



Visual Language of Javanese Script on Shoe Design as Cultural Identity

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ABSTRACT

Local entrepreneurs should focus on the creative industry in this digital age. The abundance of local brand opportunities fuels fierce competition among entrepreneurs. This study aims to find out what kind of visual language needs to be in a creative product to blend or acculturate with popular products and transfer cultural identity to cultural industry players and the general public. This study employs qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews with the proprietor of Flymax Indonesia and visual language analysis. The result of this study is that the use of cultural features in product design is a differentiator in the creative industry. This also has an impact on the rise of local pride or pleasant memories of the city through the choice of the name SALA. This study concludes that Hanacaraka in Flymax shoes carries three identities, first for the brand, second for users, and third for culture.

KEYWORDS

Preservation
Hanacaraka
Cultural Asset
Visual Identity
Javanese Language

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1. Introduction

Local brands in Indonesia are flourishing. The creative industry is the right place for local business people in the current digital era. The many opportunities for local brands create intense competition between business people (Winit et al. 2014). The majority of local brands carry local culture into their products; this is transforming into a creative product of a culture that eventually enters an industry called the creative industry (Chua, Roth, and Lemoine 2015; Huang et al. 2014). Local cultural products are the output of a creative approach to cultural preservation. So that culture is not lost, cultural products are made so that they can be closer to consumers as well as convey philosophical values and identity markers of products originating (Moalosi, Popovic, and Hickling-Hudson 2010). The culture tends to differ according to the region and behaviour that goes around in a certain area resulting in various cultures in Indonesia. However, as time passed, these customs were slowly being forgotten as it was not used anymore (Efferin and Hopper 2007). There are 719 languages in Indonesia, of which 704 live and 13 are extinct. Of the living languages, 21 are institutional, 97 are developing, 248 are vigorous, 265 are in difficulty, and 75 are dying (Harmon 1995). Indonesia's rich language is a precious cultural heritage. Hanacaraka is a written language of the many languages that exist in Indonesia. People also know the central Java Hanacarakas as "Javanese." Literacy is part of human life. Literacy is also a means of communication, which is also the identity of a nation (region) (Setiawan 2015). According to Suryadi Mulyono (2004), Hana Caraka is Javanese literature with very high cultural values, as the ancient Javanese script in the text from Kridhasastra, by Raden Ngabei Puspapipura. *Ha, Na Ca Ra Ka, Da Ta Sa Wa La, Pa Dha Ja Ya Nya*, and *Ma Ga Ba Tha Nga* are basic elements of God as the essence of human life. These universal principles are followed by humans. The Javanese people believe these are a way of life for society and believe in God. Hanacarka is a strong cultural asset, but it is almost gone. Javanese script is rarely used in daily life, and this matter triggers a huge realization where the concerns and passion toward the local product are highly



decreasing. It is strengthened by how the majority did not know how to read or translate the meaning of the Javanese script (Wardoyo et al. 2018).

In accordingly, another approach to preserve cultural preservation is through the creative product as a bridge to convey the urgency of cultural regeneration. To a certain extent, it seems that culture in Central Java has decreased excessively, especially the Javanese script, one of the oldest scripts of communication in Indonesia (Setyawan 2019). People can see wherever they go; the writing of Javanese script displayed in public places is minimal and only used as an effort for that Javanese letters are not entirely lost (Setiawan 2015). Javanese scripts or Hanacaraka represent a culture and identity for the regional and national. Furthermore, Hanacaraka is also one of the alphabets recognized by UNICODE, an organization under UNESCO that is concerned with the standard alphabet codes on computers (Santosah and Haryanto 2020).

