Logo Design and Brand Recognition in Independent Music: A Case Study of Traditopia

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ABSTRACT

Logos are essential to visual identity, enabling audiences to recognise, differentiate, and remember creative projects. This study examines the perceived impact of logo design on brand recognition and evaluates the effectiveness of the Traditopia logo in communicating cultural and musical themes. Traditopia is a Malaysian music project that combines traditional cultural narratives with contemporary musical approaches. A mixed-methods case study design was employed, involving a questionnaire administered to 30 respondents aged 18–30 from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), alongside case-study documentation analysis. Quantitative data were analysed using frequency counts and percentages, while open-ended responses were examined thematically. The findings indicate that 76.6% of respondents rated the logo positively for cultural representation, while 70.0% gave positive ratings for the use of colour in representing cultural themes. In comparison, 60.0% rated the logo positively for communicating musical identity, while 26.7% gave a moderate rating. Regarding brand recognition, 56.7% considered the logo fairly or extremely memorable, and 56.6% indicated that they were fairly or extremely likely to recognise Traditopia from the logo. Furthermore, 66.7% perceived the logo as likely or extremely likely to generate interest in the project. Qualitative responses identified the keris, batik-inspired patterns, gold accents, and black-and-gold colour combinations as meaningful cultural cues. Overall, the findings suggest that the logo communicates cultural identity more effectively than musical identity, while memorability and brand recognition remain areas for further development. The study concludes that logo design for culturally grounded independent music projects should balance cultural representation, musical relevance, visual distinctiveness, and memorability. These findings offer practical insights for independent musicians, designers, and music marketers developing visual identities that communicate cultural meaning and support brand recognition. However, the small sample and descriptive research design limit generalisability, and the findings do not establish actual effects on audience behaviour.

Keywords: logo design, independent music, visual branding, brand recognition, Traditopia

INTRODUCTION

In a competitive creative economy, visual identity is increasingly important to how audiences identify and remember cultural and music projects. A logo combines visual elements such as typography, images, shapes, symbols, and colour to represent a brand, product, or creative project (Goldstein, 2021). Logos can distinguish one identity from another and provide a concise visual point of recognition. Sharma (2020), Andrivet (2019), and Mullin (2022) similarly describe logos as recognizable visual devices that support differentiation and brand identity. For music projects, the logo operates alongside album artwork, photography, merchandise, stage design, promotional graphics, and digital media to create a coherent visual identity.

Logos function not only as visual identifiers but also as carriers of brand associations and organisational identity. Research by Erjansola et al. (2021) demonstrates that audiences' interpretations of a logo can encompass both its visual characteristics and the identity it represents. Similarly, Shang and Guo (2020) identify aesthetic

attraction and the meaning conveyed by logo elements as important pathways through which consumers respond to brand logo design. These perspectives suggest that logo effectiveness should be evaluated beyond visual appeal alone, particularly when a creative project seeks to communicate a distinctive cultural identity.

In the context of independent music, this consideration is relevant because a logo must communicate the project's artistic positioning while remaining recognisable across different promotional settings.

Independent music is commonly associated with production and distribution outside the control of major record companies and with greater emphasis on artistic autonomy, originality, and creative freedom. The independent music sector encompasses diverse genres and practices and is often connected to a do-it-yourself approach to music production and distribution (Jenaudionetwork, 2021; Provos, 2023). Within this environment, independent artists may have fewer institutional resources for marketing and brand development. Consequently, a clear and distinctive visual identity can function as a practical communication tool for attracting attention and supporting recognition across digital platforms.

Visual identity is particularly relevant to music because audiences often encounter an artist or album visually before engaging with the complete musical product. Crowley (2019) notes the role of visual identity in helping musicians express their artistic direction, while PCG Artist Development (n.d.) highlights the importance of memorable visual identity in strengthening audience recall. Album covers, logos, promotional images, and merchandise can therefore extend musical storytelling into a visual environment. Symbols may also contribute to emotional and cultural associations between a creative project and its audience (Reale, 2023).

