



TRANSFORMATION OF THE VISUAL IDENTITY OF KUTUS-KUTUS BALI HERBAL PRODUCTS

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 29-05-2026

Accepted: 22-06-2026

Published: 08-07-2026

Keyword: visual identity, logo transformation, semiotic analysis, local Balinese brands as a visual sign system that negotiates meaning, culture, and identity in the context of local

ABSTRACT

Visual identity plays a crucial role in shaping brand perception, differentiation, and the construction of meaning, particularly for local products rooted in cultural values. This study examines the visual identity transformation of the Balinese herbal product Kutus-Kutus, with a particular focus on its logo design changes. Using a qualitative descriptive-interpretive approach, the study analyzes before and after the transformation through visual comparison and semiotic analysis. The findings reveal a significant shift from a functional and denotative visual approach, characterized by Latin typography and simplified forms, to a more symbolic and culturally embedded visual system through the use of Balinese script and ornamental structures. This transformation demonstrates a transition from universal visual communication to context-specific representations that emphasize cultural identity and locality. This study contributes to the study of visual communication design by highlighting how the logo transformation functions branding. Practically, these findings offer insights for local brand designers and developers in utilizing cultural symbols in visual identities while balancing functionality and symbolic expression.

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INTRODUCTION

Visual identity is a strategic element in building image, differentiating brands, and maintaining consumer trust in a brand. According to Wheeler (2017), brand identity serves not only as a visual differentiator but also as a sign system that communicates the brand's values, character, and vision to the audience. Visual identity can also be understood as a sign system capable of conveying symbolic meaning and shaping audience perceptions of the brand or product it represents. Visual elements such as logos, colors, typography, packaging, and visual communication styles serve as a means of consistently embodying a brand's personality and narrative.

From a brand management perspective, visual identity transformation is often undertaken to reaffirm relevance, strengthen perceptions, or address challenges that threaten the brand's sustainability (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006). The rebranding process is a strategic effort to rebuild a brand's image through updated logos or symbols, narratives or characters, and visual experiences aimed at strengthening perceptions and rebuilding consumer trust.

For products based on local wisdom, visual identity serves not only as a commercial tool but also as a representation of the cultural values and philosophy underlying the product's existence.

Visual identity serves as a medium that bridges traditional products with modern audiences. Amidst globalization, brands based on local culture face the challenge of remaining relevant and competitive in an increasingly open market, without losing the uniqueness and traditional values that underpin their identity. This situation is one of the reasons driving several brands to revitalize or redesign their visual identities as a strategy to adapt to consumers or audiences.

One local product that has undergone a visual identity transformation is Kutus-Kutus. Kutus-Kutus is a Balinese massage oil and herbal product formulated by Bambang Pranoto around 2012 in Gianyar, Bali. It is known for promoting traditional Balinese healing narratives. The name Kutus-Kutus is inspired by the philosophy of body balance, which aligns with traditional Balinese medicine. Over time, Kutus-Kutus has faced new challenges, particularly related to the rise of counterfeits with packaging and visual identities that resemble the original product. This phenomenon makes it difficult for consumers to distinguish genuine products from counterfeits,

resulting in a decline in trust in the product. This situation prompted Kutus-Kutus to take strategic action to restore the brand's authenticity, strengthen differentiation, and rebuild consumer trust through stronger identity management.

In an effort to prevent product counterfeiting, Kutus-Kutus attempted several packaging design changes, but counterfeit products continued to emerge. This situation not only caused economic losses but also threatened public trust and Kutus-Kutus' reputation. Kutus-Kutus' visual identity in its early phase was characterized by the use of a four-petal green symbol, the Kutus-Kutus logo using simple typography, and packaging featuring traditional ornaments. Consistent with the internal and external dynamics faced, Kutus-Kutus' visual identity underwent significant changes, both in terms of visual form and the accompanying narrative.

This change in visual identity is interesting to examine as a phenomenon of design transformation in the context of local Balinese herbal medicine. The transformation not only reflects aesthetic value but also demonstrates the brand's efforts to rebuild a clear identity, visual differentiation, and symbolic meaning that are confirmed for consumers. However, to date, there have been few academic studies in the field of visual communication design that specifically examine the process of revitalizing visual identity based on local wisdom through brand transformation, particularly in the context of reconstructing the symbolic meaning and representation of Balinese culture in herbal products. Based on this research gap, this study aims to analyze the transformation of the Kutus-Kutus logo as part of a change in visual identity and representation of cultural meaning.

