

FRAMING VISUAL NARRATIVES OF THE GEORGE TOWN HERITAGE CELEBRATION BROCHURE: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

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Abstract. The George Town Heritage Celebration is an annual cultural event held in George Town, a historic city recognized as part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site for its exceptional multicultural heritage and architectural landscape. The focus of this study is to analyze the nuanced visual elements within the brochure, aiming to uncover the intricate narrative woven through its visual content, denotative and connotative elements, and ideology relevance represented in the image of this brochure through layout and pictures. The research focuses on how visual elements including layout composition, imagery, colour schemes, and symbolic motifs operate at both denotative and connotative levels to communicate ideological meanings. Through a systematic visual analysis, the study interrogates how the brochure strategically mobilizes visual rhetoric and cultural symbolism to frame George Town's heritage as a harmonious multicultural narrative. As a result, the most prominent explicit element is heritage landmarks. Meanwhile, implicit elements show Malay, Chinese, and Indian figures as the signature of unity, representing the George Town Heritage Celebration identity. Both denotative and connotative elements form the main synecdoche of George Town Heritage Celebration representation images. This study provides a foundation for preserving and cultivating Georgetown Heritage Day to unite the community.

Keywords: *visual analysis, heritage celebrations, brochure, critical discourse analysis, social semiotic*

Introduction

George Town, the dynamic capital city of the Malaysian state of Penang, is a testament to its cultural heritage. Located on the island of Penang, this historic city showcases a distinctive fusion of traditions, architectural wonders, and diverse communities that have influenced its identity across centuries. Pampus (2021) stated that the British East India Company founded George Town as a port settlement on a piece of land on Penang Island that was previously uninhabited and swampy in 1786. The Heritage Celebrations in George Town serve as a platform to safeguard and exhibit the city's cultural legacy. These events capture the essence of its history, traditions, and customs, ensuring their preservation for future generations and sharing them with the wider community and global visitors. This festival is celebrated yearly on July 7. At the core of George Town's cultural vibrancy lies the yearly Heritage Celebrations an array of events and festivities that honor the city's rich history and embrace its multicultural heritage that showing the festivities showcase intangible heritage like music, dance, cuisine, and oral traditions, playing a role in safeguarding these cultural elements. These celebrations create a platform for the local community together, fostering a sense of pride and engagement. They allow residents to connect with their heritage, pass down traditions to younger generations, and collectively celebrate the distinctive features that make George Town a cultural gem (Sadatiseyedmahalleh et al., 2015). Due to the significance of these Heritage Celebrations, George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) assumed responsibility for the Heritage Celebrations and gradually

established it as a significant platform. In Penang, the management and oversight of UNESCO World Heritage Sites is entrusted to two primary bodies which are the Penang City Council (MBPP) and George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) (Ferdhaus et al., 2023). GTWHI is also committed to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage by prioritizing community-based ownership as a core value. The dedication extends beyond celebrations and encompasses a range of activities and occasions within the framework of heritage management (Pan, 2018). Currently, in 2020 the study focuses on visual reviews of the celebrations (Sukmayadi and Effendi, 2020). Sualman et al. (2021) analyze media, particularly celebration advertisements as a significant avenue for promoting in Malaysia to portray and deliver messages that could potentially assist a good relationship between races in Malaysia by visual. Nonetheless, there is limited research into the visual portrayals of heritage celebrations images, especially concerning the visual and language components in depicting the celebration.

Literature review

With the advancement of technology in this century, various celebration advertising platforms and festival activities often get public attention. The same goes for festival activities that are promoted or highlighted in the form of visual brochures. This tendency can shape the understanding of the audience based on the visual source and the role of the message in the visual offered (Sukmayadi and Effendi, 2020). In addition, similar visual materials frequently serve as educational tools by offering insights into cultural practices, historical backgrounds, and the significance of events. This educational role clarifies cultural traditions and makes them more understandable to a broader audience. Arumugam et al. (2023) note that this context expands destination branding by creating appealing and distinctive identity values that are deliberately associated with the essence of a destination and the visual brochures are valuable educational resources, capable of presenting intricate cultural stories clearly and engagingly. In this context, the brochure, including both visual and linguistic elements, helps present visuals are meticulously crafted representations of culture and tourism for promotional purposes. The festival and heritage brochures are a key resource for exploring the language and imagery intended for potential tourists known as a source of information. This process reflects the imaginary and reality of the image perceived by the tourists. This advantage will influence the local and outsiders' satisfaction value with the information provided in brochures. Francesconi (2011) stated that using the brochure helps to build a positive perception of the reader. The visual of George Town Heritage crafts an ideal narrative through the cultural concept that is being seen as a promotional strategy.