Traditopia provides a useful case through which to examine this relationship between music, cultural representation, and visual identity. The project presents Malaysian myths and cultural narratives through contemporary musical approaches. According to the original project documentation, Traditopia brings together traditional and folk-infused musical materials with elements of jazz and funk and comprises nine songs performed by a 17-piece ensemble of musicians and storytellers. The project therefore requires a visual identity capable of communicating both cultural heritage and contemporary musical practice.

The problem addressed by this study is the limited understanding of how audiences perceive logo design in the context of independent music projects that are also culturally grounded. Although logo design has been widely discussed within branding, less attention has been given to how cultural symbolism and musical identity can be communicated simultaneously through a logo for an independent album. This study therefore examines the Traditopia logo from the perspectives of cultural representation, musical representation, memorability, recognition, visual appeal, and audience engagement.

THEORETICAL GROUNDING: BRAND KNOWLEDGE, VISUAL SEMIOTICS, AND RECALL DYNAMICS

To evaluate visual identity within independent music, branding must be examined through cognitive and semiotic frameworks. Keller's (1993) Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model conceptualizes brand knowledge as comprising two distinct cognitive dimensions: brand awareness and brand image. Brand awareness operates across a hierarchical continuum, distinguishing between brand recognition the cognitive ability of consumers to confirm prior exposure when given the brand as a visual or verbal cue and brand recall, the more demanding cognitive retrieval of the brand from memory when prompted by the product category or related retrieval cues (Keller, 1993, 2003). While visual brand marks (logos) frequently trigger immediate perceptual familiarity (recognition), achieving durable brand recall requires rich, multi-tiered semantic associations embedded within associative memory networks (Collins & Loftus, 1975; Henderson & Cote, 1998).

In creative and cultural industries, the challenge of visual branding is further amplified by dual-coding demands (Paivio, 1991). Independent music releases exist within hyper-fragmented digital distribution channels such as Spotify, Apple Music, and *Instagram* where visual assets serve as primary micro-touchpoints (Crowley, 2019; Haynes & Marshall, 2018). Within these channels, a logo must perform two simultaneous semiotic functions:

1. **Denotative and Connotative Cultural Encoding:** Signifying socio-cultural provenance, ethnic narratives, or traditional heritage through culturally coded iconography (Barthes, 1977; Eco, 1976).

2. **Genre and Aesthetic Signalling:** Communicating acoustic, structural, and genre conventions (e.g., folk fusion, jazz, funk) that guide consumer musical expectations (Hesmondhalgh, 2013; Salzer et al., 2021).

When visual identities incorporate high-salience cultural symbols such as traditional weaponry, regalia, or textile motifs these elements can trigger dominant culturally conditioned associations. According to cognitive load and stimulus-processing theories (Sweller, 2011; van der Lans et al., 2009), highly potent cultural iconography can create visual and semantic "overshadowing," wherein cultural legibility dominates the visual hierarchy at the expense of commercial product categorization, genre clarity, and distinct visual memorability. Consequently, an independent music project risks achieving high perceived cultural authenticity while failing to establish the distinct cognitive brand traces necessary to drive unaided brand recall and behavioral discovery in crowded streaming ecosystems

RESEARCH FOCUS AND CONTRIBUTION

This study examines the relationship between logo design, brand recognition, and the communication of cultural and musical identity in independent music projects, using Traditopia as a case study. It addresses two research objectives: (1) to analyse the perceived impact of logo design on brand recognition for an independent music album; and (2), to evaluate the effectiveness of the Traditopia logo in communicating the project's cultural and musical themes. In pursuing these objectives, the study investigates the cultural elements incorporated into the logo and their contribution to its perceived effectiveness, while also identifying design practices that may strengthen the brand presence of independent music projects.

The study offers practical insights into the role of visual identity in music branding, particularly within culturally grounded creative projects. Its findings may inform the work of independent musicians, graphic designers, music marketers, and cultural-project developers seeking to communicate artistic identity through a recognisable and coherent visual language. In particular, the study considers how logo design may support brand recognition and maintain visual consistency across album artwork, merchandise, social media, and other promotional materials. Given the visual orientation of Instagram, the original research also considered the presentation of Traditopia's visual branding on social media, with particular attention to this platform.

