

## Multiculturalism in the Design Work of Indonesian Women Designers

Senja Aprela Agustin<sup>1\*</sup>, Acep Iwan Saidi<sup>2</sup>, Irma Damajanti<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Institut Teknologi Bandung

\*Corresponding author, e-mail: [senja@kotasib.com](mailto:senja@kotasib.com)

### Abstract

Multiculturalism has become a prominent issue in media communication, serving as both a communication strategy and a form of awareness for creators, particularly in visual communication design media. Most of the previous findings on the study of multiculturalism in the media suggest that different cultural backgrounds must be considered for global brands to reach diverse markets since visual language is not universal. In addition, other studies explore the interpretation of multiculturalism ideas in the media and practice participatory design research to communicate multiculturalism value through visual communication media. Nevertheless, in Indonesia, the interpretation study of multiculturalism in designs, especially those created by women designers, as a manifestation of multiculturalism awareness seems to be underexplored. To narrow the gap, this study uses the visual semiotic theory of Roland Barthes to investigate the multicultural significance represented in visual images in the work of Indonesian women designers by outlining the levels of denotative and connotative meanings which develop into myth. This research reveals that the idea of multiculturalism in the design work of Nita Darsono and Sanchia Hamidjaja can provide other counter-knowledge in representing the diversity amongst the hegemony of a single and standardized body myth, such as white skin, ideal body, and race, in media. This approach better understands the audiences and appreciates cultural diversity. Overall, this study sheds light on the importance of multiculturalism in visual communication design media, particularly in representing diversity and challenging hegemonic norms. It highlights the need for more research in this area, particularly from underrepresented perspectives, such as women designers in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Design work; Indonesian; Multiculturalism; Semiotic; Woman designers.

**How to Cite:** Agustin, S.A., Saidi, A.I. & Damajanti, I. (2023). Multiculturalism in the Design Work of Indonesian Women Designers. *Jurnal Socius: Journal of Sociology Research and Education*, 10(1), 10-18.



This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons 4.0 Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited under the same license as the original. ©2023 by Jurnal Socius.

## Introduction

Recently, there has been an increasing diversity of cultural representations in various forms of media, including advertisements, films, packaging, and other visual communication designs. This diversity is often characterized by differences in race, ethnicity, culture, body shape, religion, and other factors. Visual communication messages that depict diversity can serve as a marketing communication strategy for brands or reflect a designer's awareness of their role as a meaning creator. Although the commissioner has a significant role in the message that will be conveyed, the designer also contributes to providing design solutions. Furthermore, diversity in this paper refers to multiculturalism, which is the idea of recognizing diverse cultures in society as a form of tolerance in an equal relationship. Racial differences are perhaps the most prominent form of multiculturalism because they can be directly identified visually. For instance, black is Africa, while white is Europe. Specifically, regarding race, [Barker \(2004\)](#) states that the concept of race issues traces its origin in the biological discourse of social Darwinism, which emphasizes the existence of 'lineage' and 'human types'. In this concept race refers to believed biological and physical characteristics, of which the most prominent is skin pigmentation. These attributes are often associated with intelligence or capability to rank racial groups in a social hierarchy and material superiority and subordination. Barker further adds that the distinctive characteristic of multiculturalism is the demand for a positive image and aims to celebrate differences without requiring assimilation. In line with that, [Arivia \(2018\)](#) on

multiculturalism is often associated with the movement of intellectual and social groups that promote the values or principles of difference and emphasize the importance of respect for each group with a different culture.

The latest view on multiculturalism is presented by [Modood \(2005\)](#) through three key ideas: equality, multi, and integration. The first idea is about celebrating previously demeaned identities, including accepting different sexual orientations, as political choices. The second idea is that the character of race equality is not dualistic (black or white) but "multi." The groups fighting for racial equality are diverse and have different identities based on origin, skin color, culture, ethnicity, religion, etc. The third idea is integration, which is different from assimilation and is more pluralistic, acknowledging the diversity of identities. Modood recommends a kind of integration that does not involve deconstructing the identities that people consider important to them or attach to certain communities or political projects. Recognition requires that people have a collective identity, not just an individual or citizenship identity. The idea of interactive integration will make sense if we constantly re-evaluate what it means to be part of this society and country.

