

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Tionghoa ethnic group is one of the ethnic groups that has a long history in Indonesia. Dahana (2020:55-29) explains that the Tionghoa began migrating to the Nusantara since the 17th century through trade routes and increased during the Dutch colonial period in the 19th century. The majority of immigrants came from southern provinces such as 广东 (*Guangdong*), 福建 (*Fujian*), 广西 (*Guangxi*), who then formed migrant groups such as 福建 *Hokkian*, 客家 *Hakka*, *Teochiu*, and *Cantonese*. The development of the Tionghoa ethnic group led to the formation of Peranakan Tionghoa communities that assimilated with the local population as well as Totok communities that retained their original identity. The Tionghoa ethnic group has been recognized as one of the ethnicities within the national framework of Indonesia as stated in Article 2 of Law No. 12 of 2006 concerning the Citizenship of the Republic of Indonesia. There is no data on the Tionghoa ethnic population in the 2020 Population Census, so the 2010 Census serves as the last reference, in which the data recorded that the Tionghoa ethnic group was about 2.83 million people, accounting for 1.2% of Indonesia's total population at that time, with distribution in major cities such as Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, and Pontianak.

It should first be noted that the Tionghoa people have 24 *Jieqi* (二十四節氣), which is the division of the year into 24 periods, each lasting about 15 days, according to the movement of the sun and used in the traditional Tionghoa calendar to guide agricultural activities and indicate changes in seasons and climate. *Lichun* (立春), or the beginning of spring, is considered the season of the Imlek (Yuan, 2006:168). According to a journal by Yuan (2016), the celebration activities of the Imlek, which are year-end rituals involving offerings to gods and ancestors, have been carried out since the Shang Dynasty (1600-1050 BC), and this ritual began to be introduced during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty (140-87 BC). In the new government led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, it was decided to name the first day of the Chinese calendar as the 'Spring Festival'. However, Chinese people outside mainland China are more familiar with the term Imlek or Lunar New Year. The word Imlek (阴历 im = month, 陰曆 lek

= calendar) comes from the Hokkien dialect or in Mandarin, 阴历/陰曆 *Yin Li*, which means lunar calendar (Lunar New Year). Originally, Imlek was a celebration marking the spring season in China for farmers, a season considered as a new life. Over time, this tradition has developed into a ritual that continues to be preserved to this day and also serves as an important moment to gather with family (Harsono, 2017:59).

Imlek celebrations have many diverse traditions, but unfortunately the interest of young Tionghoa ethnic people in preserving these cultures is declining. As reported by regional.kompas.com, the lack of young generations interested in Tionghoa arts and culture has raised fears of the cultural baton being broken. The worse part is that many Tionghoa generations themselves do not know about their cultural history. Related to this, it is also supported by an article on vice.com (Evan, 2020) which interviewed several young Tionghoa ethnic people stating that many are more interested in modern and global culture, making them less interested in ancestral traditions, and many do not understand the meaning and values behind Imlek traditions. This is inseparable from the influence of globalization, which brings changes in their mindset and lifestyle. The possible impact arising from the rapid development of globalization in the cultural field is the presence of a local culture that experiences a crisis, resulting in the replacement by a new culture (Indriani, 2024).

Based on a survey conducted online on September 27, 2025, with 72 young respondents of Tionghoa ethnicity aged 18-25, as many as 94.4% of respondents celebrate Imlek every year; however, many young people of Tionghoa ethnicity are still not well informed about Imlek traditions. Based on the survey questions regarding Imlek traditions, more than 50% of young people of Tionghoa ethnicity do not know at all and only know a little about these traditions, so it can be concluded that young people of Tionghoa ethnicity have minimal understanding of Imlek traditions. This happens because young people of Tionghoa ethnicity feel that this information is not relevant to their daily lives. Many also already know some information about Imlek from their parents or family, so they are not interested in finding out more, and young people nowadays prefer entertainment content such as games, social media, and others.

Young people aged 18-25 are in the stage of adult maturity, which is experiencing significant identity development. This also includes the period of identity formation, especially for minority ethnic groups who face more complex challenges due to being confronted with their own culture and the dominant culture, as stated by Santrock (2017:384-386). In this regard,

the role of young people becomes very important because they are the main inheritors of tradition and culture. Susanti et al. (2023:295) explain that young people have a very important role in preserving local culture, as cultural preservation and local wisdom values will be lost without the involvement of this generation. Therefore, all young people, especially those aged 18-25, must be the main actors in passing down the wisdom values contained in cultural preservation.