The study's scope is limited to the Traditopia project and the perceptions of 30 respondents aged 18–30 recruited from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), Malaysia. Consequently, the findings reflect the views of a relatively small, institutionally concentrated sample and should not be generalised to the wider population of independent music audiences without further investigation. Furthermore, the study assesses perceived logo effectiveness rather than longitudinal changes in actual streaming activity, music sales, or audience growth. These limitations provide important context for interpreting the findings and highlight the need for future research involving larger and more diverse audiences, as well as behavioural measures of branding effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A mixed-method case-study design was used. The research combined a questionnaire, case-study analysis, and secondary/documentation review. The questionnaire generated quantitative ratings and qualitative comments concerning the Traditopia logo. The case-study component provided contextual understanding of Traditopia as an independent music project, while documentation analysis supported interpretation of the logo's cultural and visual characteristics. The integration of these sources enabled the study to examine both measurable response patterns and participants' explanations of their perceptions.

Participants and Sampling

The study involved 30 respondents aged between 18 and 30. Twenty-one respondents (70%) were from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), while nine (30%) were from Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI). The respondents were selected to provide perspectives from students with exposure to creative and artistic environments. Because the sample was purposive and limited in size, the findings are treated as descriptive rather than statistically representative of the wider population.

Table 1: Place of Participants

Institution	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)	21	70.0
Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI)	9	30.0
Total	30	100.0

Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaire contained 21 items. Closed-ended items used five-point response scales, while open-ended items invited participants to describe the role of a logo, cultural and musical associations, possible improvements, and recommended practices for independent artists. Quantitative responses were summarized using frequency counts and percentages. Open-ended responses were reviewed for recurring themes, particularly cultural symbolism, musical representation, simplicity, memorability, visual balance, and audience relevance.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire examined familiarity with independent music and Traditopia; general perceptions of the logo; cultural and musical representation; memorability and recognizability; audience interest and brand perception; visual balance; suitability for an independent album; and recommendations for logo development. The instrument was therefore aligned with the study's two research objectives and the visual-branding dimensions identified in the literature review.

Ethical Considerations and Data Availability

This study received ethical approval from the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection. The research data are openly accessible to the public to support transparency, accessibility, and further scholarly investigation. Any use of the data should be conducted in accordance with applicable ethical requirements and appropriate attribution practices.

RESULTS

Respondent Familiarity

Table 2: Familiarity with Independent Music Albums

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not familiar (1)	4	13.3
Low familiarity (2)	3	10.0

Moderate familiarity (3)	12	40.0
Fairly familiar (4)	7	23.3
Very familiar (5)	4	13.3
Total	30	100.0

Table 3: Familiarity with the Traditopia Project

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not familiar (1)	9	30.0
Low familiarity (2)	5	16.7
Moderate familiarity (3)	7	23.3
Fairly familiar (4)	6	20.0
Very familiar (5)	3	10.0
Total	30	100.0

The respondents' familiarity with independent music albums and the Traditopia project provides an important context for interpreting their evaluations of the logo. As shown in Table 2, familiarity with independent music albums was generally moderate, with 40.0% of respondents reporting moderate familiarity. A further 36.6% indicated that they were fairly or very familiar with independent music albums, whereas 23.3% reported low or no familiarity. These results suggest that most respondents had at least some exposure to independent music, although high familiarity was not universal.

A different pattern emerged in relation to Traditopia itself. Table 3 shows that 46.7% of respondents reported being unfamiliar or having low familiarity with the project, while 23.3% indicated moderate familiarity and 30.0% reported being fairly or very familiar. Compared with the broader category of independent music albums, Traditopia had a lower proportion of respondents in the two highest familiarity categories (30.0% versus 36.6%) and a higher proportion in the two lowest categories (46.7% versus 23.3%). This contrast suggests that general exposure to independent music did not necessarily translate into awareness of the specific project.

