Typography as Communication Media to Revitalize Wayang Potehi (Potehi Puppet)

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ABSTRACT

This is further research of content identification for the development of promotional media to increase public interest, especially for the younger generation (Y and Z) in Wayang Potehi performances. The obtained data is that respondents only know Indonesian Chinese culture in general such as Chinese New Year, and its dishes, and there is this feeling to feel old and ancient when they wear traditional clothes. But if the traditional things are combined with the modern styles, it will be easier for them to accept it. To acquire 'talking' content there are three things that need to be considered, namely Brand Voice, Big Theme, and Stories. Start from the most fundamental thing in communication, namely typography. This research will use a mixed approach, using interviewing techniques from competent sources from the typography field also taking sampling from an online survey to the younger generation. From this further research, it is hoped that in-depth information will be obtained about the most suitable recommendations for Wayang Potehi's typography to support the big theme, and create a mixed content between traditional and modern, so it will be easier to be accepted.

Keywords: *Wayang Potehi, typography, media, communication, culture*

1. INTRODUCTION

As the new culture comes and emerges, also the fastening of the technology world can become a threat to Potehi show that is portrayed as too ancient for the younger generation; and even can result in its extinction. In many studies about the millennials generation, in Indonesia, there is a big amount of Gen Y (millennials generation; age 15-37 years old). The unique trait about this generation based on the research is how they use technology and how they love pop culture. For this generation, technology is their life, so they cannot be separated from technology, specifically, the internet (Asosiasi Penyedia Jasa Internet Indonesia (APJII)) estimated there is 43 million medium connected to the internet. The other thing that can be seen is their view of social norms are changing, they are the open-minded people that make them easily adopt more modern social norms. They are also very proud of freedom of life and they do not have realistic and unrealistic visions. As technology is rapidly developed each day, it can be an opportunity to introduce and revitalize the forgotten culture even the almost extinct one. According to Tendean Harry, the head of Pusat Kesenian dan Kebudayaan Cina Jogja, the lack of awareness from Tionghoa people in terms of art and culture preservation cannot be separated from the trauma of the New Order regime (New Order). Tionghoa Indonesia ethnicity is chosen to focus on their activity rather than appear for a wider community. The involvement of Indonesia's younger generation is depleted. Tionghoa's younger generation prefer to enjoy digital activity and western culture.

Wayang Potehi is also affected by this condition. Wayang Potehi itself starts to lose its regeneration ability. The most significant example is the decreasing interest from the younger generation to become a puppeteer. Currently, there are only seven puppeteers, and not one of them is from the Tionghoa ethnic. [1]

Typography is one of the most important elements in a graphic art form. As an alphabet, typography has a role as the most seen element and a verbal element that can be read (textual). Also, the meaning of typography growing as technology develops. According to Rinanda Purba, "Tipografi kreasi dari motif ukir Melayu Deli) is made by enhancing the cultural identity to preserve local culture so that it can grow well and live amongst the youngsters. The preservation of Melayu Deli culture with the method of publication and promotion is not enough. As the era keeps moving and western culture is the one preferred by the youngsters, Melayu culture is being forgotten. That is why a modern approach and the use of developed technologies are needed to introduce and preserving Melayu Deli culture. Typography creation from the carved motive of Pakis Melayu Deli is an effort to popularize the culture to the modern graphic art so the use of the cultural elements can be used widely as a design concept for the nowadays designer. [2]

Apart from that, from the writing "Adaptasi Karakter Aksara Batak dalam Huruf Latin" Njoo Dewi Candra Kertasari stated typography or as we say it alphabet specifically traditional alphabet is being used as a preserving method of our nation alphabet. The traditional alphabet is one of the traditional heritage that needed

special attention. It is because functionally, currently traditional alphabet is not seen as the need of the communication media and suppressed by the affectivity of the Latin alphabet that has been used in all of the global communication. This can cause the extinction of the traditional alphabet. The most effective key to resolve this matter is through alphabet technology where the traditional alphabet can be used as an inspiration source of a computerized typeface without replacing the effectiveness of the Latin alphabet. [3]

The same thing is also done by Dimas Fakhruddin in his writing "Pengembangan Desain Informasi dan pembelajaran aksara Jawa melalui media website". According to Dimas, the Javanese alphabet is one of the nation's heritage that becomes a distinctive trait of Javanese culture and also becomes part of the Javanese people's identity. The effort to preserve the Javanese alphabet has already been done by the local government through the Local Language subjects at Elementary - High School. However, this effort is still not effective because of limited teaching hours. It is needed more effort to preserve the Javanese alphabet and introduce it to the younger generation, especially the teenager. But, to make it attractive for nowadays teenagers, a visual design adjustment is needed when delivering the Javanese alphabet information. The visual design information of the Javanese alphabet needed to relate to the history of the Javanese alphabet also the typography itself, so the distinctive character of Javanese culture can still appear in the new visual design process. [4]

