



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i1/16142> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i1/16142

Received: 12 November 2022, **Revised:** 15 December 2022, **Accepted:** 30 December 2022

Published Online: 21 January 2023

In-Text Citation: (Radzi et al., 2023)

To Cite this Article: Radzi, M. Q. A.-N. bin A., Ibrahim, N. H., Gani, M. A. A. bin A., & Zainudin, M. A. bin. (2023). Nationalism Characteristic in Mural Artwork. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13(1), 1324 – 1331.

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Vol. 13, No. 1, 2023, Pg. 1324 – 1331

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



www.hrmars.com

ISSN: 2222-6990

Nationalism Characteristic in Mural Artwork

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Abstract

This research paper is a part of an ongoing research study. The researcher has determined and analyzed past literature works that relates to nationalism, national unity, and Malaysia's identity in order to fulfill this research objective. The researcher then will gather the data from the area of study to be analyzed by utilizing visual content analysis. Because of the nature of this research paper is a visual study, visual content analysis has been proposed. The main outcome and finding of this research paper are to gain more knowledge about nationalism characteristics toward visual art works from a Malaysia perspective.

Keywords: Mural, Nationalism, Malaysia Identity, National Unity, Visual Analysis

Introduction

Historically, homosapien expressed their emotions by drawing onto a stone wall. For the longest time, it had been a common practice for us humans. The language of drawing then evolved to recorded messages for the soul purpose of documenting events that had already been done. The visual that is drawn onto the wall is the main indicator of the message or story behind it. Later on, this particular medium of communicating through visual art underwent many stages of developments and improvisations throughout the timelines of human history until eventually, it turns into an artistic works that has its own meaning and tells its own story namely a mural, which is a part of street art.

To start, there are many mural arts that can be found around the globe. Previous literature also proves the existence of mural art in the world. Banksy mural is a good example of a popular mural influencer around the world. Banksy is an England-based street artist who is famous for its humorous and satire murals that delves into social economic issues and current political practices (Atanasova-Petrova, 2021). There also are popular murals that can be found within our homeland, Malaysia with an interesting content and its own unique theme.

The mural with the visual of a popular figure or influencer may become a good theme practice in the mural design. An example, the mural that uses the visual of Tengku Hassan Ibrahim

Alam Shah (Pahang Royal Family) and Tan Sri Noor Hisham bin Abdullah (Malaysia Director-General of Health) has been beautifully composed as a mural on a wall just outside of a local Clinic in Pahang, Malaysia (Mat Isa, 2020). Other than that, thirty-two murals also recorded had been painted in Penang, Malaysia as a part of promoting unity Malaysia (Zulkifly, 2021).

The term and the theme of unity must also been understood especially in the context of a multiracial country like Malaysia. According to (Thye, 1979) mentioned that unity can be broken into two major issues such as problems inside of an ethnicity or the race itself or between multiple ethnic that may be caused by social hierarchy or political parties. However, the researcher identified this problem as something avoidable because of its high possibility for nationalism spirit can be freely practiced in society, especially through visual artwork.

Nationalism

Nationalism is a spirit to protect the country and hold the nation (Fauziah & Dewi, 2021). On the other hand, the spirit of nationalism may be archived by growing the national unity spirit and forwarding it to patriotism. Researcher also identified several discussions on the meaning of nationalism in historical context. Below is a summary of nationalism in Malaysia's context; meaning that has been extracted from (Ridzuan et al., 2020).

Table 1

Nationalism meaning

Name	Explanation
Hans Kohn	Individual loyalty for the country of the people of the nation
Onn Jaafar	Visibility of a nation that strong and independent
Burhanuddin	The strong unity that held in culture Malay and Islamic principles
Suntharalingam	The right of the nation to build their country and nation loyalty to the country
Zainal Abidin	Loyalty to the king of the nation

In the visual artwork, the indicator of nationalism can be shared in-between. Furthermore, Lat's comic series cartoon is familiar with nationalism in Malaysia context. According to Zainuddin & Mahamood (2018), Lat's comic is a reflection of Malaysia which portrays the image of Malaysia, culture, and heritage. Then, nationalism can be promoted visually by looking forward at the national identity or characteristics related to Malaysia (Zainuddin & Mahamood, 2018). They add, the concept of 1 Malaysia, independence, festival, national culture, and the daily scene in Malaysia is the indicator that can be used to measure nationalism in the visual artwork.

