

Translating West Borneo Malay Sartorial Traditions into Instagram Visual Content

Ahmad Ramadhan

Universitas Komputer Indonesia, West Java, Indonesia

Yully Ambarsih Ekawardhani

Universitas Komputer Indonesia, West Java, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This design aims to produce visual information in the form of social media content that combines informative text and illustrations to explain Malay attire, including types of clothing, fabric patterns, accessories, and their philosophical significance. The approach is design-based, utilising visualisation as a means of communication. This project is inspired by a phenomenon in West Kalimantan concerning the understanding and awareness of appropriate Malay dress codes. Many people follow modern fashion trends without understanding the cultural values embedded in traditional clothing. Social media was chosen as the primary platform due to its high usage rate and its ability to disseminate information widely, quickly, and easily. The result is communicative and informative visual content that educates the audience on Malay dress etiquette, values of modesty, and related cultural elements. It is hoped that this medium will serve as a visual educational resource for the public, particularly the younger generation, to better understand and help preserve the Malay dress culture in West Kalimantan today.

Keywords: *Malay, Malay clothing, Malay culture, visual communication design, West Borneo.*

INTRODUCTION

The Malay sub-ethnic group forms part of the ethnic groups of Southeast Asia, enriched by a wealth of historical and cultural heritage. Anthropologically, they occupy a vast area stretching across the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, the coast of Borneo, Southern Thailand, Singapore, and a number of coastal regions in Southeast Asia, referred to as the "Alam Malaya". They are widely dispersed as groups that pass on beautiful cultural traditions and beliefs from one generation to the next (Thamrin, 2018).

According to a number of Western anthropologists, the defining characteristics of a 'true' Malay are adherence to Islam, adherence to Malay customs, the use of the Malay language, and modest dress (Thamrin, 2018). This article focuses on Malay dress, which has evolved over time. In fact, the Malay cultural system is characterised by a combination of ideas, social practices, and cultural expressions manifested in both tangible and intangible forms. A significant tangible manifestation of this cultural identity is clearly evident in traditional Malay clothing, which serves as a reflection of a long process of cultural evolution and the formation of a distinctive identity.

The initial historical development of the Malay people in West Borneo has frequently been associated with the movement of populations from the southern Chinese region of Yunnan. In accordance with the prevailing hypothesis (Warren & Leake, 1990), the Malays constituted a component of the second migration wave, designated the Deutro Malays, which ensued the earlier Proto-Malay movement spanning the period from 3000

to 1500 BC. Subsequent developments were significantly influenced by the advent of Islam through western, southern, and eastern coastal routes (Hermansyah, 2010). The establishment of the Sambas Islamic Kingdom, which was under Brunei's authority at the time and connected to regions such as Pontianak, Kotawaringin, Paser, Banjarmasin, and Berau, played an important role in spreading Islam and cultural traditions, including weaving. It is likely that weaving spread from Brunei to the Sambas region as a symbol of historical and cultural ties (Shaari & Suleiman, 2014).

According to Achjadi (1986), Malay clothing was influenced by Islamic and West Indian traders, visible in the tunic neckline and the early form of the *baju kurung* during the era of the Malacca Sultanate. In the 15th century, Tun Hassan Temenggong modified the *baju kurung* by making it looser and longer to ensure modesty. Meanwhile Gittinger (1990) notes that the *baju kurung* was also worn by court dancers in Palembang and became widely popular across Sumatra during the 19th and 20th centuries. Traditional clothing symbolises the civilisation of a nation, including Malay society (Anwar, 2019). During the era of the Malay kingdoms, Malay clothing reached its peak, reflecting luxury and elegance.

