

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The spread of popular culture is expanding massively because it is supported by the advancement of digital technology. According to Dr. Burhan Bungin in Setiawan & Atmadja, popular culture has a lot to do with daily problems that are enjoyed by everyone or certain circles such as mega-star performances, private vehicles, fashion, home models, body care and the like. (T. Setiawan & Atmadja, 2025)

In a book quoted in Hidayat & Utami, Dominic Strinati explains popular culture from various aspects, such as definition, history of development, characteristics, process of formation, types, and examples of its application. In general, popular culture is understood as a culture that is in demand and followed by many people, is massively widespread, and continues to develop over time. One of the forms of popular culture that is easily accepted and popular with the public is popular culture that originated in Japan. (Hidayat & Utami, 2023:11)

Japanese popular culture includes various forms of entertainment and lifestyles, such as anime, manga, J-dramas, J-Music, and fashion. Among these various popular cultures, anime is one of the most in demand by the public. According to Napier in Gama, anime is a term used to refer to animation that originated in Japan. Internationally, the term refers to all types of Japanese animation, whether in the form of films, television series, or short videos. (Gama, 2024:22)

According to Suki Desu, Japan occupies the position of the country with the largest number of anime viewers in the world. In 2023, the number of anime viewers in Japan reached 75.87% of the total population or about 63.1 million people. The United States is in second place with a percentage of viewers of 71.86% or around 167 million people, followed by the Philippines in third place with a proportion of 70.58%. Meanwhile, Indonesia has around 50 million anime viewers, making it one of the countries with the largest number of anime viewers in the world, although the percentage is not as high as some of the other countries on the list. (Fatika, 2024). Currently, Indonesia ranks third as the country with the largest number of Japanese culture fans or weeb in the world. Based on research from Luminate, Generation Z's interest in Japanese songs in Indonesia has increased, from 25.7% in 2022 to 31%. This increase shows that the weeb culture is now increasingly known and popular among the public. (Tania, 2023)

Through the love of watching anime, anime fans create a new subculture. Anime fans or commonly called otaku often imitate the way they speak, habits, and even dress styles of anime characters they like. This activity is called Cosplay. Even now anime cosplayers are starting to flourish in various malls, especially in the Surabaya area. Almost every week there is always information about Japanese cultural events held in malls in Surabaya, this information is usually shared through social media. This Japanese event usually includes a music performance event by a band that sings Japanese songs and of course a cosplay performance event itself.

Cosplay is a subculture, which originated with anime fans and is now also infiltrating gaming culture as well. Cosplay comes from the Japanese Kōsupure, a Japanese-made English term called wasei-eigo which comes from the words "costume" and "play," which means to act by wearing a costume. Cosplay is a hobby that involves wearing costumes and accessories and using makeup to resemble characters from anime, manga, fairy tales, movie actors, singers, games, and idol musicians, as well as cartoon movies. (Nasution et al., 2024:335)

Cosplay originally came from fans' love for anime characters they liked so much that they wanted to be like their favorite characters. In the Surabaya area itself, the interest in cosplay is huge, with many cosplay events held almost every week. This can be seen on social media platforms that often provide information about Japan Festival activities in Surabaya, for example, @japanmatsuri Instagram accounts and @event_cosplay_surabaya who actively share information about Japan Festival activities every week. Japan Festival activities present various kinds of Japanese culture, such as Japanese song performances, Japanese food, and also cosplay competitions.

Cosplay is not just a hobby, cosplay can be a means to find their identity through characters they like, as well as create social connections with fellow anime fans. People who often cosplay call themselves cosplayers. Cosplayers form a community or one that can be created as a place to channel hobbies and talents together.

One of the largest cosplay communities in Surabaya is COSURA (Cosplay Surabaya). This community is known as the pioneer of cosplay activities in Surabaya, which was founded in 2007. For more than a decade, COSURA has consistently provided a forum for cosplayers to pursue their hobbies and express themselves through the characters they play. Not only active in offline activities such as events and meetings, COSURA has also built a presence on social media. This can be seen from their official Instagram account, which has

over 17,300 followers at the time of writing. This figure illustrates the level of public interest and involvement in COSURA's activities, while strengthening its position as an important community in the development of cosplay culture in Surabaya.

