical conditions of the residential area will inevitably change and decline after a long period of human exploitation.

In theory, cultural exchange will be viewed from many different approaches. When referring to the receiving subject, we will see the active or passive stance in receiving cultural values in the exchange process of different cultures. The history of cultural exchange and acculturation in Vietnam also experienced the process of both active and passive (forced) reception. The influence of the acculturation process is at the individual and group levels (different community groups). At the group level, acculturation often leads to changes in culture,

customs, and social organizations. Notable group-level effects of acculturation often include changes in food, clothing, and language. At the individual level, differences in the way individuals acculturate have been shown to be related not only to changes in daily behavior and treatment but also to many areas of psychological and physical well-being. Some of the main stages and forms that need to be mentioned are:

In Vietnam, archaeological documents show that in the late Neolithic cultural period, discovered in Lang Son, Ha Tay, Phu Tho, Quang Ninh, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Tay Nguyen, and Nam Bo, dating back more than 4,000 years ago, many tribes took wet rice agriculture as their main economic activity, and they began to settle in villages (Do D.H., Nguyen D.N., Tran T.V., & Truong T.Y., 2001, p. 9). The wet rice civilization with the customs and practices of village culture gradually took shape. The model of social organization as well as the awareness of nature and of the relationship between humans and nature also had the first marks, creating the material activities of residents in the wet rice-growing areas.

The Dong Son culture period was the period when Viet-Muong culture reached its brilliant peak in the development of wet rice agriculture in the delta plains, in bronze-iron metallurgy, in village-country community organization, in ancestor worship, and in ethnic consciousness. Around the 7th century BC, on the basis of wet rice agriculture and the development of bronze-iron metallurgy, Viet-Muong residents built the Van Lang state, the first state in Southeast Asia, located in an area spanning from the midlands and deltas of North Vietnam, North Central Vietnam, and the Northeast highlands up to a part of today's Guangxi province of China. In 258 BC, this state was succeeded by the Au Lac state founded by An Duong Vuong Thuc Phan. Thanks to the achievements in bronze-iron metallurgy, Viet-Muong residents were able to earn a living, build a state, and protect their ethnic territory more effectively. The Vietnamese legend of the Golden Turtle God shows how the bronze arrows and crossbows of the Au Lac state hindered Trieu Da when he implemented his plan to expand his territory and establish his own country in the South, taking advantage of the collapse of the Qin Dynasty. But by 208 BC, Au Lac was annexed to Nam Viet, and by 111 BC, Nam Viet was annexed to the Han empire, opening the period of Chinese domination in Vietnamese history.

During the period of Chinese dominance (111 BC – 938 AD), the process of cultural exchange and acculturation took place in the northern region; the owners were the Vietnamese-Muong people. The first contact with Indian culture and Chinese culture was influenced by religion (Buddhism from Indian monks by sea to Vietnam and from Chinese monks by land), contact with Confucianism due to the "assimilation" process of the Han Dynasty, and the first contacts with Taoism (the mark in the legend of Chu Dong Tu). That was also the first contact between Vietnamese culture and Indian culture and Chinese culture, formed in the North Central region about the religious fusion between Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. In addition, around the 7th and 8th centuries AD, the current Central and Southern regions also saw the exchange process between Vietnamese culture and the cultures of Southeast Asian countries. During this process, due to those cultural changes, from about the 6th to the 12th century, ancient Vietnamese formed tones (Hoang T., 1991, p. 23).

From the 10th to the 19th century, due to the need to build and consolidate the feudal regime, Confucianism and Han culture were increasingly introduced and deeply influenced Vietnamese culture, especially among the mandarin and scholar classes. During this period, the indomitable and constant sense of resistance against the threat of invasion from feudal

China was relatively reduced, and due to the need to establish an orthodox ideology and consolidate the national regime, the trend of importing Chinese culture gradually became stronger. During the Ly - Tran dynasties (1009 – 1400), Buddhism still had a profound influence, combining with Confucianism and Taoism to form the three religions. During the Later Le Dynasty (1428 –1527) and the early Nguyen Dynasty (1802 – 1883), Vietnamese feudal dynasties proactively accepted the values of Confucianism. Confucianism was propagated, taught, and became the content and form of education, examinations, and selection of talented people of the Vietnamese feudal court. Confucianism occupied a unique position, becoming the official ideology of the upper classes in society. Buddhism in this period lost its political position but gained a firm foothold in folk life and culture, becoming an indispensable part of the lives of the people.