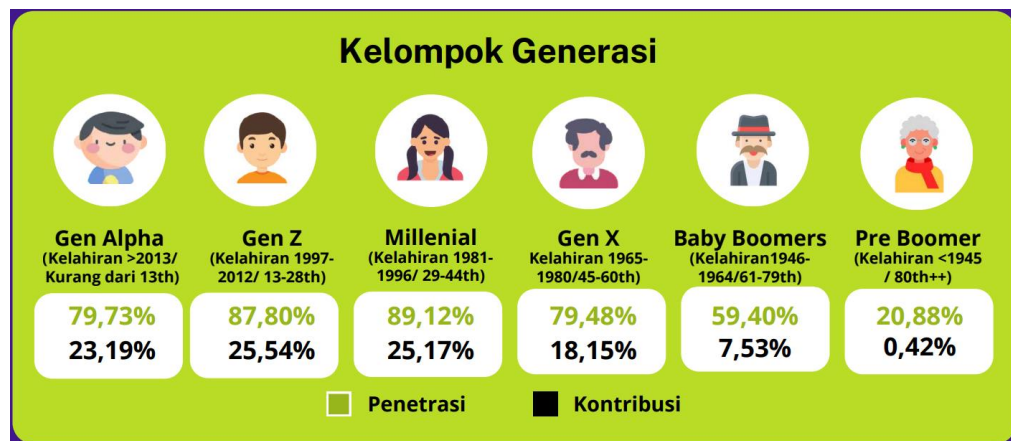


Figure 1. 1 APJII Internet User Profile 2025 by Generation Group
(Source: APJII Internet User Profile 2025)

The current young generation, namely Gen Z, spends more time on the internet, whether for socializing through social media, seeking entertainment, or accessing information, which reduces young people's interaction with traditional culture. According to APJII data in 2025 regarding the '2025 Internet User Profile,' Indonesia's internet penetration rate reached 80.66%, with the Gen Z generation aged 18-28 as the highest users, at more than 87.80%. This shows that cultural preservation strategies will be more effective if delivered through media familiar to the daily lives of young people, namely internet-based devices, such as smartphones.

An online survey was conducted on September 27, 2025, involving 72 respondents to determine the intensity of media use among young people of Tionghoa ethnicity. The survey results showed that as many as 98.6% of young people use smartphones in their daily activities, with 79.2% of respondents answering always and 19.4% of respondents often using them. As many as 44.4% of respondents spend 4-6 hours per day using their smartphones. In their leisure time, young people use their smartphones to seek entertainment through various activities, with 68.1% of respondents reading web comics in their free time. Based on this data, it can be

concluded that web comics can be used as a medium for introducing Imlek traditions to young people of Tionghoa ethnicity.

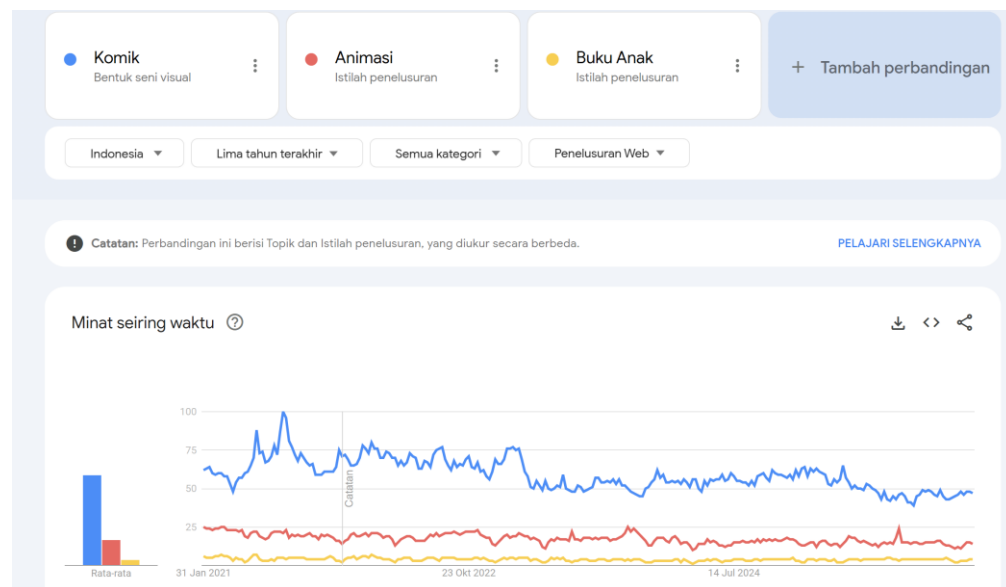


Figure 1. 2 Google Trends
(Source: Google Trends accessed on February 3, 2026)

Based on Google Trends accessed on February 3, 2026, comics are a more popular medium compared to other entertainment media, making comics potentially a medium for introducing Imlek traditions to young Tionghoa ethnic individuals. The book *Understanding Comics* (McCloud, 1994:5) defines comics as a collection of images with other symbols arranged side by side in a certain sequence, forming information that elicits an aesthetic response from the reader. In the explanation by Daryanto (2012) and Sudjana (2010), it is explained that comics play a significant role as an effective medium for providing educational and entertaining information because they contain strong visual elements and stories (Prasetiawan 2020:69).

