

# Designing Visual Character Of Raden Wijaya As Historical Figure In Visual Novel

Dendi Pratama, Winny Gunarti Widya Wardani, Taufiq Akbar

**Abstract:** Visual character in Visual Novel games have the power to carry messages. Creation of visual characters in historical narratives can also bring cultural meaning. This study examines the creation of Raden Wijaya visual character as a case example in Visual Novel "Twist Majapahit" which is set in Majapahit kingdom, but with manga-style visualization. On the contrary, the creation of Raden Wijaya visual character in this study is more trying to accentuate the characteristic of Indonesia. The choice of Raden Wijaya character is based on consideration because it has historically included a major influence in expanding the royal power. The study discussions are elaborated qualitatively with the Social Semiotic approach that analyzes informative functions, interactive functions, and imaginative functions in visual character design elements. The results of this study show that design elements can build a comprehensive association of meanings, so that the creation of visual characters tailored to historical figures has the potential to bring cultural messages.

**Keywords:** Visual novel, visual character, historical figure, social semiotic.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Visual Novels are a kind of game in audiovisual media that invites its players to interact through framed stories and visual character choices. Visual Novels are often called sound novels. This game comes from Japan and also called *bijuaru noberu*, which is adventure game [1]. The market of Visual Novel in Indonesia is also dominated by developers from Japan, so the production of Visual Novel Indonesia is also much influenced by manga styles in presenting the visual character and narration. This study takes the example of a Visual Novel titled "Twist Majapahit" created by Kawamata Hiruma, an Indonesian developer who presents a narrative set in Indonesian history but by presenting the manga style to its visual character. Visual character in this game does have the power that can build the perception of players through the depiction of figures who have visual identities. Visual identity in the context of visual communication design can be presented through visual elements. As a form of comparison of character creation, this study elevates one character in the Majapahit Kingdom, Raden Wijaya. Raden Wijaya is the most influential figure in the progress of Majapahit Kingdom, and is the legendary figure of the leader. The question of this research is, how the visual elements of Raden Wijaya visual character can bring the message of culture? The purpose of this study is to explain the function of design elements in visual characters that can build user perceptions of cultural values and history through interactive games.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Visual Novel "Twist Majapahit"

Visual Novel "Twist Majapahit" is an interactive game that tells about 12 historical figures in Majapahit Kingdom.

- *Dendi Pratama is vice dean and Lecturer in visual communication design major, Indraprasta University PGRI, Jakarta 12530, Indonesia. E-mail:dendipratama@unindra.ac.id*
- *Winny Gunarti Widya Wardan. and Taufiq Akbar as Co-Author are lecturers in visual communication design major, Indraprasta University, PGRI, Jakarta 12530, Indonesia. E-mail: winnygw@yahoo.com, and grapickology@gmail.com*

Visual This novel was developed by Kawamata Hiruma, a student of a computer high school in Yogyakarta [2]. The developer whose real name is R. Firmansyah deliberately chose the Japanese-style commercial name to be able to compete with Visual Novel from abroad. In addition, the depiction of visual characters in his work is also entirely using the manga style, ranging from posture visualization to the costumes displayed from each character. Based on interviews with Kawamata Hiruma, the creation of the character with the style aims to be more competitive in the global market and can meet the tastes of the young generation today. It is expected that game players in Indonesia are interested to learn the history of Indonesia through Visual Novel.