Contact with Cham culture and the cultures of Southeast Asian countries left strong marks on the Vietnamese people in the Quang Binh - Quang Tri - Quang Nam - Quang Ngai cultural region and the adjacent Southern region in the period after the 15th century.

Thus, until the 15th century, early 16th century, the exchange and contact with Chinese culture, Indian culture, Cham culture, and the culture of Southeast Asian countries caused profound changes in Vietnamese culture. Besides the characteristics of religion and belief with the tradition of the Three Teachings of the Same Origin and Confucian ideology, Vietnamese culture still retains great identity values, the most typical and important of which is to preserve the independence and autonomy of the country.

Vietnamese Cultural Acculturation in the Period of 16th - 19th Centuries

The time of the appearance of Catholicism in Vietnam (1533) recorded a strong change in Vietnamese culture. The exchange was not only between Vietnamese culture and France, Portugal, and Spain, but it was also broader, a collision of East and West cultures. Besides the influence of traditional culture, Vietnamese culture was exposed to French culture and strongly transformed in the direction of Europeanization in both material and spirit. During this period, Confucianism was brought to a unique position by the Nguyen Dynasty but gradually declined. The strong transformation of the country when it was divided into two regions: Dang Trong and Dang Ngoai, with the political roles of Lord Nguyen and Lord Trinh, made Confucianism unable to assume the role of spiritual foundation of Vietnam to unify the country. This was probably also the solvent that created the solvent for Western culture to quickly penetrate into the East and into Vietnam. However, the spirit of resistance due to the big difference In the early stages of the French colonial period, our people opposed Europeanization and tried to Vietnamize the influence of the West.

Cultural Acculturation in Terms of Language

One of the most important aspects of acculturation is language acquisition. The ability to communicate in the language of one's own culture is crucial to economic and social integration. Language is not only a tool for communication but also a sign of identity and culture. Language acquisition can help individuals understand the cultural norms and values of their new environment, making it easier for them to adapt to their new surroundings. Many international students who want to study and work in other countries must first learn the language of the country they are going to. In the process of living and working, many Vietnamese people will have to give up some habits influenced by their mother culture.

In the 17th century, Western missionaries, especially a French missionary, created the national language to spread Christianity in Vietnam. When the French colonialists occupied Vietnam, their intention was to teach the national language to serve their governing purposes. Vietnamese patriots used the national language to spread patriotism, fight for independence, and build a Vietnamese science. That is the different roles of individuals in cultural assimilation. The French colonial government opened universities to train natives to serve the governing cause. During the period from 1615 to 1665, after laying the foundation for the development of Catholicism in Dang Trong, by the end of the 17th century, when the missionary work in this land had positive changes, Vietnamese language education and training became an important task before they went to do missionary work. Because, according to a common argument, Vietnamese language, culture, and Vietnamese cultural research have a decisive significance for the success of the missionary process. Therefore, before coming to Vietnam, in addition to making efforts to learn the local language and culture, the missionaries all compiled dictionaries of European languages and local languages.

However, besides the language, there is the Quoc Ngu script compiled by missionaries. Although it is easy to learn, it is still a Western way of thinking. Therefore, for the Vietnamese, besides this language system, there is also Nom script, a type of hieroglyphic script created by the Vietnamese based on the use of Chinese radicals to write Sino-Vietnamese words as well as pure Vietnamese words. Therefore, the common use of Nom script at that time also caused great difficulties for Western missionaries, which shows us the strong resistance in terms of language of the Vietnamese people at this stage. However, we cannot deny the convenient role of Quoc Ngu script, and that explains why we use this language system today.