Problem of Statements

Poor nationalism campaigns in Malaysia cause a lack of patriotism spirit among Malaysians. The nationalism campaign can be portrayed in many ways, especially in a multiracial country like Malaysia. The former Prime Minister of Malaysia once mentioned the unity spirit and acceptance of other cultures in Malaysia as an example of the nationalist spirit that should be practiced by Malaysians (Harian, 2022).

Other than that, the nationalism campaign can be done in multiple ways. Fauziah & Dewi (2021), mentioned that the nationalist spirit in the community can be archived by

strengthening the educational system by adding nationalism-related topics to the current school syllabus. Then, campaigning about local culture and heritage also can give an impact on promoting and gaining a nationalist spirit in the community (Bria, 2020). Visual artwork may also help the country to spread a good understanding of nationalism if it can be composed properly.

Methodology

The researcher proceeded to implement a qualitative research method namely visual content analysis as a single research method for this research paper. This research method help research to guide the research paper's objective. Visual content analysis is a method or technique that helps to analyze any visual sources related to art history (D'Alleva, 2016). Three phases for this paper been summarized on the table 1 below.

Table 2

Research phases

Phase	Activity
One	Collecting literature related to nationalism
Two	Analyzing data collection
Three	Identify nationalism in local murals

In detail, the past literature works on this paper provided an information and data regarding nationalism especially in a Malaysian context. Other than that, the related indicator of nationalism related with visual artwork has also been discussed in phase one. Not only that, the analysis takes part in the second phase that focuses on a set of murals visual that have been collected from the ground. The last phase is the process where the nationalism in Malaysia perspective will be identify. This phase has also been guided with the information from the first and second phase. Furthermore, these research phases help researchers to fulfill the objectives of this research paper.

Objective

- To identify nationalism characteristic in Ipoh murals artwork
- To analyses nationalism characteristic in Ipoh murals artwork

Ipoh Murals

The Ipoh murals that have been analysed in this study are related to the Ipoh Mural Art Trails. The mural itself has been promoted by the local government and according to the visual sources that been provided by the Ipoh City Tourism Center, there are few places around Ipoh that had been gazette as a Ipoh Mural Art Trails. This Mural Art Trails had been utilized as a medium of tourism attraction. However, based on the survey that had been done by the researcher on 8 October 2022, the murals that have been painted during the Mural Art Trails promotion in Ipoh has been repainted and pale. Then, researchers proceeded to recapture and recollect the visual data to be analyze for this research paper.

Researchers applied visual content analysis in order to analyze the murals visual that had been collected before. The past literature works and the indicator of nationalism that been extracted from the visual artwork related to the Lat's comic series had been adopted to this

analysis. This is because the indicator that been discussed on the previous research paper is related to the visual artwork overall.

Table 3

Murals Analysis

Mural title	1 Malaysia	Independence	Festival	National Culture	Daily Life	others	Visual references
Perak Kucai Culture				/			Cow
Full Love				/			Tiger
Tiger dance music			/	/			Chinese Tiger Dance music instruments and the instruments player
Three betta		/					Betta fish
Malay dance			/	/			People dancing with Malay traditional wear with people whom playing traditional music instruments
Chinese dance			/	/			Two Chinese people dancing together with beautiful cloth
Mom Love	/				/		Three separated moments with three main ethnic sin Malaysia such as Malay, Indian and Chinese with the daily moment
Hide and seek					/		Three children playing hide and seek
Friend forever	/	/			/		Nine children walking together
Father love							Father and a son
Playing together	/	/		/	/		Children playing jumping a rope with the visual of Sarawak ethics wearing traditional cloth
Christmas			/	/			The Christmas Eve visual
elephant				/			The visual of elephant that been decorate
Eid Fitri			/	/			Visual of lantern with wording Eid Fitri in Malay words
Dayak and children	/	/		/	/		Visual of Dayak people playing together with multiple ethnic children.