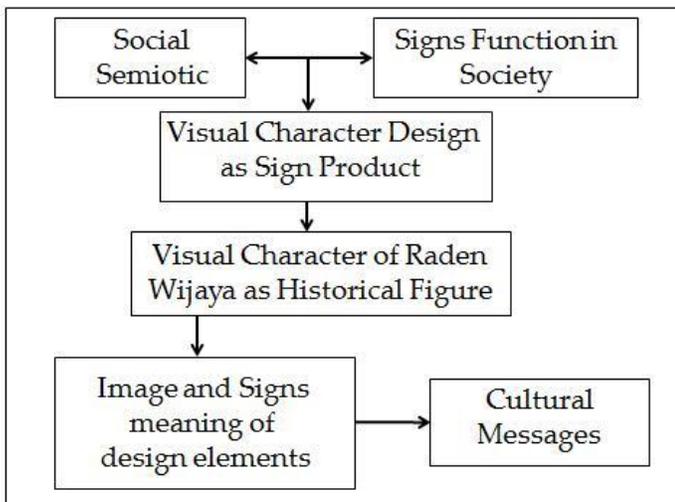
### 2.2 The Power of Visual Character

Visual power is able to build the perception of game players through the elements of design on the visual character. In addition to the narrative offered, the visual character is part of the important element that must be present in Visual Novel. Without visual character then Visual Novel does not have game identity. Visual characters are designed through line elements, shapes, textures, and colors. Messages designed through visual characters can include cultural ideas. Therefore, the visual character of local cultural values can potentially be a symbolic product that carries a cultural message. Sloan said [3], the visual character serves to build the imagination and involvement of the mind and emotions of its users. Moreover, the creation of characters in the design of interactive games in cyberspace is very unlimited. Visual characters can exist and are attached as visual identities through the illustrative styles presented by the facial, postural, and accessory illustrations shown on the characters. According to Kusrianto [4], illustrations can build an image or representation. In the discussion of this study, it can be said that the style of illustration through visual characters is significantly able to represent the idea of cultural values of society. It is said by Barker [5] research on culture can be paralleled by the exploration of the process of representation. In other words, the creation of a visual character that refers to the culture of society is a representation of the cultural values inherent in society.

## 3 METHOD

The qualitative approach in this study is used to collect literature data, observations, and interviews, particularly the

understanding of the creation of visual characters as cultural messengers through design elements. The discussion of elements of the visual character is translated using the Social Semiotics method, which contains the theory of sign readings. Semiotics is the science of signs and their use in various media analyzes to generate codes of meaningful signs. Visual character design as a form of communication media through illustrations also contains a number of meaningful signs. Barthes [6] says the focus of analysis in semiotics is more to the text and how codes and signs work. In the context of the discussion according to Social Semiotics, the reading of the sign element is based on its function in society, and how the design elements as the language are used. Or in other words, Social Semiotics is more descriptive by association of meaning. Related object of research that is the visual character Raden Wijaya as the historical figure of Majapahit Kingdom, Social Semiotics review the image of Raden Wijaya through the elements of manga and nonmanga design or potentially bring the message of Indonesian culture.



**Fig. 1.** Social Semiotic Approach in Visual Character of Raden Wijaya

## 4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 4.1 Design Elements of Visual Character

Character design can be created through line design elements, which is to visualize the form through type, thickness, orientation, and position, to present the personality, expression, identity, and emotion, gender, social class. Then the form elements to further strengthen the linkage of the line, and can present the appearance of character, character type, and personality. The design elements that also play an important role in the visual character are texture and color. The texture shown in the illustration here refers to the texture look, as the result of a quasi-two-dimensional picture [7]. Then the color design element is a connotative sign. Color can build the perception of its users according to sensory and psychological meanings. The colors here are also related to cultural meaning. As Danesi [8] says, through color, one can perceive color much more than a phenomenon involving visual perception alone, but rather playing a function within the area of cultural symbols.

## 4.2 Social Semiotics

Social Semiotics as an association of visual meanings and functions of its use in visual language is applied by Kress and van Leeuwen [9] into the visual design system which in the discussion of this study is viewed according to informative functions, interactive functions, and imaginative functions. Interaction function as a form of expression and to discover new things, imaginative functions to imitate something, and the function of information as a particular messenger. The sign aspect that can be interpreted in Social Semiotics here is contained in the visual character of Raden Wijaya. The reading of Social Semiotics meaning to the visual character design of Raden Wijaya, both manga and nonmanga as a form of creation that is considered potential to bring Indonesian cultural values, refers to the development of visualization of human dimension as an object of illustration which can be seen through the elements of line design, shape, texture, and colors. In character design, design elements become presentational signs conveyed through postural messages, namely visualization of body proportions, including messages conveyed through the look of fashion and accessories, as a whole of message interaction.