Through an interview with Machiato as a member of the COSURA community in the Public Relations division as well as events and talent, it was found that most people are currently quite accepting of cosplay, but the acceptance is more positioned as just a hobby and entertainment. This view reflects that although cosplay is increasingly popular in Surabaya, there is still a limited understanding of the public who only see it as a hobby and entertainment. This shows that there is a gap between the popularity of cosplay and the social legitimacy to be achieved, namely how cosplay can also be understood as a medium of self-expression, creativity, and part of creative culture.

1.2 Problem Identification

Based on the background of the research, the problems identified are as follows:

1. Lack of a persuasive visual communication design strategy. From the results of observations made to accounts and forums on social media that are active in cosplay activities in Surabaya, it is still rare to find the systematic use of DKV elements (such as educational infographics or integrated visual campaigns) to reach people outside the fan circle (non-wibu). As a result, the message about the creative value of cosplay is not effectively conveyed to the general public.
2. Limitations of Educational Content in Digital Media. Social media communities (such as COSURA) and individuals today are still stuck on functional content such as event promotions, documentation, and technical tutorials. There is still a lack of digital content that strategically educates the psychological and social aspects of cosplay.
3. Gap in Public Understanding. The majority of Surabaya people only see cosplay as a purely visual entertainment (18%) and a personal hobby (16%). Based on the questionnaire, the people of Surabaya only see, personal hobbies,
4. The existence of negative stigma due to lack of education. There is still a strong stereotype that cosplay is a "weird" and "excessive" activity (supported by data that 75% of cosplayers have received negative gazes). This shows that there are communication barriers between cultural actors and the general public.

1.3 Problem Formulation

Based on the background and identification of the problems that have been presented, the formulation of the problem in this study is, how to design a cosplay digital campaign in the context of visual communication to increase social appreciation of cosplay culture in Surabaya?

1.4 Problem Limitations

In order for the research to be more directed, the author provides the following problem limitations:

1. This research focuses on designing digital campaigns with the theme of cosplay culture as an effort to increase social appreciation for cosplay in Surabaya.
2. The focus of the study was directed at visual communication strategies and digital media used to build a positive Figure of cosplay among the general public.
3. The problems studied focus on public acceptance and perception of cosplay, not on technical aspects such as costume making, makeup, and event management.
4. The research data was obtained through the distribution of questionnaires, interviews with active cosplayers and COSURA community representatives, as well as observation of cosplay events in Surabaya, so that the results of the analysis were limited to the local context and the primary data obtained.
5. The campaign media is designed to focus on digital platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, in the form of posters, campaign videos, and educational visual content, with the aim of increasing understanding that cosplay is a form of self-expression, creativity, and a positive medium of expression.

1.5 Purpose of Design

The purpose of designing this digital campaign is to:

1. Increase public understanding of the value of art and self-expression in cosplay. This goal is to answer the problems of people who have only seen cosplay as entertainment or personal hobbies through the delivery of more in-depth information.
2. Reduce negative stigma through visual messages that build a positive Figure. Answering the "weird" stereotype by showing the creative and inclusive side of cosplay, so that people no longer see it as an excessive activity.
3. Designing digital campaigns that focus on social and psychological education. Overcome the lack of educational content by creating campaign materials that not only

contain event promotion, but also educate the public about the positive benefits of cosplay culture.

4. Implement effective Visual Communication Design strategies to reach the general public. Addressing the lack of strategic visual elements by designing content such as infographics and social media that is engaging, so that educational messages can be conveyed persuasively and easily understood by people outside the community.

1.6 Benefits of the Design

The design of a digital campaign regarding social appreciation of cosplay culture is expected to provide the following benefits:

1.6.1 For the Cosplay Community

1. Menjadi sarana untuk memperkenalkan nilai positif dan esensi budaya cosplay kepada masyarakat luas.
2. Membantu meningkatkan citra komunitas cosplay sebagai wadah kreatif yang aktif dalam mempromosikan ekspresi diri melalui media digital.
3. Memberikan referensi strategi campaign digital yang dapat digunakan untuk kegiatan promosi atau kolaborasi berikutnya.

1.6.2 For the General Public

1. Adding insight and understanding that cosplay is not just entertainment, but also a form of art, creativity, and a positive medium of self-expression.
2. Reduce stigma and negative stereotypes against cosplayers through an educational and inspiring visual approach.
3. Encourage the creation of a more open, appreciative social environment, and respect the diversity of individual interests and creativity.

