

Visual Representation of Indonesian Culture in Character Design HololiveID Virtual Youtuber

G Rimbawati¹, Y H Putra²

^{1,2}Magister Design Department, Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Indonesia

E-mail: geugeu.75321010@mahasiswa.unikom.ac.id

Abstract. The purpose of this study is to identify visual representations of Indonesian culture that are applied to the virtual character design of Hololive Indonesia (HololiveID) Virtual Youtuber (vTuber). To obtain data, qualitative research methods will be performed as well as observation. This cultural representation can analyze using narrative-visual analysis and semiotics. Through visual-narrative and semiotic analysis, the visual elements of the HololiveID vTuber character design will be identified and analyzed to classify the design of Indonesian cultural artifacts that the character is trying to adapt. As a virtual youtuber, the character design itself will represent their visual identity. The discourse on the visual adaptation of Indonesian cultural elements has become an interesting phenomenon to study. The impact on Japanese popular culture fans among Indonesian people can be seen from the enthusiasm that emerged when this was a trend. Cultural visual adaptation can be used as a media to introduce a traditional culture by the means of popular culture. From this analysis, it can be concluded how the HololiveID vTuber character design lifts and represents Indonesian culture into its visual identity. The result of this present research shows HololiveID generation two's character design is proven to have Indonesian cultural design as their visual Identity, mostly their design using batik to represent the Indonesian culture and requires a deeper level of understanding of the Indonesian cultural artefact itself.

Keywords: character design, culture, semiotic, virtual youtuber, visual identity

1. Introduction

The virtual youtuber (vtuber) became a massive viral and trend. The number of Virtual YouTubers is increasing year by year and has reached 10,000 virtual YouTubers according to the local virtual YouTuber ranking. They belong to some agency or became an indie vTuber [1]. Start by the very first vTuber who claimed as pioneer of this world, Kizuna Ai. With that a huge industry also came into being with this VTuber wave. Those VTubers are extending their existence out of YouTube videos into different advertisements, TV programs, games, and other diverse media. For instance, Tokyo Metropolitan Television Broadcasting Corporation once had a special production called VIRTUAL BUZZ TALK which was specifically designed for virtual YouTubers [2]. Self-titled “the world’s first virtual YouTuber”, Kizuna AI is the one who has popularized the VTuber style and the term “virtual YouTuber” since her debut in 2016 despite that there was earlier use of CG avatar in YouTube vlogs. [2] Kizuna Ai’s influence has caused this vTuber trend to become big, including in Indonesia. This vTuber trend is extremely popular among Indonesian people who like Japanese culture. Based on previous research, the existence of a person's interest in the Vtuber trend is due to a unique interaction, included in a new raw experience for fans of Japanese culture [3]. The Virtual YouTuber character design is adjusted to Live2D and facerig to support the creation of live streaming content. These

phenomena of Virtual YouTubers made the topic of virtual avatars interesting to study. These virtual characters not just simply users that exist as an imagination or “mind”. It is existed to provide some access point in creation of identity, construct their identity through avatars and live on as part of social life [4]. Majority of VTuber groups or agency have a clear idea of what and how they want to appear their VTuber identity. On previous research explained how some EN-VTuber (international VTuber) need some time before making their decision or initial idea how their character develops over time. A little bit different with some Japanese-vTubers as the original country which carry out their activities without any particular thought process, because the trend itself already became part of their culture. The intent and purpose of France-vTubers and En-VTubers is to build and help grow a community, become socialize and have fun, to bring about positivity by creating safe spaces where people can helpful While some J-vTubers also contain the last two goals, other answers include knowledge transmission, related business, spread awareness of cyberspace as a living environment [5].