METHOD

1. Research Design

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive interpretive design to analyze the phenomenon of visual identity transformation for the Balinese herbal product Kutus-Kutus. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply understand the meanings, symbols, and visual representations contained within the design elements, in accordance with the cultural and visual context in which the brand identity developed.

2. Object of Study

The object of this research is the visual identity of the Balinese herbal product

Kutus-Kutus, focusing on the key visual elements that underwent changes, including the logo, color scheme, typography, packaging, and accompanying visual narrative. The analysis focused on the periods before and after the visual identity transformation, with the aim of identifying shifts in form, visual style, and symbolic meaning.

3. Data Collection

Research data was collected using visual documentation techniques, which included the collection of visual materials for the Kutus-Kutus brand, such as the logo, packaging design, promotional materials, and visual content published through the brand's official channels. Data sources were obtained from digital archives, official online media, and public documentation relevant to the product identity. Data collection was conducted purposively, considering representativeness and visual consistency.

4. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two stages: the first was a comparative visual analysis to identify changes in design elements, including aspects of shape, color, typography, and visual composition. The second stage was a visual semiotic analysis, which used this approach to interpret the relationship between signs, meanings, and cultural contexts represented in the visual identity of Kutus-Kutus. The analysis process was conducted interpretively by linking visual themes to relevant theoretical frameworks of visual identity and visual culture. The results of the analysis are presented in the form of a description of the findings and an interpretation of meaning without the intention of generalizing the research results to other brand contexts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Visual Transformation of the Kutus-Kutus Logo

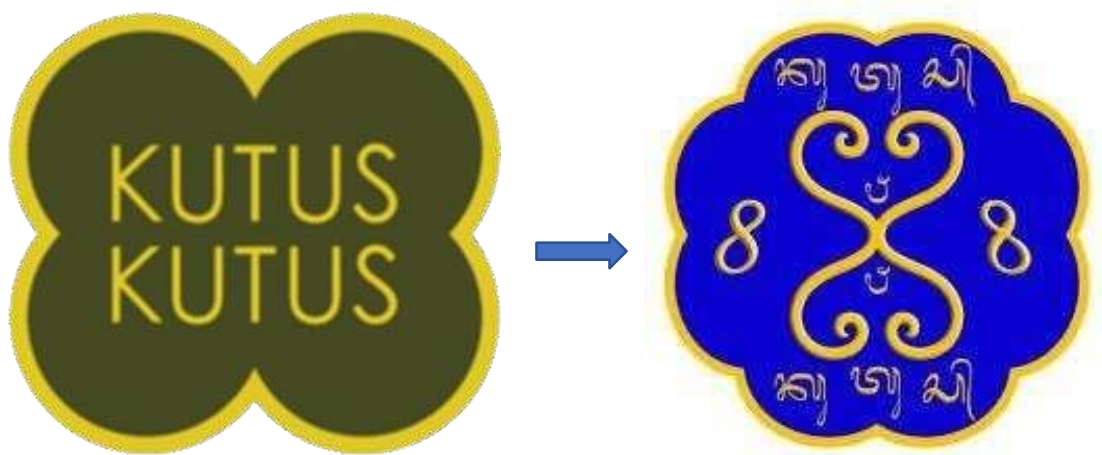


Figure 1. Transformation of the Kutus-Kutus Logo

Visual analysis reveals a significant transformation in the writing system of the Kutus-Kutus logo. Initially, the logo used Latin script with simple typography, emphasizing legibility and ease of brand recognition. This approach reflects a functional orientation in visual communication, where the brand name is conveyed directly and explicitly to consumers. In the transformed logo, the writing system has undergone a shift, with the use of Balinese script as the main visual element, becoming more complex and ornamental than the previous logo. Balinese script not only serves as a representation of language but also shapes the overall visual structure of the logo through symmetrical patterns and decorative compositions.

