

Reimagining Southeast Asian Mythology in Digital Games: A Case Study of *Kabaret* by Persona Theory Games

Norhasheila Muharam, Mastura Hj Mohd Jarit dan Muhammad Fairus Kamaruzzaman

Fakulti Filem, Teater dan Animasi,^{2,3}Fakulti Seni Lukis dan Seni Reka, Universiti Teknologi MARA

ABSTRACT

Character design in digital games is more than creating visually appealing figures; it is an evolving discipline that blends storytelling, cultural heritage, and artistic expression. As global audiences increasingly seek diverse and culturally grounded narratives, Southeast Asian folklore offers a rich and underrepresented source of inspiration for digital games. This study investigates how Southeast Asian mythological characters are adapted and reimagined in game design, focusing on the representation of cultural identity through character design. The research centres on Kabaret, a narrative-driven game developed by Persona Theory Games, which features a cast of characters inspired by Southeast Asian myths and legends. Adopting a qualitative methodology, this study combines literature review with visual and thematic analysis. It examines character names, design aesthetics, personality traits, costume elements, cultural references, and symbolic forms to explore how cultural identity is visually encoded. Findings reveal that Kabaret achieves a balance between creative reinterpretation and cultural authenticity, presenting Southeast Asian culture in a manner that is both respectful and globally accessible. Each character contributes to a cohesive narrative that bridges traditional heritage with contemporary game aesthetics. This research underscores the role of digital games as powerful platforms for cultural storytelling and heritage preservation. It contributes to academic discourse in game studies on cultural representation and provides practical insights for developers and artists seeking to produce culturally respectful content. By bringing Southeast Asian folklore into the digital sphere, Kabaret demonstrates how games can foster intercultural appreciation and strengthen the visibility of regional identities in the creative industries.

Keywords: Character Design, Cultural Representation, Digital Games, Southeast Asian Mythology, Visual Analysis.

ABSTRAK

Reka bentuk watak dalam permainan digital bukan sekadar penciptaan figura yang menarik secara visual, ia merupakan satu disiplin yang berkembang dengan menggabungkan penceritaan, warisan budaya, dan ekspresi artistik. Dalam era ketika khalayak global semakin menginginkan naratif yang pelbagai dan berasaskan budaya, cerita rakyat Asia Tenggara menawarkan sumber inspirasi yang kaya namun kurang diwakili dalam permainan digital. Kajian ini menyelidik bagaimana watak mitologi Asia Tenggara disesuaikan dan diolah semula dalam reka bentuk permainan, dengan memberi tumpuan kepada representasi identiti budaya melalui reka bentuk watak. Penyelidikan ini memfokuskan kepada Kabaret, sebuah permainan naratif yang dibangunkan oleh Persona Theory Games, yang menampilkan barisan watak yang diinspirasikan daripada mitos dan legenda Asia Tenggara. Dengan menggunakan metodologi kualitatif, kajian ini menggabungkan ulasan literatur dengan analisis visual dan analisis tematik. Ia meneliti nama watak, estetika reka bentuk, ciri-ciri personaliti, elemen kostum, rujukan budaya, dan bentuk simbolik bagi meneroka bagaimana identiti budaya dikodkan secara visual. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa Kabaret berjaya mencapai keseimbangan antara interpretasi kreatif dan keaslian budaya, serta mempersembahkan budaya Asia Tenggara secara hormat dan boleh diakses oleh khalayak global. Setiap watak menyumbang kepada naratif yang padu, yang menghubungkan warisan tradisional dengan estetik permainan kontemporari. Kajian ini menegaskan peranan permainan digital sebagai platform yang

berkuasa dalam penceritaan budaya dan pemeliharaan warisan. Ia menyumbang kepada wacana akademik dalam kajian permainan mengenai representasi budaya dan memberikan panduan praktikal kepada pembangun dan artis yang ingin menghasilkan kandungan yang menghormati nilai budaya. Dengan membawa cerita rakyat Asia Tenggara ke dalam ruang digital, Kabaret membuktikan bahawa permainan mampu memupuk penghargaan antara budaya serta memperkuat keterlihatan identiti serantau dalam industri kreatif.