Cultural Acculturation in Terms of Language Religion and Beliefs

Another important aspect of the acculturation process is the adoption of cultural practices and beliefs. This includes customs, traditions, beliefs, and values unique to Vietnamese culture. Acculturation in science and technology. Cultural exchanges in terms of religion and belief with Portuguese, Spanish, and French missionaries (especially the Jesuit missionaries). Their method of evangelization was to approach and establish relationships with the upper class in society to facilitate evangelization in an academic manner—through "missionary literature". Thus, from the beginning, Western missionary orders, through their team of chaplains and priests, under the name of taking care of the spiritual life of the crew as well as the merchants during their voyages at sea, also had the dual mission of *"realizing a sacred plan entrusted by the Holy See and their religious orders: expanding the influence of Christianity in the Far East, through sowing "Gospel seeds" in the countries of this region"* (Truong A.T., 2023, p. 19). However, when arriving in Vietnam, the attitudes of the social classes of Vietnam were also very different towards this strange religion. In general, it can be generalized and affirmed that the approach and purpose of the missionary orders as we mentioned above were the upper class - infiltrating the royal court, they tried their best to find every way to persuade and make efforts to evangelize the native ruling class, for one simple reason: if "the kings of the missionary land accepted the Gospel, it would create extremely favorable conditions for the propagation of Christianity" and therefore:

> *"Although rejecting the Gospel, that does not mean that a hostile attitude towards Christianity was expressed from the beginning by the ruling class in China and Vietnam, but from the 17th to the 18th century, there were still some Vietnamese and*

> *Chinese kings at certain times who showed a tolerant attitude towards this religion."*
> (Truong A.T., 2023, p. 59)

And although very few, despite their cautious and wary attitude towards Western missionaries, there is evidence that some officials of the Hue court participated in this religion:

> *"There are many people among the believers who belong to the upper class. There are also people from the royal family, brothers of the late king, who have converted to the religion with their entire family. Currently, among the believers, we also see a personal advisor to the king, who is also the administrator of this country: the viceroy in Dinh Cat, the commander of the wall separating Dang Trong and Dang Ngoai, a general, two colonels, twelve lieutenant colonels, and among them countless lieutenants who are familiar to me."* (Truong B.C., 2008, 100)

With the mandarin and scholar class, Vietnam had a whole anti-religious force, opposing the existence of not only Catholicism but also all other religions: Buddhism, Taoism, and of course Catholicism:

> *"As an educated class in society, holding a certain level of economic power and political power, regularly approaching and advising the king on important national governance issues, and replacing the court in exercising ruling power in the localities, ... including the birth of religious bans and expulsion of clergy in the years 1625, 1630, 1661, 1664, 1690."* (Vo P.L., 2008, pp. 16 – 20)

L. Cadière, a French priest who spent many years involved in the missionary process in Indochina and especially in Vietnam, was deeply attached to and loved the land and people of this land. Therefore, he had a unique perspective; he was the first person to go beyond the Christian perspective to have a more objective view when affirming that the Vietnamese have a deep religious consciousness, with a meaning of "religion in the broad sense", it must be admitted that the Vietnamese, to be precise, live in the supernatural world. Generally, it is difficult for Europeans to understand this state of mind, because for them, when religion is only a few practices or even a few beliefs, it is often framed within a few time or space limits and is reserved for a few minutes of their day, a small part of their activities. Europeans, though devout, often still live with their God. The Vietnamese, on the contrary, regardless of class, except for a few products of our modern education, feel themselves in direct contact with the gods in nature.

