

Character Design of Indonesian Chinese Youth for Webtoon “Kenangan Angpao”

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ABSTRACT

Chinese New Year celebrations hold significant cultural importance in China, embodying traditional values and symbolic meanings. However, the advent of globalization has led to a decline in the understanding of Chinese New Year culture among younger generations. Visual media, particularly webtoons, present a promising avenue for cultural introduction tailored to the characteristics of contemporary youth. This study seeks to design webtoon characters that embody the essence of Chinese New Year and represent young Chinese Indonesians in the context of modern life. The methodology employed in this study involves a structured design process encompassing pre-production, production, and post-production stages. The outcomes of this study are webtoon character designs that effectively convey the identity, lifestyle, and personality of young Chinese Indonesians. It is anticipated that this design serves as an alternative medium for introducing Chinese New Year culture, fostering greater relevance and acceptance among the younger generation.

KEYWORDS

Chinese New Year,
Culture, Webtoon,
Character, Design

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INTRODUCTION

Several previous studies have discussed the use of webtoon and character design as media for introducing culture to younger audiences. Research conducted by Ayuswanta (2014) explained that web-coins can become an alternative alternative medium for introducing traditional culture to younger generations because they combine visual storytelling with digital accessibility. Another study by Purnama (2023) showed that webtoon media is effective in delivering cultural and educational messages because it is interactive and easily accepted by digital-native audiences. In addition, research regarding character representation in webtoon by Ramadhan (2022) emphasized that character design plays an important role in building emotional engagement and strengthening audience understanding of cultural values represented in the story. These studies indicate that webtoon has strong potential as a medium for cultural introduction and preservation among young audiences.

However, previous studies mostly focused on traditional heritage, folklore, historical narratives, or general cultural representation. Research specifically discussing the visualization of contemporary Chinese-Indonesian youth characters as a medium for introducing Chinese New Year culture through slice-of-life webtoon storytelling is still limited. Most studies also focus more on narrative or media effectiveness, while discussions regarding character visualization that reflects the lifestyle, identity, and modern experiences of Chinese-Indonesian youth remain underexplored.

This study focuses on character design that will accompany readers in the webtoon “Kenangan Angpao”. Character design is more readily accepted if it aligns with the experiences and daily life of

the target audience, which also increases the target audience's engagement with the story being told (Love & Withers, 2015:44). Thus, character design is focused according to the characteristics of the target audience, namely teenagers around 18-25 years old of Chinese ethnicity, along with additional characters to support the story. The study focuses on how character design can function not only as a visual storytelling element but also as a bridge for introducing Chinese New Year traditions in a way that feels closer, more relatable, and relevant to Generation Z audiences. Through a slice-of-life approach and semi-realistic visual style, the character designs are expected to strengthen emotional connection while increasing cultural awareness among young readers.

To support this study, an online questionnaire was conducted on September 27, 2025, involving 72 Chinese-Indonesian respondents aged 18–25 from several cities in Indonesia, most of whom were university students actively using smartphones and social media platforms. The questionnaire results indicate that although most respondents celebrate Chinese New Year annually, many still have limited understanding regarding the meanings and traditions behind the celebration.

Based on these issues, this study can present the visualization of Chinese culture not only in a symbolic way but also reflecting everyday life and its contributions as an alternative medium for introducing Chinese New Year culture to the younger generation.

METHOD

The method used in designing character involves three stages according to the method used by Masnuna (Masnuna, 2023), namely the pre-production stage which is the stage before production, the production stage, and the post-production stage when the design is completed and can be implemented.