Kata kunci: Mitologi Asia Tenggara, Perwakilan Budaya, Permainan Digital, Rekabentuk Watak, Tenggara, Analisis Visual.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asia is a culturally rich region marked by diverse ethnicities, languages, and belief systems, with folklore and mythology forming a vital component of its intangible heritage. Across Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, mystical creatures occupy a central place in traditional narratives, reflecting deep relationships between humans, nature, and the supernatural. These beings are not merely fantastical figures, but symbolic expressions of moral values, spiritual beliefs, and communal worldviews embedded within everyday life. A defining characteristic of Southeast Asian mythical creatures is their embodiment of duality: they are often both feared and revered. Many function simultaneously as protectors and destroyers, mirroring natural forces that demand respect. The Garuda in Indonesian mythology exemplifies this dual role, symbolising divine power, protection, and national unity while representing authority and cosmic order (Syafrony, 2015). Similarly, the Nabau of Borneo is portrayed as a colossal serpent capable of destruction but revered as a guardian of rivers and natural balance, underscoring cultural respect for environmental forces (Janowski, 2019).

These creatures also act as moral instruments, conveying cautionary lessons that reinforce social norms. The Indonesian Babi Ngepet, a human who transforms into a pig to steal wealth, warns against greed and unethical behaviour (Indriana et al., 2021). Likewise, Malaysia's Harimau Jadian symbolises inner conflict between individual desire and communal responsibility, reflecting anxieties surrounding moral self-control and social order (EtAl, 2021). In the Philippines, the Ekek embodies fears associated with childbirth and vulnerability, revealing how folklore addresses deeply rooted social concerns (Stoic-Aswang, 2025). Despite rapid modernisation, these myths remain culturally resilient. They continue to evolve through film, literature, and digital media, adapting to contemporary contexts while retaining symbolic meaning (Eslit, 2023). Thai spirits such as phi krasue and phi pop, as well as Indonesia's modern reimaginings of mythic figures, demonstrate how folklore negotiates modern anxieties and identities (Ancuta, 2017; Saptanto et al., 2025). As living cultural symbols, Southeast Asian mystical creatures connect past traditions with present realities, preserving heritage while enabling cultural continuity in a changing world.

This study explores fascinating mythical figures from Southeast Asia as featured in digital games, focusing on their origins, characteristics, and cultural significance. Digital games offer an immersive and interactive platform for cultural storytelling. Unlike traditional media, games allow players to engage directly with cultural narratives, often resulting in a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage (Salen & Zimmerman, 2003). This study focuses on *Kabaret*, a narrative-driven game, and examines how its complex, historically rich characters, drawn from Southeast Asian mythology, are adapted in the digital space. As efforts to preserve cultural heritage through digital means grow, games present new opportunities to document, reimagine, and share traditional art forms with global audiences. However, translating cultural heritage into games is not without challenges. Key issues include the risks of cultural appropriation and misrepresentation, as well as the ethical responsibility of creators. Cultural appropriation, in which cultural elements are used out of context or without proper

understanding, can result in stereotyping or dilution of meaning (Smith, 2006; Lancefield et al., 1998). As such, game designers must navigate the delicate balance between cultural authenticity and creative freedom. While digital games can help make intangible heritage more accessible, they also risk simplifying complex traditions for entertainment (Maier, 2015). These ethical considerations are central to this study, which emphasizes the importance of culturally respectful design.