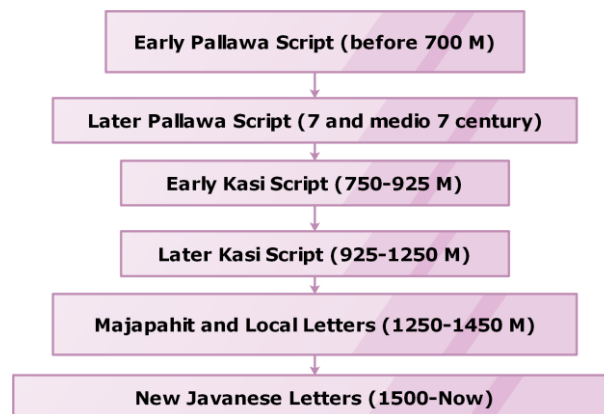


Fig. 1. History of Javanese Old Script (Robson 2011)

The oldest written or language heritage in Indonesia is the Javanese script or known by the name Hanacaraka. The journey of Hanacaraka is long and winding that all the circles in Indonesia will learn during the time of the kings. In Indonesia, before getting to know either Latin or Alphabet, the script was already known as the Kawi Script used in Java, Sumatra and Bali. The Kawi script was generated by the creation of Pallawa from Eastern India, which, along with the influx of the Indian religious and cultural influences, entered the Archipelago in the fourth century A.D. In the 17th century AD, following the Majapahit, in other words, in the period of the Muslim Mataram sultanate. The Kawi script had been converted into the ancient Javanese language, or the Hanacaraka language (Forshee 2006). This has resulted in many types of Javanese writing in Western Java, East Java and Central Java. The Majapahit Empire started to crumble down in the 14th-15th century as a consequence of the production of the book. The presence of a modern Javanese script used around the 16th century was an important development during this time of historical transition (Robson 2011). In the sense that Javanese literature had been written on various media (Praheto and Sayekti 2018), the development of Javanese literature had been encouraged.

Historical evidence used to compile the Javanese script can be found in the inscriptions, including (1) The Yupa inscription in East Kalimantan and the royal inscription Tarumanegara in West Java depict the early Pallava aksara, (2) The final Pallava script is in the Srivijaya royal inscriptions and the Canggal inscriptions in Central Java, (3) Early Kawi script is in the inscriptions of Dinoyo, Plumpunga, inscriptions of King Rakai Kayuwangi and Rakai Belitung, (4) The final Kawi script in the inscriptions of King Airlangga and Kediri, (5) Javanese Majapahit script as contained in the inscription Orchard, Kabantenan, and Batutulis, (6) Javanese characters from the 15th century are found in Suradakan inscriptions, (7) The use of new Javanese characters in the 16th century is found in the Suluk Seh Bari (Ahmad 2019). These are examples of general development in Java, each region in Java has its own civilisation. This led to various forms of Javanese Old Script in West Java (Sundanese script), East Java and Central Java. In connection with the development of the manuscript, the Majapahit empire began to collapse in the 14th-15th century. The existence of the new Javanese Old Script used around the 16th century was an interesting development during this period of historical change (Adha 2021). The development of Javanese literacy has encouraged the development of



Javanese literature in the sense that Javanese literature has been written in different media (Kurasawa 1987).

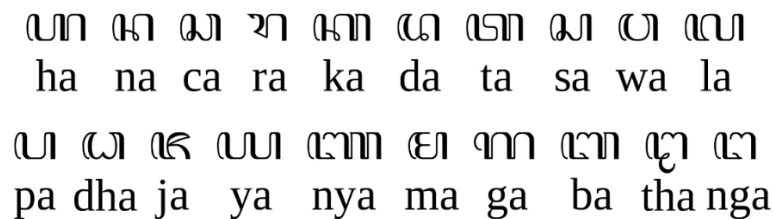


Fig. 2. Hanacaraka Scripture (Ardhianto et al. 2021)

In general, there is almost no use of the Hanacaraka Language. Just a few applications in a public place, such as street signs, school signs and some texts in the city government system, can be encountered in many cities, including Surakarta and Yogyakarta. The Hanacaraka Script will continue to exist to prevent it from disappearing entirely (Sari 2020). Hanacaraka has lost its purpose itself; some younger generations are able to talk Javanese but are unable to read the Hanacaraka script. Some primary schools have faint memories of using the Hanacaraka script taught in various public schools and private national schools about Hanacaraka in one hour lesson per one week. Java language subjects have been omitted (Setiawan 2015). This pushes an urgency to research how local brands start to involve local culture into their product to preserve the customs in an area. Correspondingly, Flymax Indonesia (flymax.id) inserts a glimpse of the cultural element using Javanese script in their product. This research is established to know what type of visual language needs to be in a creative product in order to blend or acculturate with the popular product and transfer the cultural identity toward the cultural industry players and the general public. Flymax.id is the first local brand that dares to include Javanese characters in creative cultural products, namely shoes. The results of preliminary observations show that the local owner of the Flymax.id brand is brave enough to take risks related to selling products with local nuances because the younger generation is still oriented towards famous brands and their designs. Flymax.id thinks that the current locality needs to promote because it is part of the real identity and character.