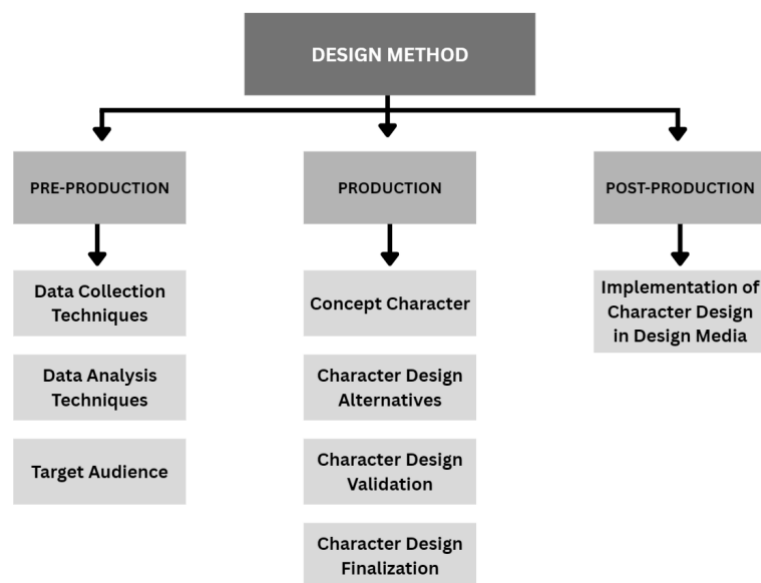


Figure 1. Design Method

The pre-production stage includes several data collection techniques through interviews with experts and online questionnaires conducted with young Chinese ethnic individuals aged 18-25. The data obtained is then analyzed using the 5W+1H method (What, Who, When, Where, Why, How). This method serves to solve problems by asking who is involved with the issue, what provides information about a problem that researchers need to pay attention to, where gives information on where the problem occurs, when indicates when an issue happens, why shows the reason why the problem may occur, and how explains how it can be done and how the problem arises (Jang, Ko, & Woo, 2015) in (Ridwan. Prasetyo, 2024). The target audience for this design is young Chinese ethnic individuals aged 18-25.

The production stage includes formulating concepts based on the results of the analysis obtained. Concept formulation consists of verbal concepts and visual concepts as a foundation for creating alternative character designs. These alternative character designs will then be validated by experts and the target design audience. The selected character design will be finalized in the form of a character sheet as a guideline in the webcomic production process. The post-production stage is the final stage, which implements the final character design into the webcomic and other supporting needs.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Pre-production

The pre-production stage begins with data collection techniques, using qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative data is obtained through interviews and observations. According to [Romdona \(2025\)](#), interviews are a technique where researchers can understand the respondents' perspectives, experiences, feelings, or opinions in more detail. Interviews were conducted with three sources: Pastor Wen Si Kho Tjihang San, a pastor of the Hok Swie Bio temple in Bojonegoro, with the aim of exploring in-depth data about Chinese New Year; young Chinese ethnic individuals who have limited knowledge about Chinese New Year; and the author of the webtoon Moon Flower, aiming to understand how to design a web comic on the Webtoon platform. Through these interviews, data was obtained indicating that there are many meanings derived from Chinese New Year in daily life, but young people have limited understanding of this, leading to their reluctance to continue the tradition. Webtoonist Moon Flower explained that the main character must have a goal and character development to capture the readers' attention.

Quantitative data was obtained through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to gather information about respondents' opinions, attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics related to a phenomenon to be studied ([Maulana, 2024](#)). The questionnaire was distributed on September 27, 2025, to young Chinese ethnic individuals aged 18-25, through media platforms such as WhatsApp. The purpose of this questionnaire was to collect data related to the audience, including age, knowledge about Chinese New Year, habits in using smartphones, their preferences for web comics, and their opinions on the introduction of Chinese New Year traditions through web comics. From the questionnaire, it was found that the target audience liked the semi-realistic webtoon art style and drama genre.

The collective data were then analyzed using the 5W+1H method to determine the direction of the character design process. The analysis results became the basis for constructing the visual identities of the characters, including clothing styles, body posture, facial expressions, personality representation, and cultural attributes. The character designs were intentionally developed to reflect the realities of contemporary Chinese-Indonesian youth while incorporating Chinese cultural elements in a modern and approachable way. This approach aimed to strengthen emotional engagement between the audience and the characters while also supporting the delivery of cultural values through visual storytelling in webtoon media.

- What is being researched? The design of character concepts in webtoon media that explore the Chinese New Year theme with representations of contemporary Chinese youth.
- Who is the target audience of the research? Indonesian Chinese youth aged 18-25 who are active on social media and have an interest in webtoons.
- Where are the character designs applied? The character designs are applied in the webtoon "Kenangan Angpao," which can be accessed through online platforms, making it easily reachable for the target audience.
- When is this character design relevant to use? The character design is created in a contemporary context, particularly to introduce and give meaning to Chinese New Year culture amid the development of popular culture and the lifestyle of young generations.
- Why is the character design necessary? Character design is necessary to build an emotional connection with the target audience. The characters are designed to reflect the realities of young people's lives to increase empathy and ensure better understanding.
- How is character design planning carried out? Character design planning is done through pre-

production by collecting and analyzing data, followed by the production stage where alternative character designs are created and validated, and finally the post-production stage where the character designs are applied to the web comic.

