

***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 hosted 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 Adiwitono
(Source: G20 visual identity design document by Seto Adiwitono)

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 Adiwitono)

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.

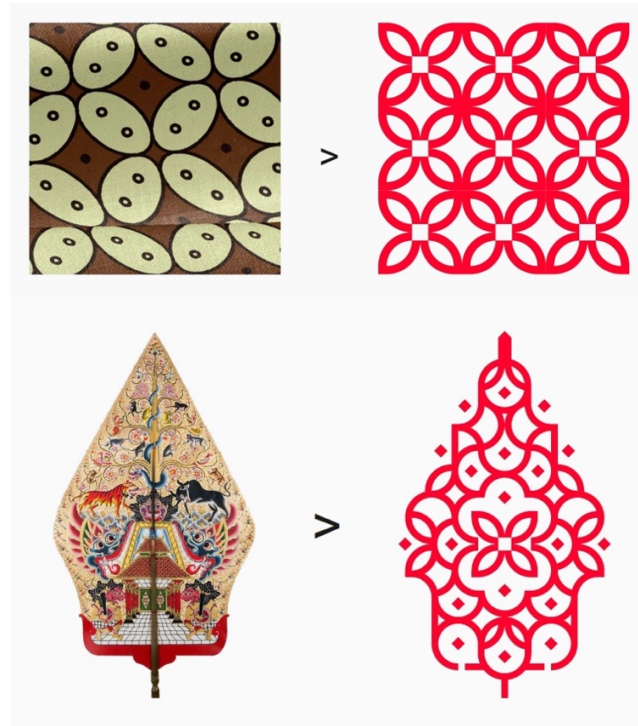


Figure 5: Symbolic Depiction of Mountains From Kawung Batik Elements
(Source: G20 visual identity design document by Seto Adiwitono)

The graphic element of kawung batik, a traditional batik motif from Javanese culture in Indonesia, is used to fill the inside of the gunung. 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.

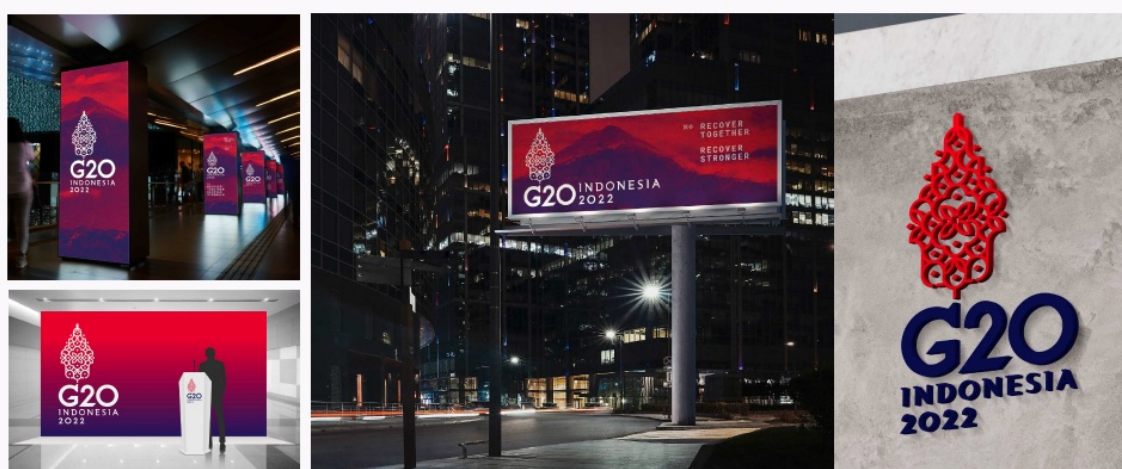


Figure 6: Application of the G20 2022 Visual Identity
(Source: G20 visual identity design document by Seto Adiwitono)

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.