The government has observed a substantial growth in tourists seeking cultural and heritage experiences in recent years. Acknowledging the importance of cultural heritage in drawing a diverse audience, the local administration of George Town has collaborated with heritage organizations and event coordinators to introduce inventive policies that cater to the requirements of both local and international participants. Adjustments have been applied in public policies, event venues, cultural programs, and participant safety to nurture a vibrant heritage celebration atmosphere in the city. The George Town Heritage represents a space with diverse perspectives, and UNESCO's universal values and interpretations associated with the site. The growing demand from locals and outsiders has resulted in a significant rise in the availability of culture and tourism accommodations in George Town. Johnes et al. (2022) claimed that expressed

is the significance of folk celebrations as a vital component of culture in fostering ethnic harmony within Malaysia's diverse society. Evaluating the potential impact of these folk celebrations on relationship harmony requires consideration of the motivational dimension. Consequently, the brochure functions not only as a marketing instrument but also as a crucial medium in shaping the community's identity, values, and views related to the George Town Heritage Day celebration. Analyzing the symbols in each image allows for the interpretation of the cultural narrative presented, highlighting principles of justice and equilibrium within the George Town community.

Materials and Methods

The study will utilize a qualitative method in which the research's essence necessitates a thorough visual analysis making the most appropriate methodology. Visual imagery involves the transmission of messages through image, publisher, and audience aspects. The data from this method will be collected, categorized, and descriptively analyzed based on visual content analysis. As described, the researcher will adopt and adapt a social semiotic approach that combines the visual content analysis framework by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2020) and the critical discourse framework by Fairclough (1995) in this study. This combination of frameworks aims to analyze the visual content, image representation, and ideology in the Heritage Celebration brochures. Regarding the research data, the researcher will use 6 digital heritage celebration brochures from the official website of the Georgetown World Heritage Corporation. The data set includes 6 brochures of the George Town Heritage Celebration, as seen on the website. This is because this visual analysis involves a very broad scope, and the researcher needs to limit the data set so that the study findings are relevant to the aspects being examined. The digital brochure data to be analyzed includes brochures available on the official website in the years 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019. In this study, the researcher will only analyze data available in digital format. Based on the data collection, the researcher has four main steps in conducting the overall research. (1) to collect data available digitally on the website which is 6 selected data, (2) examine the visual content and categorize the visuals, (3) identify denotative elements in visuals and linguistic messages, or writing by identifying the frequency of denotative aspects and connotative elements to see the dominance of this feature in each brochure, and the final step (4) is to analyze the overall visual relationship with ideology in these brochures.

The Kress and Van Leeuwen (2020) theoretical framework, based on a critical social semiotic approach, consists of three main aspects: representational meaning, compositional meaning, and interactive meaning. By this framework, the researcher will only adapt and limit the study to the aspect of compositional meaning. This compositional meaning allows the researcher to examine visual sources and text in the Heritage Celebration brochures and how visual content and image representation based on denotative and connotative elements emerge in the Heritage Celebration brochures. Concerning representational meaning, this aspect refers to how images can represent a particular experience, subject, or event. The subject includes participants in the images, whether individuals or groups, people, places, or abstract concepts represented by living or non-living objects. The event refers to the situational background of the image, encompassing participants and processes or activities within the image. However, the study will not focus on this aspect. The interactive aspect refers to the relationship

between readers and participants in the image based on language calls, narrative perspectives, reflections, visual size, and perspectives of contemplation. This aspect is shaped by the different characteristics possessed by objects that become participants in the image and vice versa. This aspect will also not be addressed in this study. The researcher also incorporates the Fairclough framework to identify ideologies in the Heritage Celebration brochures. Fairclough (1995) framework has three main dimensions. The first dimension involves textual analysis, focusing on the text's features or linguistic characteristics, including text structure, grammar, lexis, and cohesion. The second dimension is discourse practices, interpreting the relationship between the production and interpretation processes of discourse and text. Meanwhile, the third dimension is the social process, encompassing the explanation of the relationship between discourse processes and social processes. In this framework, the researcher's focus is solely based on the ideological aspect to gain a clearer understanding of the construction of the Heritage Celebration brochures with their ideology. Typically, critical discourse analysis attempts to uncover meanings behind images, logos, colors, numbers, and so on. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2020) suggest that in society, there is a need to connect textual and social forms during the production and use of texts. With this connection, a genuine context in societal and cultural practices can be established..