In *Kabaret* game, character design plays a crucial role in conveying cultural meaning. Well-crafted characters can bring traditional stories to life, offering players insight into the values, aesthetics, and symbols of a particular community. In this context, character design must capture both the theatrical flair and symbolic depth of the original art form, while adapting it for the interactive and visual demands of the game format (Bennett, 2018). This study uses a case study approach to analyze how visual elements, costume design, and underlying design choices reflect and reinterpret cultural themes in *Kabaret*. To gain a comprehensive understanding of how *Kabaret*'s characters represent cultural heritage in a respectful and engaging manner, this research combines gameplay observation, visual analysis, and interviews with game designers and cultural experts. It explores the broader implications of cultural representation in digital games, highlighting how such media can foster cross-cultural appreciation and preserve traditional knowledge in modern forms. Ultimately, this study contributes to ongoing discussions on cultural representation in game design. It illustrates how digital platforms, when used thoughtfully, can serve not just as tools for entertainment but also as vehicles for cultural education, preservation, and creative reinterpretation. By examining the adaptation of *Kabaret* characters in games, the research sheds light on the evolving relationship between tradition and technology in Southeast Asia's growing game development industry.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Culture Heritage in Digital Games

The preservation of cultural heritage through digital games has become an important area of academic and creative inquiry as societies grow increasingly digitised. Digital platforms now function as key tools for sustaining and reinterpreting cultural identities. Champion et al. (2021) argue that virtual heritage enables not only documentation but also immersive and interactive experiences that foster emotional engagement and memory. Games, in particular, can simulate traditional practices and cultural narratives for wider audiences, though this process raises challenges of authenticity, context, and representation. Cultural heritage includes both tangible and intangible elements, such as monuments, folklore, language, and rituals (Smith, 2006), which are often difficult to translate into digital forms without losing cultural meaning. Vindigni (2023) stresses that narrative expression and visual aesthetics must remain culturally resonant to avoid superficial representation.

Contrasting static media, games introduce interaction as a central mode of engagement. Maier (2015) and Champion (2021) suggest that culturally informed interactivity can transform players into active participants within heritage narratives, as demonstrated by *Never Alone (Kisima Ingitchuna)* (Bennett, 2018). However, issues of stereotyping and appropriation persist when cultural elements are used without consent or understanding (Jansz & Martis, 2007; Lancefield et al., 1998). Globalisation further risks cultural homogenisation (De Zoysa & Appadurai, 1998), yet digital storytelling also empowers communities to reclaim and share their narratives (Lundby, 2008). When developed collaboratively and sensitively, digital games can revitalise cultural heritage and expand its global appreciation (Champion, 2021).

2.2 Character Design in Digital Games

Character design in digital games functions as both a narrative and cultural vehicle, integrating visual aesthetics with symbolic representation to shape player immersion and emotional engagement. Salen and Zimmerman (2003) identify character design as central to narrative involvement, particularly when characters are grounded in real-world cultural contexts. In Malaysian games such as *Kabaret*, the fusion of cultural motifs, mythology, and visual storytelling demonstrates how character design can act as a platform for cultural transmission while enabling creative innovation. However, this process requires a careful balance between artistic expression and cultural integrity. Vindigni (2023) stresses that visual aesthetics and narrative elements must align with cultural frameworks to prevent culture from being reduced to surface decoration, a challenge especially relevant when adapting Southeast Asian folklore into contemporary game formats.

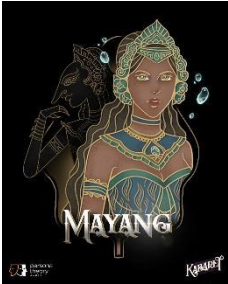
Digital games also provide new affordances for cultural engagement by representing layered identities across ethnicity, gender, and tradition. Jansz and Martis (2007) argue that diverse character representation can challenge stereotypes and promote inclusivity, though misrepresentation often arises when design choices prioritise commercial tropes over cultural meaning. As gaming becomes increasingly mainstream, its cultural influence expands. Jamil and Kadir (2015) note that Malaysian youth's engagement with digital entertainment positions games as significant cultural artefacts, while Champion (2021) highlights their dual potential for entertainment and education. Games like *Kabaret* exemplify how character design can preserve and reinterpret heritage, reflecting Vindigni's (2023) concept of "cultural affinity," where cultural depth enhances narrative resonance and contemporary relevance.