Continuing Rinanda research to design typography based on the cultural tradition, also making local pride as a source of ideas, and to support the previous research to make a "talking" content, there are three things that needed to be considered, namely Brand Voice, Big Theme and Stories. Brand Voice is how to deliver and UX writing is what to deliver. One of the elements to form Big theme in a design is typography, also there are illustrations, color, and layout. In this research, it is hoped to find the type of typography that is suitable for Wayang Potehi to support the unity of the Big Theme in terms of re-popularize and revitalizing the culture (tradition) also can be utilized as one of the promotional media for Wayang Potehi. [2]

2. WAYANG POTEHI

The Indonesian variety of Potehi, the glove puppet form which originated in southern Fujian, is frequently known as Wayang Potehi. [5]. This puppet show is an example of harmonic assimilation between cultures and Indonesian cultures from outside Indonesia [6] According to Kong, Wayang Potehi is also mentioned as "Science of Palms" found in wooden puppet theatre in Fujian. Word "Potehi" come from the Minnan dialect [7] etymologically from the word *Bù* 布 (fabric), *Dài* 袋 (pocket) dan *Xì* 戲(play). Wayang Potehi regularly is played at a small stage that is dominated by red color, length 1,5-2 meters, and wide 20-30 centimeters. The puppeteer will play from behind the

stage, and the audience can only see Wayang Potehi show from the upper stage [8].

Figure 1 The Shape of Wayang Potehi
Source: Image by Anny Valentina

Wayang Potehi was brought to Indonesia in the 9th century (Syailendra Dynasty - Mataram by Tionghoa immigrant). From the beginning, the show is usually happening in the temples on Chinese New Year and Cap Go Meh (fifteen days after Chinese New Year). Potehi show is closely related to Tionghoa beliefs. Hong San Kiong - Gudo (East Java) is one of the temples that is still doing and cultivating this culture. Although the show is in the Chinese language, peoples are enthusiastic at that time, but this also makes Potehi is difficult to be done by non-Tionghoa people. Potehi show is popular in Indonesia around 1930-1960. At that time, there are more than 50 puppeteers who have their puppet groups. However, this puppet show is sunk not long after the publishing of the President Instruction Number. 14 in 1967, that is to forbid Chinese art shows. Potehi came back to the surface after the instruction is being retracted by President Abudarrahman Wahid while he reigned.[6]. Wayang Potehi is precious cultural acculturation that needs to be preserved. Although it is still playing today, Potehi show has a very minimum enthusiast, indeed almost forgotten; Potehi also is not known by the wide public, specifically in the younger generation (Y&Z generation). There are still many temples in Jakarta that still hold Potehi show, also in the mall, hotel, Tionghoa Culture week, and churches [9].

3. METHODS

3.1. Object and Location

This research object is about the use of typography in the younger generation (sampling is gathered online with google form) and the typography amongst typographers (both researcher and designer).

3.2. Method and Data Collection Technique

This research is using a mixed parallel convergent method, with data collection techniques both quantitative and qualitative. Qualitative data is collected from an interview with the typography experts both in Bandung and Jakarta,

however, the quantitative data is collected from the sampling with a survey within the younger generation.

3.3. Analytical Method

This research is using a mixed parallel convergent method, the method is listed below:
- Collection and analysing data
- Comparing and connecting
- Interpreting

3.4. Research Procedure

1. Preparation Step
   - Decide topic
   - Submit proposal title and arrange research a proposal
   - Create a research instrument
2. Implementation Step
   - Using Google Form, asking the younger generation with random sampling
   - Interview with expert and designer
3. Data Processing Step
   - Collecting data
   - Comparing data from younger generation and expert
4. Report Writing Step
   - Compile research report

4.   RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Younger Generation and Typography

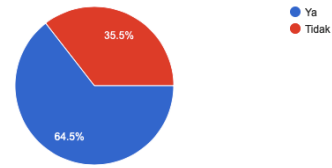Conducted an online survey to 76 respondents from the younger generation with the age of 19-23 years old.

Table 1 Respondents Age Gap
Source: Research survey, 2020

Usia
76 responses
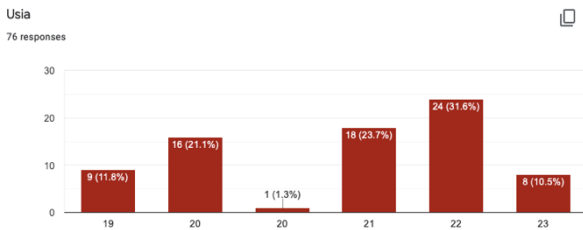
64,5% of respondents are often downloading font type.

Table 2 Activity of downloading font type
Source: Research survey, 2020

Apakah kalian sering mengunduh font?
76 responses

● Ya
● Tidak

Various factors that affected 64,5% of respondents to download font type, such as:
- The need to find a suitable font type for design necessity (for work presentation) to make it more interesting but still easy to read.
- Seek aesthetically
- The need to find a new and unique font type to form a more interesting output.
- The need to find a suitable font type that matches the design concept.

Although 35,5% of respondents are who are rarely downloading font type, it is because they felt all font types are the same, the most important thing it is easy to read also just make the most of the available fonts.

