Visual Identity as a Modality for Cultural Negotiation: A Social Semiotic Analysis and Measurement of Visual Consistency in the Branding of Voice of Baceprot

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Abstract

Visual consistency plays an important role in shaping artists' identities and values across different communicative contexts. However, visual consistency is generally interpreted as repetition or uniformity of visual features, ignoring the possibility that identity may be retained through many variations. This study investigates the visual identity of Voice of Baceprot (VoB), an Indonesian metal music group, by examining how visual consistency contribute in shaping the band's identity within global popular music culture. This study uses a mixed method approach combining qualitative visual analysis using social semiotic approach, cultural branding framework, and a formal measurement of Visual Consistency Index (VCI) across VoB's visual artefact. The results show that VoB maintains visual consistency through different configuration of graphic and stylistic elements which provide continuity. From social semiotics analysis, these patterns translate the interaction between global metal and Indonesian culture references. Thus, VoB can maintain their resistant identity while also adapt to different contexts.

Keyword: social semiotics, Visual Consistency Index (VCI), metal band, Voice of Baceprot (VoB), national branding

Introduction

Music has certainly become one arena for this massive circulation of identities and this arena has attracted growing attention on the discussions of cultural identities, cultural diplomacy, soft power, and national branding. Some cases in several countries such as Korea and France present a significant finding showing that musicians participate in the construction of national branding through their international visibility (Kim & Lee, 2018; Marc, 2019). This suggests that the national and cultural representation can be examined through artists' cultural identities and practices and not through official governmental campaign.



Picture 1. Voice of Baceprot Performance in Glastonbury Festival 2024

Voice of Baceprot (VoB), a female Indonesian metal band, offers a rich analytical case study for examining these dynamics. Despite having significant international exposure, comprehensive and systematic scholarly study regarding the construction of VoB's visual identity and branding is limited. Therefore, this study tries to fill the gap by investigating the visual identity of VoB across different communicative contexts, time, and platforms.

This study also includes the visual consistency measurement as a quantitative empirical measure of visual identity consistency within different context. This study is expected to have direct implication for the field of branding particularly in visual identity design within Indonesia's broader creative industries.

Research Method

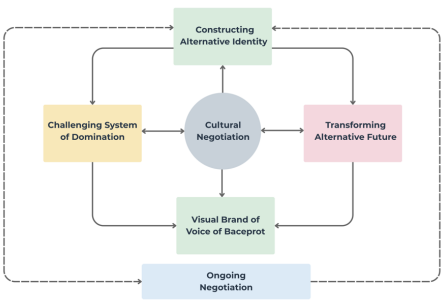
This study employs a mixed method design which combines social semiotic visual analysis (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006) and cultural branding framework (Holt, 2004) with quantitative measurement of visual consistency. The data consists of 35 visual artefacts of Voice of Baceprot (VoB) produced and officially disseminated across multiple platforms and contexts. The data was collected using purposive sampling method to maximize variation of forms of artefact, time period, platform, as well as to make sure the adequate depth in every category for semiotic analysis.



Picture 2. Example of data corpus

Discussion & Result

The analysis across the corpus reveals a combination of visual resources to construct VoB's alternative visual identity through the interaction of musical, gendered, religious, and cultural representations. The visual resource shapes a broader discursive formation of resistance which promotes self determination, challenge dominating system, and collective aspiration.



Picture 3. Dialectical Model of Voice of Baceprot's Visual Discourse

Table 1 Overall Visual Consistency Index

Measure	Value	Interpretation
Overall VCI	0.589	Moderate visual consistency
Number of artefacts	35	Pilot corpus
Number of dimensions	6	Visual coding dimensions
Basis of calculation	Consensus coding	Majority-based rater agreement

Based on assessment from three raters on 35 visual artifact, it is found that VoB demonstrates stronger consistency in its general visual and graphic identity than in the explicit representation of Muslim religious identity and Indonesian cultural identity. This suggests that its visual branding is relatively recognizable through its stylistic characteristics, but Indonesian cultural references are not consistently foregrounded across the 35 visual artifacts.

Table 2 Visual Consistency Index by dimension

Visual dimension	VCI score	Interpretation
Typography Style	0.848	High consistency
Dominant Colour	0.800	High consistency
Branding Consistency	0.800	High consistency
Muslim Visual Marker	0.686	Moderate consistency
Logo Visibility	0.400	Low consistency
Indonesian Cultural Marker	0.086	Low consistency

The results suggest that VoB's visual identity does not rely primarily on the repeated representation of Indonesian national symbols to establish its identity. Instead, its potential contribution to national image formation may emerge through its participation in global metal culture as an Indonesian music brand, bringing together contemporary musical aesthetics, female musicianship, and Muslim identity. This suggests that national branding through popular music can extend beyond the direct promotion of national symbols towards the representation of a country's contemporary cultural and creative capacities. VoB potentially contributes to such representation by demonstrating how Indonesian musicians participate in and reinterpret a transnational music culture while retaining connections to their cultural and religious backgrounds.

Conclusion

VoB's visual identity is produced through the unconventional representation of female metal musician and the combination of Indonesian cultural reference with global metal aesthetics and these are interpreted as resistance towards the expectation of dominant culture. The implications of this study extend beyond the music branding. Visual identity of VoB will potentially give contribution to an alternative representation of Indonesia as a creative, assertive, culturally rooted, and globally connected country. This representation does not necessarily make VoB as an instrument of official nation branding. It shows that the non-state cultural actor can contribute to the production of national cultural meaning.