As for another previous research, show the result about how this trend also happen in Indonesia as the trend growth so fast within the world and how Indonesian audience affected by this trend [3]. Also, on how this trend became a new way on introducing a traditional culture into virtual world. Bredikhina (2021), on their research show some similarity between traditional Japanese theatre and VTuber performance are shaped by different socio-cultural values on them perform as virtual character. There are also another several previous studies about virtual youtuber and visual identity from a character design. As explained, previous research provides evidence that VTubers not just an avatar and on practice they have different criteria basec on individual self-expression and community interaction. As well as the VTuber itself construct their own identity and reason to engaging on the virtual culture activities [5]. William and friends (2021), from their research found how Anya Melfissa’s character design has kris visual identity. Anya’s design has Indonesian artefact cultural on itself and proven exist yet requires a deeper level understanding of this artefact (Indonesian kris) itself [6-8]. The visual identity in the character design brought by the vTuber entity has its own characteristics and it is common for an event to be held to introduce a culture. Design character or character design is an important process on this vTuber World. This process will lead, where an original character is created for. The story is felt through the characters as they function as a window for viewers to experience the world and countless events. In other words, the character must have a relationship with the audience, so that to evoke emotion and invest in the story. Unpleasant characters could be alienating the audience. To create an identity that will stick to audience, a writer or designer must have the knowledge to design that can be trusted and likable. That is why a good character design is important in visual media. On previous research explained about character design itself can be influenced by various things, one of which is how demographics can influence a selection of visual elements that will be implied [6]. For instance, how an Indonesian vTuber brought their own culture into the character design as their visual identity. The local element visual they implied can be used to attract the local audience as they can relate and felt so proud as part of the community. Within all the vTuber out there, there are some characters who bring out Indonesian culture as their visual identity, such as Anya Melfissa, Pavolia Reine and Kureiji Ollie.



Figure 1. Hololive Indonesia 2nd generation debut promotion.

They are Indonesian vTuber who belongs to Hololive Indonesia Generation 2. Known as “holoro” as unit’s name, a portmanteau of “Hololive” and “Loro”. In Javanese, “loro” mean two as they are indeed the second generation of HololiveID [7]. The three of them already gain “subs count”. It’s meant how much people who are interested on their characters, and which mean how much people (as sampling) would see their design. Their default design, although some of them not really shown or represent the Indonesian culture, still implies some hint to represent their nationality. Also, they have a special “traditional” costume that represent the Indonesian ethnic culture. For example, Anya Melfissa is a character that came from Indonesian kris as inspiration. The representation of the kris in Anya Melfissa’s visual identity is an example on how the design character from a pop culture could introduce the ethnical traditional culture to public. From previous research, explain on how an anthropomorphism could be the key to overcome the barrier between traditional cultural artefact and a brand-new pop culture [8].



Figure 2. Anya Melfissa default costume (1st costume).
Designed by Uekura Eku ©
Hololive



Figure 3. Pavolia Reine default costume (1st costume).
Designed by Iida Pochi ©
Hololive



Figure 4. Kureiji Ollie default costume (1st costume).
Designed by LAM Hololiye

This study aims to find the artefact meaning and visual identity of Indonesian culture that implied on the HololiveID 2nd generation designs. Character designs are developed complete with costumes, accessories, or weapons where all the characteristics are usually inspired by culture, for example local traditional clothing and ornament used by a certain Indonesian tribes represent the character's identity. This research uses qualitative approach. The visual-narrative analysis uses to identify the element visual on these characters design. This research will focus on costume design to identify whether culture influences the vTuber characters design produced by Hololive ID second generation. It will be possible to detect a pattern in how this character design incorporates Indonesian culture into its aesthetic design by understanding the meaning through visual analysis combine with semiotic methods. As a result, a transcultural can be a viable option for bringing one culture to another while also bolstering the expression of traditional culture in the modern world. This type of cultural acculturation can help traditional cultural values persist in modern society. By finding the result, this research can be used for reference to artist or other on how to make a character design whose have Indonesian culture as their visual identity.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the process is in the form of collecting various kinds of data, both text and images, then interpretation is conducted to understand the problem findings and find conclusions or answers to these problems. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative methods can be used to process various open data, image and text analysis, information representation and personal interpretation of findings. Researchers can interpret these problems through personal interpretations that are supported by theories and opinions of existing experts [9]. For another method, the theory of cultural and mass communication from semiotic perspective. Using the code as a significant system to read the statement from an invisible unit. Audience using any symbols to respond, label, sharing idea, feeling even giving a meaning into something [10]. The cultural definition also can be found using semiotics. Semiotic is a competence reaction which is belongs to individuals in society to identify, interpret or produce something on symbolic way. How this interaction can create the construction of meaning and then can be considered as a sign where humans start creating a culture. This is a significant system even though it does not involve a two way of communication between sender and receiver. However, it might still be regarded as an indication that people are beginning to develop culture. This culture thus accidentally shapes the identity of a small group of individuals through equipment, costume, and accessories for everyday usage [11]. Semiotics defines sign as a sort of language in words, pictures or visuals, sounds, gestures, and objects. When opposed to verbal language, writing, sounds, and voices, visual language can be discovered and comprehended instantly. Furthermore, as compared to verbal communication, visual language is more successful than voice language and has a stronger symbolic interpretation [11, 12]. So, using the semiotic methods as well as the visual narrative, the physical attributes and costumes are the main factor that significance the culture for the character design itself. With the consideration between the object of the visual design element from character design, visual design from traditional artefact of Indonesian culture and its meaning. Through visual-narrative analysis, the visual elements of the HololiveID vTuber character design will be identified and analyzed to classify the design of Indonesian cultural artifacts that the character is trying to adapt.