Garments decorated with gold and silver embroidery became symbols of the status and power of the nobility. Songket fabric, known for its luxurious weave and intricate motifs, was highly valued among the Malay elite. The use of high-quality materials and complex manufacturing techniques demonstrated the remarkable skill, craftsmanship, and aesthetic beauty of Malay clothing in that period. Another fact mentions that the existence of Kain Lunggi, a songket weave typical of Sambas, West Borneo, is a weave that originally originated in the Brunei Malay Sultanate. In the 17th century, the Sultan of Brunei bestowed a set of weaving houses and tools along with weavers to the King of Sambas, Sultan Muhammad Tajuddin, who ruled from 1682 to 1718 when he left for Brunei to pay a courtesy visit as an envoy from the land of Sambas, which is now the Regency of Sambas in the province of West Borneo in Indonesia (Wahsalfelah, 2007). These explanations underscore the distinctive nature of Malay clothing, particularly with regard to the grandeur of traditional fabrics as embodied in traditional attire. The traditional attire is subject to challenges when confronted with modernisation, which results in a diminution of its distinctive character, reducing it to a mere fashion item.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Hafied Cangara (2007) stated that the audience refers to individuals or groups targeted by messages delivered by a source, which may include individuals, organizations, or institutions. In addition, the study under scrutiny by Chen (2023) places significant emphasis on the role of the target demographic in the enhancement of marketing endeavours. Based on demographic, geographic, and psychographic segmentation, this study targets early adults aged 18–40 years without social status restrictions, addressing all segments of Malay society in West Borneo. This age group was selected due to the lack of accurate information among many young Malays—both men and women—regarding proper Malay dress practices. Geographic segmentation focuses on districts and cities in West Borneo where misunderstandings about Malay attire remain common. Psychologically, early adulthood is generally defined as the period between 18 and 40 years, characterized by individuals adapting to new life patterns and social expectations, Elizabeth B. Hurlock as noted by Agoes Dariyo (2003).

Consumer insight refers to an understanding of how consumers use products, services, and media, especially digital media such as social media (Hamilton, 2007). Among the productive age group (18–40 years old), this includes behaviour, information needs, and motivation. This large demographic group has strong social influence, high participation rates, and urbanisation trends that significantly shape consumption patterns and innovation. This design strategy aims to ensure the effective dissemination of information about Malay clothing in West Borneo. The content includes explanations of appropriate Malay dress practices and an introduction to motifs and patterns characteristic of the region. This information is supported by visual illustrations and presented through verbal and visual communication concepts tailored to the productive age audience to increase its effectiveness.

The visual design employs a retro-style illustration inspired by the Mid-Century colonial-era poster illustration style, digitally simplified while drawing aesthetic references from the 1950s–1990s. Historically,

this style functioned as an educational and persuasive medium to promote collective spirit and modernization, often combining local cultural elements such as traditional clothing and regional language with Western modernist messages. The verbal approach also incorporates several Jawi (Malay-Arabic) script terms that are now rarely recognized, such as “ڤاڤاين ملاي” (Pakaian Melayu), “ساي” (saya), and “بهاسا” (bahasa). This approach aims to reintroduce and familiarize the target audience—Malay communities in West Borneo—with Jawi literacy.

Creative strategy refers to a carefully planned approach to effectively deliver information to the target audience. According to Fachruddin (in Ramaputra & Afifi, 2021), it originates from a structured thinking process that generates creative ideas and solutions to address specific problems. In this design, the strategy targets audiences aged 18–40 regardless of social status, incorporating local West Borneo community figures as illustration references and integrating the Malay tradition of pantun to create cultural relevance and familiarity.

Media refers to technology or tools used to deliver instructional messages or information that can be seen, read, heard, and manipulated (Schramm, 1977). The selected media strategy must align with the message and the target audience. In this design, the media strategy consists of two categories: primary and supporting media. The primary medium is social media content, while supporting media include posters, x-banners, keychains, sticker packs, tote bags, mugs, tumblers, T-shirts, bookmarks, tissue boxes, and festive allowance envelopes.

According to Ghozali (2017), a questionnaire is deemed legitimate if its questions successfully assess the variables that were intended. In order to gather trustworthy data on popular attitudes and knowledge about Malay dress in West Borneo, a questionnaire was issued. People from a range of age groups in the general community made up the respondents. To enable respondents to freely express their thoughts, an open-ended questionnaire was utilized. West Borneo locals were given access to the online survey via Google Forms, and the results are shown in the graph below.

The research methodology used in this study was qualitative. Questionnaires, observations, and interviews were used to gather data. Asmadi, the head of Singkawang's Malay Cultural Customary Council, was interviewed. 65 respondents in West Borneo—students, workers, and business owners—were given questionnaires to complete in order to assess their knowledge of Malay costume, appropriate dress code, and the distinctions between Malay clothes in West Borneo and other areas.

