

Mascot: An alternate method to prevent the misuse of visual assets in Indonesia's Covid 19 prevention campaign



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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the use of visual assets during the covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. There are regulations related to restrictions on movement for everyone during the pandemic, and there is much confusion in information, resulting in information chaos, and one of the reasons is the inappropriate use of visual assets as a medium for the Covid-19 prevention campaign in Indonesia. This study aims to identify the misuse of these visual assets. This study uses visual data spread on social media and observation to examine billboards, banners, and the like scattered in the community. In addition to visual data, interviews were also conducted with graphic designers. The questions asked were about the reasons for determining the design and their motivation in utilizing visual assets. The analysis is carried out by building relationships between the designs created, the use of visual assets, and contextual relationships with other interests outside the substance of the Covid 19 prevention campaign program in Indonesia. The results of the study show that visual assets are not used proportionally in conveying the Covid-19 prevention campaign in Indonesia. The conclusion is that there is no policy that provides direction regarding the provisions for the use of visual assets in preventing the Covid-19 health disaster in Indonesia. This research contributes to the government because this research finds a rule model for the use of visual assets in Indonesia.



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1. Introduction

The introduction of visual assets in public spaces can increase information awareness for the wider community. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of visual assets in public spaces was less than optimal. This can be seen from the information displayed in the public space that does not significantly contain the substance of the message to be published. There is a lot of misinformation and uncertainty about the emergence of destabilizing drugs in society. Therefore Indonesian government officials implement preventive measures by strictly enforcing the rules. The rules come with heavy sanctions by local governments. The socialization of the applied policies usually uses a pattern of punishment rather than awareness education. Meanwhile, the media used to disseminate information is still classic and is often misused. The visual assets they apply refer to the use of photos of local community leaders, such as political propaganda. The use of visual language as an effort to prevent covid 19 is being degraded by this information. The thing that eventually became a scourge in the minds of the people caused dissatisfaction. Invalid sources of visual assets are often an additional problem that many city dwellers overlook. Many people then disobeyed the rules in some areas, especially in big cities. Community involvement is indispensable during a pandemic, so the supporting policies related to the utilization of visual assets are very suitable for minimizing conflicts caused by the incorrect utilization of visual assets. The bureaucracy must be able to make a selection

of the content of substances to be published in the public sphere. Based on this issue, this study aims to identify the misuse of visual assets during the COVID-19 period in Indonesia.

Laviola *et al.*, in their research, investigated the opportunity to use a "minimal AR" approach in optimizing visual assets used by interfaces in augmented reality (AR) to deliver work instructions in manufacturing. Laviola proposes a new writing approach that imposes a minimal amount of information to complete a task while identifying paired objects; determining colour coding is also considered in the use of additional visual assets. According to him, if there are more than two objects, the visual assets must be identified properly. Laviola's research contributes to the industrial production of AR work instruction designs [1]. Prasetyo, in his research, discusses the movement of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Indonesia. Prasetyo stated that Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises have serious problems with processing promotional visual assets, such as design courses, buying design software, and the time spent creating visual content is not small. According to Prasetyo, this problem should be resolved properly because, currently, there are many choices in using social media processing services. But in reality, the services of many Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises are not able to prepare a special budget for spending on visual asset needs for promotional purposes; Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, in this case, have not been able to adapt to the new social media management model [2]. Maharani, in his research, discusses the issue of visual asset design in the Nolja vocabulary card game. Maharani explained that the designs included game theme designs, illustrations, educational game systems, layouts, and content arrangements. Maharani's research aims to produce a Nolja card game design that is interactive, educative, and suitable for women aged 15-25 years who have the motivation and function to convey Korean language lessons well. The design is carried out with qualitative methods through interviews with experts and extreme users in games and learning Korean, distributing surveys to 100 target markets [3].

Gattullo *et al.* studied the development of visual materials for use in Augmented Reality. According to Gattullo, the lack of standards made it difficult to determine the quality of paper-based and digital visual assets before. Gattullo in his research, categorizing and comparing different Augmented Reality visual assets, Gattullo simplifies the work of industrial operators in various tasks, from planning and commissioning to assembly and maintenance, so that it can describe the advantages and disadvantages of Augmented Reality visual sets and provide direction for research future [4]. Annette *et al.* conducted a study of visual identity, aiming to find out the relationship between visual identity and the factors that contribute to the formation of a company's reputation. These visual assets are evaluated based on the design's visibility, uniqueness, authenticity, transparency, and coherence. Annette *et al.* discovered that public approval of a company's visual assets was influenced by the design's quality, the breadth of its application, and the distribution medium [5]. The results of the previous study did not discuss the use of visual assets in public spaces in overcoming the chaos of information during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, so this topic has a significant novelty. This novelty is expected to contribute to bureaucratic implementers as stakeholders and policy implementers to give special attention to the proper use of visual assets in public spaces. The involvement of communication experts in the use of visual assets should get attention, so that they can provide input in solving the problem of setting policies on the rules for the use of visual assets so that they are more informative and educative, as well as entertaining the public's eyes, without biasing the substance of the message conveyed. It can even put emphasis on communication strategies that have a psychological impact so that the message is actually received easily and is remembered in long-term memory.