Rubber tree					/		The visual of children playing the star shape bubbles inside the rubber farm with visual of animals
Lunar year			/	/			Visual of animals and one of it holding a cake with the working Lunar year
Dragon Boat			/	/			Traditional Dragon boat with the children inside it
2020						/	Visual of balloon with the 2020 wording.
River moment					/		Visual of three women playing inside the river with few animals.
Culture button				/			Visual of the button with the Chinese floral decoration
Starring night						/	Houses and trees
A day before Eid			/	/			Mother, son, and traditional food (Ketupat)
Inauguration ceremony	/			/	/		Dragon Dance, Indian Dance, Hide and seek game and inauguration ceremony
Sport	/				/		Tennis and badminton player with the wording
Cubic					/		People playing paper plane, clown machine, cats, building, Perak monument, and traditional window.
Whale						/	A big whale, plastic bag and Ipoh monument.
Tang Lung			/	/			Moon, lantern (tang lung), tree and a people holding the lantern.
Indian music				/			Traditional Indian music instruments and Indian women wearing traditional wear (saree).
Chinese music				/			Traditional Chinese music instruments and Chinese women wearing traditional wear (Cheong Sum).
Traditional laundry					/		Water tank, animals, people with Indian cloth, balls, water, and clothes.
Lantern head			/				People with fish shaped lantern on their head

Animals				/	/		Children with animals
Elephant						/	Elephant shape with the traditional motif.
Tourism Perak						/	Bird, leaves, flower, and wording.
Mural art lanes						/	Cat, food, and wording

Findings

Table 2 shows that almost majority of the murals made had at least contains the core characteristic of nationalism. Basically, the murals with 1 Malaysia indicator implemented on six murals that content the visual of togetherness. It also reflects the image of multiethnic in Malaysia. Then, the characteristic of independence is applied to the visual that is synonymous with its meaning. Four murals with independent characters in this research paper use symbols that is closely related to 'freedom'. Moreover, the festival characteristic is identifiable by looking at the visual of multiethnic symbol or practices such as the lion and tiger.

The symbol or characteristic also had been discussed by the previous scholars in their research papers. They mentioned that festival is a symbol of Malaysia based on their visual content analysis (Dzulkepli & Lazim, 2022). According to the data collection, there are ten murals with festival characteristics. Then, there are eighty murals that have been identified with national cultural characteristics. The national culture characteristic is related to cultural practices in the Malaysian community that pair with local heritage.

Not to mention, twelve murals have also been analyzed with characteristics of daily life in a national context. The daily life characteristic related to the normal norm and the community daily lives in Malaysia, namely playing and working. However, the researcher also identified there are several murals without any related characteristics to nationalism. This unrelated mural applied a visual that did not meet with any other nationalist characteristic.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the researcher can specifically identify that the most popular characters that reflect nationalism are located in Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia. Based on the analysis that had been done, the most popular characteristic in the murals are national cultures, followed by daily lifestyle, festival, 1 Malaysia concept, and independence. This proves that national culture can be a main character that reflects nationalism. the uniqueness of multiethnic in Malaysia gives an advantage in choosing the variety of visuals that can be a part of visual art, especially on the local mural. Any visual related to ethics in Malaysia can be a part of the nationalism symbol. The daily life of Malaysian, festivals, the 1 Malaysia concept, and independence also still can be an alternative to nationalism visual references. This also proves that the set of murals for this study fulfills most of the characteristics that have been discussed by the previous scholar about nationalism in visual art.

Other than that, the content visual analysis that has been used in this research paper also can be adopted by any related visual research. Photography, graphic design, interface design, comics, and illustrations that are printed or on-screen are good examples of creative visual artwork that are recommended to implement the content visual analysis. This creative visual artwork also can extend this nationalism study. Other scholars also can adopt the

characteristic of nationalism in this research paper and suit their research. This shows that nationalism can be discussed and been implementing through any visual artwork.

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