

Semiotic Theory for the National Day Logo of Malaysia

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Abstract:

This qualitative research aims to analyse the Malaysian National Day logo. After going through controversies and issues regarding the design of the Malaysian National Day logo, this research will focus on the meaning of the signs and symbols found on the Malaysian National Day logo. Based on the semiotic theory (theory of sign) by Charles Sanders Peirce which is the basis for the analysis of the object, representation, and interpretation of Malaysia's National Day logo. The findings from this semiotic analysis present two important elements, namely colour and shape (objects) that give meaning to events that have occurred in that year. Following the spread of the Covid-19 epidemic at the end of 2019, the theme of concerned Malaysia on the logo of Malaysia's national day in 2020 and 2021 is the appearance of a heart on the logo and theme of concerned Malaysia, which conveys the understanding that all Malaysians are working together to fight the Covid-19 pandemic. While the red, blue and yellow colors found in the logo are the colours of the Malaysian flag.

Keywords —Sign; Symbols; Semiotics; IndependenceDay Logo; Shape; Color

I. INTRODUCTION

Logo and semiotics are inseparable. As agreed by Aro, (2019) also stated that semiotics is the study of signs, symbols, and meanings that specialize in how signs are used and interpreted. The sign here according to Onipede, (2020) is one of the elements on the logo. A logo is a symbol used to represent an organization, an event that aims to help and encourage people to recognize their identity. Logos play an important role in mediating and communicating between designers and society. The National Day logo was introduced to give meaning and foster awareness and patriotism among people in Malaysia. So, it is very important that logo design can have a deeper impact on society (Hashim et al., 2021). It is considered a part of the company, so it is very important to convey the benefits of the

company and carry the brand message. (Indra Sapa'at&Kurniasih, 2018).

The Malaysian National Day logo was first introduced in 1976, which is about 19 years after Malaysia achieved independence on 31 August 1957. The creation of the Malaysian National Day logo was introduced by Tan Sri (now Tun) Mohd. Ghazali Shafie, Chairman of this year's National Day celebration (Bingkisan Merdeka 52 years, PemangkanAspirasi, 2009). Accordingly, the Independence Day logo for each year has been designed by several lecturers and students of InstitutTeknologi MARA, Shah Alam. Each logo based on the theme of the celebration has been jointly agreed by the National Day Celebration Central Committee.

Referring to the National Day logo design introduced to give the meaning and theme chosen

by the Information Department. Each logo is based on a celebration theme that has been mutually agreed upon by the National Day Celebration Central Committee. In addition, the National Day logo also aims to show the image of a country that is free from foreign colonialism. As one of the core in the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia (KKMM) 2019-2023 campaign of nationalism and patriotism, the month of independence has outlined the role of KKMM together with the Department of Information Malaysia in providing explanations related to policies, philosophies and visions the country to enhance the identity and patriotic spirit of the people through physical printed publication materials and also in the form of digital books of the Ministry of Information, (2019).

The search on Malaysian National Day Logo has been done in various databases for the past ten years and it was found that not much research has been published. Just some study related Malaysia's National Day Logo has been done since 2014 on the Malaysia's National day logo (Subramaniam et al., 2021; Hashim et al., 2021; Yunus et al., 2019; Yusoff & Hassan, 2014). This is one of the main reasons why this study was done to gather as much data as possible about the Malaysian National Day Logo.

Based on previous research, the Malaysian National Day Logo study only focused on the design elements of the Malaysian National Day Logo. Research from Yunus et al., (2019) has analysed the 2018 National Day logo in terms of design and application on the medium that hosts the logo. Research findings from Subramaniam et al., (2021) found the application of element of art and principle of design in the Malaysian National Day logo. Yusoff & Hassan, (2014) studied the impact and communicative implications of the generic Independence Day logo, an icon of the 1Malaysia idea, in the daily life of the people of this country. (Yusoff & Hassan, 2014).

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Every logo that is produced must be easy to interpret and have significance that allows the logo to be engraved in the memory of every Malaysian. Lilik Damayanti (2013) through his argument says that the National Day logo created should contain criteria that work to stimulate the love of the country in each individual. The logo and theme of National Day are closely related to social factors and also the current situation that occurs throughout the year (MohdYusoff & Hassan, 2014). Various opinions and issues have been debated about the National Day logo. According to Yunus et al., (2019) there is a defect in the construction of the structure and design management consisting of color elements, the principle of discipline which has affected the perfection of the function of the Independence Day 2018 logo in the aspect of visual communication.