3. Results and Discussion

According to the data gathered, there is a pattern in the application of Indonesian culture to the vTuber trend. The character design of the HololiveID avatars explored employs several cultural objects deemed to be artifacts that symbolize Indonesian culture. Anya's primary character is designed with a kris as the major item used to reflect Indonesian culture (using anthropomorphism) [3]. As for Reine's design, there are some indications on how the accessories and her identity as "Lady of Peafowl" using Indonesian traditional artefact for the inspirations [13-17]. Meanwhile, the incorporation of Indonesian culture in

Ollie's character designs occurs in the second outfit. The second outfit they have, designed as new outfits that represent Indonesian culture [13].



Figure 5. Kureiji Ollie second design costume. Designed by LAM © Hololive

From the results of video recaps and archive [shows on each channel] about their second outfit design (including hair style, pose, color), these three HololiveID members tried to explain the meaning of the parts of the design used. This costume was purposefully created to promote Indonesian culture and underline the fact that they were from Indonesia. Based on the number of views when the first screening of this traditional outfit occurred, it is expected that this visual cultural design may be exposed to a wider public audience, particularly enthusiasts and connoisseurs of the vTuber world. The batik patterns, accessories, and haircuts are chosen and tailored to each character's personality. The audience's and fans of this vTuber cultural' reactions revealed a good and diversified excitement. Another reply revealed that the audience could not comprehend the cultural items that the HololiveID members were attempting to introduce [14 - 16].



Figure 6. Anya Melfissa second design costume. Designed by Eku Uekura © Hololive



Figure 7. Pavolia Reine second design costume. Designed by Iida Pochi © Hololive

Visual elements from their character design will analysed by grouping them into some criteria. The visual narrative from this media focused on the characters itself. Their appeal for transformation in attitudes toward their own whole design (pose and the still image), especially on the costume design. Thus, the criteria details to analysed on the character design according to the point of Indonesian artefact or traditional culture:

- Ethnic Influence (elements of symbol/artefact/object that representative an Indonesian culture)
- Accessories (e.g. hair pin, neckless, earrings)
- Material (e.g. beads, fabric pattern)

First have a look on table 1 and 2 to see how Anya and Reine 1st default character design proven to have Indonesian symbol as their visual identity.

Table 1. Anya Melifissa’s default character design based on “*kris*”

<i>Character Design</i>	Criteria	Representamen on the design character	Implementation and Interpretant
	Ethnic Influence: Javanese Kris	(See figure on character design)	A zigzag shape that unique and be use on almost all over around the Anya’character design. Ukiran (a carving, kris handle), Mendak (kris ring), Wilah (kris blade), and Warangka (kris blade) are the four sections of the kris (kris frame). Blade curvature (luk), decoration (ricikan), color or brilliance of the blade, and pamor pattern are all aspects of Kris morphology to examine. Kris is unique in that he has a degree of tilt that isn't found on any other arm weapon [18].
	Accessories: Earrings, Decorations, Hair pin.	Dress Hair	Every shape of the accessories around her resemble to the kris shape itself. Also, some of the design try to imitate the elegance of carving that engrave on kris handle.
	Materials: Black Dress with Gold Ornament		The image try to imitate the shape of hilt of a sword that is stuck. Probably to match the kris image.
	Others: The golden and brown hair colour. Cute modern dress with lots of ribbon.		This color represent the majority color of kris in Indonesia. Also gold can represent as elegance and a high status (sacral)

As table 1 try to break down Anya Melfissa’s default design character, table 2 will explain Pavoila Reine’s default character design. Use same method as Anya Melfissa’, Pavoila Reine’s character design using anthropomorphism from Peafowl. Peafowl believed as one of the Indonesian native animals. Also, on some detail, there are Javanese traditional accessories used on her design character.

