



## Local Culture in Advertising: From Identity to Visual Communication Strategy (Case Study on Coca Cola Advertisement Kabayan Version)

Samsul Alam<sup>1\*</sup>, Asep Kadarisman<sup>2</sup>

Visual Communication Design, School of Creative Industries, Telkom University

**Corresponding Author:** Samsul Alam [samsulalam@telkomuniversity.ac.id](mailto:samsulalam@telkomuniversity.ac.id)

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### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Local Culture, Advertising, Visual Communication, Coca-Cola Kabayan, Marketing Strategy

*Received :* 2 May

*Revised :* 12 June

*Accepted:* 23 July

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the transformation of local culture from a mere identity marker into an active visual communication strategy in advertising, using the Coca Cola Kabayan version as a case study. Through a qualitative approach involving visual and semiotic analysis, the research explores how cultural symbols, archetypes, and narratives are strategically employed to build emotional resonance and brand relevance. The Coca Cola advertisement featuring Kabayan demonstrates how local cultural elements serve not only as visual background but as the core of the communication message, reflecting everyday experiences of Indonesian society. The analysis focuses on visual elements such as traditional clothing, character expressions, market settings, and social interactions that embody local values. The findings reveal that integrating local culture effectively enhances brand image, fosters consumer trust, and increases emotional engagement. This study also identifies stages in the transformation of cultural function in advertising, from decorative symbols to strategic narratives shaping brand identity. The results contribute significantly to understanding the dynamics of cross-cultural visual communication and offer new insights for academics and creative industry practitioners on leveraging local cultural potential as a strategic asset in socially and emotionally relevant advertising campaigns.

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### INTRODUCTION

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59890/ijaamr.v3i7.66>

ISSN-E: 3026-2437

<https://journal.multitechpublisher.com/index.php/ijaamr>

Local culture is an integral part of people's lives, reflecting values, symbols, and practices that are passed down from generation to generation. It serves as a marker of collective identity and reflects the perspectives, habits, and social expressions that are unique to a community. In the context of Indonesia, which is rich in cultural diversity, local elements such as regional languages, traditional clothing, culinary specialties, and traditional figures have deep meaning and are an inseparable part of everyday life.

Traditionally, local culture is understood as a set of values, norms, languages, symbols, rituals, and practices that are passed down from generation to generation, functioning as markers of the existence and uniqueness of a community (Casilas et al., 2025; Hutabarat et al., 2025). For example, in the Indonesian context, the existence of traditional clothing, regional languages, and culinary specialties are not merely historical heritage, but real manifestations of identity that bind individuals in a social group. This concept is in line with Social Identity Theory which states that individuals build self-concepts based on membership in certain social groups, where affiliation with the symbols of the group becomes important (Hutabarat et al., 2025). Therefore, local culture inherently has an essential function as a differentiator and unifier in the social structure of society.

Local culture plays an important role in shaping community identity. It is a marker that distinguishes one group from another, as well as a source of pride and belonging. Cultural representation in the media, including advertising, contributes to the formation of perceptions and meanings of collective identity (Casilas et al., 2025). Although cultural representation in advertising is often commodified, where cultural elements are used for commercial purposes without considering their authenticity and historical value (Wijaya et al., 2015).

Along with the development of technology and media, the world of advertising and visual communication has undergone a significant transformation. Advertising is no longer just a promotional tool, but also a medium for conveying cultural and ideological values (Casilas et al., 2025; Nisa & Erdiana, 2023; Sharma, 2017). Local culture in advertising not only functions as an aesthetic element or visual appeal, but can also reflect the contemporary social conditions and identities of the target community (Wijaya et al., 2015). This transformation marks how local cultural elements such as symbols, language, and settings that previously represented identity is now deliberately utilized to achieve broader communication goals. The use of local culture in advertising is a strategy to build emotional closeness, create an authentic and "local" brand image, and differentiate products in a competitive market (Shambodo et al., 2025; Waluyo et al., 2024). This is where visual communication plays an important role in branding innovation and influences consumer perceptions (Poon, 2016).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Visual communication strategy is a planned approach to conveying messages through visual elements (such as images, colors, typography, symbols, and digital media) designed to strengthen the effectiveness of communication between brands and audiences. This strategy includes the creative process, media