2. Method

The research method used in this research is a qualitative method with an in-depth interview and visual language analysis approach. The qualitative method relies on descriptive data obtained through in-depth interviews with Mr Wahyu Wiji, flymax company owners which were conducted on May 20, 2020. An in-depth interview is an interview done toward an individual in a comprehensive interview exploring their thoughts of a particular idea or perspective in viewing certain things. It is used to obtain the opinion of an individual complexly (Voutsina 2018). Visual Language analysis in Indonesian graphic design scopes is also called *Tinjauan Desain* (Design Review). Design Review is a science to examine, observe and criticize a design phenomenon (design work, philosophy, design strategy, design history, design theories, design methods, aesthetic values, lifestyle changes) as well as other matters relating to the general world design—both tangible and intangible to the impact on society. In Indonesia since 1971, the Science of Design Review (Visual Language Analysis) initially emphasized critical studies of the history of Western design, both the development of style, methodology, and social impact. However, due to the complexity of the problems faced, Design Methodology studies developed into separate sciences, likewise social studies developed into Design Sociology, while historical studies developed into studies of Modern Design History and Indonesian Design History. The Design Review itself then specifically develops a design criticism methodology based on various theoretical approaches (Austin, Sahinidis, and Trahan 2016).

A Visual Language analysis (design review) becomes essential to understand the work of art and design. In conducting a review, there are at least 3 points of view of the discussion. The three points of view of the review are as follows: Formalistic, the word 'formalistic' comes from the word 'form'. Discuss work from formal qualifications or forms—for example, size, anatomy, lines, colours, and other design elements. Expressivist, namely discussing the work from the perspective of the ability to



work in expressing a theme or message. In this research, what is analyzed is the message or ideas to be conveyed. Instrumentalists, namely, discuss the work from the perspective of the function of the work as an instrument or tool to achieve cultural, socio-political, moral, religious, or psychological goals (Preece, Kerrigan, and O'Reilly 2016). Visual language review techniques are also used to represent information using a sign, symbol or design approach (Kim et al. 2019).

Visual Language analysis is a science to examine, observe and criticize a design phenomenon (the designer's work, philosophy, strategy, history, theories, methods, aesthetic values, and lifestyle changes) as well as other matters relating to the general world design—both tangible and intangible to the impact on society (Scheer 1994). The visual language analysis is a study of analyzing visuals which are divided into four phases: First, the description analysis describes the visuals purely as what is seen in the picture without any interpretation or principle related. Second, the formal analysis mentions and suggests what kind of method, design principle, work unity, balance, composition, proportion, hierarchy, dominance, contrast or any other various elements exist in the visual. It discusses the effect of a certain medium, every perception that was shown. Third, interpretation analysis answers the idea or meaning of the artwork and connects with other supporting information regarding the artwork in the visuals. In the last phase, evaluation analysis helps to figure if the artwork does fulfil the standard of an appropriate artwork based on the supporting information related to the artwork. This includes the criticism of the artwork of how it turns out according to the writer's analysis. This will help in understanding the Javanese script meaning deeply (Ardhianto 2018).