Table 3 Activity respondents while downloading a font type
Source: Research survey, 2020

Ketika mengunduh atau mencari font baru, apakah kalian suka membaca cerita dibalik font tersebut ketika dibuat?
72 responses

● Ya
● Tidak
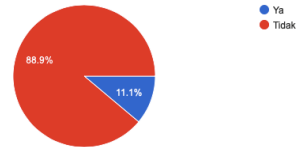
88,9% of respondents are not reading the story behind a fond type, while only 11,1% read it.
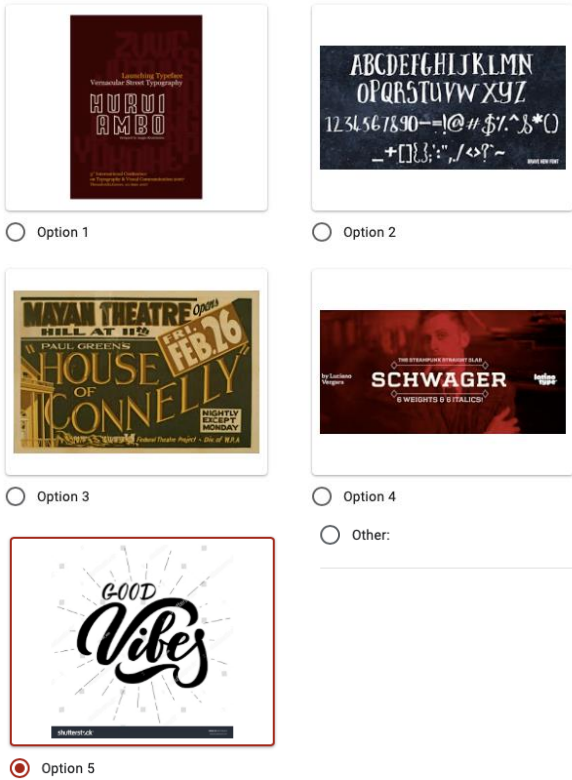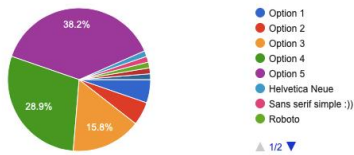
Figure 2 Font types option
Source: Research survey, 2020

From the five options of font types, the most liked is option 5 with the percentage of 38,2%, next 28,9% for option 4 and 15,8% for option 3. 5,3% for option 2 and 1.

Table 4 On-demand font type
Source: Research survey, 2020

Most of the respondents agreed that a font type that has ethnic characteristics and decorative is very appealing, creative, and has its image and value. Some interesting answers are that they presume that something ethnic is about a character and identity, has a distinctive trait, creative and suitable to support one's culture publication, also portraying a national identity. Yet, readability (clear and easy to read) is still important and not using exaggerated decorative elements.

Respondents used font type when creating a design (any design), report, Instagram story caption, and presentation.

4.2. The Experts and Typographer Views

An interview is conducted with 2 sources, and academics that are competent in the typography field and a typographer. When asked if it's possible when typography is utilized as a medium to introduce a specific culture, both sources stated that is very much possible. Typography is very suitable to be used as a medium to support revitalization.

Directly said that there is still no experience to creating a font type that is directly linked to a specific culture characteristic and decorative, but on the other side, there is a recommendation to use a font type with vernacular character.

The process of creating a font type is started from a full alphabet sketch; the process of digitalization, then the font type is applied to the requester company until now there is font type creator software. The making process of a font type: research, sketching ideas, refining, digitalization, shape refining, kerning, redefining, testing, redefining.

Seeing the complex process of the making of a font type, but is inversely proportional to the demeanor of a font type user. Typography is a niche field. Everyday human is faced with font type and because it is too common, we take for granted the act of font type usage. Just like the sun, we often think font type is already there from the start. It is commonly asked, "What is the purpose to make a new font type when there are already many font types available?" The same goes for fashion and food, but people never asked about it. The younger generation nowadays is more exposed to visual art and branding, automatically make them more aware of typography. Even local start-up start to customized their font type to be used in all of their platforms not only in the logo.

To support the process of a theme and revitalization, typography has the same character as Wayang Potehi, from the shape itself (one character), as well as the era.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- The use of font type to unify a big theme is very much possible, can be seen from many nowadays start-up that starts to develop their font type to differentiate themselves and own a 'soul'.
- As a media to re-popularize a culture, the character of the typography need to be considered and in line with Wayang Potehi, from the shape itself (one character), as well as the era. In-depth research is needed to find the 'soul' of Potehi that can be inserted into the typography.
- Seen from the younger generation habits of downloading font type, typography can be seen as one of the promotional media.
- It is better to develop a new and unique font type character for Potehi, so the writing itself can produce interesting output.
- Vernacular (decorative) character is proven to be the most liked character, just like as suggested by the experts.
- Ethnicity elements are still needed because it is pointing to a character and an identity, has a distinctive trait, it is

best to support the publication of one culture, also portraying the national characteristic. Yet, readability (clarity and easy to read) and it does not use exaggerated decorative elements.
- Still needed to find a way to make the younger generation to read the story behind the making of Potehi typography, so an in-depth understanding will be delivered not only an empty impression.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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