Table 2. Pavolia Reine’s default character design based on “Peafowl”

<i>Character Design</i>	Criteria	Representamen on the design character	Implementation and Interpretant
	Ethnic Influence: Peafowl 	<i>(See figure on character design)</i>	The overall shape and silhouette use some bird aspects. Such as the wing and the colour on her costume. Several peafowl unique pattern shape also shown in the design. The pose itself show elegance. As well to tell audience about her background (Reine is a lady from a royal/noble family)
	 Accessories: Earrings, dress decorations, hair pin, necklaces. Materials: Black Dress Blue, Green and White-ish Gradation. Others: Broken white / grayish hair colour and some broch. Also pointed shoes with gold embroidery.		Every shape of the accessories around her resemble to wing shape. As for her broch, the shape resembles to the unique peafowl pattern. Also, for her necklaces the shape design show indication to Javanese traditional accessories, used by some royal family or used on a special event. The skirt resembles to the shape of peafowl beautiful tail. Her hair style, pose and detail shape resemble some unique shape from peafowl. Peafowl itself has meaning as symbol of Elegance and Beauty. In some Indonesian traditional artefact like batik, this pattern have same meaning.

Table 1 and 2 are example of how Indonesian traditional artefact and Indonesian symbol cultural (such as national animal) can be implied on a VTuber character design. As for the next section, this research will be focused on the criteria that already exist and focus on the second costume that have been claimed implying the Indonesian cultural touch. Indonesia has various ethnic cultures. Of course,

this causes a variety of choices of cultural artifacts that are characteristic of Indonesia. Not only the visible form of artifacts, but there are also various cultural symbols that have meaning and represent Indonesian culture. Certain ethics that appear in the design will also be considered and try to be interpreted in accordance with the semiotic values of Indonesian culture. The selection of symbols and design characteristics of traditional Indonesian culture is balanced with the characteristics of each vTuber. Then for next table section on this study (table 3, 4 and 5), we will discuss the comparison of artifacts and the visual meaning of the designs applied to the character designs, especially in the second costume which is labeled as a special costume representing Indonesian culture.

Table 3. Design character element and semiotic meaning of Anya Melifissa’s second outfit

Criteria	Representamen on the design character			
<i>Character Visual</i>				
Part of Design Accessories (Ethical/Culture Symbol)	Head Earrings, glasses with kris shape ornament	Hair Short with same tone color as most of kris.	Clothing A tie with kris shape tie pin	Shoes -
Materials (e.g. fabric pattern) Ethnic Influence	- Javanese Kris	- Javanese Kris	Batik on some part (excluded coat) Batik Kawung (top), Batik Parang (skirt)	Modern shoes.
Interpretant / Meaning (semiotic)	Every shape of the accessories around her resemble to the kris shape itself. Because Anya is a anthropomorphism from kris. To maintain her visual identity.		This pattern of batik is popular among another pattern. The color itself still represent the characteristic of Anya, herself. Batik Kawung have a unique shape that resemble to sugar palm fruit. For intense, The kawung motif means perfection, purity and holiness. This emptiness makes a person neutral, impartial, not wanting to stand out, following the flow of life, letting everything around him run according to the will of nature. Semar, the incarnation of a god who has a very good and wise character, always wears this kawung motif [19, 20].	

Figure 6 shows the full 2nd design of Anya Melfissa’s Indonesian outfit theme. Without losing her identity as “kris girl” and the moe (Japanese term for cute character) aura, her new character design shows the combination of modern clothing with some traditional touch. By visceral, batik shown as the vocal point of this costume design. On table 3, the image and meaning explained use semiotic method.

Table 4. Design character element and semiotic meaning of Kureiji Ollie’s second outfit

Criteria	Representamen on the design character			
Part of Design	Bust up	Hair	Clothing	Shoes
Character Visual				
Accessories (Ethical/Cultural Symbol)	Necklace	Hair pins	Sinjang, Batik Skirt, Traditional Corset	-
Materials (Fabric Pattern/Ethnic Symbol)	Bronze / Gold	Bronze	Batik	-
Ethnic Influence		<i>Cunduk Mental</i>	Pilin/Padang Batik Pattern	Modern Shoes
Interpretant / Meaning (semiotic)	This necklace design usually worn by a bride on Javanese traditional wedding. The 3 parts depicts three stages of woman’s life: Birth, Marriage, and Death [13].	This type of hair pin usually worn by a bride, pinned on the the hair bun on Javanese traditional wedding. The number of cunduk mental has its own philosophical meaning. Cunduk Mental is a beautiful attribute that towers over the bride’s head. The number can be 1, 3, 5, 7, or 9. Seven in Javanese is <i>pitu</i> . The word " <i>pitu</i> " is a symbol of " <i>pitulungan</i> " or in Indonesian it means help, hoped that later in navigating the household ark, the bride can always be in the Almighty protection.	This batik pattern symbolizes the spirit to stay alive and not easily give up when facing problem. The spirit to stay alive matches with Ollie’s lore and characteristic. For the corset part it’s trying to represent a traditional clothing in mostly part in Indonesia [13].	Cute Gothics design that represents Ollie as a cute zombie. (moe anthropomorphism) [3]