2. Production

Based on the data obtained through the process of data collection and analysis, the webtoon design concept for “Kenangan Angpao” emphasizes the portrayal of modern Indonesian Chinese youth with a drama genre and a slice of life sub-genre. The visual character concept prioritizes the representation of Indonesian Chinese youth, with visual styles such as clothing, facial expressions, and body language adjusted according to the characteristics of Chinese youth. This approach aims to present characters that are closer to the audience's reality, allowing Chinese New Year cultural values to be conveyed more naturally through character interactions and narratives. Character naming is adjusted to the naming of the Chinese ethnic group in Indonesia. According to [Suharyo \(2013\)](#), the Chinese ethnic community has a naming pattern in which their names are more Western-influenced compared to Indonesian names. The family name is retained phonetically as the first syllable in the Indonesian name, with graphic adjustments and combined with another syllable. There are a total of two main characters in the webtoon “Kenangan Angpao,” each referring to background, personality, status, and more. Before designing character visuals, the character sheet contains character references, background, biography, motivation, and character relationships. Character design alternatives are adjusted according to the character sheet and then validated by experts and the target audience

a. Jessica Chandra

The character Jessica Chandra represents a young Chinese-Indonesian who lives under the influence of globalization, which limits her understanding of her native culture. The character is depicted as a university student studying abroad to strengthen the story's background and narrative context. Alternative character design concepts were created based on visual references obtained from observations and adjusted to fit the needs of the developing story.


Jessica Chandra
<p><u>Background:</u> Jessica is a student studying abroad majoring in communication studies. She has never paid much attention to her own culture because she is more interested in foreign or modern cultures. Until one day, she received an assignment about each culture, but she knew nothing and tried to learn about her own culture again.</p>
<p>Referensi:</p> 
<p>Gambar 4. 1 Referensi Karakter Jessica Chandra (Sumber: Pinterest)</p>
<p><u>Current situation:</u> studying abroad and planning to return to my grandmother's house to learn about her culture again while also celebrating Chinese New Year</p>
<p><u>Traits:</u> Friendly, intelligent, independent</p>
<p><u>Age:</u> 23 Years</p>
<p><u>Motivation:</u> To study his own culture, especially the Chinese New Year tradition</p>
<p><u>Relationship:</u> Yohan's cousin, Chen Lien Hua's grandchild</p>

Figure 2. Character Sheets Jessica

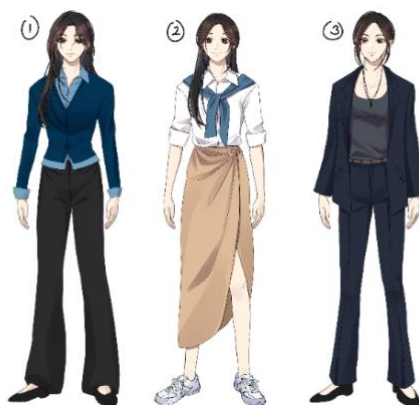


Figure 3. Alternative Design Character Jessica Chandra

Based on the questionnaire distributed to respondents aged 18–25 years, 38.4% of respondents chose the first alternative design of Jessica Chandra. The selected design was considered more relatable to the lifestyle of contemporary Chinese-Indonesian youth because it used casual modern fashion, natural facial expressions, and proportional body posture that reflected the daily appearance of university students. The semi-realistic visual style also strengthened the impression of realism and emotional closeness between the audience and the character.

According to Lubis and Budiwiwaramulja (2020), visual elements such as clothing style, facial expressions, and body proportions contribute significantly to the formation of character identity and audience perception in comic media. This supports the result that respondents preferred the first design alternative because the character visualization was perceived as more natural and suitable for the slice-of-life webtoon genre. In addition, Imanda et al. (2024) explain that relatable visual storytelling in digital comics can increase audience engagement and emotional attachment, especially among Generation Z readers who are familiar with digital visual media.

Rotama et al. (2024) explain that the modernization of traditional clothing in character design can function as a visual strategy to make cultural identity more accessible to contemporary audiences without removing its traditional meaning. Therefore, the visual design of Jessica's Chinese New Year version functions not only as an aesthetic element but also as a medium for introducing Chinese cultural values through digital storytelling.