2. Methods

Visual arts are a realm of creativity and the embodiment of reflection; therefore, a comprehensive set of multidisciplinary knowledge is required to undertake research on the subject of visual assets. This qualitative research uses case study approaches to uncover and understand something behind an unknown phenomenon at once to gain widespread insight [6]. Because the current pandemic problem is increasingly protracted, case study research methods seem to be the best way of research. In addition, its rapid and massive emergence has also limited the wiggle room to divide the area for affected residents within the boundaries of the red, yellow, and green zones. Then the only way to gain information is from examples from other cases. These restrictions raise difficulties in the delivery of information, as well as in communicating efficiently. So the phenomenon that surfaces in many regions in different countries is about the problem of communication, specifically the medium used

in the communication process. These studies precisely describe the similarity when experiencing a phenomenon. Then technically, identify the sensation and present it in the analyzed reporting following systematic procedures from narrow to broader units (units of meaning). Research with case study methods in the case of pandemic handling communication will be more complicated if combined with the analysis results of the visual works used to deliver messages. It is orderly arranged, explained at the beginning, and then described with a specific study. This guiding methodology is possible, as stated in the description of Creswell [7]. Visual works such as created mascots as visual media function to communicate the message; therefore, it takes three essential aspects of visual research. According to Kocaballi *et al.*, these three aspects are the imaginary, designer, and viewer [8], all of which have their way in the data collection method. Researchers then analyzed these three aspects using observation, categorization, and interpretation. The more complete the visual data of an object, the easier it will be for the thing to be interpreted.

3. Results and Discussion

Cities as gathering places for many people are ideal for spreading the covid-19 virus. The movement of people with very high mobility becomes fatal and results in many deaths. Government officials then implement preventive measures by dividing the categories of areas (zones) that are critical, vulnerable, and under monitoring. Movement restrictions where all people must comply with the five latest basic laws. Namely: wearing masks, maintaining distance, avoiding crowds, reducing mobility, and having a healthy lifestyle. They are adopting the 3M rule that did look effective before in preventing the spread of the first wave. Unfortunately, the problem is still the same thing; many people do not obey the rules because the use of public figures' photos takes more place than the policies will see Figure 1.



Fig. 1. Some examples of media campaigns as a medium for delivering messages about the pandemic policies are using images of community leaders or political figures. The impression refracts from the actual message

The high literacy level in urban areas lacks proper regulations to sort out the information obtained. Finally, in some places, there is resistance to acts of vandalism, see Figure 2. The challenge then becomes how the government may employ alternative media to maximize the connection with its citizens, particularly those in vital locations, during this pandemic in order to enforce limitations. Therefore, the solution to this issue is to utilize visual assets. This must be accomplished collectively because we are currently living in a visual world, and the use of social media and even cellular

communication cannot be divorced from the discovery of diverse visual assets [9]. Numerous parties, including individuals, organizations, and enterprises, use visual assets to promote their brand and image. Even visual assets may be a rich source of data for political communication specialists, allowing them to better explain, for instance, how voter selection and candidate positioning function in the ecology of visual asset utilization [10]. Visually assets and informatively produced visual materials can receive creative recognition from the public [11], however, the visual assets of the Covid-19 handling campaign tend to emphasize hedonistic values. Even though the use of appropriate visual assets can increase the efficacy of crisis communication so that diverse information or events can be transmitted during a pandemic, many Covid-19 preventive initiatives incorporate visual assets. The potential for communication through the use of visual assets as a COVID-19 prevention campaign strategy also plays a role in advocating for the broader community, including stakeholders, namely the government, to increase collective awareness of the use of visual assets in responding to global health disasters.



Fig. 2. Several acts of rejection of covert political propaganda during the covid-19 pandemic.