## 5 DISCUSSION

### 5.1. Association of Meaning

The social life and cultural background of the Majapahit Empire contributed to the creation of Raden Wijaya's visual character. The Social Semiotics approach to analyze informative functions, interactive functions, and imaginative functions through the significance of facial expressions, postures, costumes, and accessories of visual character designs that can give meaning associations. The influence of culture becomes part of the text - in this case the visual character - which can be analyzed as signs that carry the message and have meaning. The visual comparison of Raden Wijaya's manga-style visualization of Visual Novel "Twist Majapahit" [10], and the created character in this study with nonmanga style can be seen in the figure below.



**Fig. 2.** Comparing of Visual Character Style of Raden Wijaya Manga Style

**TABLE 1: ASSOCIATION OF MEANING**

Visual Character	Association of Meaning		
	<i>Informative Function</i>	<i>Interactive Function</i>	<i>Imaginative Function</i>
Raden Wijaya	Facial expressions, body postures, costumes and accessories serve to present the character of Raden Wijaya as a servant and leader of a mighty and authoritative empire.	Facial expressions, postures, costumes and accessories serve to build past and present dialogue in the mind and emotions of players	Facial expressions, postures, costumes and accessories work to build the imagination of the character of Raden Wijaya who is brave, mighty, and masculine.

In the informative function, association of meaning refers to the signification of Raden Wijaya's character as a mighty and authoritative servant and royal leader. This informative meaning can be read through the facial expression of calm, firm posture, the typical costume of the Javanese kingdom equipped with head coverings, shoulder ornaments, belts, and necklaces of gold, as part of the identity of the royal figures in the past. In the interactive function, association of meaning refers to the character of Raden Wijaya who is able to build past and present dialogues in the mind and emotions of players. This is due to the creation of facial expressions and posture adjusted to the perception of the figure of heroism itself, which is a handsome figure, well-built, muscular, and strong. This visualization certainly needs to be supported with the narration as well. In imaginative function, association of meaning refers to the brave, mighty, and masculine character of Raden Wijaya. Imagination can be awakened because of the perception based on selectivity, the internal factors of the psychological needs of players who influenced expectations about the nature and personality of the hero figure they want. This association of meanings awakens when players have to interact and respond to the dialogues that arise from the visual character. Here, players can imagine through the visualization of facial expressions, postures, and everything attached to the character by combining historical stories in the past through the game in the present.

## 5.2 Pembacaan Elemen Desain Dalam Karakter Visual Raden Wijaya

The reading of sign elements in visual character of Raden Wijaya created in this study is inseparable from the image of Raden Wijaya's character in Visual Novel "Twist Majapahit". This can be used as a comparison as a case example, because of the acculturation of culture in its portrayal dominated by Japanese manga style, but using the narrative of Indonesian history.

**TABLE 2: SIGN ELEMENTS OF RADEN WIJAYA VISUAL CHARACTER**

Visual Character	Design Elements			
	<i>Line</i>	<i>Shape</i>	<i>Texture</i>	<i>Color</i>
Raden Wijaya	The lines on the manga-style character are more impressive sleek and elegant. The lines on the character of creation more point to a serious, balanced, consistent, and stable energy image.	The shape on the manga-style character memorabl e sharp and young, and aggressiv e. Shape on the character of creation is stronger, stronger, bolder, and secure.	Texture look at manga style characters in the form of modern motifs. Texture look at the characters of creation according to the historical batik motifs as royal symbols.	The colors on manga style characters are bold colors, as the image of an energetic youngster. The colors on the character of the creation of natural and neutral color-shadow as the image of the figure in the past