The digital era has brought many changes in various areas, including comics. McCloud (1994:213-222) explains that comics have undergone a transformation, initially in print form to digital form gradually since the development of computers and the internet around the 1990s, with the change starting from digital CD-ROMs to web comics with the concept of an unlimited canvas. Technological advances have shifted comic enthusiasts toward digital comics in the early 2010s due to the convenience of reading them and being more economical than having to buy printed comics sold in bookstores, according to Ramadhan (2020:3).

Currently, web comicsites can be accessed very easily through various digital applications on smartphones and other gadgets, such as Webtoon, Komiku, Mangatoon, and others. At present, Webtoon is the platform with the most users in Indonesia according to Similarweb (31/1/2026). Reported on the about.webtoon.com page for the quarter ending June 30, 2025, Webtoon recorded 155 million monthly active users. This achievement proves that Webtoon will be the primary choice for webcomic readers.



	App and Publisher ⓘ	Category ⓘ	↑ Usage Rank ⓘ
1	 WEBTOON: Manga, Comics, Manhwa NAVER WEBTOON	Comics	1
2	 Komiku - Baca Komik Manga Parakekok	Comics	2
3	 MangaToon: Comic & Manga MangaToon	Comics	3
4	 KomikID - Baca Komik Freesign	Comics	4
5	 MANGA Plus by SHUEISHA 株式会社 集英社	Comics	5
6	 Komikomi-manga&novel reader Komikomi	Comics	6
7	 Permen Comic for Indonesia HELLOAPTE	Comics	7
8	 KomikIndo - Komik Bahasa	Comics	8

Figure 1. 3 Free and popular comic category applications
(Source: Similarweb accessed on February 3, 2026)

A survey was conducted on September 27, 2025, online involving 72 young respondents aged 18-25 of Tionghoa descent to determine their preferences for web comics. The survey results showed that as many as 90.3% of young people enjoy reading web comics and 76.4% read on the Webtoon platform, ranking first among other platforms. The reasons they like web comics include the ability to read them anytime, very easy access via smartphones, and that web comics are free or cheaper compared to printed comics. The demographics of Webtoon readers in 2024, reported on the website www.whatech.com (Ryan, 2024), explained that Webtoon is highly popular among young generations such as Gen Z, with Webtoon readers spanning various age groups and genders. About 40% of Webtoon readers are aged 18-24 and 35% are aged 25-34. Gender distribution is relatively balanced, with a slight tendency toward female readers.

Introduction to Imlek is carried out through the presentation of stories created using web comic media on the Webtoon platform, which is expected to address the problem of declining interest among young Tionghoa ethnic groups in Imlek traditions. The target audience in this design is young Tionghoa people aged 18-25 using web comic media, and this design focuses on an in-depth introduction to Imlek traditions.

1.2 Problem identification

1. Young people of Tionghoa ethnicity have little understanding of Imlek traditions. Based on a survey conducted online on September 27, 2025, involving 72 young respondents of Tionghoa ethnicity, more than 50% of young people of Tionghoa ethnicity did not know anything about Imlek traditions, and around 30% of young people of Tionghoa ethnicity knew only a little about these traditions. Therefore, it can be concluded that young people of Tionghoa ethnicity have minimal understanding of Imlek traditions.
2. The majority of young Tionghoa ethnic respondents, amounting to 55.6%, do not intend to seek information about Imlek because they are more interested in accessing entertainment content such as social media and the like, and feel that they already know about Imlek traditions from their families, so they feel there is no need to find out more about it, as shown in an online survey conducted on September 27, 2025, with 72 respondents.
3. As many as 47.2% of young people have difficulty finding sources that are interesting and easier to understand about Imlek traditions based on an online survey conducted on September 27, 2025, with 72 respondents.

1.3 Problem Formulation

How to Design a Imlek Tradition Web comic in Indonesia as a Medium for Introducing Tionghoa Culture to 18-25 Year Olds?

1.4 Batasan Masalah

1. Focus on traditions and core values in Indonesian Imlek celebrations.
2. The target audience for the web comic design is young people aged 18-25 years.
3. The web comic platform used in this design is a web comic based on Infinite Canvas.

1.5 Design Objectives

1. To design a media introduction to Imlek traditions that can foster interest and understanding among young Tionghoa ethnic individuals.
2. To create an informational media that aligns with current youth entertainment so that they can learn and preserve Imlek traditions without feeling bored, such as educational comics.
3. To create media that is packaged creatively and relevantly for young people in order to enhance their love and understanding.