Figure 5 shows the full 2nd design of Kureiji Ollie’s Indonesian outfit theme and figure 7 shows Pavolia Reine’s 2nd design. Without losing their characteristics, both of their design also combines modern clothing with some traditional design. Ollie identity as “a zombie girl” still showing on her face scars. Based on the selection of Indonesian traditional artefact, the objects and symbols chosen to do not just include objects that symbolize Indonesian culture. Each selected object and visual element are combined with the characteristics (traits) and identity of each member for this VTuber. For example, batik pilin (parang) in Kureijii Ollie’s design conveys Ollie’s message and her visual identity as a character who has a spirit of life even though she is a zombie. The batik kipas wore by Pavolia Reine, reflects her elegance and status as a noble character. Her second character design (especially on her pose) is also timeless in terms of elegance and indicates her position that comes from a noble family.

On table 4 and 5, the image and meaning explained use semiotic method. Same as Anya's design, by visceral batik shown as the vocal point of these costume designs.

Table 5. Design character element and semiotic meaning of Pavolia Reine's second outfit

Criteria	Representamen on the design character			
Part of Design	Head	Hair	Clothing	Shoes
<i>Character Visual</i>				
Accessories (Ethical/Cultural Symbol)	Earring with a pattern that inspired from peacock	Hair pin	<i>Sinjang, Bracelets</i>	-
Materials (Fabric Pattern/Ethnic Symbol)		Peacock feathers	Batik and Lace, Beads	<i>Sandals</i>
Ethnic Influence	Kipas with Peafowl motifs			
Interpretant / Meaning (semiotic)	Her iconic representation as a Lady Peafowl	Her iconic representation as a Lady Peafowl. Peafowl (especially the Green Peafowl) is a native Indonesian animal.	This motif / pattern symbolizes the nobility to its historical issues which is only be worn by the Royal Family who use it. After 17 th century, this pattern became part of cultural property for some traditional dancer and symbolize beauty and flexibility.	<i>Sandals</i> is a common Nusantara footwear. Using this kind of models make Reine looks more casual but still represent a Indonesian culture

From the results of the analysis tables 1-5, shows how many objects of Indonesian artefact culture are applied in the character designs. There is a comparison between the default character design (first costume) based on table 1-2 and the second costume on table 3-5. For the second character designs of Anya and Pavolia, even though they claim to be Indonesian cultural outfits, this second design still feels modern when compared to the original designs of the two. On the other hand, Ollie's second character design (second costume) feels more Indonesian than his first design. As for Anya default design that already try to represent one of Indonesian traditional artefact and for Pavoila whose try to represent one of Indonesian national animal (Green Peafowl), their second design character feels more casual but can be related to the audience in real life. The usage of batik can be use daily and giving meaning of proud to be part of Indonesian vTuber community whose can introduce the Indonesian culture to the world.

4. Conclusion

These three designs can be said to be quite representative of Indonesian culture. Although, as Anya Melfissa's main design aims to accomplish a traditional object, not all the designs explicitly depict a product of tribal traditional items in Indonesia. The use of visual elements that represent Indonesian culture in combination with anime drawing methods from Japan creates an intriguing acculturation hybrid. The collaboration of non-Japanese designers attempting to apply an Indonesian design with this

Indonesian vTuber member results in a one-of-a-kind design that is still deemed to symbolize a touch of Indonesian culture. This form of acculturation will certainly be appreciated by Japanese culture aficionados especially in Indonesia and elsewhere who enjoy the vTuber trend. Once again, batik has been regarded as a well-known Indonesian cultural artifact that reflects the country. Even if the concept is quite accurate, the artists (designers) use batik designs that are more contemporary than traditional batik. The symbol or icon they choose for the batik quite accurate to represent the visual identity of each member itself. They second outfit design may demonstrate and motivate their audience to incorporate Indonesian culture into daily life. The results of this study are expected to be an additional reference for other vTuber character designs in applying patterns and other Indonesian cultural artifacts. Various choices of interesting visual elements can be found in symbols and other Indonesian artifact products. There is no obstacle for traditional culture to survive in modern life. One way to maintain it is to introduce the culture itself through any media, in this case, especially how Indonesian culture can become part of visual identity. The way to make it happen can be through modern culture like Virtual Youtuber (vTuber).

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