

CREATING GRAPHIC DESIGN AS A BRANDING MEDIUM FOR THE CULTURAL EVENT PASAR DUGDERAN SEMARANG

Ardilla Maulana *, Eko Haryanto

Universitas Negeri Semarang

Campus UNNES Sekaran, Gunungpati, Semarang, Central Java 50229, Indonesia

Email: ardillamaulana30@students.ac.id

Abstract

Pasar Dugderan is one of Semarang's annual cultural events, not only serving as a commemoration of the month of Ramadan but also as a symbol of Indonesian culture that upholds historical, social, and spiritual values. Indonesia is a country rich in culture and language, making cultural events such as Dugderan play an important role in strengthening national identity and preserving culture and traditions amidst the current of modernization. The author designed a graphic design that highlights typical Dugderan elements such as Warak Ngendhog, traditional ornaments, and local patterns that represent the nuances of Semarang's local culture and Javanese culture more broadly. This design includes visual exploration, color selection, typography, and the application of design to promotional and branding media such as posters, banners, and social media. The goal of this design is to create a visual identity that is not only communicative and aesthetic, but also able to depict the spirit of Indonesia's cultural diversity in an attractive package, especially for the younger generation. The final result of this design is expected to make a positive contribution to efforts regarding the preservation of local culture and to increase awareness of the importance of national cultural heritage in the era of globalization.

Keywords: Graphic Design, Branding, Cultural Event

INTRODUCTION

Quoted from Arnston (2007), graphic design is the art and profession of selecting and arranging visual elements—such as typography, images, symbols, and colors—to communicate a message to an audience. In his book, Arnston adds that graphic design was originally defined as problem-solving carried out on a flat or two-dimensional surface. However, over time, this science has evolved to encompass applications in three-dimensional fields to meet the increasingly rapid technological developments.

According to Ambrose & Harris (2019) the word brand can be defined as a symbol, sign, word, or phrase that identifies and differentiates a product, service, or organization from its competitors. Brands are created to help us differentiate between similar product offerings through perceived quality and value. Meanwhile, according to Kotler & Keller (2009) Branding is the use of a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or combination of these to identify a product or service and differentiate it from competitors. In the context of an event, branding can be

applied as a means of communication between organizers and participants.

According to Putri (2021), an event is a type of promotion often used by companies or by connecting a brand to a themed event or party. This event is designed to create an experience for consumers and promote a product or service. Meanwhile, according to Kennedy (2009), an event is a period of activity carried out by an organization that brings people to a location to gain important information or experiences, as well as other objectives desired by the organizer.

There are various types of events encountered in everyday life. From personal events for those closest to us to public events that everyone can participate in. Events are inseparable from human social life, as humans are inherently social creatures who constantly need interaction with others. This need for social interaction is what drives people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds to interact with one another, especially in our vast and diverse country. A common form of event used to facilitate this interaction is the cultural event.

According to Semarang City Department of Culture and Tourism, DISBUPDAR Kota Semarang (2024), a Cultural Event is an activity celebrating culture or cultural traditions aimed at introducing, promoting, and elevating the value of various aspects of local culture. Meanwhile, according to Timothy & Boyd (2006 in Hanafi, 2023), a Cultural Event is an event created to celebrate the heritage, traditions, customs, arts, history, and diversity of a local community or region. Indonesia has a diverse culture, each of which has a very deep meaning for the people who adhere to it. In addition to being unique, culture can also be a bridge for mutual recognition and appreciation between ethnic groups in the country which is rich in differences. Because of the importance of mutual recognition of culture, cultural events are a good means for this purpose. Because everyone can attend the event and enjoy the various cultural themes raised. Since a variety of people can attend a cultural event, this activity also plays an important role in the context of a region's tourism, considering the opportunity for the region to introduce and preserve their culture to domestic and international tourists.

The OECD (2022) in its Tourism Trends and Policies 2022 Report states that the tourism sector is a vital part of the Indonesian economy. The tourism sector contributed 5% of Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2019. In its report, the OECD also stated that in 2019, domestic tourism contributed 84% of tourism expenditure in Indonesia. The OECD report proves that Indonesia is no stranger to the concept of tourism. In addition to well-known tourist destinations like Bali, each region in Indonesia also has its own equally stunning tourist destinations. From this data, it can also be concluded that the majority of Indonesia's tourism industry is driven by domestic tourists coming from various regions.

Semarang's position as the capital of Central Java Province makes it a hub of activity for the surrounding area. Besides being the seat of government, Semarang also acts as a center of economic activity due to the large number of jobs in various sectors, ranging from industry and services to tourism. The development of the tourism sector in Semarang itself is driven by the many tourist destinations in the city. Some of the most well-known tourist attractions include Lawang Sewu, Sam Poo Kong, and Kota Lama. The Semarang City Central Statistics Agency (BPS) reported in its 2023 report that 6,478,883 domestic tourists and 13,992 international tourists visited Semarang (BPS Kota Semarang, 2024).