Regarding the essence of cultural understanding in visual communication design, designers play a crucial role. They create meaning and aim to understand the audience's background so that they can effectively convey the message. [Frascara \(2004\)](#) explains that "noise" can be a disturbance that arises between information and the public, which can lead to the distortion, obliteration, or concealment of messages. In the case of communication design, noise can appear purely visually due to elements or techniques that obscure the visibility of stimuli that present information. This can also occur at the semantic level when the logic of the message does not align with the cognitive culture of the intended audience. Therefore, cultural awareness is an essential aspect of visual communication design.

There has been a recent emergence of many cultural identities in design and multicultural communication models. This phenomenon is intriguing to discuss, considering that most visual communication design media are popular media in society, such as films, advertisements, posters, packaging designs, etc., which indirectly affect how society views and speaks. As a result, visual communication design media have become one of the arenas of cultural contestation, both dominant and sidelined. This paper focuses on the representation of multiculturalism by women designers in Indonesia, especially through the works of Nita Darsono and Sanchia Hamidjaja. These women designers depict multiculturalism in visual communication design media as a contention of identity by representing the 'other' amid communication messages that dominate the view of the beauty and perfection of the body and the superiority of white skin.

Several previous studies that discussed the issue of multiculturalism included the semiotic analysis of the multicultural values of images in English textbooks for vocational high schools in Indonesia conducted by [Isnaini et al. \(2019\)](#). This study identified four categories of multicultural values in the illustrations, namely respecting other people's traditions, appreciating other people's perspectives, appreciating other people's cultural products, and appreciating women's equal rights. These four cultural values are believed to enhance intercultural communication competence (ICC) and promote acceptance of cultural, racial, and religious differences in the environment.

Another study examined how cross-cultural ideas influence the understanding of English-language global brand advertisements by 60 Spanish consumers ([Pérez, 2018](#)). This study revealed that verbal anchoring plays a crucial role in interpreting the complexity of visual figures by considering two basic frameworks, namely visual structure as a way of depicting visual figures and meaning operations as a form of meaning processing. The results of this study showed that the audience does not fully understand the meaning of advertising solely through visuals and instead interprets it eccentrically by changing the focus of the message according to their personal experience. Although anchoring images with English verbals is considered to help interpret meaning, it cannot always be taken for granted and may contradict its acceptance in specific cultural situations.

In terms of women's representation in beauty campaigns, other research has focused on Dove advertising and how the advertising series represents the diversity of women based on race (black woman), age group (older woman), and body shape (slim or thin) through communication strategies that offer a choice of how to view the beauty of the body on the audience of the message in binary opposition ([Agustin, 2015](#)). Furthermore, visual rhetoric in global brand advertising research on local groups and immigrant groups, even though they are in one language, has been studied ([Bulmer & Oliver-Buchanan, 2006](#)). The study identified that consumers have diverse interpretations influenced by cultural factors and experiences in previous advertisements. Therefore, international brand communicators must be aware of the selection of verbal communication that can be misinterpreted and relevant imagery in a cross-cultural setting to avoid wrong positioning and difficulties in dealing with competitors. Another study explored participatory design in the design process and was useful for understanding the needs of audiences, especially ethnically diverse immigrant women in Canada, through designing posters with designers ([Mumtaz, 2010](#)). Mumtaz

emphasized that a user-centered participatory design approach can work effectively in developing a visual vocabulary for a culturally diverse female audience.

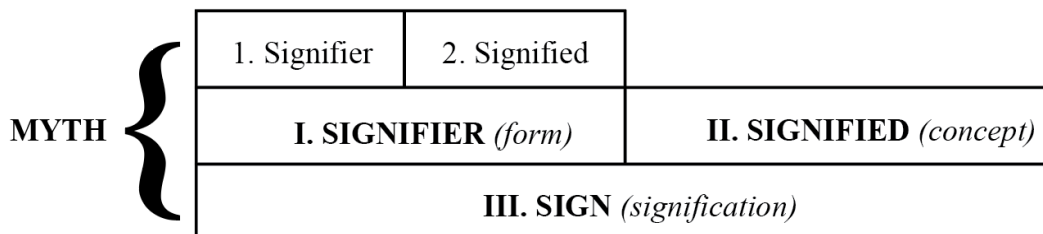
The last study is an exploratory one by [Sá et al. \(2019\)](#) who designed Mobeybou, an electronic board and various sets of physical blocks for children to use as an interface for manipulating digital content. The Mobeybou was created using a participatory design method by involving children and teachers in creating digital stories through manipulating physical representations. The resulting design is a three-block set that represents the cultures of India, China, and Brazil. Each set consists of seven elements: two leading male and female characters, animals, mythical creatures, landscapes, musical instruments, and magical objects inspired by local country elements, folklore, traditions, and cultural mythology. Through these sets, children can combine visual elements from different cultures to understand and create multicultural and cross-cultural narratives.

Previous studies reveal the reading and production of multiculturalism ideas and cultural influences in visual communication design media. On the other hand, reading semiotics to express the idea of multiculturalism in designs created especially by women designers as producers of meaning that absorbs social construction and then displays the issue of diversity in identity has not been explored much. To address this gap, this study will use semiotic text analysis, specifically Roland Barthes's, to investigate the meaning of denotations and myths through semiotic elements in the media. Roland Barthes's semiotics can provide insights into the deeper meaning of visual elements and symbols used in designs, and can reveal how they convey cultural values and attitudes.

In line with Barthes's thoughts, [Frascara \(2004\)](#) also explains that the meaning level includes denotation and connotation. Denotation refers to a relatively objective message dimension, such as a description or representation in an image or text. Whereas, connotation refers to the more subjective aspects of a message, especially emotional appeal, as in the case of persuasive messages. At the connotation level, the community plays an active role in constructing meaning. Connoted messages are more culturally dependent and were constructed as a combination of the designer's concept and the experience of the target public. Therefore, in this discussion, the choice to focus on works by two women designers reflects the importance of recognizing the contributions of women in a society that is often still dominated by patriarchal values. As designers, these women bring a unique perspective and a heightened awareness of the importance of equality and inclusion in their work practice. Furthermore, the increasing demand for communication messages that promote the idea of multiculturalism comes from designer clients who represent specific brands or organizations seeking to align themselves with values of diversity and inclusivity.

## Methods

This research method refers to the semiotic text of Roland Barthes on two works of women designers, Nita Darsono and Sanchia Hamidjaja. Barthes developed two levels of signs (staggered systems) that produce levels of meaning named denotation and connotation ([Piliang, 2003](#)). In the first order of meaning, denotation can be interpreted through the relationship between the signifier and the signified, between the sign and its reference to reality as a direct meaning. Denotation refers to the dictionary definition of a word or image representing a thing. Whereas the second level of a sign is connotation as an indirect meaning which usually expresses certain aspects, such as feelings, beliefs, or emotions. According to Barthes, this connotation will later develop into a myth as the coding of meaning, and social values (meaning connotation/arbitrator) is considered natural or taken for granted. [Barthes \(1991\)](#) argues that myth is a second-level semiological system. Furthermore, signs in the first system become signifiers in the second system.



**Figure 1. The signification process (Barthes, 1991)**

The chart above illustrates two semiological systems, according to Barthes. According to Barthes, the entire semiological system gives rise to a particular type of speech, known as a myth. Myth is a type of speech that is used to serve an ideology that functions to naturalize (experience) history so that it seems as if it is a

natural thing. Naturalization occurs through the use of these signs. Still on myths, Barthes explains that the function of myths is to naturalize culture - in other words to make dominant culture and history, attitudes, and beliefs appear natural, reasonable, self-evident, timeless, real as a general assumption - the goal and reflection is to 'appear as it is' (Chandler, 2007).

This study focuses on the analysis of two works by women designers: Nita Darsono's "*We rise because we support each other*" and Sanchia Hamidjaja's "*Merdeka beragam setara*". The selection of these works was based on their representation of the idea of multiculturalism using Roland Barthes's semiotics of text. The study examines how different design elements, such as images and texts, are interrelated and utilized to convey the idea of multiculturalism. The semiotic analysis stages by Roland Barthes in visual communication design include three levels of analysis. The first level is denotative level, which relates to the direct meanings that can be observed from a visual image or object as signifiers and explain the signified within them. Moreover, the second level is connotative level, which relates to implicit or hidden meanings that arise from first level signs. At this level, it is necessary to explore the meanings associated with visual elements in a design and explain how these meanings can influence the way audiences understand visual messages. Finally, the third level is Myth level, which relates to broader and more complex meanings in the social and cultural conventions that arise from the connotative level. Although subjective, semiotics of significance requires references in interpreting the meaning of design works (such as valid literacy, myths, expert views and so on) in order to produce interpretation formulations based on valid arguments (Saidi, 2018).

## Result and Discussion

### Semiotic Analysis of Nita Darsono's Design

#### Denotative level

The first work being analyzed is Nita Darsono's design for the Woman Blitz tote bag, which was created for the Keling (Kelas Keliling) event in commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25, 2019. The design features an illustration of four women on a tote bag. To analyze its meaning, Roland Barthes's semiotics is used, which involves two levels of signs. The denotative meaning of the design includes four women standing and embracing each other, with a pink ribbon wrapped around their thighs that reads "*We rise because we support each other*". The first woman on the left has short yellow or blonde hair, light skin, and wears a white crop top that reads "*women*" and white trousers with red converse shoes. The second woman has long black hair in two ponytails, pale yellow skin, slanted eyes, and wears a white T-shirt that says "*stand*" and a white pleated skirt with black sneakers.

The third woman has curly dark brown hair covered with an ethnic-patterned bandana and a beaded necklace. She is dark-skinned and has the biggest of the four wrapped in orange and red ethnic-patterned cloth. She wears a white crop-top shirt that reads "*together*" and a skirt that is parted to reveal her waist. Lastly, the fourth woman is light-skinned and wears a pink hijab and a white long-sleeved t-shirt that says "*equality*" on the sleeves. She wears gray trousers covered with a short skirt on the outside and sneakers. The four women seem to be smiling, facing the front, and embracing each other. At the top of the illustration are the texts "Woman Blitz" and "Think Woman". The layout is symmetrical, with a cream background as the canvas bag material.



Figure 2. Nita Darsono's design which contains the idea of multiculturalism, entitled "*We rise because we support each other*". Source: Instagram @nitchii

---

### **Conotative level**

Significance at the denotation level can become a signifier at the connotation level. The connotative level refers to the hidden meaning of an image, which is related to aspects such as feelings, beliefs, culture, and emotions. In this design, the connotation meaning is the representation of race diversity among four women, as described at the denotation level. Different races are represented by the following characteristics: a Western woman with white skin and blonde hair, an Asian woman with yellow skin, slanted eyes, and black hair, a Brown woman with the darkest skin, and an Arabian woman wearing a hijab. The difference in skin color among the women standing side by side shows that no particular race or ethnicity is superior to another, which is an important message given the global media's tendency to represent white skin as a standard of physical beauty, especially for women. Yulianto (2007) explains that Indonesian women are easily influenced by whitening cosmetic products due to the media's portrayal of Western races as superior to other skin colors. This influence is also reinforced by several cultural elements, such as the legacy of *'Inlander mentality'* in society, which feels inferior to Western races. Another cultural element is the redomystification by the New Order regime, which revived the ideal of traditional Javanese beauty combined with modernity.

The racial equality portrayed in the illustration is connected to the text sign on the t-shirt, which reveals the meaning that each woman represents the ideas of women standing together in equality. While the texts *Woman Blitz* and *Think Woman* can be interpreted as logo brand, as the design commissioner on Nita Darsono whose also the creator of meaning. The two logos, juxtaposed with the illustration above, mean that the two brands are producers of meaning that promote the *"equality in women diversity"* campaign. According to Barthes, this connotation will later develop into a myth, as the coding of meaning and social values become considered natural or reasonable. The social code to be constructed is that women can stand together and support each other, regardless of their different racial backgrounds and body shapes.

### **Myth**

As previously discussed, the myth of multiculturalism is conveyed through the representation of the four diverse women in terms of race or skin color, body shape, culture, and religion. This representation signifies the value of tolerance between races, both globally and nationally, particularly since this design is intended for events in Indonesia. Therefore, multiculturalism can be interpreted in terms of connotations and myths. Firstly, the four women represent differences in ethnic and religious origins in Indonesia. One woman with blonde hair represents Western mixed race, another woman represents Chinese or Chinese descent, a woman from Eastern Indonesia such as Papua, and a woman of descent Arabian or Indonesian Muslim. Secondly, the four of them are united under the banner of one nation, as Indonesian citizens. Referring to Moodod (2005), this design recognizes that these women have a collective identity, including their individual and citizenship identities, despite their different origins. Thirdly, the ribbon that binds the four women can be interpreted as an idea of integration, reflecting beliefs on what it means to be a part of this society or nation. This multicultural Indonesian woman is promoted by *Woman Blitz* and *Think Woman*.

Meanwhile, in connection to the theme of the poster for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the idea of multiculturalism is articulated as women from different cultural backgrounds and skin colors supporting each other and working together to eliminate violence against women worldwide. This form of multiculturalism aligns with Sen (2016) that multiculturalism should not impede an individual's ability to participate in civil society, engage in national politics, or live their life according to their own beliefs. Additionally, as crucial as multiculturalism may be, traditional cultural norms should not automatically take precedence over others.

## **Semiotic Analysis of Sanchia Hamidjaja's Design**

### **Denotative level**

The second work, created by Sanchia Hamidjaya for the #FreedomDiversityEquality (#MerdekaBeragamSetara) campaign poster, was posted on the official Instagram account of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture on September 27, 2022. In the first semiotic analysis, the denotation level of the image is decoded, which can be directly observed. The design area is a symmetrical square, with the phrase *"freedom diversity equality"* (*"merdeka beragam setara"*) handwritten in red, yellow, and green colors on a white circle background in the center. The design area is divided into seven panels, each containing images. In the first panel, clockwise from the top, there is an illustration on an orange background with seven pictures of children wearing white-blue clothes, necklaces, and semi-circular hats with a polka-dot motif. The caption on this panel reads, *"Student orientation is not a place to lower someone's self-esteem"* (*"orientasi tidak untuk merendahkan harga diri"*). In front of the children, a laughing girl is seen recording a boy with dark skin and curly hair using her cellphone.

The second panel depicts two boys and two girls dressed in white and blue. One boy with dark skin and curly hair is sitting in a wheelchair, arranging a ribbon, while a girl is putting up a poster next to the “*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*” poster by climbing stairs. Another boy is cutting paper near them, and a girl wearing a headscarf is drawing. A caption at the bottom of the panel reads, “*Because diversity adds colors*” (“*karena tidak sama bisa memberi warna*”).

In the third panel is a picture of four children standing on a stage with a banner that reads “*School Orientation Period*” (“*Masa Pengenalan Lingkungan Sekolah*”). The four children are dressed as follows: the first child, who is bare-chested and has dark brown curly hair, wears traditional brown clothing, a straw necklace, and head accessories, with paintings of spiral motifs on his body and face. The second child is a girl who wears a yellow scarf, a pink long-sleeved top, and a long green skirt. The third child, a brown-skinned boy, wears head accessories with frangipani flowers on his ears, a white shirt, and a black and white checkered pattern. The fourth child, a girl, wears a wide headband shaped like a horn with tassels and is dressed in a loose pink long-sleeved top and a blue skirt with a green cloth strap. The four children are holding hands on the stage and smiling. Right in front of them is a black silhouette of several people cheering them on. At the bottom of the panel, the text reads “*Embrace diversity, put aside differences*” (“*Cintai keragaman, beda bukan lagi persoalan*”).



Figure 3. Sanchia Hamidjaya’s design for “Freedom Diversity Equality” (Merdeka Beragam Setara) poster. Source: Instagram @sanchimilikiti

In the fourth panel, four children (two girls and two boys) are dressed in white and blue and wearing headbands. The first child is a dark-skinned girl with long black curls. The second girl wears a headscarf, and one of the boys is in a wheelchair. The four children are walking hand in hand and seem to be holding their fists. The panel reads, *“Dare to help friends fight against harassment”* (*“berani bantu teman lawan pelecehan”*). In the fifth panel, two boys in white and blue clothes are interacting. The first boy has orange handprints on his body and neck and looks sad while holding a cell phone that says *“Report!”* on the screen. The other boy seems to be embracing him. The caption reads *“Comfort friends who seem distressed”* (*“dampingi teman yang terlihat murung”*). In the sixth panel, three people are sitting, one adult female and a male who is looking at the girl in the middle, who is covering her face with both hands. There are orange handprints on her body. In the background, there is a framed picture of a parent and their two children, and on the side is a photo of a person graduating. The panel reads *“Stay and listen to their story”* (*“temani dan dengarkan ceritanya”*).

In the final panel, five children dressed in white and blue are in a classroom. One boy is posing like a ballerina in the middle of the room, surrounded by laughing boys and girls pointing at him, while one girl in the front appears to be clapping for him. The words *“Everyone is free to have talents and hobbies that they love”* (*“Siapapun bebas punya bakat dan hobi yang mereka suka”*) are at the top of the panel. On the four sides of the design area are the following texts: #standstrongagainstbullying (#bersamaatasiperundungan), #standstronglovediversity (#bersamacintaikeragaman), and #standstrongagainstsexualharrasement (#bersamahapuskekerasanseksual). At the bottom is a caption: *“Prevention and the fight against violence in educational institutions is regulated by Permendikbud 82 of 2015. If a case is found, it is mandatory to report it to the school, such as the homeroom teacher, counselor, school board, or school principal. If the school authorities do not handle it, report it via kemdikbud.lapor.go.id or call the call center at 177.”* Additionally, the design is equipped with the *“Smart Character”* logo (*“Cerdas Berkarakter”*), *“Freedom to Learn”* logo (*“Merdeka Belajar”*), and the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture logo.

#### **Connotative Level**

The denotative meaning described above develops into signifiers at the connotative level, which serve to connect all elements of the signs, including the illustrations and text. The two semiotic elements complement each other, enabling easy understanding. The first panel connotes the bullying faced by new junior high school students (wearing blue and white uniforms) from their seniors, which is often rooted in humiliating situations, as illustrated by the dark-skinned child in the picture. The second panel connotes the harmony and collaboration between students from different identities, including Muslims and children with disabilities, anchored by the slogan *“Bhineka Tunggal Ika”* (*“Unity in Diversity”*). The third panel connotes the tolerance for diversity and the embrace of different cultures and ethnicity in the junior high school community, represented by children wearing traditional clothes from Papua, Balinese Hindus, Muslims, and Minangkabau. The fourth panel connotes the willingness of students to help one another, particularly with a child in a wheelchair showing cooperation against harassment, as illustrated by the text below. The fifth panel connotes the importance of mentoring, supporting, and reporting cases of sexual violence to authorities in the junior high school environment. Similar to the previous panel, the sixth panel connotes the importance of accompanying and listening to the stories of victims of sexual violence, as suggested by the shadow of hands. The seventh panel reveals the need for respect for individual talent choices, particularly for those who identify differently from traditional gender norms. All seven panels are connected to the text in the middle of the design, *“Merdeka Beragam Setara”* (*“Freedom Diversity Equality”*), which is part of a campaign by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture.

#### **Myth**

Through semiotic analysis using the theory of Roland Barthes, the seven panels in the design poster and text of *“Freedom Diversity Equality”* (*“Merdeka Beragam Setara”*) reveal the myth of multiculturalism in the junior high school education environment promoted by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. This myth emerges through the signs of traditional clothes, differences in body shape and skin color, including disabled bodies, and the equality of women and men from various ethnic backgrounds. The constructed myth of multiculturalism is about tolerance for diversity and respect for life choices, which are expected to prevent and overcome harassment and violence against adolescents in the junior high school environment, including sexual violence. Moreover, the representation of the diversity of ethnic backgrounds, gender issues, and disability is the primary idea in revealing that groups that are always marginalized in binary oppositions that often depict certain groups or values as superior to others are actually represented and celebrated in the seven panels. The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, as the representative of the country's identity, is campaigning for independence and equality in diversity, particularly in junior high school education in Indonesia.

---

### Multiculturalism Perspective of Women Designers

The two works of women designers above express the idea of multiculturalism by representing the diversity of origin, body shape, skin color, religion, culture, gender preferences, and so on in semiotic elements. Specifically, regarding body shape representation, women designers present diverse bodies and beauty, such as skin pigment, body shape, and disability, as an endeavor to present a different identity. Referring to Prabasmoro (2006) that the body is cultured so that a hierarchy of meanings emerges: a beautiful body, a somewhat beautiful body, a not-so-beautiful one, a not-beautiful one, which is not beautiful at all. Desired and unwanted bodies. Normal and abnormal bodies. The ideal body and what is not. The designer efforts to represent diverse bodies aim to challenge these societal norms and promote the acceptance of different body types as equally valuable.

The myth constructed by women designers is that awareness of multiculturalism is essential for promoting tolerance and respect for equality among individuals. Interestingly, in their representations of multiculturalism, women designers showcase characters and narratives that are often underrepresented in mass media, such as individuals with black skin, disabilities, and different gender preferences. These representations serve as a counter-discourse to the dominant beauty standards and body ideals that have been perpetuated so far. According to Arivia (2018), women designers who represent the diversity of women's identities indirectly reflect the feminism of multiculturalism. Arivia explains that feminist multiculturalism recognizes that women experience oppression due to differences in class and race, sexual preferences, age, religion, education, work, health, and other factors, rather than viewing oppression as a single definition.

### Conclusion

This study demonstrates that semiotics can help us understand how meaning is constructed and interpreted through symbols, signs, and visual or verbal representations. In conclusion, through reading semiotics, the idea of multiculturalism can be expressed its meaning as an affirmation by women designers on the standard of body beauty and the dominance of race so far. Women designers and commissioners as meaning producers offer a representation of the diversity of identities that have been marginalized and forgotten so far, such as ethnicity, race, religion, culture, body shape and disability, skin color to gender preferences. This is an important point because historically, mainstream beauty standards and cultural norms have been dominated by a narrow range of identities that do not reflect the diversity of human experience. Therefore, it is essential to challenge these norms and create a space where diverse identities can be celebrated and represented. The reading of textual semiotics shows that the reflections of women designers using semiotic sources that can frame diversity can reach more audiences because they feel that their identity is more represented in the design. Furthermore, this representation can limit the dominant discourse in representing identities accustomed to affirming values considered superior in binary opposition systems, which can perpetuate discrimination and prejudice. Overall, this study reveals how semiotics can be used to challenge dominant discourses and promoting diversity in the field of design. Moving forward, interpretive research to uncover ideas of multiculturalism or other inclusive ideas, such as in films, fashion, animation, packaging design, and more, can be further explored.

### References

- Agustin, S. A. (2015). Multikulturalisme Perempuan pada Iklan Dove Serial Campaign for Real Beauty. *Jurnal Desain IDEA*, 17(2).
- Arivia, G. (2018). *Filsafat Berperspektif Feminis*. Jakarta: YJP Press.
- Barker, C. (2004). *Cultural studies : teori dan praktis*. Jakarta: Kreasi Wacana.
- Barthes, R. (1991). *Mythologies*. UK: Noonday Press.
- Bulmer, S., & Oliver-Buchanan, M. (2006). Advertising across Cultures: Interpretations of Visually Complex Advertising. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 28(1), 57–71. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2006.10505191>
- Chandler, D. (2007). *Semiotic: The Basics* (2nd Editio). UK: Routledge.
- Frascara, J. (2004). *Communication design: principles, methods, and practice*. UK: Allworth Press.
- Isnaini, F., Setyono, B., & Ariyanto, S. (2019). A visual semiotic analysis of multicultural values in an Indonesian English textbook. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Semiotics*, 8(3), 545–553. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v8i3.15253>
- Moodod, T. (2005). A defence of multiculturalism. *Journal of Politics and Culture*, 62–71. [http://www.tariqmodood.com/uploads/1/2/3/9/12392325/a\\_defence\\_of\\_multiculturalism.pdf](http://www.tariqmodood.com/uploads/1/2/3/9/12392325/a_defence_of_multiculturalism.pdf)
-



- 
- Mumtaz, N. (2010). Designing for Cultural Diversity: Participatory Design, Immigrant Women and Shared Creativity. Design Research Society Conference Proceeding - Design and Complexity. <https://dl.designresearchsociety.org/drs-conference-papers/drs2010/researchpapers/91/>
- Pérez, M. C. (2018). Visual Rhetorical Figures in Cross-Cultural Consumer Behavior: The Impact of Moderating Factors in a Spanish Language Context. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 39(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2017.1372320>
- Piliang, Y. A. (2003). *Hipersemiotika: Tafsir Cultural Studies Atas Matinya Makna*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- Prabasmoro, A. P. (2006). *Kajian Budaya Feminis, Tubuh, Sastra dan Budaya Pop*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- Sá, G., Sylla, C., Martins, V., Caruso, A., & Menegazzi, D. (2019). Multiculturalism and Creativity in Storytelling Visual Development of a Digital Manipulative for Young Children. *12th ACM International Conference on Creativity & Cognition 2019*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3325480.3326571>
- Saidi, A. I. (2018). *Homo Artem: Seni Baca-Tulis untuk Penelitian Desain*. Bandung: ITB Press.
- Sen, A. (2016). *Kekerasan dan Identitas* (2nd edition). Yogyakarta: Marjin Kiri.
- Yulianto, V. I. (2007). *Pesona Barat Analisa Kritis-Historis Tentang Kesadaran Warna Kulit di Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.