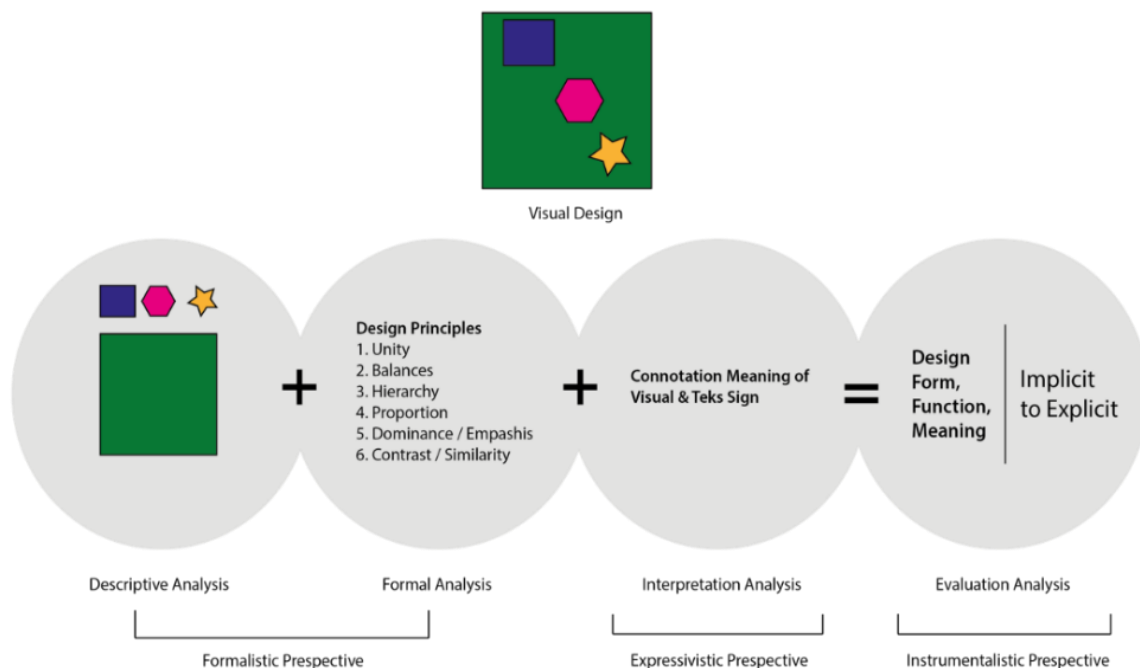


Fig. 3. Visual Language Analysis Steps

The use of visual language analysis with four stages Analysis is the researcher's step in avoiding bias in the results of the study. In the analysis of visual language, researchers also combine in-depth interview data and literature study to get the validity of the analysis mutually. The use of visual language analysis was chosen because of the following conditions of cultural studies and designs in Indonesia. This research also looks at from triangulation points of view, namely the point of view of the design actor, visual analysis result and theoretical framework. It was thus, minimizing the existence of bias results in this study.



3. Results and Discussion

The in-depth interview combined with visual language analysis was done to determine the meaning behind the visuals through several phases, which are description, formal, interpretation and evaluation analysis. This will help to understand the approach of custom in products made by local brands. Through the principles applied in this cultural product, it will be easy to understand how the local product could engage the market.



Fig. 4. Flymax Indonesia “Flymax Nusantara 1” (source: Flymax Indonesia Instagram Account)

3.1. In-Depth Interview Analysis

The following is an analysis of the results interview conducted on May 20, 2020, to the initiator of the Flymax.id shoe idea and the owner of the brand, Mr Wahyu Wiji Nugroho (33). The interview outline summarizes the questions, and the interview output summarizes the answers from the in-depth interview results.

Table 1. In-depth Interview analysis

Interview Outline	Interview Output
Where did the idea come from?	The idea came from an awareness where the public mostly had forgotten the Javanese script. It was inspired by the Chinese product, which uses the Mandarin alphabet in their product, which led to a design where it shows the identity of a certain place.
What is the reason of placing the Javanese script on the heel's notch?	It was placed on the heel's notch to create attention and awareness from the public with the <i>Nusantara</i> theme. Especially Hanacaraka.
Why did you use the universal type of shoe shape?	The shoe's shape was not influenced by the Javanese Script. Instead, it is based on school's regulations in Indonesia, where students need to use black and white shoes that are associated with emotional bonding for those who live in Java.
What is the function of the cultural product?	It was aimed to fulfil the aesthetic needs in the markets through Indonesian culture, which is the Javanese script.
What is the meaning of Flymax as the brand name?	Flymax itself means Flying to the maximum and being accepted to the national. The Hanacaraka script used in the shoes meant SALA as in Solo City. It is a small city, but it produces a great leader who has a huge impact. This brand wishes to be able to be like these great leaders.