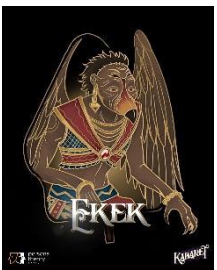
3.0 Result and Finding

Kabaret holds significant cultural value for Southeast Asia by bringing its rich mythology to the forefront. The game introduces players to mythical creatures and traditional stories that are unique to the region, offering a fresh perspective rarely seen in mainstream games. By weaving in traditional music, languages, and art styles, *Kabaret* not only celebrates cultural identity and pride but also serves as an educational bridge for players around the world. Through its storytelling, the game fosters cross-cultural appreciation and helps players better understand Southeast Asian customs and beliefs.

Importantly, *Kabaret* plays a key role in revitalizing interest in local myths, particularly among younger generations. By presenting these age-old stories in an interactive and engaging digital format, the game helps ensure that Southeast Asia's cultural heritage remains relevant and cherished in today's digital world. The characters in *Kabaret* are a testament to this cultural richness, demonstrating how diverse traditions and artistic influences can come together to create an immersive and memorable gaming experience. Player interaction with these characters also offers valuable insights. Through data analysis, the game can reveal how cultural diversity impacts gameplay and shapes player identity, providing a deeper understanding of how cultural narratives resonate within a global audience. Ultimately, *Kabaret* does more than entertain it educates, preserves, and shares Southeast Asian cultural heritage on a global stage, promoting cultural appreciation, pride, and meaningful engagement through play.

Table 1 Analysis of Character Cultural Visual Representation

Character Name	Character Visual	Characteristics	Cultural Influence	Costume and Shape Representation	Cultural Visual Representation
Jebat		A solid, heroic warrior with a shadowed presence, embodying courage, fierce loyalty, inner conflict, rebellion, and the tragedy of divided convictions.	A central Malay folkloric hero from <i>Hikayat Hang Tuah</i> , symbolising loyalty, betrayal, rebellion, moral conflict, and the enduring complexity of warrior duty. (Abdillah, 2016)	Wears hybrid traditional fantasy Malay attire; a muscular, grounded stance and occasional serpentine transformation visualise mystical power, strength, and inner rebellion	Dark earthy tones of black, green, and grey with shadowy motifs convey inner conflict, moral ambiguity, and a looming tragic destiny.
Mayang		A graceful, elegant figure with refined movement, embodying gentle wisdom, calm authority, noble beauty, and the dignified virtues of royalty.	Rooted in Malay and Javanese folklore, she symbolises royal femininity through beauty, grace, inner strength, love, sacrifice, and supernatural elegance. (Indriana et al., 2021)	She wears ornate batik attire with elegant jewellery; a slender silhouette and flowing garments emphasise poise, refinement, and timeless mythical beauty.	Soft pastels, gold, and green with water motifs express purity, elegance, natural harmony, supernatural origins, and serene regal authority.
Garuda		A powerful avian-humanoid guardian with commanding wings and talons, embodying noble vigilance, divine authority, protection, and revered mythical strength.	Rooted in Hindu-Buddhist mythology, Garuda symbolises divine power, freedom, solar authority, and celestial guardianship with deep Southeast Asian	Ornate golden armour and jewellery crown a muscular, winged form, reinforcing divine royalty, cultural grandeur, and Garuda's imposing guardian presence.	Gold, red, and black with sun motifs and traditional patterns convey divinity, purity, power, strength, and Garuda's celestial guardianship.

