

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**VISUAL RHETORIC EXPRESSION
IN SHAPING COHESIVE
NATIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH
F&B PACKAGING DESIGN**

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ABSTRACT

Packaging design functions as a critical medium for communicating visual messages. It helps to shape brand identity, convey cultural narrative and articulate national identity. Despite its significance, the relationship between culture and graphic design remains insufficiently explored. Effective visual design communication necessitates a comprehensive understanding of cultural context and distinctive visual characteristics. Semiotic provides an essential for interpreting culture symbols and enabling the articulation of national identity and fostering collective identity of unique Malaysia. It facilitates the communication of complex cultural value, belief and mutual respect among Malaysia's ethnic group. This study aims to identify, interpret and examine the visual characteristic that facilitate meaningful multicultural expression. The empirical scope of the study focuses on Merdeka edition of F&B packaging design from 2007 to 2024. The three phase methodology was employed, including literature review, visual analysis, and semi-structured interviews with experts using qualitative methodology. The contribution of expertise in visual design, anthropology and sociology significantly contributes to the valuable data findings of the research study. The findings of this research establish a significant relationship between visual rhetoric and semiotics. It demonstrates the integrative role in constructing effective design strategies that communicate Malaysia's multicultural identity. This interplay highlights the critical importance of inclusive visual representation in reflecting the diversity of each ethnic group. Addressing this gap will propose a conceptual framework for multicultural design expression that systematically articulates Malaysia's cultural richness. The framework offers strategic insights for designers to develop meaningful, culturally responsive design practices. Ultimately, this research positions F&B packaging design as a powerful medium of visual communication that not only conveys symbolic meaning but also reinforces a shared Malaysian multi-ethnic identity.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Malaysians express their passion for food and beverage as a vibrant reflection of cultural identity and collective belonging. The *Nasi Lemak*, *Roti Canai*, *Hokkien Mee*, *Teh Tarik*, *Cendol* and many more reflect Malaysia's multicultural signature cuisine. For that, food and beverage (F&B) packaging design has become an impactful medium that showcases the richness of Malaysia's vibrant cultural identity. Multicultural expression (MCE) serves as an important medium in expressing and delivering cultural identity. The Merdeka edition of F&B packaging communicates local tradition, belief, historical and ethnic identity of unique Malaysia. The deep understanding of shared symbol and visual narratives will shape the collective identity of Malaysia. Beyond commercial purposes, F&B packaging design powerfully reflects the vibrant cultural value, tradition and national identity of Malaysia. Visual rhetoric (VR) are categorized by the persuasive use of visual element and principle to communicate message, evoke emotion and influence interpretation. Each visual characteristic serves as a significant representation of ethnic group identity. On the other hand, semiotic examine the meaning of visual signs in cultural contexts. The visual interpretation of signs through denotation and connotation reveals rich visual meaning across different ethnic groups. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of semiotic significantly enhances the complexity in visual communication. It vividly expresses Malaysia's collective identity that shapes the nation. The Merdeka limited-edition F&B packaging celebrates the national pride incorporating a variety of patriotic symbols and motifs. Moreover, it effectively evokes the powerful national spirit that makes Malaysia unique. Packaging design has become a powerful medium of visual communication. It effectively conveys values, identities and emotional connection among consumers. The research framework will provide a systematic understanding of symbols interpretation across different ethnic group. Ultimately, it aims to highlight the transformative power of MCE that effectively fosters Malaysia's national integration. Moreover, F&B packaging design has the power to transform the symbolic representation to convey the cultural symbolism of a nation. Over the years, many brand including international and