The polytheistic tradition of the Vietnamese people is also one of the novelties and attractions for Western missionaries. Sometimes, this makes them confused; many times they "underestimate" this thinking of the Vietnamese people, and they also found the cause of those situations when seriously researching to explain that phenomenon: To explain the existence of so many religious beliefs for the Annamese people, G. Coulet explained that:

> *"That is because Eastern religions are not clear at all, first of all in terms of metaphysics. All were born by chance out of essential needs. They bear the mark of very special characteristics of a unique social origin, especially the mechanical nature of rituals, followed by the formality of moral ideals."* (G. Coulet, 2020, p. 117)

Thus, G. Coulet explained that the origin of the phenomena of belief and religion is from social life, the activities of traditional agricultural civilization, the polytheistic tradition that flourished from the labor, from the production of the Vietnamese people, from the different "needs" of life. And therefore, the priests also had a rustic approach to the working class, thanks to which they quickly spread the monotheistic tradition, which is inherently opposed to the polytheistic tradition of Eastern countries. It is these characteristics that make it difficult for Catholicism to penetrate into the social life of Vietnam. Through that, we can see the "soft power" from the cultural characteristics, the thinking about the gods-although loose, it also creates the strength to resist the missionary process of Western priests.

The Acculturation of Scientific, Technical and Astronomical Values

There is a very special thing in the process of cultural exchange and assimilation between Vietnamese and Western culture, which is the attraction of Western science, technology, and medicine to Vietnam. Regarding this, the Vietnamese people, or more precisely, the Mandarin class of Dang Trong and Dang Ngoai, also had different attitudes: they both actively accepted and cautiously rejected the "probing" attitude of the priests, and they also saw the military force behind those priests. But on the other hand, the Western priests themselves were also attracted by cultural values: Vietnamese experience, medical methods, remedies, and medicinal herbs were also extremely attractive to Westerners. Therefore, in the process of receiving Western cultural values, at the same time, the indigenous authorities also wanted to transmit indigenous cultural values through Western missionaries:

> *"This process is also "two-way". Not only did Western science and technology penetrate and be received in China and Vietnam, but vice versa, medicine, astronomy, and other scientific knowledge of China and Vietnam were also transmitted to the West through the works, reports, letters, diaries, etc. of missionaries. In fact, Western missionaries became one of the most important bridges in the cultural exchange process between the West and China and Vietnam."* (Truong A.T., 2023, p. 27)

Thus, we can also see the appeal of Vietnamese culture in the process of exchange and assimilation with Western cultural values. The Vietnamese are curious about Western technical devices: clocks, telescopes, large ships, guns, and ammunition, but Westerners are also curious and attracted by our own cultural values. The typical material products of the tropics are typical products of agricultural lands.

Cultural Acculturation in the Current Period and Suggestive Experiences for Vietnam to Continue Preserving Cultural Identity Values

Cultural Exchange and Acculturation Are Still Inevitable in the Current Period

We must recognize that up to now, cultural exchange and acculturation are an important part in the process of building and developing an advanced Vietnamese culture with a strong national identity. Through that, the world understands that Vietnam is a country with a long-standing cultural history, formed and experienced many ups and downs, acculturation; Vietnamese culture always aims at humanistic values, for peace, independence, and freedom. Traditional Vietnamese culture is a culture of tolerance, openness, harmony, and the ability to transform the values of other cultures. Cultural exchange and acculturation also bring opportunities for Vietnam to renew its thinking about cultural development in a socialist-oriented market mechanism, integrating more and more deeply into the world.

Integration in Vietnam has promoted and created extremely strong and broad premises for Vietnamese culture to integrate with the region and the world. Strong changes in thinking. Perhaps never before in social awareness, concepts and ideas about religious freedom, human rights, democracy, human development, sustainable development, cultural freedom, press, creation, have been discussed in many forums of different scales as they are today. This not only has the effect of awakening new thinking and awareness about the mission of culture but also overcomes one-sidedness, bias, or narrow vision when determining the role of culture in development. Since 1998, with Resolution 5 of the 8th Central Committee, culture has been identified as the spiritual foundation of society, both the goal and the driving force of socio-economic development. From this foundation, culture is also identified as one of the four pillars of sustainable development, with a position equal to economics, politics, and society. From here, culture not only has the function of cognition, education, and meeting people's spiritual needs, but is also an endogenous resource, contributing to socio-economic development.