			significance. (Syafrony, 2015)		
Babi Ngepet		A grotesque human-boar hybrid with an intimidating form, embodying cunning greed, malevolence, deception, and dangerous trickster villainy.	Rooted in Indonesian folklore, Babi Ngepet symbolises greed, deceit, black magic, temptation, and moral downfall through boar-like transformation. (Indriana et al., 2021)	Tattered red-green garments, hunched posture, tusks, snout, and coarse fur merge human and boar forms, emphasising grotesque, folkloric menace.	Dark blacks, browns, and deep reds with pig features and traditional patterns convey secrecy, blood, greed, and sinister folkloric identity.
Ekek		A bird-humanoid figure with wings and beak-like features, projecting predatory intimidation, impatience, superiority, and authoritative dominance.	Inspired by Southeast Asian bird spirits like Ekek and Wak Wak, symbolising predatory threat, speed, danger, fear, and supernatural power. (Stoic-Aswang, 2025)	Bold geometric attire in red and blue with gold accents crowns a muscular bird-human form, projecting authority, dominance, and otherworldly menace.	Deep reds and blues with gold accents, avian features, and geometric motifs signal status, supernatural power, death symbolism, and regional heritage.
Were-Tiger or Harimau Jadian		A masked figure with exaggerated features projects mystery and intimidation, embodying an authoritative, enigmatic guardian overseeing events from concealment.	Rooted in Southeast Asian mask performance traditions, symbolising spiritual guardianship, ritual storytelling, and mediation between human and supernatural realms. (Boomgaard, 2017)	An ornate ceremonial robe and exaggerated mask blend human and supernatural forms, emphasising high status, ritual importance, and mystical authority.	Regal gold, blue, and purple with ritual masks and textile motifs convey ceremonial authority, cultural storytelling, and sacred performative heritage.

<i>Nabau</i>		A serpentine humanoid with scaled skin and mask projects eerie mystery, cautious distance, quiet menace, and concealed supernatural power.	Rooted in Bornean and Malaysian folklore, Nabau symbolises serpent power, water elemental force, and dual roles as guardian or adversary. (Janowski, 2019)	Minimal scaled attire with Iban elements shapes a sleek serpentine humanoid, merging human intelligence with animalistic mythical power.	Green, red, and earthy tones with scales, green skin, and fluid posture express water mythology, ancient power, and deep cultural connection to nature.
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Kabaret is a dark fantasy adventure game that immerses players in the rich and diverse mythological landscape of Southeast Asia. Table 1 presents the characters featured in the game, each of whom is closely connected to Southeast Asian cultural heritage. The characters are carefully crafted, drawing inspiration from regional stories, legends, and folklore, thereby introducing these traditional narratives to a global audience. Their designs are firmly rooted in Southeast Asian cultural traditions, seamlessly blending traditional visual elements with contemporary digital game design principles. These characters serve as cultural ambassadors, effectively conveying the depth and diversity of Southeast Asian mythology to players worldwide. Beyond their aesthetic appeal, they carry significant cultural value.

The game’s narrative is intricately interwoven with the characters’ visual and symbolic representations, offering a storytelling experience that not only entertains but also contributes to cultural preservation. This approach underscores the potential of digital games to safeguard, reinterpret, and distribute cultural heritage in meaningful ways. Table 1 provides a detailed analysis of each character’s cultural background and mythological significance, which is central to this paper’s focus on preserving cultural heritage through digital games. The table further supports the study’s aim to explore the visual adaptation of these culturally significant figures while maintaining their authenticity. Additionally, it addresses the challenges and opportunities involved in introducing iconic cultural characters into contemporary gaming spaces, reflecting the broader discourse on how digital platforms can both protect and transform cultural heritage

3.1 Summary of Cultural and Design Patterns in Character Design

Across all *Kabaret* characters, several common design patterns emerge that effectively represent Southeast Asian cultural heritage both visually and narratively. Rooted in regional folklore and mythology, these characters embody mythological traits, ethical narratives, and symbolic meanings reflective of their cultural origins. Tangible and intangible cultural elements such as traditional attire, ritualistic motifs, and moral analogies are woven into their designs to create a rich sense of authenticity. Visually, the characters feature traditional aesthetics, including masks, animal-human hybrids, and culturally specific color palettes that reinforce their symbolic roles and mythic significance. Common themes such as loyalty, greed, transformation, and guardianship recur across characters, highlighting deeper cultural messages and ethical dilemmas. A consistent interplay between human and supernatural features enhances their hybrid visual forms, blending traditional identity with modern digital storytelling. This alignment of visual, symbolic, and narrative components reflects *Kabaret*’s overarching design philosophy: to preserve, reinterpret, and celebrate Southeast Asian heritage through immersive, character-driven experiences that are culturally grounded yet globally accessible.