The results of in-depth interviews with Mr Wahyu Wiji Nugroho show that the purpose of using cultural elements in flymax.id shoe is an external manifestation of the owner's anxiety about the erosion of Javanese culture, namely Hanacaraka. The owner wants to combine the character of a popular shoe with local culture as his identity. These shoes' main target is the young generation at the junior high school to high school levels. The secondary target is young workers. The flymax.id shoes



deliberately carry Indonesian culture, especially the owner's hometown, Solo, so that the younger generation has a love for local culture and products to increase the economic growth of MSMEs and regions. Even more significant, Mr Wahyu hopes that a strong identity can attract tourism potential and retail sales of local products in Solo. So that emotional bonding from cultural identity is enjoyed by the people of Solo and tourists who come to visit. Currently, flymax.id shoe market is still at the national level and will continue to develop for export abroad (Ardhianto et al. 2021).

3.2. Description Analysis

The shoes were produced by Flymax Indonesia photographed in a white background giving a contrast between the shoe's black colour and the white background. The shoe colour mainly is divided into two; black and white. The upper part of the shoes, eyelets, insole, tie and tongue are in black colour. At the same time, the sole and the heel's notch are in white colour. Focusing on the shoes, it had a Javanese script written on the heel's notch, which was read SALA as in Solo, one of the cities in Central Java. Whereas the sole had typography of "FLYMAX" written in an uppercase alphabet glued to the sole, as on the left and right quarter part of the shoes had the logo of Flymax in white sewing thread as well using the embroidery technique. As for how it looks, the heel's notch with the typography was sewed to the upper part of the shoes using white sewing threads. The shoes were placed in the centre of the space facing the background. According to the angle fixed on the shoes, it was placed diagonally to the left on the visuals. Most parts of the shoes are made out of fabric and rubber fitted for shoes daily wear.

3.3. Formal Analysis

The shoes were placed slightly diagonally to the left side to show the logo of Flymax and, at the same time, to display the Javanese script written on the heel notch on both shoes using black colour on a white heel notch. The placement of the Javanese script was intended so it could be seen clearly. The same thing goes to the typography of Flymax placed on the sole in the uppercase alphabet to show the brand. At the same time, the Flymax logo was placed on the quarter of the shoes. The contrast was shown clearly to focus on the shoe's characteristics. Balancing the main object with the background was finely done, creating an emphasis on the shoes themselves. The lines created by the Javanese script has a repetition that gives a dynamic character. Dominated by white colour, the black colour gives a clear shape of the shoes and typography within the shoes. Determining from the analysis above, Flymax wants to rejuvenate the culture where once the public uses the Javanese Script as the main medium of communication in those eras. Nowadays, the Javanese Script is barely used and almost forgotten by the people living in Central Java. Through this cultural product, it could be analyzed that Flymax creates a product for daily wear which includes cultural elements so it won't be forgotten.

3.4. Interpretation Analysis

Interviewing the owner of Flymax, the idea of using Javanese script, which was long forgotten, was taken from Solo city, where Javanese script is already used but is not functioning well enough. Flymax was inspired through Chinese products where it still uses Chinese characters to describe or explain its product. In order to show the Javanese identity, products from Solo, Central java should dare to show Javanese script at the national level. Getting an idea such as how Nike put its brand name on the heel notch, Flymax tries to cooperate with the brand of Solo city, which has an important role in the nation. Thus, to experiment placing the Javanese script of the word SALA which means Solo (Surakarta City), on the heel notch of the shoe, creating a national identity since Javanese script was used all over Indonesia a long time ago.

The shoe design was a universal design unrelated to the Javanese script. However, the colour of black and white shoes was used in an Indonesian school; as a rule, this gives an emotional bonding for the majority who once lived in Java or Central Java via the target approximately 13 years old till 22 years old. The function was to fill the space of local aesthetic for the public where it hasn't been found a design which involves local culture in the design of a shoe produced in large quantity. Furthermore, Flymax was derived from the word maximum flying, where the owner hopes that the shoes could fly high enough to be accepted in the nationals. The idea was using the word Solo in the Javanese script was influenced by Solo city, which was a small city yet has a lot of roles at the national level and even more than just the national level. The primary purpose of this flymax.id shoes are to



introduce and foster a love of local culture to the public. The hope of the creation of shoes is the re-recognition of Hanacaraka as the identity of the city of SALA or what is now Surakarta or commonly known as Solo City.