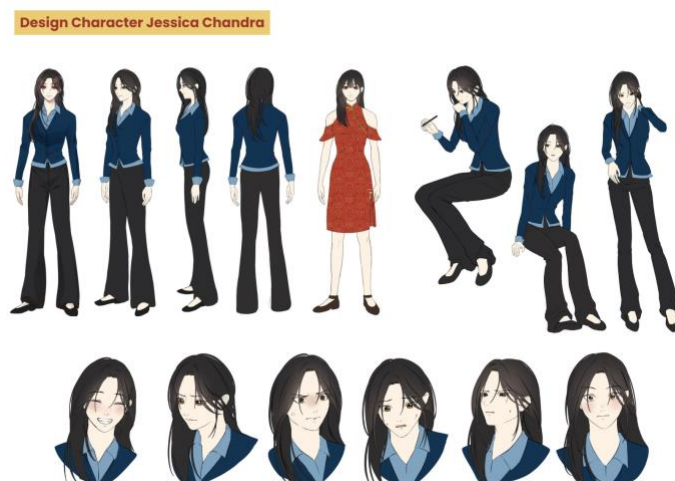


Figure 4. Final Design Character Jessica Chandra

b. Yohan Tanuwijaya

The character Yohan Tanuwijaya represents young Chinese-Indonesian individuals who live with cultural indifference and consider it something outdated, resulting in a limited understanding of

their own culture. The character is depicted as a child who is indifferent to cultural matters and can only accept things based on logic. Alternative character design concepts were developed based on visual references obtained from observations and adjusted to fit the needs of the story being developed.


Yohan Tanuwijaya
<u>Background: Yohan is a student who has moved away from home and lives in a boarding house, and he enjoys playing games. Yohan feels that Chinese New Year traditions are no longer relevant today and has unpleasant memories associated with these traditions.</u>
Referensi:

Gambar 4. 2 Referensi Karakter Yohan Tanuwijaya (Sumber: Pinterest)
<u>Current situation: Financial difficulties due to poor money management and planning to go back home to celebrate Chinese New Year to get red envelopes.</u>
<u>Personality: Rational, slightly stubborn</u>
<u>Age: 21 years old</u>
<u>Motivation: to receive Angpao and buy the games he likes</u>
Relationships:
Koko Cindy, Grandchild of Chen Lien Hua

Figure 5. Character Sheets Yohan

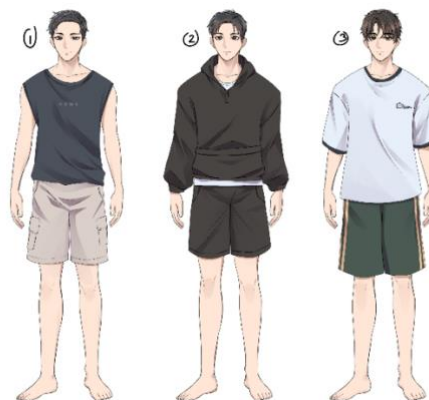


Figure 6. Alternative Design Character Yohan

Based on the questionnaire results distributed to respondents aged 18–25 years, 42.5% of respondents selected the first alternative design of Yohan Tanuwijaya. Respondents considered the design more representative of contemporary youth personalities because it used simple casual clothing, relaxed body posture, and neutral facial expressions that reflected the character’s logical and indifferent personality. The selected visual appearance successfully represented modern Chinese-Indonesian youth who are more influenced by globalization and less interested in traditional culture.

According to [Sekarayu et al. \(2025\)](#), character design should visually reflect personality traits and narrative roles in order to strengthen audience recognition and emotional engagement within digital storytelling media. This theory supports the selected Yohan design because the visual appearance consistently represented the character’s personality and role within the story narrative. Furthermore, relatable character visuals help audiences build emotional connections and parasocial

relationships with fictional characters, making the story easier to understand and emotionally engaging for readers.

Rusyada et al. (2025) state that character visualization in digital comics can serve as a medium for cultural representation because visual narratives help audiences understand traditional values more naturally through storytelling. Therefore, the Chinese New Year version of Yohan functions as a visual bridge between traditional Chinese culture and modern youth lifestyles, allowing cultural values to be introduced in a more relatable and engaging way for Generation Z readers.