In the manga-style Raden Wijaya character, expressive style can be seen from the illustrations of facial lines, large eyeballs, slim and dynamic postures, and brightly colored costumes, motifs, and modern models. Design elements in Raden Wijaya's visual character are designed to carry messages through lines, shapes, textures, and colors. On facial and body line elements, if the manga-style character is more impressive slim and elegant, then on the characters that adjust to the historical literature, facial and body lines show more seriousness, balance, consistency, and stable energy. In the facial and body shape elements, when the manga-style characters look spiky and show youthfulness, and aggressiveness, the characters created in this study attempt to show strength, courage, courage, and royalty leaders who give a sense of security, through the illustration of the shoulder shape and a wide and muscular body. In texture elements, especially texture look, the characters in the manga style more in the form of contemporary motifs. While the texture of the character Raden Wijaya designed in this study to adjust to the historical batik motifs as royal symbols. In the color element, the manga style character accentuates bold bright colors, as the image of an energetic youngster. While on the character of the creation creates a natural and neutral color-wana to put forward the image of heroism in the past. Thus the discussion of reading the sign elements on the visual character design Raden Wijaya.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Raden Wijaya's visual character design as a historical figure in Visual Novel can be shaped through line, shape, texture, and color elements, and potentially brings cultural messages. The design elements are able to build the association of meaning

and image of Raden Wijaya character based on informative function, interactive function, and imaginative function. The entire interaction of these functions can be visualized through illustrations of facial expressions, postures, costumes, and accessories displayed. Discussion of the study of visual character design becomes important in the visual novel game, because it can encourage creativity in creating similar visual characters based on historical figures, thus potentially as a more informative and entertaining educational media to meet the tastes of today's market. This study can be a scientific reference in the application of visual communication design work, also useful for the national interest, especially for the development of visual character design in Visual Novel Indonesia. Character design models referring to historical figures can be developed creatively and competitively while still exploring local cultural values, thereby building more visual identity of Novel Indonesia.

Routledge, pp. 75-76, 2006.

[10] Kawamata Hiruma, Hiruma Kawamata, diakses melalui <https://gumroad.com/kawamata>, 2013, 20th October 2017.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researcher would like to thank the Directorate General of Higher Education (Ditjen Dikti) of Kopertis Region III for research implementation in 2017, and Institute for Research and Community Service (LP2M) Universitas Indraprasta PGRI, Jakarta, so that this study can be done well.

### REFERENCES

- [1] Dani Cavallaro. *Anime and the Visual Novel. Narrative Structure, Design and Play at the Crossroads of Animation and Computer Games*. North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., pp. 9, 2010
- [2] Kusnawi dan R. Firmansyah. "Game Hybrid Visual Novel Sejarah Dengan Metode Sistem Pakar Twist Majapahit", *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Teknologi Informasi dan Multimedia*. Yogyakarta: STMIK AMIKOM, pp. 5-7, 6-8 Februari 2015.
- [3] Robin J.S. Sloan. *Virtual Character Design for Games and Interactive Media*. Boca Raton, London, New York: CRC Press, Taylor & francis Group, pp. 28, 2015.
- [4] Adi Kusrianto. *Pengantar Desain Komunikasi Visual*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Andi, pp.30, 2009.
- [5] Chris Barker. *Kamus Kajian Budaya*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit PT. Kanisius, pp. 255, 2014.
- [6] Roland Barthes. *Imaji, Musik, Teks, Analisis Semiologi Atas Fotografi, Iklan, Film, Musik, Alkitab, Penulisan dan Pembacaan Serta Kritik Sastra, Esei- esei Terpilih*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, pp. 61 , 2010
- [7] Bambang Irawan dan Priscilla Tamara. *Dasar-dasar Desain Untuk Arsitektur, Interior-Arsitektur, Seni Rupa, Desain Produk Industri dan Desain Komunikasi Visual*. Depok: Griya Kreasi, pp.25-27, 2013.
- [8] Marcel Danesi. *Pesan, Tanda, dan Makna, Buku Teks Dasar Mengenai Semiotika dan Teori Komunikasi*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, pp.85, 2011.
- [9] Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London and New York: