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Cultural Branding in Teh Botol Sosro Advertising Campaign:
A Case Study of #SebotolKaryaAnakBangsa Campaign on Instagram
@tehbotolsosro

Leonita Kusumawardhani
Universitas Paramadina
leonita.kusumawardhani@paramadina.ac.id

Wilna Liana Az Zahra
Universitas Paramadina
wilnaazzahra@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

As one of the pioneering brands of ready to drink tea in Indonesia, Teh Botol Sosro has become ingrained in the minds of the public with its iconic tagline “Apa pun Makanannya, Minumnya Teh Botol Sosro (Whatever the food, drink Teh Botol Sosro”. This has made the Teh Botol Sosro brand not just a beverage product, but also a symbol of national cultural identity and social togetherness. Through the #SebotolKaryaAnakBangsa campaign featuring the work of local illustrators, Teh Botol Sosro represents the richness of Indonesian culture and natural beauty in its packaging design, and makes it a marketing content on Instagram social media. Using a qualitative case study approach, this study aims to analyze how the #SebotolKaryaAnakBangsa digital campaign shapes and maintains the image of the Teh Botol Sosro brand as an Indonesian cultural icon through a cultural branding strategy. This research was conducted using a content analysis method to interpret cultural messages and local values shown through visuals, text, and narratives in Instagram posts @tehbotolsosro. The analysis was conducted based on Holt's Cultural Branding theory to understand how Teh Botol Sosro represents national pride and remains relevant to modern digital audiences. The results of this study are expected to demonstrate how cultural branding practices contribute to strengthening the brand's position as a symbol of Indonesian culture amidst the dynamics of digital marketing communications. This campaign effectively blends nostalgia and modern aesthetics, enabling emotional engagement and strengthening the brand's identity as a symbol of Indonesian unity and innovation. This research is also expected to contribute to the growing discussion on how local brands use digital spaces to negotiate cultural relevance in the global marketplace.

Keywords: *Cultural Branding, Local Culture, Teh Botol Sosro, Digital Campaign, Brand Identity.*



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INTRODUCTION

In today's digital economy, brands increasingly serve as cultural agents, embodying social meaning and shared values. Brands are not simply about promoting products; they are also used to tell the story of the brand as part of a community or nation. This is particularly evident in emerging markets like Indonesia, where cultural identity plays a key role in shaping consumer engagement.

In recent years, the intersection between cultural identity and marketing communication has become an increasingly significant site of inquiry. As globalization reshapes the ways in which brands interact with audiences, companies are no longer selling products alone but also cultural meanings and shared values. In Indonesia, this phenomenon is particularly visible among legacy brands that have long been embedded within everyday social life.

One local brand that has successfully maintained its identity amidst the onslaught of global brands is Teh Botol Sosro. As the first pioneer of packaged tea in Indonesia, Teh Botol Sosro has maintained cultural resonance for more than five decades. Although The Botol Sosro has been replaced by The Pucuk Harum in the Top Brand Awards in the last five years, the #SebotolKaryaAnakBangsa campaign reflects the brand's efforts to modernize its image through youth-driven creativity, while reaffirming its national identity in digital form.

The #SebotolKaryaAnakBangsa campaign is a creative initiative from Teh Botol Sosro that aims to appreciate and elevate the potential of young Indonesian artists through a packaging design illustration competition. The competition was first held in 2020 and has since become an annual event, consistently highlighting the beauty of Indonesian culture. In 2025, the campaign adopted the overarching theme "The True Face of Indonesian Kindness," with three sub-themes to choose from: "The Kindness of Indonesian Nature," "The Kindness of Indonesian Stories," and "The Kindness of Indonesian Youth." Each sub-theme reflects a different dimension of Indonesia's identity and character, rich in its natural diversity and the positive values of its people.

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

In this research, two theories served as the basis for the analysis: Cultural Branding by Douglas Holt (2004) and Cultural Identity by Stuart Hall.

a. Cultural Branding

The concept of cultural branding proposed by Holt (2004) is based on the idea that brands function not only as product identities but also as cultural icons that represent the values, aspirations, and collective imagination of a society. Holt emphasized that a brand's symbolic



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power lies in its ability to create cultural narratives that are relevant to consumers' social and emotional contexts. Through these narratives, brands can position themselves as part of a broader cultural discourse, not simply as economic actors offering products.

Holt proposed three main dimensions of cultural branding: (1) Cultural Expression, how a brand expresses specific cultural values and identities through symbols, narratives, and communication practices; (2) Consumer Involvement, the extent to which society or consumers are involved in the process of producing and reproducing the brand's cultural meaning; and (3) Cultural Resonance, the extent to which brand messages and symbols resonate with the experiences, aspirations, and social values of the society.

In the context of the #SebotolKaryaAnakBangsa packaging design competition campaign, this theoretical approach is relevant for analyzing how Teh Botol Sosro utilizes local wisdom within the community as a strategy to build brand engagement with Indonesian culture.

b. Cultural Identity

Stuart Hall introduced the concept of cultural identity, which stems from the view that cultural identity is not static, but rather is formed through a constantly changing process of history, representation, and discursive practices. Hall rejects the notion that cultural identity is fixed and singular; instead, he emphasizes that identity is always in the process of being and becoming. In the context of globalization and modern media flows, cultural identity is constantly negotiated and reconstructed through various forms of representation, including visual media and communication practices.

Hall also highlights that cultural identity is formed through two primary perspectives: first, as a shared culture, namely the shared values, experiences, and history that bind individuals within a community; and second, as points of difference, namely the recognition of diversity and transformation that shape contemporary cultural experiences. Thus, cultural representation in the media not only reflects existing identities, but also helps shape and negotiate the meaning of those identities.

METHODOLOGY

This research is a descriptive qualitative case study using content analysis methods to describe how cultural representation and local wisdom are demonstrated through the visuals and narratives of the #SebotolKaryaAnakBangsa campaign content on Instagram @tehbotolsosro. The content analyzed consists of 23 works by illustrators who have been selected as winners of the Teh Botol Sosro packaging design competition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



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Teh Botol Sosro is a bottled tea brand that has long been a part of Indonesian life. For nearly five decades, Teh Botol Sosro has been known not only as a beverage but also as a symbol of togetherness, as seen through its iconic tagline, "Whatever the food, drink The Botol Sosro." This has ultimately forged an emotional connection between the brand and the public. Teh Botol Sosro is not merely a consumer product; its products have become part of Indonesian popular culture. In this context, the #SebotolKaryaAnakBangsa campaign can be understood as a form of appreciation and gratitude to the community who have contributed to the rise of Teh Botol Sosro. The launch of special edition packaging designs themed around Indonesian culture every Independence Day is a manifestation of the brand's efforts to emphasize its role as a national icon and preserve local cultural values.

Furthermore, the competition targeting young illustrators demonstrates Teh Botol Sosro's appreciation and commitment to empowering and recognizing the creativity of Indonesia's younger generation. Through this competition, young illustrators are given the space to express ideas about goodness from an Indonesian cultural perspective, which are then realized in visual form for The Botol Sosro product packaging. In 2025, the winning works will not only be used as the official packaging design for Teh Botol Sosro, but will also be exhibited and documented in an illustration book entitled "Warna Asli Nusantara". This campaign carried out by Teh Botol Sosro is not only a form of commercial activity, but also a form of cultural collaboration that strengthens Teh Botol Sosro's position as a brand with local values.

In the context of this research, the 23 winning works in the #SebotolKaryaAnakBangsa competition were analyzed visually and through their narratives to understand how they reconstruct values that reflect the identity of Indonesian society and symbols that represent Indonesia's culture and natural wealth.

a. Cultural Expression

Visually, most of the winning works utilize a warm color palette and nature-inspired colors, such as brown, green, and blue. These colors are clearly visible in each of the three sub-themes, particularly in the works addressing the "Goodness of Indonesia's Nature" sub-theme, which showcases the biodiversity and natural beauty of the archipelago, from mountains, seas, and agricultural areas to unique flora and fauna found only in Indonesia, such as the Giant Padma Flower (*Rafflesia Arnoldii*). In the context of cultural branding theory (Holt, 2004), the visual expressions shown in these works can be interpreted as a symbolic strategy to link the brand to authentic cultural values, namely the emotional closeness of Indonesian people to nature and gratitude for abundant resources. This can be seen in several works below that attempt to show how Indonesian people live side by side by utilizing the goodness of existing natural wealth.



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Figure 1. Example of Winning Work with Brand Colors

Although the illustrators had freedom and creativity in their use of color palettes, nearly every winning work incorporated elements of orange, the iconic Teh Botol Sosro brand image. This color serves not only as a brand identity element but also as a symbol representing warmth, energy, and cheerfulness. These values also reflect the friendly and open character of the Indonesian people. Through the consistent use of orange, the #SebotolKaryaAnakBangsa campaign successfully maintained the continuity of the brand identity while integrating it with the visual expressions of local culture presented by the illustrators.

Beyond color, the symbols that frequently employed, drawn from Indonesia's natural and social environments, reveal how cultural expression operates as a site of emotional connection between brand and audience. The artworks do not merely depict culture, but they perform it by inviting viewers to recognize themselves in the narratives of everyday goodness and mutual care.

Under the subtheme "The Goodness of Indonesian Stories," the selected works focused on depicting moral values, togetherness, and local wisdom that live on in Indonesian stories. For example, some depict the stories of Lutung Kasarung, Malin Kundang, and even the legend behind the founding of Prambanan Temple—the story of Roro Jonggrang. The illustrators participating in this competition not only strive to present beautiful visual aesthetics, but also how their work can reconstruct the narrative of community stories that have become part of the nation's cultural memory.



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Figure 2. Winning Works for the "Goodness of Indonesian Stories" Subtheme

From a cultural expression perspective, the illustrations in this subtheme feature various symbols that demonstrate how the values of social life, such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong) or the spirit of struggle and perseverance, are reflected in the stories of the community. Furthermore, the stories conveyed in this subtheme are not limited to depictions of community legends, but also reflect how community life occurs despite differences in cultural, ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds. Similarly, the color choices in the works in the "Goodness of Indonesian Nature" subtheme are clearly evident. These colors convey the nuances of happiness, friendliness, togetherness, and optimism that are characteristic of the Indonesian people. The visuals, which emphasize human interaction, complemented by ornamental touches of Indonesian culture, create the impression that goodness and togetherness are an inseparable part of everyday life, both past and present.

Meanwhile, the subtheme "The Goodness of Indonesian Youth" highlights the role of the younger generation as the successors of national values and agents of change in maintaining the sustainability of Indonesian culture. Within the framework of cultural branding theory (Holt, 2004), this representation demonstrates how Teh Botol Sosro links its brand identity to the collective energy of a progressive, innovative, and deeply rooted young generation rooted in the nation's noble values. This includes a Teh Botol Sosro packaging design competition that attracts many talented young illustrators to build a brand image that is relevant across generations, while simultaneously emphasizing that "the goodness of Indonesia" lives on in the spirit of its youth.



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From a cultural expression perspective, the visuals presented in this subtheme generally highlight active, creative, and diverse youth figures in their cultural expressions, ranging from arts and sports to social innovation. The orange element is certainly present again in the illustrations to emphasize Teh Botol Sosro's brand identity. Although this sub-theme uses other colors that appear bolder and more prominent than the previous sub-theme's color palette, such as yellow, red, and even purple. These colors are believed to symbolize creativity, enthusiasm, and hope—as should be the ideals of the nation's youth.



Figure 3. Winning Works for "The Goodness of Indonesian Youth" subtheme

Symbols such as traditional musical instruments played by young people and visualizations of urban lifestyles demonstrate the harmonious blend of tradition and modernity. In this case, the visual expression represents fusion culture, namely how old and new cultures merge to form a new identity unique to Indonesia's youth. This fusion does not merely showcase aesthetic diversity but conveys a symbolic narrative of continuity that cultural roots can coexist with innovation. Such expressions illustrate how everyday youth culture becomes a living canvas for articulating *Indonesian-ness* in ways that feel current yet familiar.

By associating the brand with young creators who embody both tradition and modern progress, Teh Botol Sosro aligns itself with the values of creativity, pride, and authenticity that define Indonesia's evolving cultural landscape. The presence of traditional instruments and local motifs within youthful, urban compositions reinforces the brand's symbolic message: that "goodness" (kebaikan) and cultural pride are not relics of the past, but living forces carried forward by the new generation. Through this visual strategy, Teh Botol Sosro strengthens its position as a *cultural brand* that bridges



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generational experiences, preserving its heritage while continuously renewing its relevance in modern Indonesian life.

b. Cultural Identity

#SebotolKaryaAnakBangsa campaign demonstrates how Teh Botol Sosro constructs its cultural identity through the embodiment of shared national values. As a long-established brand that has grown alongside Indonesian society, Teh Botol Sosro's identity is deeply intertwined with collective memories of togetherness, hospitality, and everyday simplicity. Through this campaign, the brand revitalizes those values by aligning them with the creative energy of Indonesia's younger generation. Resulting visual representations, youthful yet rooted in cultural heritage, signify an evolving notion of what it means to be "authentically Indonesian" in contemporary life.