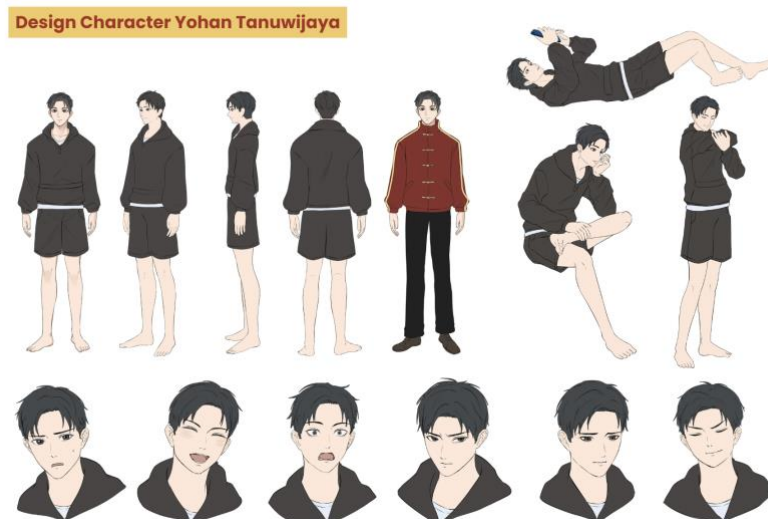


Figure 7. Final Design Character Yohan

3. Post-production

The postproduction stage is the final stage in the design process, where the character designs completed in the previous stage are implemented into the webtoon "Kenangan Angpao." In addition, the designs are also developed to meet the needs of webtoon support, such as designing the webtoon cover, as well as other visual media that support the distribution and introduction of the work.

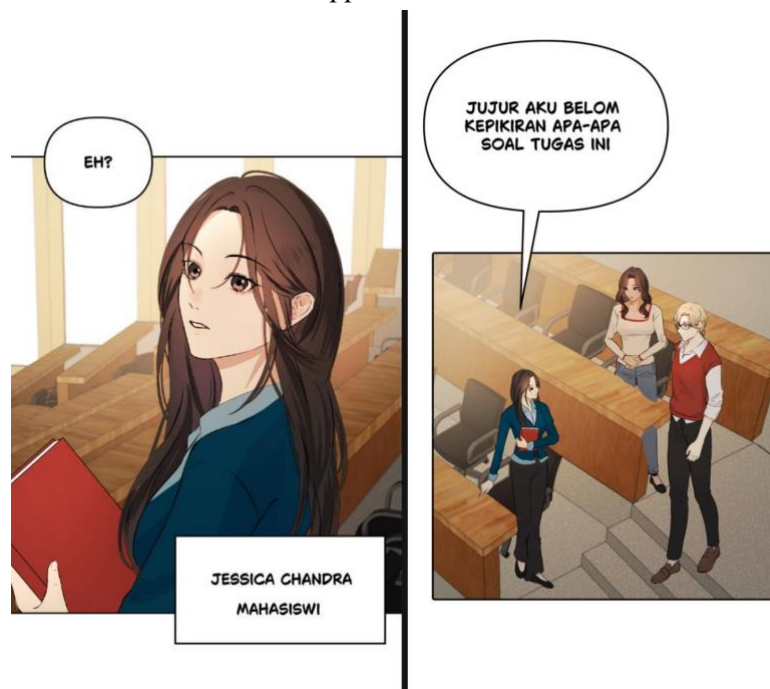


Figure 8. Implementation of Character Design in Webtoon

CONCLUSION

This study resulted in the design of webtoon characters representing contemporary Chinese-Indonesian youth through a semi-realistic visual style and slice-of-life approach. The character designs combine modern youth lifestyles with Chinese New Year cultural elements to create visuals that are relatable and relevant to Generation Z audiences. Elements such as modern cheongsam adaptations, symbolic colors, and contemporary fashion styles function as visual representations of cultural identity while helping introduce Chinese New Year traditions through digital storytelling.

This study also shows that webtoon media has the potential to become an alternative platform for cultural introduction among younger generations. However, this research is still limited to character design and visual representation without measuring the long-term effectiveness of the webtoon in increasing cultural understanding. Therefore, future studies are recommended to explore broader audiences and develop other digital media approaches for cultural preservation and education.

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