This distinction is relevant to the interpretation of logo effectiveness. Respondents who had limited prior familiarity with Traditopia may have evaluated the logo primarily through its immediate visual and cultural cues rather than through established associations with the project. Nevertheless, the questionnaire does not establish whether the logo itself had previously contributed to recognition. The findings should therefore be interpreted as a comparison between familiarity levels and subsequent perceptions, rather than as evidence that the logo independently generated brand awareness.

General Perception of Logo Design

Table 4: Overall Appeal of the Traditopia Logo

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not appealing (1)	0	0.0

Low appeal (2)	2	6.7
Moderate appeal (3)	11	36.7
Fairly appealing (4)	10	33.3
Very appealing (5)	7	23.3
Total	30	100.0

Table 5: Attention-Grabbing Effectiveness of the Traditopia Logo

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not well at all (1)	0	0.0
Not so well (2)	4	13.3
Moderately well (3)	6	20.0
Know it well (4)	14	46.7
Extremely well (5)	6	20.0
Total	30	100.0

The overall appeal of the Traditopia logo was predominantly positive, although the responses indicate room for improvement. As presented in Table 4, 56.6% of respondents rated the logo as fairly or very appealing, while 36.7% assigned a moderate rating. Only 6.7% rated it as having low appeal, and no respondents selected the lowest category. The distribution suggests that the logo was generally acceptable to the sample, but the relatively large proportion of moderate responses indicates that its visual appeal was not consistently perceived as strong.

Table 5 provides a complementary perspective on the logo's attention-grabbing effectiveness. The largest group, comprising 46.7% of respondents, selected category 4, followed by 20.0% who selected category 5. Taken together, these categories account for 66.7% of responses at the upper end of the scale. However, 20.0% selected the middle category, and 13.3% selected category 2. No respondents selected category 1.

Compared with overall appeal, the attention-related measure therefore received a higher proportion of responses in the upper two categories (66.7% versus 56.6%). This difference suggests that the logo may be more effective at attracting attention than at generating a consistently strong aesthetic response.

Such a distinction matters because initial visual attention and sustained preference are related but separate dimensions of visual communication. A design may attract notice without necessarily being distinctive, emotionally compelling, or sufficiently memorable to support long-term brand recognition.

The interpretation of Table 5 requires a qualification. The response label "Know it well (4)" does not clearly correspond to the stated construct of attention-grabbing effectiveness. The original questionnaire should be checked to establish whether this category was intended to measure effectiveness, familiarity, or another construct. Until that wording is verified, the percentages can be reported descriptively, but conclusions about attention-grabbing performance should remain cautious.

Cultural and Musical Representation

Table 6: Cultural Elements Reflected in the Traditopia Logo

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not effective (1)	0	0.0
Low effectiveness (2)	1	3.3
Moderate effectiveness (3)	6	20.0
Fairly effective (4)	16	53.3
Extremely effective (5)	7	23.3
Total	30	100.0

Table 7: Effectiveness of Logo Colours in Representing Cultural Themes

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not well at all (1)	1	3.3
Not so well (2)	0	0.0
Moderately well (3)	8	26.7
Know it well (4)	15	50.0
Extremely well (5)	6	20.0
Total	30	100.0

Table 8: Effectiveness of the Logo in Conveying Musical Identity

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not well at all (1)	2	6.7
Not so well (2)	2	6.7
Moderately well (3)	8	26.7
Know it well (4)	12	40.0
Extremely well (5)	6	20.0
Total	30	100.0

Cultural representation emerged as one of the strongest dimensions in respondents' evaluations of the Traditopia logo. Table 6 indicates that 76.6% rated the logo as fairly or extremely effective in reflecting cultural elements. A further 20.0% assigned a moderate rating, while only 3.3% selected the low-effectiveness category. No

respondents selected the lowest category. This distribution indicates that the logo was generally perceived as communicating cultural references effectively within the study sample.