selection, and the preparation of visual messages that can build identity, strengthen brand awareness, and create emotional engagement with the target audience (Irwanto & Kristiana, 2022; Poon, 2016; Syafikarani et al., 2022). Therefore, it can be said that the main purpose of a visual communication strategy is to strengthen brand identity, build emotional connections, and convey socially and culturally relevant messages to the target audience.

Several studies have examined the use of culture in advertising, such as the study of the Sari Roti advertisement which not only displays local values, but also builds a narrative that strengthens Indonesian cultural identity, even utilizing local cultural symbols as a marketing strategy as well as a representation of identity (Casilas et al., 2025). A study of the Lapo Tuak advertisement shows how cultural symbols and regional slang are used as branding strategies to strengthen local identity among young people (Hutabarat et al., 2025). Other studies also indicate that the integration of local culture in advertising is an important approach to increasing the appeal of global products in local markets through advertising activities (Akolkar et al., 2024; Shambodo et al., 2025). The role of visual communication and semiotics has also been studied in increasing the effectiveness of product advertising (Rahmadhina et al., 2024), and the use of visual communication strategies in advertising shows the ability to convey product messages in an interesting and memorable way (Hasbullah et al., 2024).

Previous studies tend to focus on analyzing the representation of local culture in advertising or its integration as a general marketing strategy. There is an identifiable gap in the study, namely the lack of in-depth exploration of how the function of local culture changes from mere identity to a systematic visual communication strategy. Previous studies have discussed the existence of local culture in advertising or its impact, but have not explicitly discussed the transformational process and mechanism from "identity" to "visual communication strategy".

This study also offers a comparative approach to four advertisements from different brands, thus revealing the variation of visual strategies in packaging local cultural elements. In addition, the integration of semiotic analysis and consideration of ethical representation broadens the scope of the study from merely visual aesthetics to ideological and social critique of cultural commodification practices in the creative industry. In the context of globalization and the development of the media industry, this study makes an important contribution to the understanding of how local values are processed and negotiated in cross-cultural and cross-market visual communication. Thus, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the use of local culture in advertising, offering new insights for academics and advertising practitioners regarding the utilization of cultural potential as a powerful communication tool in a visual context.

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## **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a qualitative approach with visual and semiotic analysis methods to understand how local culture is represented and functioned in advertisements as a visual communication strategy. Analysis is carried out on the visual, symbolic, and narrative elements that appear in advertisements, as well as the socio-cultural context behind them. This approach was chosen because it is able to reveal the symbolic, ideological, and emotional meanings hidden behind the visual elements in advertising media.

The object analyzed in this study is a popular advertisement in Indonesia that raises local cultural elements, namely the Coca Cola advertisement in the Kabayan version. The selection of this advertisement is based on the diversity of visual approaches and communication strategies used in representing local culture. Data were collected through; 1) visual observation of advertisements available on digital media (YouTube, television, and social media); 2) documentation in the form of screenshots of important scenes in the advertisement; and 3) literature studies from relevant journals, articles, and books on local culture, visual communication, and semiotics.

In the context of this research, visual analysis is conducted to identify local cultural characteristics that appear in advertisements. This approach systematically examines various visual elements in advertisements, such as character representation, traditional clothing, gestures and facial expressions, background or setting, use of color, and iconic symbols that may be embedded. Each of these visual elements is interpreted to reveal its denotative and connotative meanings, so that it can be understood how the values, customs, beliefs, or archetypes of the local community are represented. Through this process, researchers can draw conclusions about how local culture is adopted and repackaged in the visual narrative of advertisements, while identifying how these elements contribute to forming an identity or resonance with the target audience.

The analysis was conducted using two main approaches, namely; 1) Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis to identify the denotative (literal) and connotative (cultural and ideological) meanings of cultural symbols that appear in advertisements. This approach helps reveal how local cultural elements are constructed to convey certain messages; and 2) visual analysis, focusing on visual communication design elements such as color, typography, composition, setting, and visual characters. This analysis is used to understand how these elements work strategically in shaping audience perceptions and emotions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The “Kabayan Coca Cola” advertisement was released around 2004 featuring the main character Kabayan in a bustling city setting, possibly a bus terminal or a traditional market in an urban area. The advertisement begins with Kabayan looking confused and exhausted amidst the hustle and bustle of the city with tall buildings. He is wearing traditional Sundanese clothing: a loose white shirt (pangsi), a checkered sarong draped over his shoulders, and a black headband. He also carries a burlap sack on his back, adding to the impression of a villager in the city.



Figure 1. Coca Cola Advertisement Kabayan Version (Wahid, 2004)

Kabayan looks thirsty and with humorous and exaggerated gestures and expressions, he interacts with the drink seller. There is a funny and typical price bargaining scene. After getting and drinking Coca Cola in one gulp, Kabayan's expression changes drastically from tired to very fresh, excited, and full of energy. He even dances and shows a "steady" gesture after drinking. The visuals of this advertisement are dominated by bright colors, especially red from the Coca Cola logo and public transportation (buses), as well as the crowds of people with their daily activities. The camera angles vary, from medium shots to capture Kabayan's expressions to wide shots showing the bustling atmosphere of the city. There is a dramatic close-up of the Coca Cola bottle when it is opened and drink.

### *Characteristics of Local Culture*

Based on observations of the Kabayan version of the Coca Cola advertisement, several local cultural characteristics can be identified, reflected in various aspects. Cultural symbols are displayed through the use of traditional elements such as traditional clothing and settings resembling typical Sundanese houses. Local language and accents also strengthen the regional nuances through the use of a distinctive Sundanese dialect in the characters' dialogue. The social

values of Indonesian society, particularly Sundanese culture, are depicted in interactions that reflect the spirit of mutual cooperation, kinship, and respect for customs. Furthermore, the natural environment depicted in the advertisement, such as rural landscapes and elements of typical regional flora, also enrich the representation of local culture in advertising media.

Further explanation will be given regarding the local cultural characteristics that appear in the Kabayan version of the Coca Cola advertisement.

#### 1. Cultural symbols

- a) Traditional Clothing: The main man in this advertisement (Kabayan) wears clothing that represents traditional Sundanese attire, namely a white baju kampret (a traditional shirt), black pangsi pants, and a checkered sarong draped over his shoulders. He also wears a headband or totopong (a traditional headdress). This attire is closely associated with the Kabayan character from Sundanese folklore.
- b) Fictional/Legendary Character: The character "Kabayan" itself is a well-known and beloved symbol of local Sundanese culture, representing an innocent, clever, and often humorous figure.

#### 2. Local language/accents

The use of Sundanese in dialogue, such as:

- "Mantap mang!" (great, man!)
- "Sabaraha?" (How much?)
- "1500" (One thousand five hundred)
- "Kapok-kapok yeuh" (I'm fed up, huh?)
- "Tah, kitu atuh" (Well, that's it)
- "Orang desa juga tahu" (Villagers also know), although not a regional language, this represents the identity of the "village people" of Kabayan.

#### 3. Social values

- a) Social Interaction: The video depicts a bustling atmosphere with buying and selling activities and crowds in an environment resembling a terminal or market. This reflects the habits of Indonesians interacting in crowded public spaces.
- b) Humor: The character of Kabayan, shown as innocent yet clever in dealing with situations (for example, when bargaining), demonstrates one aspect of humor in local culture.

#### 4. Natural environment

Busy urban landscape: The background of the video is dominated by a busy urban setting with tall buildings, city buses, and the activity of people passing by. Although it does not feature typical natural landscapes such as rice fields or mountains, it reflects the everyday environment commonly found in big cities in Indonesia, often in public transportation areas such as terminals.

### **Visual Communication Strategy**

#### 1. Use of Local Cultural Elements in Communication

Local cultural elements (especially the character of Kabayan played by Jamie Aditya) are used as a vehicle to convey the message of "solid freshness" from Coca Cola. Kabayan, who is hot and tired after traveling in a big city, becomes a visual representation of the audience who needs freshness. The drastic

change in Kabayan's expression after drinking Coca Cola directly communicates the instant and satisfying refreshing effect of the product. The humor and cuteness of the Kabayan character played by Jamie Aditya make the message easy to accept and remember.

## 2. Building Emotional Closeness with the Audience

Using the Kabayan character who has become an archetype and is loved by the Sundanese people (and Indonesia in general), and played by Jamie Aditya who at that time was also popular with his unique "young man" image, this advertisement succeeded in building a strong emotional closeness. The audience felt familiar and entertained by Kabayan's antics, so that the Coca Cola brand was also associated with positive feelings and relevant local identities. Coca Cola's courage in choosing Jamie Aditya, who has a mixed background but successfully plays Kabayan with a convincing accent and behavior, shows an innovative adaptation strategy.

## 3. Reflection of Local Identity

The visuals of this advertisement reflect local identity quite authentically within the limits required by the advertisement format. Kabayan's clothes, gestures, and dialect (albeit briefly) are well played by Jamie Aditya, which shows strong research and direction to bring the character to life. The bustling market environment also adds to the authenticity of the atmosphere. Local culture here is not just decoration, but the core of the advertisement narrative used to create resonance and relevance of the product to people's daily lives.

## DISCUSSION

The use of cultural symbols in advertising not only serves as a communication tool, but also as a strategy to build emotional closeness with consumers. This strategy has proven effective in strengthening the image of a local and nationalist brand. Elements such as traditional clothing, regional languages, and local Indonesian settings are used as tools to bind the identity between the product and the consumer (Casilas et al., 2025). The Coca Cola Kabayan version of the advertisement showed significant success in attracting attention and building emotional connections with the local community. The popularity of this advertisement reflects the effectiveness of the visual communication strategy implemented, especially through the selection of Jamie Aditya as the actor of Kabayan. This decision was a smart strategic move, because Jamie was able to bring the character of Kabayan to life with a fresh and modern nuance, without eliminating the essence of humor and innocence inherent in the archetypal figure. The simple narrative, relevant humor, and communicative visual approach made this advertisement easy to remember and liked by the local audience.

The use of rhetorical visual elements such as metaphor and humor can increase cognitive elaboration and positive attitudes towards advertisements, especially when viewers have the appropriate cultural competence (McQuarrie & Mick, 1999). Furthermore, the use of local culture in this advertisement significantly strengthens the Coca Cola brand image. As a global brand, Coca Cola has successfully carried out the glocalization process by presenting a

friendlier, more familiar, and more relevant image for Indonesian consumers. Through the representation of Kabayan, this brand not only appears as an international product, but also as part of the daily lives of local people. This approach reflects a communication strategy that utilizes peripheral paths in persuasion, where visual elements and cultural symbols serve as cues that strengthen emotional appeal and brand identity (Petty et al., 1983).

However, there is a potential for cultural simplification in the representation of the Kabayan character. Although this character is beloved and has become an icon of Sundanese culture, the depiction of Kabayan as a "naive and funny villager" risks reinforcing certain stereotypes. In the context of advertising, the character is reduced for the sake of humor and product promotion. However, Jamie Aditya's charismatic appearance and ability to convey the character with its own charm tend to minimize the impact of negative stereotypes. The representation of Kabayan in this advertisement is more directed at reinforcing an entertaining cultural archetype, with an emphasis on humor and freshness as the main values to be conveyed.

Understanding cultural competence is essential in interpreting visual meaning in advertising, because without the right cultural context, visual messages can be misinterpreted or lose their effectiveness (McQuarrie & Mick, 1999). Culture in the context of contemporary marketing communications, there is a paradigm shift towards the function of culture in advertising. Historically, local culture is often positioned as a passive element that functions as a background or identity marker alone, without direct involvement in the message delivery strategy. However, in modern advertising practices, culture has experienced a reorientation of function to become an active component in visual communication strategies. Culture is now used strategically to shape narratives, convey messages contextually, and influence consumer perceptions and behavior. This transformation reflects a more complex understanding of culture as a dynamic social construct, which is able to strengthen emotional appeal and local relevance in marketing campaigns.

### ***Local Culture as a Visual Communication Strategy***

When culture is used as a visual communication strategy, cultural elements no longer just "appear" but "speak". The Coca Cola advertisement in Kabayan's version successfully transforms its elements from mere symbols into a strong and meaningful narrative.

#### **1. From Just a Symbol to an Emotional Narrative**

This advertisement not only presents Coca Cola as a refreshing beverage, but also constructs an emotional narrative through Kabayan's journey. The visual storytelling begins with Kabayan appearing tired and overheated as he walks through a market or terminal, effectively conveying a sense of exhaustion. His transformation after drinking Coca Cola – from a fatigued expression to one of satisfaction and renewed energy – creates a strong emotional connection with the audience. This narrative illustrates how Coca Cola is positioned not merely as a thirst-quencher, but as a source of happiness and vitality. Such emotional appeal aligns with the concept of emotional branding, where advertisements aim to evoke feelings that foster consumer loyalty and engagement (Nurlaili, 2024).

From a semiotic perspective, the advertisement employs signs and symbols that operate on both denotative and connotative levels. The character Kabayan, his traditional attire, and the setting function as iconic signs that evoke cultural familiarity, while the act of drinking Coca Cola becomes an indexical sign of refreshment and joy (Rifa'i, 2010). According to Barthes' theory of semiotics, these signs contribute to a layered meaning that goes beyond the literal, embedding cultural and ideological messages within the visual narrative (Leo & Kuntjara, 2017). Furthermore, the advertisement utilizes principles of visual communication, where meaning is constructed not only through language but also through imagery, gesture, and expression, allowing the audience to interpret emotional cues intuitively (Leo & Kuntjara, 2017). This integration of emotional narrative, cultural symbolism, and visual semiotics enhances the persuasive power of the advertisement and deepens its resonance with local audiences.

## **2. From Background to Message Center**

The character of Kabayan, traditionally known as a folkloric figure from West Java, is elevated in this advertisement from being a mere cultural marker to the central protagonist. No longer a background figure, Kabayan becomes the focal point of the narrative, undergoing a transformation that is catalyzed by his encounter with Coca Cola. His journey—from fatigue and discomfort to satisfaction and vitality—serves as a metaphor for the product's promise of refreshment and emotional uplift. This transformation aligns with the concept of brand storytelling, where a character's personal journey is used to embody the brand's values and emotional appeal (Lu, 2019).

From a semiotic perspective, Kabayan functions as an iconic sign representing Sundanese culture, while his transformation after consuming Coca Cola acts as an indexical sign of the product's effect (Rifa'i, 2010). The advertisement constructs meaning through visual and cultural symbols that operate on both denotative and connotative levels, reinforcing the emotional and ideological message of the brand (Rifa'i, 2010). Furthermore, the use of a culturally embedded character like Kabayan exemplifies cultural adaptation theory, where global brands localize their messaging by integrating familiar cultural elements to enhance relatability and resonance with the target audience (Lu, 2019). This strategic localization not only strengthens brand identity but also deepens emotional engagement with viewers.

## **3. From Geographic Marker to Credibility and Trust Builder**

The use of a setting such as "*Kios Jujur*" (Honest Kiosk) in the middle of a busy market or terminal, along with the character of Kabayan, functions as more than just a geographical or cultural marker. These elements contribute to building credibility and trust in the advertisement. The term "Honest Kiosk" implies integrity in transactions, as illustrated when Kabayan initially reacts with surprise to the price but then confirms it transparently. This moment reinforces the perception of fairness and openness, which are key components in establishing consumer trust. Kabayan, as a familiar and beloved local figure, further enhances this sense of reliability, making the product feel more approachable and trustworthy to the audience.

This strategy aligns with the Theory of Localization, which emphasizes the importance of adapting global brands to local cultural contexts to increase consumer relatability and trust (Jamankulova & Ayhan, 2020). By embedding culturally resonant symbols and values—such as honesty, simplicity, and community—the advertisement leverages cultural proximity to strengthen emotional engagement. Additionally, according to Stuart Hall’s Theory of Cultural Studies, media texts like advertisements are not neutral; they encode ideological meanings that reflect and reinforce cultural norms (Bryant, 2012). In this case, the specific mention of the price (Rp. 1300) serves as a semiotic cue for transparency, reinforcing the brand’s message of accessibility and sincerity (Bryant, 2012).

#### **4. From Literal Use to Visual Metaphor**

Kabayan’s simple act of drinking Coca Cola transforms into a deeper visual metaphor that conveys emotional and symbolic meaning. The moment he opens the bottle and takes a sip with visible relief, followed by a satisfied expression, visually represents recovery, emotional release, and the peak of happiness. Coca Cola is portrayed not merely as a thirst-quenching beverage, but as a symbolic “remedy” for fatigue and a source of joy. This aligns with the principles of emotional branding, where products are positioned to evoke positive emotional experiences and foster consumer loyalty (Muse, 2023).

The advertisement also employs visual metaphor theory, which suggests that visual elements in media can represent abstract concepts such as happiness, comfort, or transformation through symbolic imagery (Silva, 2025). Kabayan’s change in expression serves as a metaphorical cue that Coca Cola delivers emotional relief, reinforcing the brand’s identity as a provider of happiness. This is further emphasized by the slogan “*Segarnya Mantap Itu Coca Cola,*” which encapsulates the emotional climax of the narrative. According to brand storytelling theory, such emotionally charged moments help humanize the brand and create lasting impressions on the audience (Khanna, 2018).

#### ***The Importance of Cultural Function Changes***

The change in the function of culture from a passive element to an active instrument in visual communication strategies has great significance in the context of contemporary advertising. This transformation allows advertising to become more socially and emotionally relevant, because the cultural elements used have a direct resonance with the experiences, values, and identities of local audiences. When local culture is strategically integrated, advertising messages not only become easier to understand, but also more memorable. This is in line with the view of Stuart Hall (1997), who emphasized that cultural representations in the media not only reflect reality, but also shape the way audiences understand the world around them (Hsu & Tsai, 2015).

Beyond enhancing recall, the use of local culture also serves as an effective tool for differentiation in increasingly saturated markets. Brands that successfully demonstrate cultural proximity to their audiences tend to stand out more than those relying solely on generic or global approaches. This strategy reflects a broader trend in the creative industries, where culturally grounded design becomes a key competitive advantage 1. In this context, culture functions

not only as an aesthetic element but also as a meaningful structure that reinforces brand narratives (Hsu & Tsai, 2015).

Moreover, culture possesses strong affective power – it evokes emotions, and in consumer behavior, emotions are a primary driver of purchasing decisions. Emotional engagement triggered by visual and narrative elements in advertising can significantly enhance consumer involvement and brand loyalty (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Thus, local culture is no longer merely “present” in advertising as a decorative visual component, but actively “operates” as an integral part of brand communication strategy. This shift allows brands to speak in a visually rich and personally meaningful language, transforming cultural identity into a powerful strategic asset that strengthens the relationship between brand and consumer.