The transformation of the Kutus-Kutus logo is also evident in changes in form and visual style. The initial logo featured simple geometric shapes with a relatively static composition. The colors used tended to be minimalist and served to emphasize identity without excessive ornamentation. In contrast, the transformed logo displays a more expressive and symbolic visual style. The logo's form has evolved into a visual structure resembling an ornament with curved details and repetitive motifs. This visual style demonstrates a shift from a modern-functional approach to a more contextual and symbolic approach with traditional nuances.

Kutus-Kutus is widely known for its success in building a strong image based on local wisdom. In its first logo, Kutus-Kutus's visual identity was characterized by a four-petal green-gold logo, simple typography, ethnic-patterned packaging, and a traditional healing narrative. The combination of visual symbols and narrative makes

Kutus-Kutus not just a health product, but also a visual representation of Balinese cultural values. Meanwhile, the Kutus-Kutus Script Bali logo, with its blue background and blue-gold lettering and frame, represents change for the better and a sense of spirit.

From a visual semiotic perspective, the Kutus-Kutus logo change can be understood as a shift in the sign system from a denotative to a connotative approach. The logo with Latin script serves as a denotative approach, serving as a brand marker that is easily recognized upon direct reading. Conversely, the use of Script Bali in the resulting logo transformation enriches the layers of meaning by presenting cultural and symbolic associations. Referring to Barthes (1977), visual signs not only convey literal meaning but also produce cultural meanings through connotations. In this context, Balinese script functions not merely as a linguistic communication tool but also as a symbol of cultural identity embodying traditional and local values. Thus, the transformation of the Kutus-Kutus logo demonstrates a shift from a universal visual identity to one that is more contextual and rooted in local culture.

Logo Transformation as a Change in the Sign System

The transformation of the Kutus-Kutus logo can be understood as a change in the visual sign system. The initial logo functioned primarily at the denotative level, namely as a recognizable and readable brand name. The primary focus was on identification and legibility. Conversely, the transformed logo expands the sign's function through the use of Balinese script, so that the logo also functions as a symbol associated with Balinese culture and locality.

Shifting Visual Approach: From Functional to Symbolic

The change in visual style from the initial logo to the transformed logo indicates a shift in design approach. The initial logo emphasized direct communication, while the transformed logo emphasizes symbolic and expressive aspects. This shift aligns with Wheeler's (2017) view that visual identity serves not only as a means of identification but also as a medium for constructing a brand narrative. However, the shift toward a symbolic approach also has consequences for legibility and message clarity. The complexity of the form and the use of traditional script have the potential to limit understanding for audiences without adequate

cultural literacy. This demonstrates a negotiation between functional needs and the desire to present a culturally meaningful visual identity.

Visual Identity and Local Brand Differentiation

In the context of local herbal brands, the transformation of the Kutus-Kutus logo can be understood as an attempt at visual differentiation through cultural representation. Kapferer (2012) emphasizes that the cultural dimension is a crucial element in brand identity formation, enabling brands to build uniqueness and emotional connection with their audiences. The transformation of Kutus-Kutus' visual identity demonstrates how cultural symbols are used to strengthen the brand's local character. The use of Balinese script creates a visual identity that differs from other herbal brands that tend to use universal symbols. Thus, the logo transformation serves not only as an aesthetic change but also as a medium for communicating the identity and values the brand wishes to convey.

CONCLUSIONS

This study analyzes the transformation of the visual identity of the Balinese herbal product Kutus-Kutus by examining changes in key visual elements, particularly the logo, as part of the dynamics of local brand design. The results show that the transformation of Kutus-Kutus's visual identity is characterized by changes in the writing system, form, and visual style, representing a shift in approach from a direct communicative function to a more contextual, symbolic representation.

The use of Balinese script in the Kutus-Kutus logo enriches the visual meaning by presenting cultural and local values as elements of brand differentiation. This transformation demonstrates that visual identity serves not only as a means of identification but also as a medium for communicating meaning influenced by the cultural context in which the brand operates.

Academically, this study contributes to the enrichment of Visual Communication Design studies by providing an understanding of how the transformation of visual identity in local brands can be analyzed through a visual semiotic approach. Practically, the findings of this study can serve as

a reference for creative industry players and local brand developers in designing visual identities that are adaptive to change, without losing sight of their connection to cultural values.

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