The evaluation of colour use in Table 7 supports this pattern, although the positive response was slightly lower. Half of the respondents (50.0%) rated the colours as effective in representing cultural themes, while 20.0% selected the highest category. Thus, 70.0% of respondents provided ratings in the upper two categories, compared with 76.6% for cultural representation overall. Meanwhile, 26.7% rated the colours moderately, and only one respondent (3.3%) selected the lowest category. These findings suggest that colour was an important component of the logo's perceived cultural communication, although respondents' evaluations of cultural representation were not determined by colour alone.

The qualitative responses provide additional context for this result. Respondents identified the keris, batik-inspired patterns, gold accents, black-and-gold colour combinations, and traditional visual references as meaningful cultural cues. These elements appear to have helped communicate the project's Malaysian cultural orientation. Their value lies not merely in their decorative qualities but in their potential to make cultural references visually legible to audiences encountering the project through promotional materials or digital platforms.

However, the findings also reveal a difference between communicating cultural identity and communicating musical identity. In Table 8, 60.0% of respondents rated the logo as effective or extremely effective in conveying the project's musical identity. Although this represents a majority, it is 16.6 percentage points lower than the corresponding upper-category result for cultural representation. Furthermore, 26.7% rated musical representation moderately, while 13.4% selected one of the two lowest categories. This contrast suggests that the logo communicates cultural associations more clearly than it communicates the project's musical character. Cultural references may provide an immediately recognisable visual framework, whereas musical identity may require additional cues that indicate genre, instrumentation, sound, or the relationship between traditional and contemporary musical practices. The data do not establish which particular design elements caused this difference, but the response pattern identifies musical communication as a potential area for refinement.

For Traditopia, this finding is particularly relevant because the project's identity combines Malaysian cultural narratives with contemporary musical approaches. A visual identity that communicates cultural heritage without clearly signalling the musical dimension may convey only part of the project's artistic proposition. Future design development could therefore explore the integration of subtle musical references while retaining the cultural elements that respondents already perceived positively. Such additions should be evaluated with audiences rather than assumed to improve the logo automatically.

Brand Recognition and Memorability

Table 9: Memorability of the Traditopia Logo

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not memorable at all (1)	0	0.0
Low memorability (2)	5	16.7
Moderate memorability (3)	8	26.7
Fairly memorable (4)	11	36.7
Extremely memorable (5)	6	20.0
Total	30	100.0

Table 10: Likelihood of Recognizing Traditopia from the Logo

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not likely at all (1)	3	10.0
Low likelihood (2)	1	3.3
Moderate likelihood (3)	9	30.0
Fairly likely (4)	13	43.3
Extremely likely (5)	4	13.3
Total	30	100.0

Brand recognition and memorability are related but distinct outcomes. Memorability concerns whether a visual identity is perceived as easy to remember, whereas recognition concerns whether audiences can associate the visual mark with the relevant project. Tables 9 and 10 provide evidence about both dimensions.

As shown in Table 9, 56.7% of respondents considered the Traditopia logo fairly or extremely memorable. A further 26.7% assigned a moderate rating, while 16.7% indicated low memorability. No respondents selected the lowest category. Although the majority response was positive, the proportion reporting only moderate or low memorability was 43.4%. This suggests that the logo's favourable cultural representation and visual appeal did not translate into equally strong memorability for all respondents.

Table 10 shows a comparable pattern for the likelihood of recognising Traditopia from its logo. A total of 56.6% selected the two highest categories, comprising 43.3% who indicated that recognition was fairly likely and 13.3% who indicated that it was extremely likely. However, 30.0% selected the middle category, and 13.3% selected one of the two lowest categories. The relatively large middle-category response indicates that recognition was not uniformly assured across the sample.

The similarity between the upper-category percentages for memorability (56.7%) and recognition (56.6%) suggests that respondents evaluated these two dimensions at broadly comparable levels. Nevertheless, the figures should not be treated as evidence of a statistical relationship between them. The available frequency tables do not show whether the same individuals who found the logo memorable were also more likely to recognise the project from it. Establishing that relationship would require respondent-level data and an appropriate analysis.