In addition to its numerous historical sites, Semarang also boasts a variety of seasonal events, making it even more appealing to tourists. One example of a seasonal event eagerly awaited by residents of Semarang and its surrounding areas is the Dugderan Festival. Dugderan

is an annual event held in Semarang to determine the start of Ramadan. The Dugderan event consists of two activities: the Dugderan Market and the Dugderan Parade. This cultural event has become an integral part of Semarang's annual agenda. The Semarang City Department of Culture and Tourism (DISBUPDAR) reported in its 2024 Semarang City Event Effectiveness Study report that 75.5% of visitors to the 2024 Semarang Dugderan festival came from within Semarang, while the remaining 24.5% came from outside the region (DISBUPDAR Kota Semarang, 2024).

According to DISBUPDAR Kota Semarang (2024), at least 16% of Dugderan visitors come from areas quite far from Semarang City itself, such as Pemalang, Yogyakarta, and Surakarta. This proves that this cultural event is so attractive that some tourists are willing to travel from their hometowns to attend Dugderan Semarang. The large number of domestic tourists coming from outside the region presents a unique opportunity. In addition to celebrating the beginning of Ramadan, Dugderan can also be used as a forum for introducing and preserving local culture in Semarang and its surroundings. Although the majority of visitors to Dugderan Semarang 2024 came from within the city, many tourists were willing to travel from outside Semarang to attend this event.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

In the graphic design process, in this case for the branding purposes of the Pasar Dugderan cultural event, the author conducted a needs analysis using the SWOT model, which includes: Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat. The use of the SWOT model aims to identify the advantages and disadvantages in the application of the graphic design to be created. It is hoped that the design created can meet the needs of the event and provide the desired impact. The needs analysis using the SWOT model is as follows :



Figure 1. SWOT Analysis Graph

Source: Author's Documentation

1. Strength

The use of graphic design as a branding tool is commonplace in various fields, including events. There are several advantages to using graphic design as a branding tool for an event, including:

- a. Visual communication is the most powerful communication medium today. Through this communication, one can convey information to visitors and entertain the audience using images and text (Ijaz, 2018).
- b. The graphic design used in this event can be useful as a city branding effort for the venue, namely the city of Semarang. City branding is a marketing strategy implemented by a city with the aim of increasing city growth, particularly in the economic sector (Sa'diya & Andriani, 2018).
- c. More broadly, city branding efforts through the cultural event of Semarang's Dugderan Market can have a positive impact on tourism in the surrounding areas. The use of graphic design as a branding tool can support this goal. Promoting Indonesian tourism requires a communication strategy to promote these destinations (Anugerah, 2013).
- d. One important component of the Pasar Dugderan cultural event in Semarang is the booths prepared by MSMEs as a place for visitors to purchase food, drinks, or souvenirs. In this context, graphic design has also been proven to help product appeal in the market, with an average score of 84% and customer loyalty of 82%. In terms of increasing competitiveness, the average score of 86% indicates that branding through graphic design significantly contributes to the success of MSME strategies (Nurbalidah et al., 2025).

2. Weakness

Despite the benefits offered by graphic design as a branding medium, there are several easily identifiable drawbacks. These include:

- a. One of the graphic design media used as a branding tool is posters. Nowadays, the use of computer-generated graphic posters has become widespread over the past few decades, making them lose their novelty factor. Computer graphics are often considered less appealing than artistic, hand-produced graphics (Pryshchenko, 2021).
- b. The use of graphic design as a branding medium, particularly in the context of MSMEs in Semarang's Dugderan Market, also faces obstacles. Specifically, these include limited access to technology and design software, as well as a lack of understanding of the importance of graphic design as part of a branding strategy (Nurbalidah et al., 2025).
- c. Any positive impacts from using graphic design as a branding medium at Pasar Dugderan event in Semarang are based on the assumption that the implementation is deemed successful. If the application of graphic design is deemed unattractive or inappropriate, the opposite impact is likely to occur, and this is an undesirable end result of the application of graphic design as a branding medium at this event. Negative emotions resulting from this failed effort will end up in a negative attitude towards the event, which will ultimately lead to a negative perception of the city brand more broadly (Lee et al., 2016).

3. Opportunity

With clear advantages and disadvantages, the use of graphic design as branding provides opportunities that can be exploited, including:

- a. Beyond logistical and time considerations, using graphic design as a branding medium is relatively more economical when compared to other media such as video or digital displays.
- b. With relatively economical and easy prices and installation, the use of graphic design as a branding medium provides an opportunity for event organizers who have considerations in the cost area.
- c. Graphic design comes in a much wider variety of sizes compared to other popular branding media, such as digital displays. These range from pamphlet-sized displays to large banners.