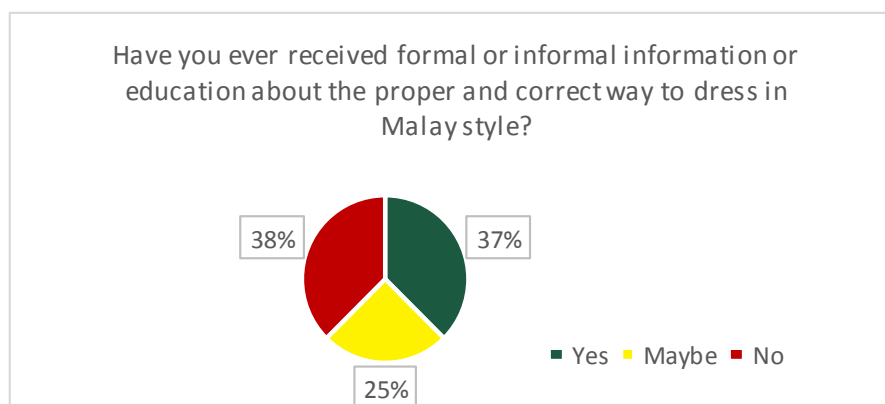


Figure 1: Questionnaire Results Chart

Source: Personal document

In addition, social media monitoring is carried out by analysing posts that use relevant hashtags to identify how people wear Malay attire at specific events.

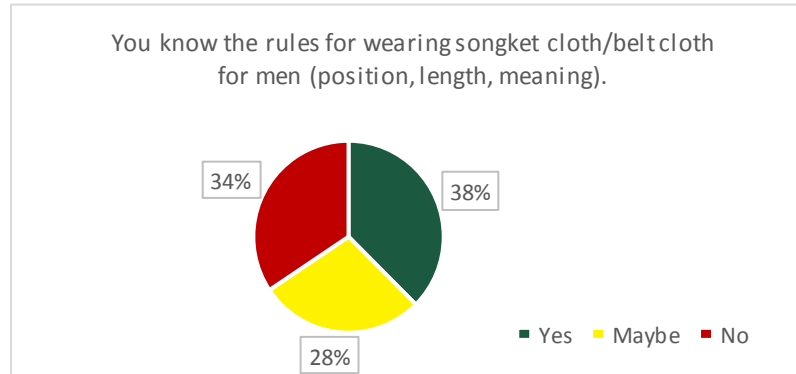


Figure 2: Questionnaire Results Chart

Source: Personal document

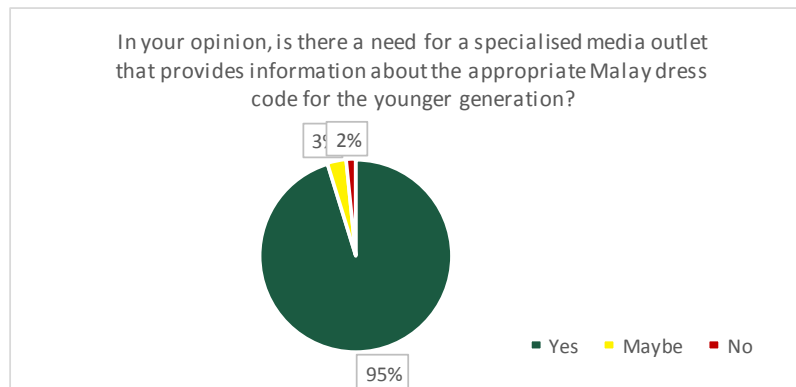


Figure 3: Questionnaire Results Chart

Source: Personal document

An interview is a purpose-driven discussion between two people: the interviewer, who poses questions, and the interviewee, who responds. According to Lincoln and Guba, the purpose of interviews is to gather data regarding social contexts, events, people, activities, organizations, emotions, motivations, requests, and concerns (Moleong, 2014).

DISCUSSION

The main media are effectively designed through the integration of various elements such as illustrations, text, typography and colour. The designs discussed adhere to a number of design principles, including balance, unity, rhythm and focus. These principles are used as the basis for evaluation, with the aim of determining the most optimal design alternative (Kusrianto, 2007). Social media, as defined by Hidayatullah (2020), refers to online platforms that facilitate the creation, dissemination, and interaction with various content formats. In this study, social media serves as the primary medium for content dissemination. The primary medium for information regarding Malay clothing in West Kalimantan is designed in a portrait format measuring 1350 × 1080 pixels (4:5 aspect ratio) for optimal display on the Instagram feed. In accordance with Instagram

standards, the dimensions for Stories and Reels are 1080×1920 pixels, equivalent to a 9:16 aspect ratio. Each image is organised into several slides or pages, based on discussion categories, and accompanied by thumbnails designed to attract viewers' attention, with the aim of increasing audience engagement.