Taken together, the results indicate that positive cultural communication does not necessarily guarantee strong brand recognition. A logo may contain meaningful cultural symbols and still require further development to become distinctive and consistently associated with a particular project. For independent music initiatives with limited promotional resources, this distinction is practically important: visual identity must not only convey the desired artistic meaning but also remain recognisable across repeated encounters and different communication channels.

Audience Engagement and Brand Perception

Table 11: Likelihood that the Logo Generates Interest in Traditopia

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not likely at all (1)	1	3.3

Low likelihood (2)	4	13.3
Moderate likelihood (3)	5	16.7
Fairly likely (4)	18	60.0
Extremely likely (5)	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

Table 12: Influence of the Logo on Overall Brand Perception

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not at all (1)	1	3.3
Quite influential (2)	2	6.7
Moderately influential (3)	13	43.3
Fairly influential (4)	11	36.7
Very influential (5)	3	10.0
Total	30	100.0

The responses concerning audience interest provide further insight into the perceived promotional potential of the Traditopia logo. Table 11 shows that 66.7% of respondents indicated that the logo was fairly or extremely likely to generate interest in the project. A further 16.7% selected the middle category, while 16.6% selected one of the two lowest categories. These findings indicate that the logo was perceived as having potential to stimulate curiosity among a substantial proportion of respondents.

The proportion reporting potential interest was higher than the proportion who considered the logo fairly or extremely memorable (66.7% versus 56.7%). This difference suggests that the logo may be perceived as capable of attracting interest even when its long-term memorability is less pronounced. In practical terms, a visual identity may encourage an audience to investigate a project without necessarily ensuring that the audience will remember the project later. However, the questionnaire measures stated likelihood rather than observed behaviour; it cannot establish whether respondents subsequently searched for Traditopia, listened to its music, followed its social media accounts, or purchased its products.

Table 12 examines the logo's perceived influence on overall brand perception. The largest group, 43.3%, selected the moderate category, while 36.7% rated the logo as fairly influential and 10.0% as very influential. Together, the two highest categories accounted for 46.7% of responses. Meanwhile, 10.0% selected one of the two lowest categories.

The relatively high proportion of moderate responses suggests that respondents recognised some relationship between the logo and their overall impression of the project, but the strength of this perceived influence varied. The result also differs from the 66.7% upper-category response for generating interest. This distinction may indicate that respondents viewed the logo more favourably as a prompt for further attention than as a decisive influence on their overall perception of the brand.

These measures should not be interpreted as direct evidence that the logo increased engagement or improved brand image. Rather, they indicate perceived promotional potential. Actual audience engagement depends on factors beyond logo design, including the quality of the music, the consistency of promotional communication, the accessibility of the project, and the audience's existing interests. The present findings therefore support treating the logo as one component of a broader branding strategy rather than as an independent driver of audience growth.

Visual Balance, Album Suitability and Audience Relevance

Table 13: Visual Balance of the Traditopia Logo

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not balanced (1)	1	3.3
Low balance (2)	3	10.0
Moderately balanced (3)	6	20.0
Fairly balanced (4)	16	53.3
Extremely balanced (5)	4	13.3
Total	30	100.0

Table 14: Suitability for Representing an Independent Music Album

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not appropriate (1)	0	0.0
Low appropriateness (2)	1	3.4
Moderately appropriate (3)	13	44.8
Fairly appropriate (4)	10	34.5
Extremely appropriate (5)	5	17.2
Total	29	100.0

Table 15: Relevance of the Logo to the Traditopia Target Audience

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Least relevant (1)	2	6.9
Low relevance (2)	0	0.0
Moderately relevant (3)	7	24.1
Fairly relevant (4)	15	51.7

Extremely relevant (5)	5	17.2
Total	29	100.0

The final set of measures evaluates whether the logo was perceived as visually coherent and suitable for its intended context. Table 13 shows that 66.6% of respondents considered the logo fairly or extremely balanced. A further 20.0% selected the moderate category, while 13.3% selected one of the two lowest categories. This distribution suggests that most respondents regarded the logo's visual arrangement positively, although a minority perceived limitations in its balance.