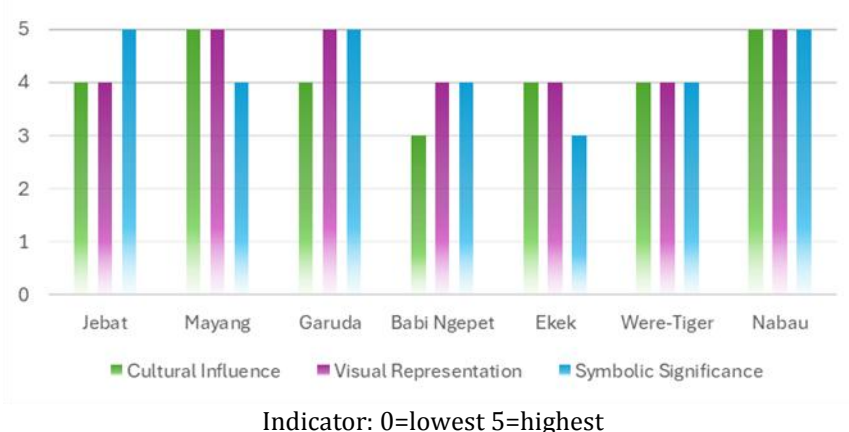


Figure 1. Comparative Analysis of Kabaret Character.

The accompanying column chart in Figure 1 offers a comprehensive overview of the character evaluations across three key dimensions: cultural influence, visual representation, and symbolic significance. Characters like Nabau and Garuda are deeply rooted in Southeast Asia's cultural heritage, playing essential roles in embodying regional mythology and traditions. Nabau and Mayang particularly excel at visual representation, with their intricate, culturally rich designs significantly enhancing their presence and role in the game. Jebat and Garuda contribute substantial symbolic depth, enriching the game's narrative and thematic layers. The chart illustrates how the game's characters strike a careful balance among cultural authenticity, visual appeal, and conceptual depth, underscoring the game's broader effort to respectfully adapt cultural heritage in a contemporary digital gaming space.

3.2 Culture Influence

Characters such as Nabau and Garuda stand out for their strong cultural influence, largely due to their deep-rooted connections to Southeast Asian mythology and folklore. These characters play significant roles in the game's cultural narrative and effectively embody traditional elements. Jebat and Mayang also demonstrate notable cultural influence, though their impact is somewhat less pronounced. Their designs incorporate both culturally specific elements and more universal, adaptable features. In contrast, characters like Babi Ngepet and Ekek receive lower ratings in terms of cultural influence. While they remain culturally significant, their roles within the game's broader cultural storyline appear less prominent than those of other characters.

3.3 Visual Representation

In terms of visual representation, Nabau, Garuda, and Mayang excel with intricate designs that strongly align with cultural themes and traditional Southeast Asian aesthetics. Their visual designs are not only elaborate but also well integrated into the game's overall art direction. Jebat and Babi Ngepet display solid visual representations, although their designs are less detailed than those of the highest-ranking characters. They effectively incorporate key cultural motifs but tend toward simpler execution. Ekek and Were-Tiger present a more modest visual impact. While their designs are still effective, they lack the complexity and cultural depth evident in the top-scoring characters.

3.4 Symbolic Significance

Jebat, Garuda, and Nabau hold strong symbolic significance within the game, serving as key representations of the game's deeper messages and cultural themes. These characters are

crucial to the game's conceptual depth and narrative structure. Mayang and Babi Ngepet also carry symbolic meaning, though their contributions to the core themes are somewhat less central. Their symbolic roles are relevant but not as critical to the main storyline. On the other hand, Ekek and Were-Tiger exhibit reduced symbolic importance, suggesting that their primary function in the game is utilitarian rather than symbolic.