4. Threat

In this ever-evolving era, the use of graphic design in print media or similar media is often considered outdated when compared to more modern media. The existence of more modern media, especially digital media, poses several threats to print media graphic design, some examples of which are:

- a. Compared to digital displays or screens, print media graphic design can't create as much of an impact or impression on visitors. This is due to the widespread use of print media graphic design for branding at events.
- b. Graphic designs printed on conventional media cannot emit their own light. Therefore, in dark conditions, lighting is required, which incurs additional costs and logistics. This can be completely avoided by using a digital screen instead.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of graphic design in this context using a SWOT analysis, the author developed a design with these results in mind. Leveraging the power of visual communication, or in this case, graphic design, the design must emphasize both engaging and informative visual elements. This engaging element can be achieved through the use of compelling illustrations or visual designs, the selection of appropriate colors, and the addition of supporting elements. This effort is reflected in the choice of bright red, combined with gold and green elements that fit the context of the Pasar Dugderan event itself. Some of these elements can be seen in the attached key visual image.

As previously identified, the cultural event of Semarang's Pasar Dugderan can also serve as a city branding tool for the city of Semarang itself. To capitalize on this opportunity, the author's design will incorporate context-appropriate color schemes, local art patterns, and elements of the surrounding culture with functional and modern design principles. The results of implementing these elements can be seen in the attached image. As a point of interest in the design, the author uses the figure of Warak Ngendhog, a mythological creature that has become an icon of Semarang. This creature represents the harmony and cultural diversity of the city, with the dragon representing the Chinese ethnic group, the burak representing the Arab ethnic group, and the goat representing the Javanese ethnic group.

In addition to the Warak Ngendhog figure, several elements also depict the background of the Pasar Dugderan Semarang event. These include the use of several elements of Chinese culture, such as the depiction of red envelopes as the main background, the use of lanterns, which are synonymous with Chinese New Year celebrations, and illustrations of lotus flowers

that add an aesthetic impression. The lanterns and other elements that use green represent the month of Ramadan, which is celebrated by the cultural event. Furthermore, there are local ornaments that serve as backgrounds to symbolize the local culture of Semarang and Javanese culture more broadly. All of these elements are combined harmoniously and in accordance with the principles of layout with the hope of creating an attractive and functional visual based on the desired goal.



Figure 2. Key Visual Design

Source: Author's Documentation

Pasar Dugderan itself is celebrated to coincide with the holy month of Ramadan. However, this event also serves as an opportunity for local residents and tourists to witness this annual event. To enliven the event, usually MSMEs are also invited to participate by setting up several booths to offer their merchandise, usually in the form of snacks and treats. To ensure the success of the participating MSMEs, the author also considers their interests by creating key visual applications for several supporting elements of the event. The designs that have been created can be adapted to various needs, one example is the venue gate to enter the event which is created by combining modern design with the cultural elements that have been described. This implementation can be seen in the attached mock-up image.



Figure 3. The Atmosphere at Pasar Dugderan Semarang
Source: Kompas.com



Figure 4. Venue Gate Mock-Up
Source: Author's Documentation

As can be seen in the attached image, the author adapted the placement of the created objects by adjusting them to the available space in the gate design. The use of a gate with a modern feel can provide a sophisticated impression specifically to attract the attention of the younger generation visiting the event. The depiction of Warak Ngendhog using a cartoon approach is also done with a similar hope. With the large number of people visiting Pasar Dugderan Semarang and the nature of the event, it is expected that many young people or children will also visit the event with their companions. The figure of Warak Ngendhog, which is worked on in a cartoon style, is a depiction of the author's hope to attract the interest of this younger generation in local culture which now has to compete with the strong current of

globalization. This approach is also intended to support the process of preserving national culture through interesting media and novels to attract attention.

CONCLUSION

The graphic design for Pasar Dugderang Semarang is expected to combine aesthetic illustration elements, effective visual communication, and representation of local cultural values. By utilizing distinctive elements such as the Warak Ngendhog cultural icon, traditional ornaments, and color choices that reflect Semarang's diverse identity, this design not only functions as a promotional medium, but also a means of education and preservation of national cultural heritage. In the context of Indonesia, which has a wide cultural diversity, this kind of design approach is a real effort to maintain the relevance of traditions amidst the current of globalization and increasingly rapid technological development. Through this graphic design work, it is hoped that the younger generation and the wider community can recognize, appreciate, and feel proud of regional culture so that the nation's cultural heritage can continue to live and develop in the future.

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