Visual balance is relevant because a logo must coordinate its constituent elements into a coherent composition. In a culturally grounded music project, traditional motifs, colour, typography, and possible musical references may compete for visual attention if their relative prominence is not carefully managed. The results suggest that the existing design achieved a broadly acceptable level of balance for most respondents. However, the frequency distribution alone cannot identify which individual elements contributed to these evaluations or whether particular design features caused negative responses.

Table 14 addresses the suitability of the logo for representing an independent music album. Of the 29 recorded responses, 51.7% rated it as fairly or extremely appropriate, while 44.8% considered it moderately appropriate. Only one respondent (3.4%) selected low appropriateness, and none selected the lowest category. The upper-category response was therefore only slightly above half of the valid responses, while almost half remained at the midpoint of the scale.

This pattern is more qualified than the results for cultural representation and attention-related effectiveness. It suggests that respondents generally did not reject the logo as inappropriate for an independent music album, but many did not regard its suitability as unequivocally strong. The distinction is important: a design may communicate cultural themes effectively yet still require refinement to function as a distinctive representation of a music release. The finding supports further evaluation of how well the logo integrates cultural symbolism with the visual conventions and communicative requirements of music branding.

Table 15 assesses the perceived relevance of the logo to Traditopia's target audience. Of the 29 recorded responses, 68.9% rated the logo as fairly or extremely relevant, 24.1% selected the moderate category, and 6.9% selected the lowest category. No respondents selected low relevance. Compared with album suitability, the upper-category response for target-audience relevance was higher (68.9% versus 51.7%). This difference suggests that respondents were more inclined to see the logo as relevant to the intended audience than to consider it an especially strong representation of an independent music album.

The contrast between these measures may reflect the fact that audience relevance and album suitability assess different aspects of visual identity. A logo may appear culturally appropriate or meaningful to a target audience without necessarily communicating the nature of the musical product with equal clarity. An important data-quality issue also arises in Tables 14 and 15. Both tables report 29 that responded, only one did not answer those require questions.

Qualitative Responses and Suggested Design Practices

Open-ended responses emphasized five recurring considerations. First, the logo should balance traditional Malaysian symbolism with contemporary visual language. Second, simplicity and memorability were viewed as important for use across album covers, merchandise, and social media. Third, cultural symbols should be meaningful rather than decorative, with respondents identifying the *keris, batik, tanjak*-related imagery, and colour choices as particularly relevant. Fourth, the logo should communicate the musical identity of the project more explicitly. Fifth, respondents recommended consistency across platforms so that repeated exposure can reinforce recognition.

Participants proposed several possible refinements, including stronger colour contrast, additional cultural symbols, clearer musical references, simplified visual composition, and typography that retains contemporary readability while allowing cultural associations. These suggestions indicate that logo development for an independent cultural music project involves balancing several potentially competing functions: cultural representation, musical identification, aesthetic appeal, memorability, and adaptability.

DISCUSSION

The Semiotic Asymmetry: Cultural Legibility versus Musical Genre Ambiguity

The empirical data reveal a pronounced semiotic asymmetry in audience reception: while 76.6% of respondents rated the Traditopia logo positively (fairly or extremely effective) for cultural representation, only 60.0% evaluated it positively for communicating musical identity a 16.6 percentage point deficit with 26.7% assigning a neutral/moderate rating and 13.4% rating it poorly.

Qualitative feedback indicates that respondents immediately identified denotative cultural markers, including the *keris* (traditional dagger), *batik*-inspired geometric motifs, *tanjak* (traditional headdress) references, and royal black-and-gold palettes. These motifs triggered rapid, culturally conditioned cognitive schemata associated with traditional Malay heritage. However, because these historical emblems carry heavy cultural connotations detached from modern sound recording conventions, they failed to communicate the acoustic dimension of the project namely, a 17-piece contemporary folk-jazz-funk ensemble. As visual branding theory demonstrates (Bresciani & Eppler, 2015; Henderson & Cote, 1998), when visual symbols rely exclusively on historical-cultural heritage, they risk semantic pigeonholing: audiences perceive the artifact as a historical or governmental cultural preservation initiative rather than a dynamic, contemporary musical release. For independent artists, visual identity must avoid semiotic misalignment, ensuring that traditional iconography is balanced with modern typographic or abstract musical signifiers that clearly signal genre.