1.6.3 For Academics and DKV Students

1. To be a reference study on the application of visual communication design in the context of social and popular culture campaigns.
2. Provide examples of the implementation of digital visual communication strategies based on research, observation, and audience analysis.
3. To be an inspiration for other students in designing community-based digital campaigns and socio-cultural issues.

1.7 Design Framework

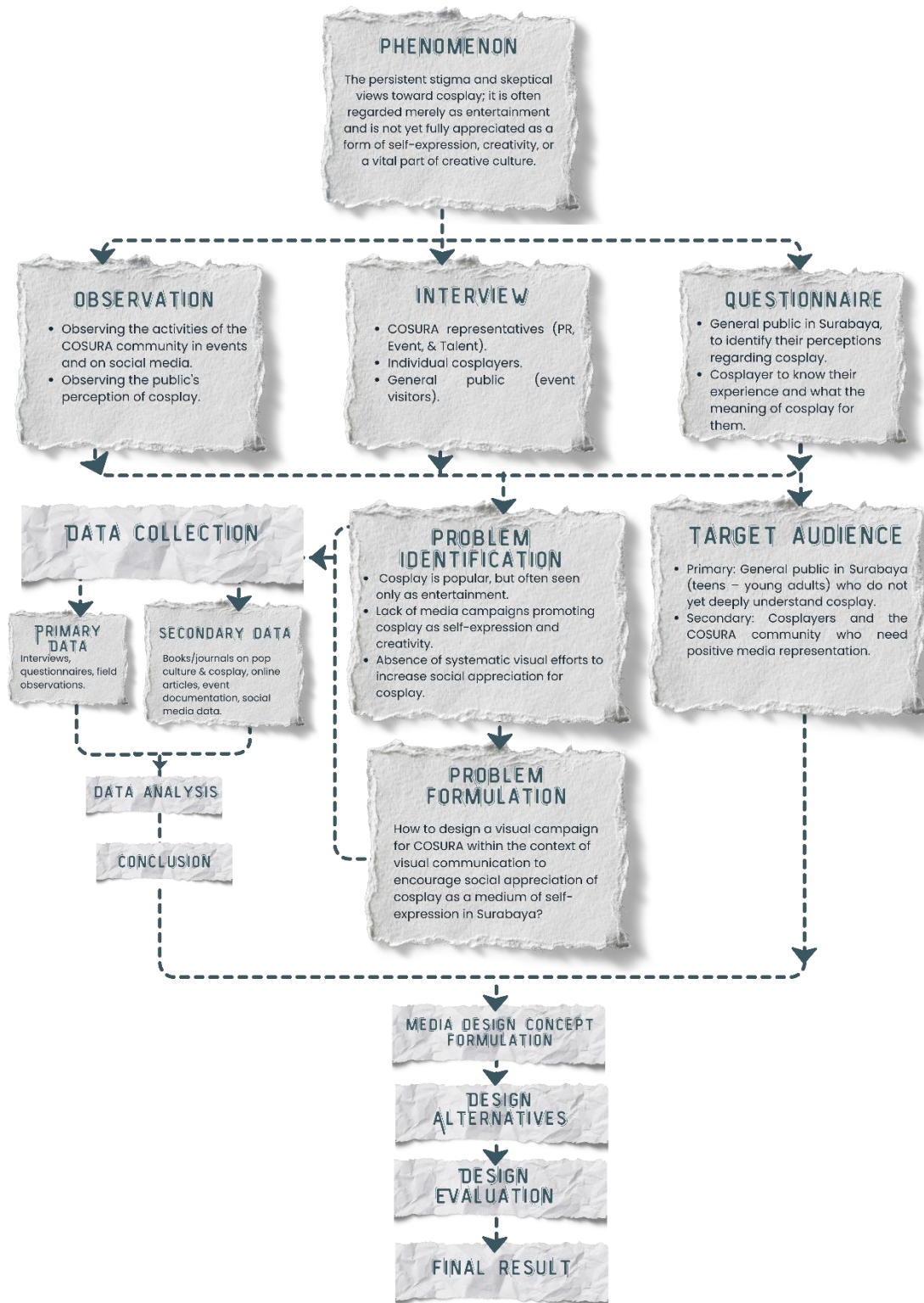


Figure 1. 1 Design Framework
(Source: Personal Document, 2025)