Results and Discussion

The scrutiny of visual content utilizes denotative components in photographs to categorize visual image types and assess their occurrence. Based on the analysis conducted, the *Table 1* shows the overall findings based on the frequency of data obtained for denotative aspects in the George Town Heritage Celebration brochure. Based on these findings, the specific attributes of visual elements represent reality and are interpreted through their arrangement and significance within the image. From this viewpoint, the focus is on visual content that highlights explicit representations of heritage concepts as presented in the George Town Heritage Festival leaflets. The analysis indicates that the table below summarizes the overall results, reflecting the frequency of explicit elements found in the George Town Heritage Festival brochure. According to *Table 1*, the George Town Heritage Festival brochure primarily highlights the festival's slogan, cultural heritage site, location, and date. The slogan, closely tied to the heritage site, is crucial in providing a succinct overview and guiding readers to delve into the festival's specifics. This unique phrase not only reflects the historical significance of each site but also serves to capture attention and present a distinctive cultural experience associated with the locations. Recent research supports the notion that slogans in promotional materials are instrumental in encapsulating and communicating the essence of cultural heritage sites. As observed, "slogans serve as condensed representations that effectively convey the core message of heritage sites, enhancing the promotional material's appeal and clarity." The strategic incorporation of slogans helps emphasize the historical and cultural value of the sites, thereby increasing the brochure's effectiveness in drawing and engaging potential visitors. This approach creates a cohesive and engaging narrative that highlights the unique aspects of the festival and its associated heritage sites. By presenting clear illustrations of heritage themes, the brochure aims to assist potential visitors in understanding and appreciating the event, thus increasing its appeal and impact. This targeted focus highlights the brochure creators' skill in portraying the festival in a way that aligns with their

objectives, potentially influencing how audiences view and value the cultural diversity and historical significance of George Town. Richards (2018) also explained how brochures are employed in cultural tourism to shape and affect views of heritage sites.

Table 1. *Denotative elements in the George Town Heritage Celebration brochure.*

Visual element and representation	Frequency of the visual data
Headlines	
George Town Heritage Celebration slogan	6
Celebration avenues, and dates	6
Celebrations logo	6
Sponsorship acknowledgement	5
George Town Heritage landmark	3
Malay, Chinese, Indian, and other races figure	4
Language	
Malay	6
Chinese	6
Indian	5
English	6
Jawi	6
Telugu	1
Malayalam	1
Punjabi	1
Gujarati	1
Color	
Light blue	1
Light brown	3
Other color combinations	1
Architecture symbols	
Mosques	3
Temples	3
Churches	3
Peranakan houses	2
Malay Houses	
Chinese Houses	4
Indian houses	4
Monumental structures	6
Other heritage buildings	6
Human figure symbols	
Malay	6
Chinese	6
Indian	6
Other races	6
Celebration symbols	
Site Excursions	4
Singing, and heritage dance floor	5
Arts and handcrafts	3
Drawing	3
Traditional games	5
Traditional and symbolic cuisine from Malay	5
Traditional and symbolic cuisine from Chinese, and Traditional and symbolic cuisine from Indian	5
Community workshop	6
Other Images	
Map	6
QR code	3
Other information (e-mail, phone number, Facebook page)	6

The brochure also displays images of George Town's heritage landmarks and individuals from Malay, Chinese, and Indian backgrounds, among others. These visuals underscore George Town's cultural diversity. Collectively, these components are designed to highlight the city's rich cultural heritage, diverse community, and the cooperative spirit of the George Town Heritage Festival. The headline of the brochure is vital for highlighting the key aspects and priorities within the content. It serves as an effective means of delivering important messages, grabbing attention, and guiding readers to explore various facets of the George Town Heritage Festival. This method