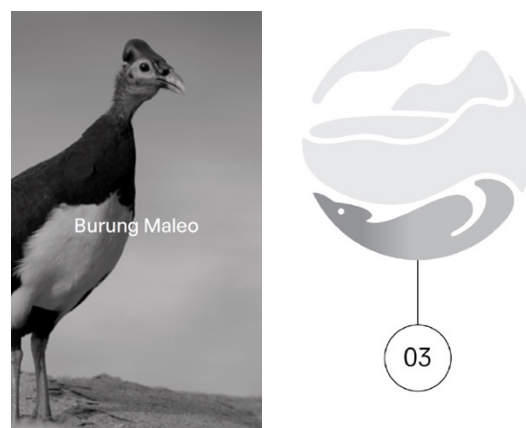


Figure 8: Depiction of the Maleo Bird on the Visual Identity of ASEAN 2023
(Source: ASEAN 2023 Visual Identity Design Document by Adji Herdanto)

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).

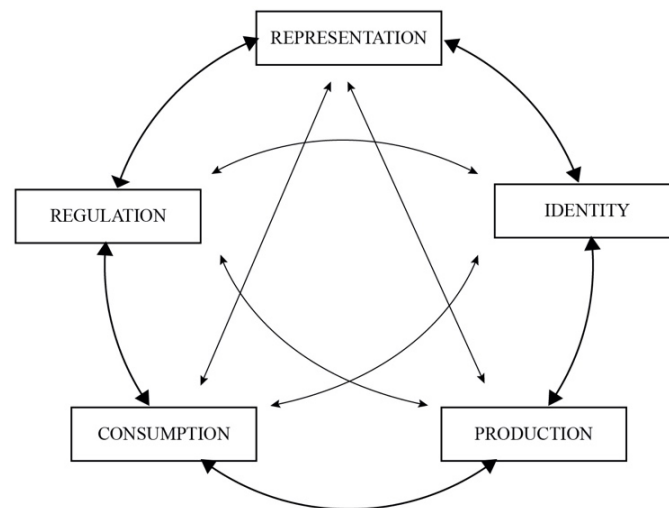


Figure 12: Adaptation of Circuit of Culture by Stuart Hall

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.

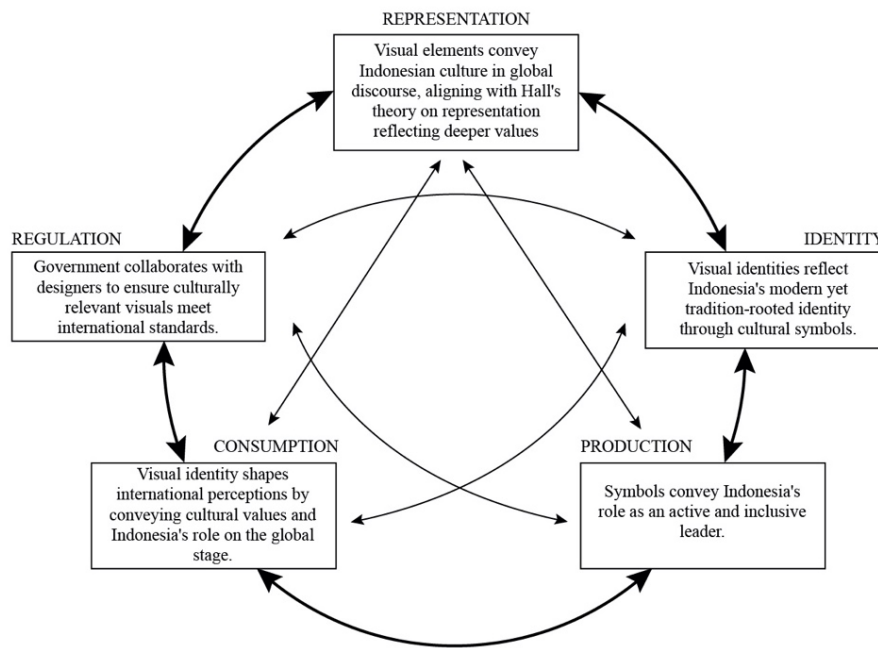


Figure 13: Mapping Case Studies on Hall's Circuit of Culture Theory

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				
G20	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				
ASEAN	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 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.	Maleo Bird, Sky, Mountain, Sea, Color Gradation.	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 gunung, 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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