The Recall-Memorability Gap in Crowded Media Ecosystems

A parallel divergence emerged between immediate aesthetic engagement and long-term brand equity indicators. Although 66.7% of respondents reported that the logo effectively captured attention and generated curiosity to explore the project, perceived memorability dropped to 56.7%, and visual suitability for an independent music album reached only 51.7% (with 44.8% remaining at the moderate midpoint). Interpreted through Keller's (1993) brand equity framework and Bagozzi and Silk's (1983) recall dynamics, this disparity illustrates the divide between initial perceptual orientation and enduring memory trace consolidation. A complex cultural logo can evoke immediate curiosity due to its ornate detail and cultural resonance; however, complex configurations often impede cognitive encoding (van der Lans et al., 2009). For independent music projects operating on mobile interfaces and streaming feeds, logos are displayed at micro-scales (e.g., social avatars, streaming thumbnails). Overly complex traditional motifs that lack high-contrast, minimalist silhouettes can suffer visual degradation at small scale, lowering both distinctiveness and automated brand recall. As a result, the logo acts as an attractive cultural illustration but remains underdeveloped as an instantly recognizable commercial trademark.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the perceived impact of logo design on brand recognition and evaluated the effectiveness of the Traditopia logo in communicating cultural and musical themes. The findings suggest that the logo communicates Malaysian cultural identity effectively, but its musical identity and memorability could be strengthened. The study highlights the importance of balancing cultural representation, musical relevance, and visual distinctiveness when developing logos for independent music projects. However, given the small sample of 30 respondents from two Malaysian higher-education institutions, the findings should be interpreted within the study context. Further research involving more diverse audiences and actual brand-recognition measures is needed to establish whether these perceptions translate into measurable branding outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategic Design Recommendations for Cultural Arts Branding

- **Dual-Signifier Integration:** Independent musicians fusing traditional and contemporary genres must implement a dual visual hierarchy: pairing traditional cultural signifiers (*keris*, *batik*) with explicit, modern typographic or geometric musical cues (e.g., soundwave vectors, instrument contours, modernist sans-serif typefaces) to prevent cultural heritage from overshadowing musical genre.

- **Responsive Multi-Scale Optimization:** Visual identities must be tested across digital streaming dimensions. Graphic assets should feature simplified vector marks capable of retaining legibility and visual punch at 16×16 and 32×32 pixel resolutions (e.g., Spotify canvas, Instagram avatars) without visual crowding.

Future Empirical Research

To build upon this exploratory baseline and overcome its sample and design constraints, future scholarship should pursue three empirical methodologies:

1. **Factorial Experimental Designs on Brand Recall:** Future studies should implement laboratory or web-based A/B split-testing protocols. Researchers should expose stratified cohorts ($N \geq 200$) to alternative logo iterations (varying cultural density, typographic style, and musical iconography) under controlled exposure windows (e.g., 2–5 seconds). Unaided recall and brand identification should be measured after distractor tasks and at 24-hour and 7-day intervals to empirically test cognitive retention and visual distinctiveness.

2. **Inferential and Multivariate Modeling:** Subsequent investigations should employ larger, nationally representative consumer samples to conduct inferential analyses. Employing multiple regression analysis or Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) will enable scholars to evaluate the structural pathways between cultural semiotic congruence, perceived aesthetic balance, musical clarity, and behavioral intent (e.g., streaming adoption, merchandise purchase).

3. **Ecological Behavioral Tracking:** Future research should measure actual consumer behavior rather than stated perceptions. By deploying alternative visual assets across live digital advertising campaigns (e.g., Meta Ads Manager, TikTok Spark Ads), researchers can track objective behavioral metrics such as cost-per-click (CPC), profile visits, Spotify pre-saves, and complete stream-through rates to evaluate the real-world commercial efficacy of culturally grounded visual branding.

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