### ***Stages of Cultural Function Changes in Advertising***

The Kabayan version of the Coca Cola advertisement shows the adaptation of a global brand into the local Indonesian cultural context. The process of the stages of change in cultural functions can be explained as follows.

#### **1. Ornamentation/Background Stage (Culture as Passive Identity)**

Local culture serves as a background or decorative element that does not yet have a strategic role in the main message of the advertisement. The character of Kabayan, with his traditional clothing, and the setting of "Kios Jujur" are visual representations of Sundanese/Indonesian culture. This reflects the use of culture as early "Cultural Symbolism", where visual elements of culture are used to create a sense of familiarity and connection without embedding deep meaning into the product itself (Nakata & Izberk-Bilgin, 2009).

This approach aligns with the idea that early advertising often mirrored the surface aspects of culture, using recognizable symbols to evoke emotional or cultural resonance without necessarily engaging with deeper cultural narratives. From a semiotic perspective, these cultural icons function as "iconic representations" – visual signs that carry cultural familiarity but not yet strategic depth (Xiong, 2024). Such use of cultural motifs is common in the early stages of cultural integration in advertising, where brands begin by incorporating local aesthetics as a form of visual communication, before evolving into more meaningful cultural storytelling.

#### **2. Direct Association Stage (Culture as Simple Signifier)**

Culture began to be used as a simple signifier that was directly linked to a product or brand, often to create positive associations. The freshness of Coca Cola was directly associated with the tired and hot condition of Kabayan. Coca Cola became an instant solution in the context of everyday activities that were culturally relatable. This relates to the concept of Cultural Relevance, where brands try to make products relevant to specific needs or situations in a cultural context.

This approach aligns with McCracken's Cultural Meaning Transfer Theory, which explains how cultural meaning moves from the culturally constituted world to consumer goods, and then from those goods to the individual consumer through mechanisms such as advertising, fashion systems, and consumption rituals (McCracken, 1986). In this case, the freshness and satisfaction of Coca Cola

are transferred through the familiar cultural figure of Kabayan, embedding the product within a culturally resonant narrative.

### **3. Symbolic Use Stage (Culture as Symbol of Power/Quality)**

Local culture is used as a deeper symbol to show the strength, quality, or certain values of the product. Kabayan's ingenuity in bargaining and the deep satisfaction after drinking Coca Cola can symbolize the value of the product that is comparable to the ingenuity of local consumers. Coca Cola not only quenches thirst but also provides a "steady" satisfaction, making it a strong symbol of freshness and in accordance with the simple values of the community.

This is in line with the concept of "Cultural Branding", as explained by Douglas Holt, where brands build their identities through strong cultural narratives and symbols that resonate with the community (Holt, 2004). Coca Cola, in this case, uses local characters such as Kabayan to strengthen the emotional and cultural associations of its product.

In addition, this approach also reflects the principle of "Cultural Congruence", which is the alignment between the advertising message and the cultural values of the audience. When advertising reflects familiar cultural practices, such as bargaining or hard work under the hot sun, the product message feels more authentic and relevant to consumers (Dumitrescu, 2016).

### **4. Narrative and Emotional Connection Stage (Culture as Heart of Communication Strategy)**

Local culture becomes an integral part of the advertising narrative, building an emotional connection with the audience through a culturally relevant story. The entire storyline of Kabayan traveling, facing prices, bargaining, and finally enjoying Coca Cola is a culturally structured narrative. The use of humor and the simplicity of Kabayan's character, which is familiar to Indonesian society, creates a strong emotional bond.