The pandemic that has spread over numerous regions of our country, particularly in the heavily populated urban centres of Java and Bali, calls for a specialized approach, including cooperation between the bureaucracy and other facets of society. This research assessed the advent of a virus that spreads so rapidly that numerous regions experience the same occurrence. Technically, the visual analysis of this work includes use cases of visual assets that have been successful in fostering public confidence. In the event of a disaster, it also facilitates contact between various segments of society and provides enjoyment in the sense of community. The approach is challenging since the entire visual character of the district, which must be considered distinctive, must be taken into account. This is because the district's aesthetic attractiveness increases creative output and attracts creative businesses [12]; therefore, the usage of visual assets for the covid-19 prevention campaign must be properly on-target and must not incorporate figures or political figures that tend to prejudice vital information. The findings of this study should serve as a guide for policymakers in selecting the most effective visual set as a communication channel, as the choice of media has a definite impact on communication connections. Visual assets that can reduce the potential for abuse of public space can be circumvented using a mascot [13]–[15], and this is frequently used as a criterion for selecting research studies, as it frequently appears in discussions published in scientific journals specializing in economics, communication, and the arts. Urban media such as mascots and flexible forms can also foster a sense of communal pride [16].

The mascot design must comprehend the personality of the chosen market. This understanding is crucial given that each group has distinct triggers of attraction, interpretation, and attitude that will arise in response to the delivered information. This syndrome will be more prevalent in urban regions,

given that the metropolitan area is the population's focal point. The city is a hub of economic activity and a gathering point for political bodies. Thus it must possess fictitious characteristics that may be extracted, such as traditional values, historical moments, and colours of local pride, among others. Visually implanted and diffused features are effective for educating the public about a subject [17]. A mascot's work must be meticulously created to have a fortunate effect [18], in accordance with the definition of the term mascot, which is intended to be able to promote the welfare of the surrounding community and society. The fictional part of the visual character must be tempered with the added value of a disturbingly solid composition of space and colour. The historical significance of the image is evident in even the tiniest of details, most notably in the historical moment depicted during the country's inception. The golden ratio is a balancing division number that can visually satisfy the viewer's reasoning ability. The science of the golden ratio frequently serves as the foundation for visual creations that become masterpieces, such as the Monalisa painting and other works of art. As we can see in Figure 3, there are many differences between the use of public figures' photos and mascots as essential visual assets. The imaginary aspect seems more attractive and gives the impression of being closer to the audience. It will be more acceptable to the community to reduce the rejection of the appeal delivered. So far, research in the field has found that the public more easily understands media that uses mascot figures. The community, until now, obediently maintains discipline even without certainty when the pandemic period will end. Malang's people are currently fighting Pandora's box that has opened with a movement to comply with the rules of health protocols because of the right targeted information.



Fig. 3. Malang city mascot, Osi & Ji, gives people a new approach to understanding government policies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A mascot represents the ideals included in that image [19], the character of a product or idea as a supporter to elevate the product's identity and have a role in marketing, as well as an effective communication tool and aid in attracting the viewer's attention to become more identifiable. This design is adaptable to a variety of activities and displays in print, three-dimensional, and digital media. The historical significance of mascot design fosters communal cohesion in the place where it is utilized (a sense of pride). Moreover, this implies that mascot pictures can be used to convey messages to the public for any purpose [20]. As working instruments, designers must comprehend the fundamental concepts of pride. They are required to create a great visual piece that encapsulates the city's values. Pride is a truly universal drive, necessitating designers to be diligent and intelligent. The first principle of pride is persuasive messages. The second pride is knowing the audience and careful audience segmentation. Mascot designers must understand how their works can take their attention and persuade the audience [21]. The third is word-of-mouth communication. Fourth is supportive visuals. As a visual asset to communicate the message to the audience, Mascot must build from their known identity. Identity allows a place to be different from other places; designers combine various elements of collective memorabilia in society into a visual form. This identity can eventually add new associations with more substantial value than previous associations. The visual form can be an

alternative solution for stakeholders in determining new associations. The visual layout is often easier to instill in one's mind and binds strong feelings to feel a sense of belonging. The togetherness of historical background becomes the keyword in mascot design, which is accepted immediately.

Designers hold the vital aspect of the creator. Their works provide energy in shaping the wind of change. Japanese mascot creators have already created lots of works. They commonly use *Yuru-Chara* (characters) as tourist ambassadors in Japan [22]. Especially after 2007. It is easy to build because it is common to remember its citizens who uphold collectivist values. In 2012, there were 865 mascots officially created and used in Japan. In 2013 the number increased to 1242 mascots, some of which were successful such as Kumamon, Hikonyan, the mascot of Hikone city, and the pair of *Sento-Kun* and *Manto-Kun*, the mascot of Nara City [23]. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, of 99 cities, only four cities have inaugurated their city mascot. The first city is Cimahi, with its mascot named *Chima* in 2009, and the second is Surabaya, with *Cak Sura & Cak Baya* in 2015. *Osi* and *Ji* in 2016 from Malang city are the third, and the last is Bekasi with their mascot named *Bang Bek & Mpok Asi* in 2017. Designers' mascots in Japan prove themselves how they are valued.