1.6 Benefits of Design

The expected benefits that can be obtained from the preparation of this web comic design about the Imlek tradition, which will be uploaded on the Webtoon platform:

1. For the Community

Introducing universal values in Imlek traditions, such as respect for ancestors, family, and family harmony, to the wider community. This design can also serve as a digital archive that documents the details of Imlek traditions in a creative presentation.

2. For Students

Training students' abilities to conduct in-depth research so that the works produced are based on strong historical foundations while still having a relevant storyline.

3. For the Target Audience

Serving as an interactive guide for those who are starting to practice small traditions without feeling awkward. Providing answers to why Imlek traditions should be carried out through characters that give a relatable impression to the target audience.

1.7 Design Framework

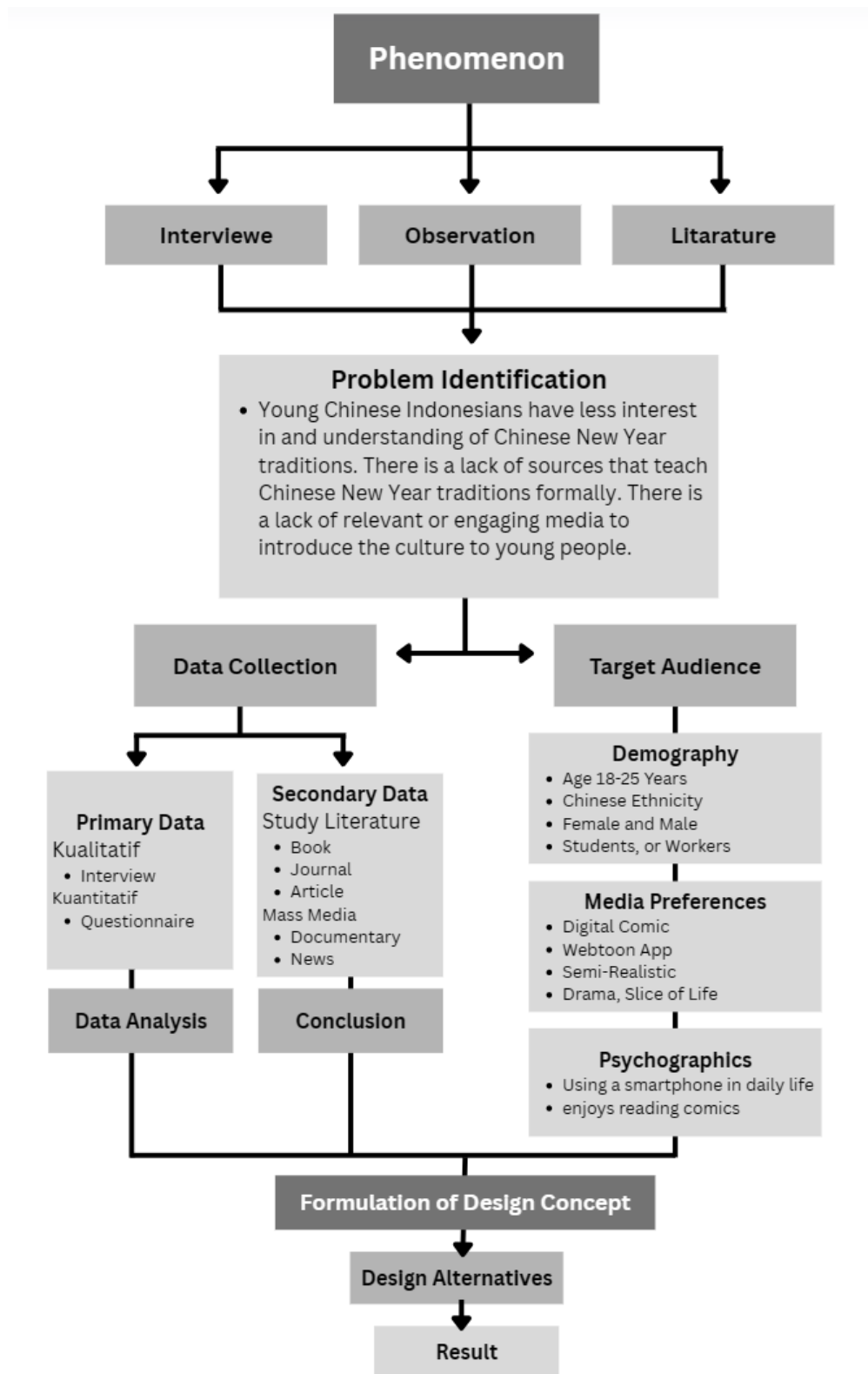


Figure 1. 4 Design Framework
(Source: Personal Documentation)