This is a strong example of the concept of "Cultural Storytelling", where brands use narratives rooted in culture to create emotional resonance and build a strong brand identity. Coca Cola has long used this strategy to create deep connections with consumers through stories that touch on local and universal values (Khanna, 2018).

In addition, the aspect of "High-Context Culture" is also relevant here (Dave, 2017). In a high-context culture like Indonesia, communication is often implicit and highly dependent on understanding the social and cultural context. Coca Cola's advertisement featuring Kabayan and the practice of bargaining conveys an emotional message and cultural relevance without the need for explicit explanation, because the audience already understands the implied meaning.

### **5. Adaptation and Innovation Stage (Culture as Global Creative Platform)**

Brands use local culture as a foundation for global innovation and adaptation, creating messages that resonate locally while maintaining a global brand identity. Coca Cola, as a global brand, cleverly adapts its message of freshness through the very local character of Kabayan. This is a form of the concept of "Glocalization", a strategy that combines global thinking with local action. Coca Cola and other global brands apply this principle to convey

culturally relevant messages while maintaining a universal brand identity (Deliceirmak, 2022).

This stage most strongly illustrates the "Cultural Adaptation" or "Localization Strategy" approach in international marketing, where brands adjust messages and visual elements to reflect local values (Dumitrescu, 2016). Coca Cola has shown how global campaigns such as Reasons to Believe have been creatively adapted to various cultural contexts, including the use of local language, music, and symbols.

This strategy can also be analyzed through the lens of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, especially in the context of a collectivist culture like Indonesia. The simple and close-to-the-people character of Kabayan reflects communal and togetherness values, which are very important in a collectivist culture. Hofstede identified that Indonesia has a low score on the individualism dimension, meaning that its people prioritize groups, family, and community over personal interests (Brigita & Supriyati, 2016). In this context, the use of the Kabayan character in Coca Cola's advertisements reflects strong collectivist values, strengthening the cultural and emotional relevance of the brand message.

This approach is also in line with Coca Cola's cultural analysis using Hofstede's model, which shows that the company actively considers cultural dimensions such as collectivism and power distance in its cross-country marketing strategy. Finally, this advertisement actively participates in the process of "Cultural Meaning Transfer", where the cultural meaning of local characters such as Kabayan is transferred to global brands such as Coca Cola, creating deeper emotional resonance and brand identity.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The use of local culture in the Kabayan version of the Coca Cola advertisement shows that cultural elements can function as more than just a visual backdrop; they become the core of a communication strategy that builds an emotional connection with the audience. The transformation of culture from a passive symbol to an active narrative strengthens the brand image and increases local relevance.

Suggestions for future research and practice include: deepening cultural representations to avoid falling into stereotypes, selecting actors who are able to bring cultural characters to life authentically, integrating local culture with the global context in innovative ways, and exploring core cultural values to strengthen brand messages.

## **FUTURE STUDY**

Future research should explore the integration of local culture in digital and interactive advertising formats, such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and social media storytelling. Additionally, comparative studies across different cultural regions in Indonesia or Southeast Asia could reveal how cultural nuances influence advertising effectiveness. Investigating audience reception and cultural interpretation through ethnographic or participatory

methods would also enrich the understanding of cultural resonance in advertising.

### ADVANCED RESEARCH

Advanced research may focus on developing a theoretical framework that maps the stages of cultural transformation in advertising – from ornamentation to strategic narrative. This could include interdisciplinary approaches combining cultural studies, consumer psychology, and visual semiotics. Quantitative validation of emotional impact and brand perception through experimental design or eye-tracking studies could provide empirical support for the effectiveness of culturally grounded advertising strategies.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the School of Creative Industries, Telkom University, for the academic support and access to research resources. Special thanks to the reviewers and editorial team of the International Journal of Applied and Advanced Multidisciplinary Research (IJAAMR) for their valuable feedback. Appreciation is also extended to the creative professionals and cultural experts whose insights enriched the analysis of the Coca Cola Kabayan advertisement.

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