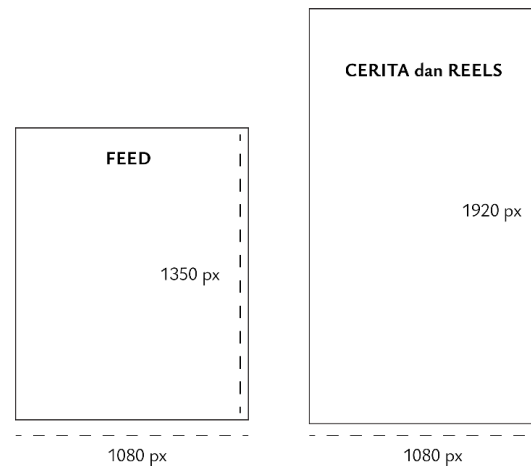


Figure 4: format content of the main media

Source: Personal document

In addition to the main media, there are various supporting media designed to reinforce the message, which can be accessed directly by scanning a QR code that links directly to the main media. Supporting media include A3-sized posters (29.7 x 42.0 cm), X-banners (60 x 160 cm), sticker packs on A5-sized paper (14.8 x 21.0 cm), key chains measuring 6-7 cm, 350-500 ml tumblers, 11 oz or 325 ml mugs, 30 x 40 cm tote bags, 3.5 x 12 cm bookmarks, A3 (29.7 x 42.0 cm) folded tissue boxes, holiday envelopes (5.5 x 10 cm), and L-sized T-shirts. All of these media are designed with sizes tailored to the needs of the target audience.

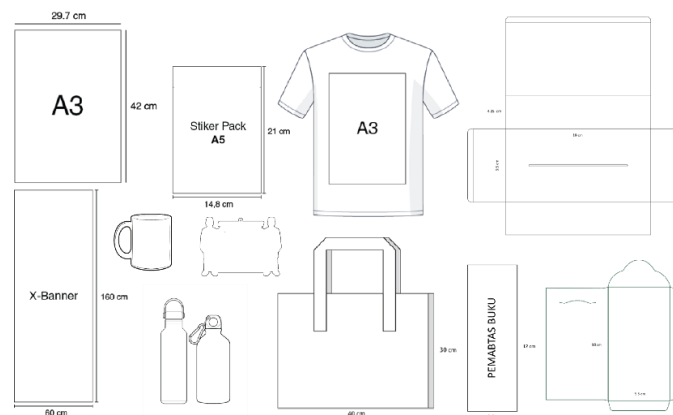


Figure 5: Supporting media content format

Source: Personal document

Layout

Layout is the arrangement of design components on a field in a particular medium with the aim of supporting the concept or message it conveys (Rustan, 2008). According to Ambrose and Harris (2003), layout is a design process that arranges visual elements and spacing to form a structured composition that facilitates effective information delivery, often through the use of grids. The main media applies a picture window layout, where illustrations dominate most of the page while text is positioned around them. The design follows the principle of symmetrical balance, ensuring equal distribution between text and images. The proportion of visual and textual elements varies across pages but generally maintains an approximate 50:50 ratio to encourage audiences to explore the content components. The following section presents examples of the layout applied in the social media content design.



Figure 6: Layout content of the main media

Source: Personal document

Fonts

Fonts play an important role in design. High-quality fonts are not only visually appealing, but also improve readability, ensuring that the intended message is communicated effectively. As an important graphic element, fonts contribute to the overall impact of the design presented to a wide audience (Wantoro & Kasmana 2017). The following are the fonts used in the design.