3.5. Evaluation Analysis

After the analysis above, Flymax is one of the local brands in Solo City, Central Java – Indonesia, which tries to revive the Javanese script or locally called Hanacaraka script culture, which was one of the communication forms a long time ago in Indonesia that had been forgotten by the majority. Through the shoes, cultural product design, it involves the Javanese script culture within the shoes to preserve, remember and share it to the public by emotional bonding for those who once lived in Central Java or Java itself. The idea of the design was to show that the shoes were fashionable streetwear and preserve the customs. According to the black and white colour, Flymax shoe product tries to engage the public by using the simplest colour in their sneakers design. The product was made to build the public to love local products made by their own country and strengthen the cultural identity of the city and the nation. Not only that it use the simplest colour available, but it also put the Javanese script in plain sight, allowing people to feel interested in the writing. The Javanese script has a sort of elegance and complexity in it. If people are curious enough, they might start looking up as to where does that script originate, and as a result, the public will end up learning about the Javanese culture. At the same time, Flymax strives to rejuvenate one of Indonesia’s cities, which is known as “SALA”, Solo or Surakarta City.

Table 2. Visual Languages Analysis Result

Brand Name	Flymax
Description	Colour: Black and white. Theme: Javanese Script culture and shoe design (casual or daily wear). Type: Cultural product design. Method: Product photography. Typography: Javanese Script on heel’s notch and Flymax logotype on the shoes’ sole. Logogram: Flymax logogram on the upper part of the shoe.
Formal	Proportion: The shoes were placed slightly diagonally to the left side to show the logo of Flymax and, at the same time, to display the Javanese script written on the heel notch on both shoes using black colour on a white heel notch. Hierarchy: The placement of the Javanese script was intended so it could be seen clearly, the typography of Flymax and Flymax logo on shoes. Contrast: Focusing on the shoe’s characteristics and colour. Balance: Balancing the main object with the background was finely done, creating an emphasis on the shoes themselves. Unity: The lines created by the Javanese script has a repetition that gives a dynamic character along the slight straight lines. Dominance: Dominated overall by white colour, the black colour gives a clear shape of the shoes and typography within the shoes.
Interpretation	Identity: Flymax Meaning: Javanese script (SALA = Solo). Flymax (flying to the maximum). Purpose: To preserve the Javanese script culture and fulfil the aesthetic needs in daily life. Psychological: Emotional bonding through product design. Geographical: for people who once lived in Central Java, especially Solo. Culture: Javanese script or Hanacaraka script. Social Habits: Relating to the rule where students need to use black and white shoes in school. As simple daily wear for young generation.
Evaluation	Flymax tries to revive the communication form in Java, Indonesia, which had been forgotten by the majority. Thus, by applying the Javanese script to the shoe design. To give a fashionable aesthetic style that the young generation uses, at the same time preserving the culture itself. The cultural product was made for the public to appreciate their own country’s product. Flymax tries to connect the audience by linking the geographical place, culture and daily wear into a cultural product design.



4. Conclusion

The results of this study found that the Flymax shoes with the theme of culture used elements of Hanacaraka as an effort to preserve Javanese culture and one of the efforts to increase local brand competitiveness for economic growth. Details of the results of this research are Flymax is one of the local brands which strive to rejuvenate the Javanese script through their product. The use of cultural elements is a differentiator for Flymax shoes with other local brand products. They were implementing the Javanese script from the word "Solo" into SALA on the heel notch of the shoes. SALA name selection in writing hanacaraka aims to instil pride as a citizen of a Solo city or happy memories of the city. The *Hanacaraka* in the Flymax shoes brings three identities, firstly identity for the brand, second. This research is a preliminary study of the visual concept of *Hanacaraka* culture in shoe products. Future research can be developed in creative industries and *Hanacaraka* innovations in creative cultural products in other sectors.

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