fosters a deeper recognition and appreciation of the festival's cultural heritage and diversity. The brochure incorporates architectural symbols related to the festival, such as mosques, temples, and churches, which represent the diverse religious practices in George Town. These visual elements highlight the area's cultural and historical significance, demonstrating the peaceful coexistence of various religions. Furthermore, the brochure features Peranakan houses, illustrating the unique blend of Chinese, Malay, and Indonesian influences that define Peranakan culture. The brochure's ideological framework is evident in its depiction of multiculturalism and heritage. By prominently showcasing diverse religious symbols like mosques, temples, and churches alongside Peranakan houses, it promotes an ideology of cultural harmony and inclusivity. This approach supports broader themes of unity and diversity, positioning the festival as a tribute to George Town's rich cultural heritage. The use of slogans and architectural symbols also highlights a commitment to preserving history and culture, appealing to both local and international audiences. This synecdochical representation aims to convey a compelling overview of the celebration. Based on the analysis, both elements found in the brochure represent synecdochical features of heritage landmarks and Malay, Chinese, and Indian figures as representations of multiracial and diverse symbols. Thus, *Table 2* shows the summary of the denotative elements and connotative portrayal of the George Town Heritage Celebration in the brochures.

Table 2. Summary of denotative elements in the George Town Heritage Celebration brochure.

Celebration representation and denotative element	Connotative element
Heritage landmarks	
Old buildings physically exist in George Town	Symbolize historical events, cultural values, or significant community achievements
Unique and heritage design architecture	Physical attributes attract tourists, serving as cultural and historical focal points
Malay, Chinese, and Indian figure	
Wearing hijab (veil)	Signature of unity from different races and portrays the distinctive image of the multicultural representation of George Town Celebration
Wearing a traditional Chinese costume	
Wearing an Indian traditional costume	

Regarding Heritage landmarks, the aged structures existing in George Town function as notable synecdochical symbols. Their distinct and heritage-designed architecture conveys meanings related to historical events, cultural values, or noteworthy community accomplishments. The physical characteristics of these landmarks are appealing to tourists, making them pivotal cultural and historical focal points during the George Town Celebration. This unique architecture carries historical, cultural, and community significance and attracts visitors who can interpret and grasp the profound heritage of George Town through these architectural features. Hassan et al. (2008) also emphasized the unique, cultural, and historic components that serve as valuable resources for Malaysia, as they correspond to the interest of tourists in exploring the uniqueness of various cultures. They unequivocally reveal that representation symbols, linguistic cues, and visual images are two essential elements employed to represent the diverse cultures of Malaysia. The portrayal of figures adorned in traditional Malay, Chinese, and Indian attire adds an extra layer of cultural richness. Each figure represents a distinct cultural identity, contributing to the diverse cultural representation of George Town. Besides, the presence of figures from Malay, Chinese, and Indian cultures symbolizes unity among different races. This diverse representation underscores the multicultural essence of the George Town Celebration, highlighting the harmonious coexistence of various

cultural identities. Jamal and Hollinshead (2001) explained that these various cultures help to promote cultural hybridization in Malaysia and enhance tourism activities then these elements can act as powerful connotative and denotative messages, conveying the essence of the celebration to potential participants. The use of these visual elements indicates a strategic intention to emphasize George Town's multicultural identity and enhance its appeal as a cultural tourism destination, framed through the ideology of unity and diversity. The brochure's aim in representing heritage landmarks and cultural figures for the George Town Celebration is to highlight its historic buildings and diverse cultural symbols. This focus promotes George Town as a culturally rich and historically significant location, aligning with tourism and heritage preservation objectives to draw visitors by showcasing the city's unique assets. This focused emphasis illustrates how the brochure's creators use their influence to present the festival in line with their goals, potentially shaping how audiences understand and appreciate the cultural diversity and historical importance of George Town. From an academic standpoint, the use of synecdoche in promotional materials is a powerful tool for encapsulating and communicating complex cultural narratives. Scholars argue that such symbolic representation allows for a condensed yet profound conveyance of the broader context and significance of heritage events. Symbolic elements in cultural promotion act as shorthand representations that convey the essence of the cultural experience, making it accessible and compelling to the audience (Cruz et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This research revealed the representation of multicultural and unity concepts besides cultural and tourism structures in George Town, Penang. The representation of Malay, Chinese, and Indian Figures conveys connotative messages of unity among different races, emphasizing the celebration's diverse and harmonious cultural coexistence. In essence, the George Town Heritage Celebration brochure employs a strategic fusion of denotative elements for factual representation and connotative elements to evoke emotions, instill pride, and promote a sense of unity. For future research, the present study did not evaluate the brochure's impact on its audience through social media and the research could focus on the demographic and the different perceptions. It is suggested that forthcoming studies utilize the design of visuals to shape the impact of social media on the audience. These future findings are expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of visual communication in the celebration besides, to immerse in the uniqueness of this festival which is different from other states in Malaysia.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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