3.5 Exploring Cultural Values and Historical Narratives

The integration of cultural values and historical narratives within digital games offers a valuable framework for examining identity formation and the preservation of cultural heritage. As digital games continue to expand, their role in representing, adapting, and disseminating cultural traditions becomes increasingly significant. This section explores how digital games, particularly Kabaret, serve as innovative platforms for cultural education, preservation, and reinterpretation. Digital games are uniquely positioned to offer immersive, interactive experiences that extend beyond traditional forms of cultural representation. Unlike static media such as literature or film, games enable players to directly engage with cultural symbols, practices, and stories, creating participatory environments that encourage experiential learning (McGonigal, 2011). In Kabaret, the game does not simply replicate the visual elements of the traditional theatrical form; it invites players to actively interact with its music, costumes, and storytelling practices, fostering a deeper cultural connection.

The adaptation of Kabaret in a digital game context also highlights the careful navigation required to translate cultural heritage into new media. Game designers must balance fidelity to traditional art forms with the creative possibilities offered by digital platforms. This requires deliberate attention to visual aesthetics, costume design, and narrative structure to ensure cultural authenticity while accommodating the medium's stylistic demands. For example, while the Kabaret characters retain essential traditional features, their designs are adapted to align with digital artistic conventions, keeping the game accessible and visually engaging without compromising cultural integrity. Translating cultural forms like Kabaret into digital games presents both challenges and opportunities. One significant challenge lies in ensuring that the representation is respectful, accurate, and avoids cultural appropriation or misinterpretation. This demands close collaboration with cultural experts and sustained engagement with source communities throughout the design process (Nakamura, 2009). On the other hand, digital games offer exceptional opportunities to revitalize cultural heritage and introduce it to global audiences, especially those who might not otherwise encounter these traditions.

Furthermore, digital platforms provide dynamic spaces where cultural narratives can evolve. As players interact with Kabaret characters and their stories, they contribute to a living, adaptive cultural dialogue. This interactive engagement helps preserve the essence of cultural heritage while keeping it relevant and meaningful in a contemporary context. Through the careful integration of cultural values and historical narratives, Kabaret exemplifies the potential of digital games as tools for cultural preservation and education. Characters such as Jebat, Mayang, Garuda, Babi Ngepet, Ekek, Were-Tiger, and Nabau serve as cultural repositories, preserving and reinterpreting diverse mythological traditions from Southeast Asia. Each character embodies cultural values, historical narratives, and ethical complexities that enrich the game's storyline with depth and nuance. Ultimately, Kabaret stands as a compelling example of how digital games can foster cross-cultural understanding and appreciation while safeguarding folklore and intangible cultural heritage. The game illustrates the potential of digital platforms not only to preserve but also to dynamically transform cultural narratives, making them accessible and engaging for future generations.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This study highlights the vital role character design plays at the intersection of cultural heritage and interactive storytelling. In digital games, characters are more than visual constructs; they are emotional and narrative anchors that connect players to the game world. When these characters are rooted in traditional forms like *Kabaret*, their design becomes an act of cultural translation. For developers, *Kabaret* presents both a creative opportunity and a responsibility: to adapt characters rich in symbolism and history without losing their essence. For cultural scholars, it offers a valuable case study in how mythical legends and regional identities can find new life in digital media. The process reveals the delicate balance between artistic freedom and cultural sensitivity, an ongoing negotiation that shapes how cultures are represented, shared, and sometimes reshaped in virtual spaces.

This research identified several recurring strategies in *Kabaret*'s character design, the integration of symbolic attire, traditional aesthetics, mythological references, and hybrid human-supernatural forms. These shared design patterns not only strengthen the game's narrative cohesion but also serve as tools for cultural preservation and education. Through careful visual storytelling, the game transforms Southeast Asian folklore into accessible, emotionally resonant experiences for global audiences. By examining how *Kabaret*'s archetypal characters are reimagined in a game setting, this study underscores the importance of cultural authenticity in design. It also highlights the growing role of games as platforms for cultural storytelling and intercultural dialogue. Moving forward, further exploration into how players perceive, engage with, and are influenced by culturally embedded characters will be essential for shaping more inclusive and meaningful gaming experiences. Ultimately, this work advocates for closer collaboration between creators and cultural communities, paving the way for games that are not only visually compelling and narratively rich but also deeply rooted in heritage and respectful of cultural complexity.

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