In this sense, cultural identity operates as a symbolic framework through which the brand communicates its ideological stance. Each artwork serves as a fragment of that identity, reflecting how the brand positions itself as both a participant and preserver of national culture.

In the subtheme "The Goodness of Indonesian Nature," the representation of nature can be understood as a process of constructing a national identity rooted in the concept of collective belonging. Indonesian nature is positioned as a source of shared identity and pride, uniting diverse communities under one overarching narrative: Indonesia is a rich, fertile, and vibrant land. This identity is demonstrated through illustrations utilizing a modern style, digital techniques, and a contemporary color palette, demonstrating the continuity between tradition and modernity. Therefore, the #SebotolKaryaAnakBangsa campaign in this subtheme successfully emphasizes Teh Botol Sosro's position as a cultural brand, one that not only sells products but also represents the values, pride, and cultural identity of the Indonesian nation.

Meanwhile, the works in the "The Goodness of Indonesian Stories" category can be interpreted as representations of a cultural identity that is continually negotiated through folktales and social experiences that shape the nation's character. The identity presented is not simply a reflection of the past, but rather a reconstruction of the meaning of "Indonesia" that is relevant to the current context. The young illustrators present these stories with a modern visual style and symbols easily recognized by today's increasingly digitally savvy generation. This demonstrates that ancient values can be reinterpreted in a new visual language that remains grounded yet adaptable to the times. By incorporating Indonesian stories and characters as visual narratives in their packaging



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designs, Teh Botol Sosro demonstrates its brand's ability to become a cultural icon representing national culture and values.

Finally, in the subtheme "The Goodness of Indonesian Youth," Indonesian cultural identity is demonstrated not only as inherited from previous generations but also as continuously shaped through the actions and creative expressions of today's youth. The narrative "youth are agents of change" is clearly evident in several works, which visualize youth as symbols of hope and agents of change. The selected works demonstrate the harmony of diverse backgrounds, signifying that Indonesian youth constitute an inclusive and adaptive society. The #SebotolKaryaAnakBangsa campaign within this subtheme embodies the spirit of cultural sustainability, where the younger generation acts as a bridge between traditional values and global challenges. Thus, the Teh Botol Sosro brand has succeeded in building a symbolic narrative that goodness, creativity, and pride in the nation's culture will continue to live on through the hands of young Indonesians.

Beyond visual representation, the campaign achieves what Holt (2004) calls *cultural resonance*, the process through which cultural symbols emotionally connect with collective experiences. By inviting illustrators from across Indonesia to contribute, Teh Botol Sosro creates a participatory platform that extends beyond consumption into co-creation. Instagram, as the primary medium, amplifies this resonance through visibility, engagement, and interactivity. Likes, comments, and digital sharing become forms of symbolic participation, allowing audiences to feel part of the brand's cultural narrative.

In this sense, Teh Botol Sosro's digital campaign transforms the brand–consumer relationship into a dialogic one. The audience is not merely a passive receiver of advertising messages but an active participant in sustaining the brand's cultural relevance. The result is a brand community bound not by purchase behaviour alone, but by shared affect and cultural belonging. Furthermore, the campaign positions Teh Botol Sosro not merely as a product, but as a symbolic representative of Indonesian cultural identity. The integration of local aesthetics with youthful modernity reflects on how the brand bridges generational experiences, ensuring cultural continuity, through visual narratives that resonate across age groups. In doing so, Teh Botol Sosro reaffirms its role as a living cultural icon, one that both shapes and reflects the evolving identity of Indonesia itself.



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CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the #SebotolKaryaAnakBangsa campaign illustrates how Teh Botol Sosro maintains its position as a cultural brand by blending traditional values with modern digital storytelling. Through narratives of creativity, pride, and togetherness, the brand revitalizes its symbolic meaning for the younger generation.

This research also observes that cultural branding in digital advertising relies on the ability to reinterpret national identity for new media audiences. Brands like Teh Botol Sosro demonstrate how local cultural narratives can remain strong amidst globalization when integrated with emotionally resonant, participatory digital strategies.



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