New driving forces for diverse cultural development: The process of innovation, integration, and cultural assimilation in many aspects has created new driving forces for diverse and rich cultural development; many forms have emerged, including new cultural institutions. Cultural products not only contribute significantly to creating a more democratic and open atmosphere, improving people's knowledge, dynamism, creativity, and autonomy, but also promote people's social positivity, forming new factors and new values of Vietnamese people. Cultural products have increased significantly in quantity, with positive signs in quality, and have been forming a market for cultural, literary, and artistic products. Literature and art have created many valuable works reflecting all areas of life and are striving to innovate creative thinking, seeking new methods to enhance the ability to explore life. The mass media system has developed strongly in terms of types, quality, modernity, directness, and responsiveness in conveying and disseminating culture to an increasingly wider public, contributing significantly to the process of forming critical social thinking in the mass media.

Some Lessons on the Process of Cultural Exchange and Acculturation in the Current Context

Cultural acculturation always includes both positive values and limitations. In addition, cultural acculturation also opens up channels for academic exchange with many civilized countries in the world, through various methods from international students to scholar exchanges. In terms of lifestyle and living style (in the narrow sense, expressed from eating, dressing, living to traveling, behaving), Vietnam's cultural acculturation with the world has brought about brilliant achievements. Along with strong economic development are a series of changes in aspects of life enjoyment, improving the quality of life, and changing behaviors related to gender equality. The important thing we realize is that cultural exchange and acculturation are inevitable results when participating in the exchange and integration process of most countries in the world. Vietnam is no exception to the rule. In that process, as a matter of course, besides the positive aspects of "gaining a lot" are the negative aspects, "losing a lot". The problem is how to improve the capacity and "filter" to best promote the enrichment of national culture and minimize negative consequences.

In order for the values considered to be the cultural identity of Vietnam not to be lost, we must gradually enrich our country's cultural values and elevate our culture. Thanks to the strong internal cultural strength, integrated from the ethnic groups living together, the Vietnamese people have proactively absorbed and transformed foreign cultural elements to

enrich their cultural baggage and capital, to develop and protect the nation. That is also a specific law of cultural assimilation in Vietnam, as Vu Khieu affirmed Whether it is infiltrated into Vietnam by persuasion or force, the invader's culture can only exist when it follows the internal development law of Vietnamese culture, is Vietnamized, and carries the unique characteristics of the Vietnamese people. That is because Vietnam already has a long-standing culture that has created spiritual values and a solid ideology. This situation has caused cultural values imported from outside to have to go through the choice of the Vietnamese people. What is not suitable will be pushed out. What is suitable will be accepted and reformed. That attitude is the basic factor that creates the great strength that demonstrates the immortal vitality of the Vietnamese national identity through all challenges. (quoted from Tran V.G, Tran B.D, Mac D, 2001, pp.146-147).

As can be seen, cultural exchange and acculturation is a complex process that involves adopting cultural practices, beliefs, and values from another culture. It is a two-way process that can lead to a sense of belonging and acceptance in the host community but can also lead to the loss of one's cultural identity. With proper understanding and respect for each other's cultures, acculturation can be a positive force for social integration and cultural exchange.

Conclusion

Vietnam is proud of its long-standing, diverse, rich, and unique culture. These are important advantages that need to be exploited and promoted strongly in the current conditions. Developing in the new context, national culture needs to promote its mission as well as its role and strengths so that culture not only raises awareness, educates, and meets the spiritual needs of the Vietnamese people but is also an important endogenous resource contributing to socio-economic development, ensuring the country's rapid and sustainable development.

Vietnam's cultural adaptation in the integration period has brought many achievements in many fields, but to create many outstanding products that create cultural values that last forever and control the shortcomings and negative aspects, it also depends on the cultural maturity of the Vietnamese people. In the context of multi-dimensional integration with the world today, to what extent that mettle will create cultural refraction? The higher the courage, the stronger the reflection, and then cultural achievements are born.

Acknowledgements

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