While the 55th Independence Day logo in 2012, has sparked controversy when the official logo that was introduced contains political elements based on the slogan "JanjiDitepati" and in addition to its design that looks less attractive. After receiving great criticism in 2012, the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia has re-organized their contest to create an Independence Day logo which was held in conjunction with the 56th Independence Day celebration. (Yusoff & Hassan, 2014). The National Day logo often reflects the image of a country free from foreign domination. The elements used to design the National Day logo usually have characteristics related to the spirit of patriotism. designed in an attractive, simple but compact image with an implied meaning behind it that can depict all the messages to be conveyed.

III. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study is to analyze the Malaysian National Day logo in 2020 and 2021 by

using semiotic theory. This study will examine the meaning of each sign and symbol found on the Malaysia National Day logo. Logos and semiotics are inseparable. The reason is, if we look at the meaning of semiotics as mentioned by Crow (2003), it refers to something related to symbols and logos. This study also examines how each semiotic analysis leads to the meaning of each element on the logo.

IV. METHOD

This qualitative study analyzes the Malaysian national day logo. According to (Nurfatwa et al., 2018) qualitative research design is research that places the main importance of research from a small sample that is randomly selected and does not try to control contextual characteristics, but instead seeks, through a variety of methods, to understand things from the informant's point of view; and produce a rich and deep picture of the analyzed phenomenon. The selection of data used is from the selection of Malaysia's national day logo redesign for the years 2020 and 2021. The selection is based on the current year's logo where Malaysia uses the same logo twice. In analyzing the Malaysian national day logo, the researcher uses semiotic theory.

Semiotics is the study of signs, symbols, and meaning that specializes in how signs are used and interpreted. Among the famous pioneers of semiotics are Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), Roland Barthes (1915-1980) and Umberto Eco. In general, Saussure and Pierce argue that semiotics is important for humans and is widely used in communication. For example in religion, symbols of the moon and stars are associated with Islam. Although their views are the same, the two have different techniques in defining the sign. Aro, (2019) also states that Semiotics is the study of signs, symbols, and meaning that specializes in how signs are used and interpreted. The sign here according to

(Onipede, 2020) is one of the elements in the logo. Although semiotics is a theory related to signs, but for semiotic pioneers Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce, Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco have different views. In this research on the Malaysia National Day Logo, the three elements that make up the mark by Pierce, which includes The Representation, An Interpretant and An Object, are used in the analysis of the Malaysia National Day logo.

Therefore, the connection of these elements allows the viewer to understand the sign and may benefit from it. In this study, the researcher used Pierce's semiotic analysis method based on the reason that it covers a wider range of signs, including language as well as non-verbal and natural signs compared to the approach Saussure only has two layers of meaning (signifier and signified).

Peirce introduced a system of signs that he called the triadic model, a system used to create meaning-making. Signs are central to this system, also known as 'representations,' in the Triadic system; According to (Cowin&Matusitz, 2011) Pierce's triadic model has long been established in philosophy. It consists of a framework of three signifiers: representation (or the sign itself), object (or the "reference" of what the sign refers to), and the interpretant (the translator. the viewer's interpretation, or the effect on the viewer). The figure below shows Charles Sander.

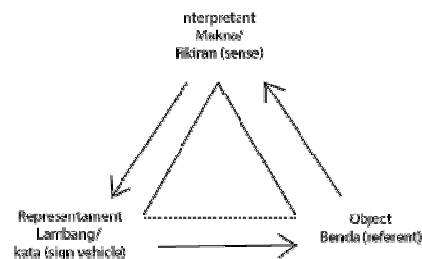


Fig1 :semiotic triangle Charles Sander Pierce

Representation = the form used by the symbol (The form (form) that takes the position of the sign. It is not necessarily material; it is usually in the thought that is interpreted)

Interpretant = meaning/concept supported by the symbol (Not only as a translator, but as an interpretation in seeing the sign)

Object / referent = the object referred to by the sign (Refers to something that exceeds the context of the sign.)



Based on Pierce's semiotic figure above, there are three levels of semiotics, namely representation, object, and interpreter. The dotted line at the base of this triangle means that there cannot be any direct relationship or a truly similar relationship between representation and object.


V. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE 2020-2021 MALAYSIA NATIONAL DAY LOGO



Fig 2: Malaysia National Day logo in 2020-2021

TABLE I
 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SIGNS, OBJECTS AND THE INTERPRETATION OF THE MALAYSIAN NATIONAL DAY LOGO 2020-2021 USING SEMIOTIC THEORY.

The Relationship Between Signs, Objects and The Interpretation Of The Malaysian National Day Logo 2020-2021 Using Semiotic Theory		
Representamen	Object	Interpretant
crescent moon and 14- pointed star		The geometric shape of the 14- pointed star is the unity of 13 states and the federal government. The shape of the crescent moon has a religious meaning for the Federation of Malaya. The 14 broken stars are the unity of 13 states and the federal government
The heart shape is combined with the stripes from the Malaysian		This heart shape symbolizes the Malaysian government's concern for the multiracial Malaysian society

flag		
Shape of the Hibiscus Stigma - One of the parts of the hibiscus that has five small circles		The repetition of five red dots (the stigma of hibiscus) is also seen at the top of the logo design, which means that the country is heading towards success. These five red dots are also symbolic of the five petals of the hibiscus which illustrate the five principles of Rukun Negara which are the key to multi-ethnic unity.

VI. DISCUSSION

The 2020 Independence Day logo can be seen in the shape of a heart filled with the red, white, yellow and blue colors found on the Malaysian flag which is the glorious stripe. The color red and white dominates the entire Malaysian national day logo. As for the colors, the percentage of use of blue and yellow is the least.

If you look at the National Day logo, there are seven red and white stripes that form a heart, meaning the interweaving of courage and availability in facing all obstacles with sincerity and seriousness. All Malaysians, regardless of race, ideology, politics, government or opposition, government employees, public and private, volunteers and individuals. While the dark blue color gives the meaning of the unity of the hearts of the multiracial Malaysians who live in peace and harmony.

This symbolizes the concern of the government that rules Malaysia to have Malaysians who are multi-racial in facing various challenges at that time. The theme of Malaysia's national day 2020 is 'Malaysia Prihatin'. At the end of 2019, Malaysia and the rest of the world are suspected of having an epidemic of Covid-19. The World Health Organization (WHO) categorizes the situation of the spread of COVID-19 as a pandemic because it is an infectious disease that spreads through the human population and across a wide area to cross

national and continental borders, even to the whole world. (Salleh, 2020). Following the spread of the Covid-19 epidemic, the theme of concerned Malaysia brings the understanding that all Malaysians join hands to fight the Covid-19 pandemic. The combination of the words 'Malaysia' and 'Prihatin' illustrates that all the people in this country are fighting the epidemic as well as the government's boldness by carrying out various initiatives covering economic and welfare aspects for the survival of the people.

INTERPRETATION OF SIGNS AND SYMBOLS ON THE MALAYSIAN NATIONAL DAY LOGO

The hibiscus stigma combined with the heart-shaped logo reveals that the country is on its way to success while the five red dots are symbolic of the five hibiscus petals that depict the five principles of Rukun Negara which are the key to unity in this country. Rukun Negara becomes a pillar of racial unity with the goal that every citizen of this country realizes, accepts and understands the fact that the diversity of races, religions and cultures in this country is a blessing that needs to be shared. Together we are strong, divided we fall. (Daily News, 2020)

The crescent moon and 14- pointed star depict Islam as the religion of the Federation and the unity of the 13 states and the Federal government. The three largest ethnicities in Peninsular Malaysia are the Malays, Chinese and Indians while other ethnicities in Sabah and Sarawak are either made up of bumiputera or non-bumiputera. (Hanafi et al., 2016)

VII. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study is to analyze and interpret the meaning of the signs found on the Malaysian National Day. The signs are analyzed and interpreted using Charles Sanders Peirce's

method of semiotic theory and based on the results of the study that has been discussed, it can be defined as a logo design that refers to the symbolic requirements of various races that are plural and enshrine culture in this country. Logos require the designer's creativity to convey information and meaning to the community. A logo can be considered successful if it is understood by all sections of society. Logos play an important role in mediating and communicating between designers and society. So, it is very important that the logo design can have a deeper impact on the community.

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