Yuru-Chara (characters) are commonly used as tourist ambassadors in Japan. The Japanese made the images starting with building their identity because a region consists of various entities and stakeholders that have different objectives and interests. Identity is a reflection of self; each prefecture has had its own identity stored in the collective memory of the original habitus group or para stakeholders. The identity of an area is also kept in physical artefacts to signify the territory; this physical form includes documents of the past, present, or future that help understand a region's identity [24]. Mascot designers in Indonesia can imitate this stage. From the previous description, the presence of mascots is related to the creation pursued by creators who design based on ideas. Existing theories and ideas provide creators with stimulation to make it happen with visual imagery; in this context, the creator seeks to visualize the ideal shape. Creating a mascot was an idea embodied by a form of object studied with various research and considerations. It is in keeping with what Villoriente and James reveal that a mascot will have a personal closeness and a unique communication relationship, especially when designed with the priority of the background that becomes his identity. Even mascots will be a staple during the crowd because of their visually strong disruptive power for their viewers [25].

The audience is also the central aspect, as the target of receiving the message becomes vital in research reference. Related to pandemics, where the problem is about disseminating information to prevent the spread of viruses, the audience response becomes a source of creative ideas. Mascots can be a medium of solution because they have the power to attract people. As a symbol of resistance in the pandemic, which often occurs nowadays to spread an issue, local figures or officials have been proved inefficient and prone to resistance. The uncertain duration of the restrictions on wiggle room in some countries led to massive demonstrations of rejection, ultimately leading to clusters of new virus spread and increased fatalities. Rejection from this community eventually became an iceberg phenomenon that resulted in increasingly erratic pandemic duration, ranging from PSBB, PPKM, PPKM level 4, level 5, and many other terms. Identifying the audience and what they expect likely to generate a better response must be a careful consideration. Collecting information from the audience is not easy. Audience analysis is a way to gain the correct delivery of the message. Cultural sensitivity should be part of the analysis to build the proper visual assets. By knowing more about the target audience, designers can estimate how receptive their mascots are. The right idea then makes the audience feel safe and comfortable. The same familiar feeling will gain people's trust. Based on the audience's needs, this visual asset will satisfy all stakeholders, including the government. Indonesia deserves to adopt this as a substitute for billboards rampant with the figure's face.

In 2020 Japan became one of the countries with a relatively low rate of virus spread globally due to its homogeneous society and geographically separated by a vast ocean boundary. Using masks in their daily lives, even its citizens with discipline apply the established rules without any resistance as in other countries. Finally, the Olympic games can begin in 2021. It was postponed for several months because other government prohibited their athletes from joining. Starting in February, Japan finally implemented new regulations related to pandemic issues by conveying information about the rules of using masks, washing hands properly, avoiding crowds, invitations to stay home, and keeping distance using different symbols. This proximity makes the mascot efficiently work as a medium of information delivery during the pandemic. The Indonesian government must choose the best alternative media to communicate its policy with the support of the newest visual form.

4. Conclusion

The role of the mascot becomes essential when associated with the pandemic; its presence as a medium of communication changes the message delivery pattern. The use of mascots as a medium of message delivery proved effective in reducing resistance from the community in times of pandemics. Its uniquely designed shape and the flexibility of its motion can play a role at once as awareness in the community, especially in areas where the community is compound. Mascot also serves as a strategic promotional medium with various beautiful, interesting, and fun visuals. The figure mascot that can gain good communication in time of pandemic must contain three aspects. First, the mascot must contain a historical symbol that has been aware by most people. Secondly, the mascot must build with national colour, and last, it must include a unifying element. The use of mascots can reduce resistance because it creates closeness to their audience, which the Japanese government is currently implementing. Japan left its old communication method by deleting the public figure's use and changing it in a new fun way. This study showed that the benefits of absorbing good information from the district increased if mascots were designed and applied as part of integrated communication by local governments affected by the pandemic. It can be an answer for the Indonesian government.

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Mascot as part of the communication element is presented objectively in this conceptual scientific research of mascots, although we realize there are still many shortcomings in this research. Constructive criticism and suggestions are welcome in developing the mascot's concept process to be improved in the future. We want to thank LPDP and the Ministry of Finance for their support in our research and suggestions regarding the pandemic analysis. We would also thank Telkom University and all the parties who have supported this research process.

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