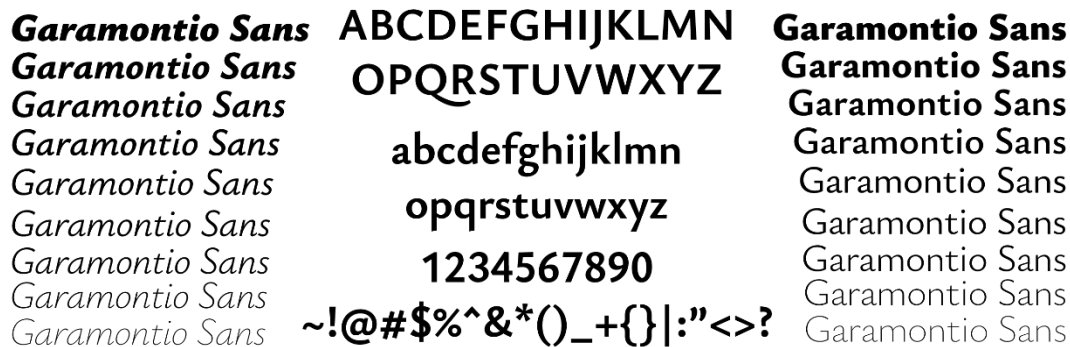


Figure 7: Font Garamontio Sans

Source: Personal document

Garamontio Sans is an open-source sans-serif typeface designed by Michele Casanova as an elegant reinterpretation of Christian Thalmann's Ysabeau. As a variable font, it enables smooth adjustments in weight, width, and optical size. Its wide spacing and balanced proportions enhance readability while maintaining a

contemporary aesthetic, making it suitable for both body text and headings in print and digital media, particularly for informational designs combined with illustrations.

This design employs Malay Arabic (Jawi) script in both the primary and secondary media to reintroduce Jawi reading among the youth of West Borneo. Jawi, otherwise referred to as Arabic Malay or Pegon script, is an adaptation of Arabic letters employed for the written form of Malay, Javanese, and Indonesian languages. The design employs the Simplified Arabic font, a system font developed by Microsoft that is derived from the Linotype Arabic typeface first introduced in 1959 as Mrowa-Linotype Simplified Arabic. This font has been specifically designed to minimise character variations, thereby facilitating efficient Arabic text composition. It is a font that is widely utilised in Arabic newspapers.

ا ب ت ث ج ح خ د ذ ر ز س
ش ص ض ط ظ ع غ ف ق ك
ل م ن و ه ي
ا ب ت ث ج ح خ د ذ ر ز س
ش ص ض ط ظ ع غ ف ق ك
ل م ن و ه ي

Figure 8: Font Simplified Arabic

Source: Personal document

Color

Color is a fundamental element of visual art and design. According to Holtzschue (2017), color is widely recognized as an essential component of aesthetic beauty. A single color can convey ideas and emotions, influence perception, motivation, and behavior, as well as communicate setting, time, character, and atmosphere. In film visual storytelling, color also plays a crucial role in conveying time, location, and environmental context (LoBrutto, 2002).



Figure 9: Color Palette

Source: Personal document

The design uses a retro color palette with bright warm and earth tones to create a warm atmosphere, while green represents the tropical environment and reflects the Malay cultural landscape, commonly located along coastal or river areas with coconut trees, sultanate palaces, and traditional wooden stilt houses.

Illustration

As posited by Zeegen (2012), illustrations are defined as visual representations of language or text, which function to communicate, inform, persuade, educate, and entertain. Furthermore, illustrations are a form of visual communication that is commonly employed in the communications industry as a medium for conveying information. As posited by Ekawardhani et al. (2020), the attribution of identities and the employment of symbols serve to fortify characters as representations of humans. The design incorporates two-dimensional illustrations with a retro style reference, a visual style inspired by the aesthetics of the past, particularly the 1950s to 1990s.

The design incorporates character illustrations, woven fabrics, and settings. The primary characters depicted in the film are Malay men and women, with the function of the supporting characters being to educate the audience on the appropriate Malay dress code. The characters are depicted with skin ranging from dark to light brown, prominent eyes, and black hair; the male characters are distinguished by their neatly trimmed short hair, while the female characters are depicted with long hair or wearing hijabs in conjunction with complete Malay attire. The visual identity of the brand is reinforced through the use of woven fabrics typical of West Borneo, namely Sambas weaving and Pontianak insang pattern weaving.

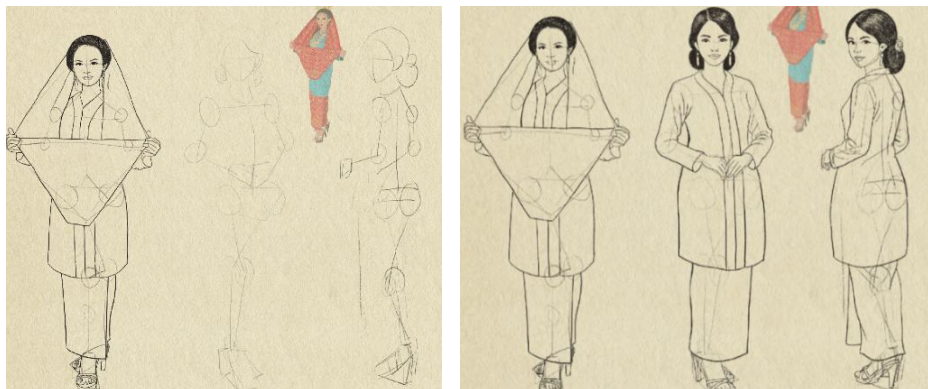


Figure 10: Character Illustration Process

Source: Personal document

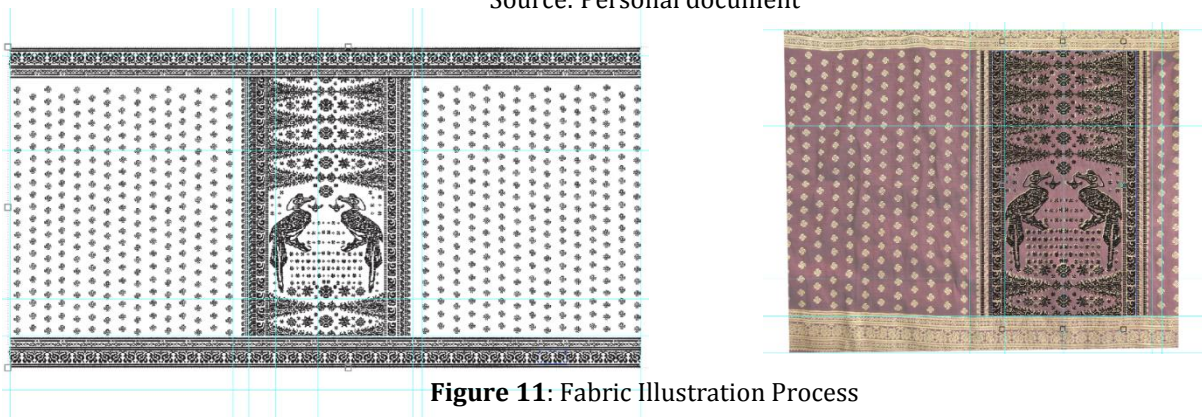


Figure 11: Fabric Illustration Process

Source: Personal document

The background illustrations are used to depict the atmosphere of locations associated with the presence of Malay clothing in West Kalimantan. The backgrounds shown include the Malay sultanate, Malay houses, and the atmosphere of parties or celebrations in villages on the banks of rivers or beaches with stilt houses and coconut trees.

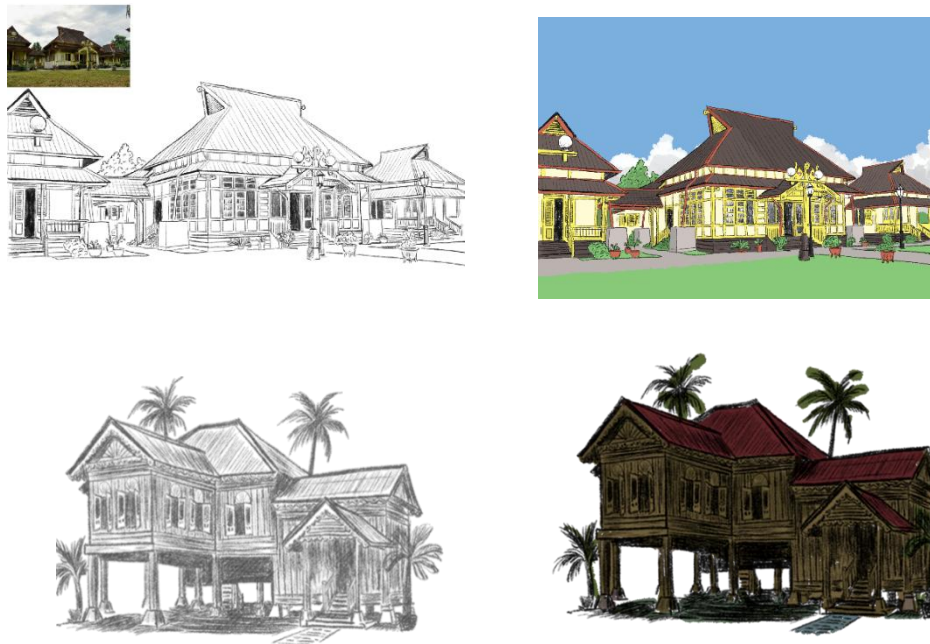


Figure 12: Location Illustration Process

Source: Personal document

Design Results

The final design was developed from information collected from books, journals, photographs, and videos related to Malay clothing. Rustan (2010) states that design is a visual outcome of creative forms developed through technical analysis, resulting in measurable visual elements. The material was organized into three main contents an introduction to Malay clothing in West Borneo and explanations of clothing types based on category and gender. Each section presents concise information supported by illustrative visuals highlighting the distinctive characteristics of each garment.

The primary social media content was devised utilising a conventional pixel dimension of 1350×1080 pixels, comprising 3–5 slide pages. The decision to employ this particular format was guided by two overarching principles: first, adherence to established platform standards, and secondly, the necessity of ensuring optimal text readability across a diverse range of mobile devices. The dimensions of the display have been meticulously calculated to provide an optimal visual balance, neither excessively diminutive nor overly cumbersome, thereby ensuring that audiences are able to engage with the content in a comfortable manner.

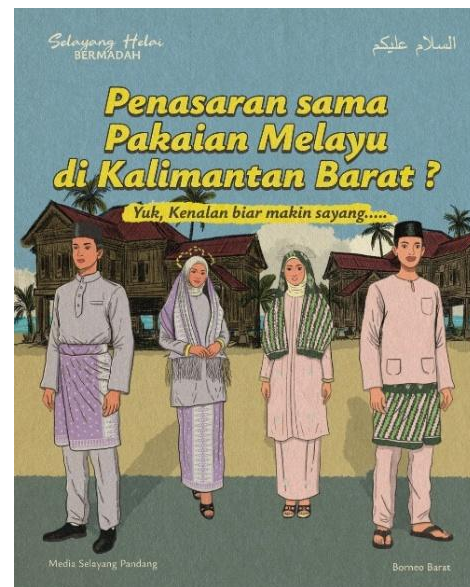
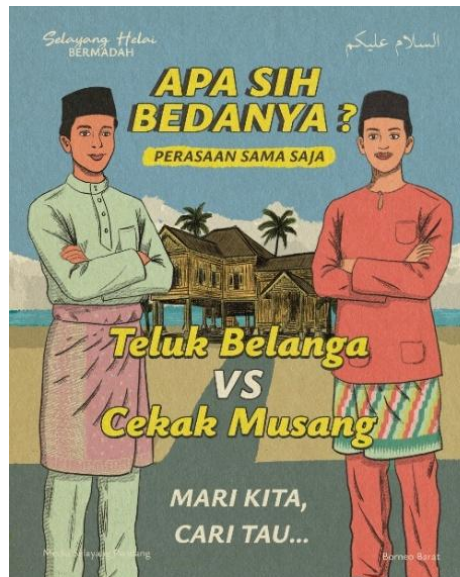


Figure 13: First content from the prime media

Source: Personal document

The content section presents the core information in a concise and structured manner, similar to brief informative facts. Each page directly displays categorized explanations of Malay clothing. The cover features the Arabic greeting “Assalamualaikum” in the upper-right corner, functioning as an introductory salutation for the presented content.

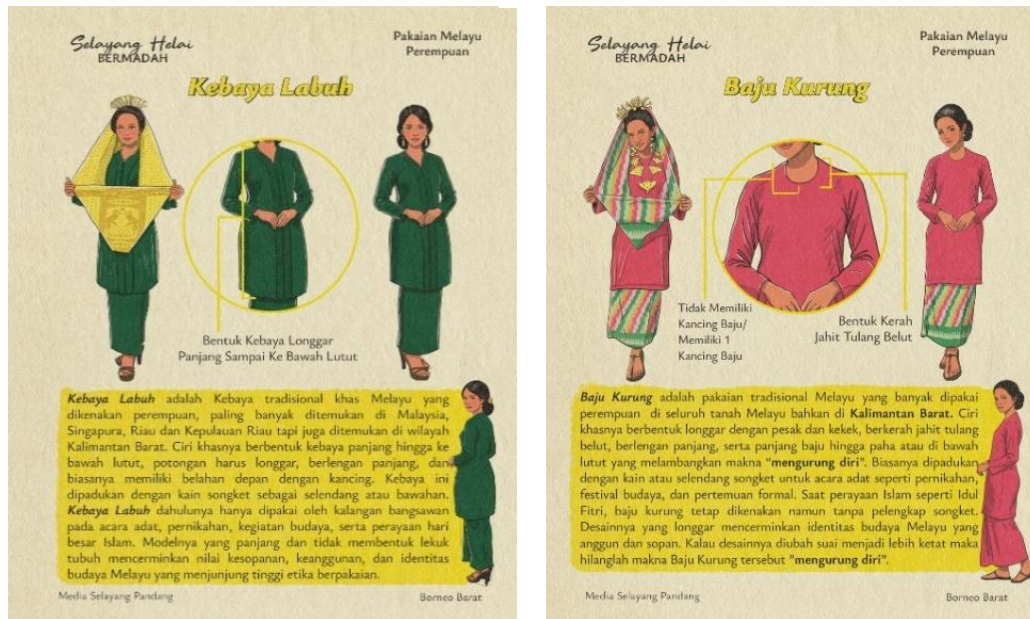


Figure 14: Second content from the prime media

Source: Personal document

The visual illustration depicts individuals attired in traditional Malay clothing, with a background representing Malay settlements in West Borneo. The front cover is designed in a poster-like style, featuring a prominent illustration and background elements. The use of yellow and green, which are strongly associated with Malay culture, is predominant.



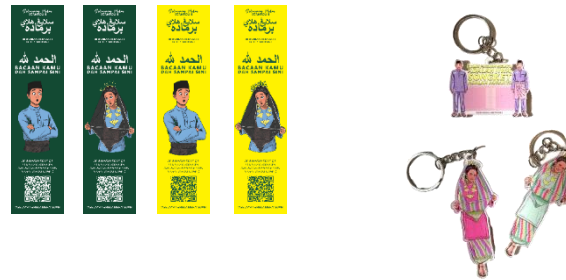


Figure 15: Third content from the prime media

Source: Personal document

Yellow symbolizes bravery, glory, grandeur, and purity, while green represents calmness, faith, spirituality, nature, and the balance between worldly and spiritual life. The colors of the clothing and songket fabric are adjusted to reflect those commonly found in the Malay community of West Borneo. The following section presents examples of the Malay clothing content from West Borneo. In addition to the prime media, this design includes supporting media that connect audiences to the primary media and serve as reminders to reach a broader target audience. The selection was based on field observations and media commonly used by the audience to ensure relevance and effectiveness. All supporting media apply a consistent visual concept.





Figure 16: Support Media

Source: Personal document

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The objective of the design of informational media on Malay dress etiquette in West Kalimantan is the dissemination of cultural knowledge to the public, with a particular focus on younger generations, through media that align with contemporary communication trends. The selection of social media as the primary platform was predicated on two key factors: first, its widespread usage among the general public, and second, its capacity to disseminate information with both rapidity and ease. The objective of this project is to create a social media-based informational medium characterised by communicative and informative visual content, employing a visual communication design approach. The content of the publication pertains to Malay dress etiquette, the values of modesty in clothing, and the cultural elements embedded within these traditions. In addition to the provision of information, the content has been meticulously designed to attract and engage the target audience. It is anticipated that this design will function as a reference point for the local community, with a particular focus on the Malay community, in order to facilitate a deeper understanding and rediscovery of the cultural values embodied by Malay dress practices in West Kalimantan. It is recommended that future development should focus on expanding the variety of content and visual approaches in order to maintain relevance in the face of evolving trends. Furthermore, there is a need for consideration of development into broader digital formats, with a view to enhancing the reach and accessibility of information for the public. It is recommended that the results of the design process be taken into consideration when formulating recommendations for future development. Firstly, further exploration of information on traditional Malay clothing in West Kalimantan should involve cultural sources, traditional leaders, and a broader range of literature to ensure more comprehensive and accurate information. Secondly, the development of informational media should not be confined to social media but should be expanded to encompass various digital platforms and printed media, with a view to reaching a wider audience. The utilisation of contemporary technological advancements and visual communication media has enabled the continuous evolution of information pertaining to Malay dress culture, thereby contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage within modern society.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ahmad Ramadhan, email: -

Ahmad Ramadhan is a student at Universitas Komputer Indonesia

Yully Ambarsih Ekawardhani, email: yully.ambarsih@email.unikom.ac.id

Yully Ambarsih Ekawardhani is a Lecture of Department of Visual Communication Design at Universitas Komputer Indonesia