

Interior Design Aesthetics: Harmonizing Theme, Style, Color, and Material

Mahdi Nurcahyo | Faculty of Visual Arts and Design | ISI Yogyakarta

Abstract

The importance of understanding concepts in interior design; particularly theme, style, color, and material, is fundamental to creating spaces that are not only functional but also aesthetically meaningful. These four elements serve as the core components in establishing a coherent visual identity and spatial atmosphere. When these elements are not harmoniously integrated, the result can be visual dissonance and discomfort in user experience. This study aims to examine how interior design students integrate theme, style, color, and material in their design processes. A qualitative approach was employed through case studies of student works from an interior design program. Analysis focused on visual documents, conceptual descriptions, and interviews with selected students. The findings reveal that a strong conceptual understanding of these elements significantly contributes to the quality of the final design, especially in producing narrative unity and visual cohesion. However, the study also identified challenges in translating abstract concepts into consistent visual forms. These insights highlight the need for pedagogical strategies that emphasize comprehensive aesthetic integration in interior design education.

Keywords: Interior Design Aesthetics, Concept Design, Student Design Project

1. Introduction

In interior design practice, a deep understanding of design concepts serves as a fundamental foundation for producing works that are not only functional but also aesthetically and emotionally engaging. A design concept is not merely an initial idea; it is a framework of thought that guides the integration of all visual and material elements involved. Among these elements, theme, style, color, and material play a crucial role in shaping the character and atmosphere of a space. When these four elements are understood and applied harmoniously, interior design can offer a spatial experience that is cohesive, balanced, and meaningful.

However, within the context of interior design education, the integration of these elements often presents challenges, especially for students who are still developing their design thinking. Students frequently struggle to align their conceptual ideas with their visual outcomes, leading to inconsistencies between the intended concept and the resulting design. This disconnect may stem from a lack of understanding of the interrelationship among design elements or from a fragmented design approach.

This study aims to explore how interior design students understand and integrate theme, style, color, and material throughout their design process. Using a qualitative approach and case studies of student works, the research investigates strategies, strengths, and challenges that students encounter in achieving aesthetic harmony within interior spaces. Through visual analysis and interviews, the study also seeks to understand how students construct their design narratives and how their conceptual frameworks influence visual decision-making.

This research is expected to contribute to the development of a more integrative and reflective approach to interior design education. By emphasizing the importance of holistic aesthetic understanding and the interconnection between fundamental design elements, educational institutions can design more effective teaching methods that nurture students' aesthetic sensitivity and conceptual abilities. Additionally, the findings are relevant to design practitioners and educators in formulating curricula, studio practices, or learning projects that emphasize the harmonization of design elements as a key competency in professional design practice.

2. What is Design Concept?

A design concept is the foundation upon which the entire design process is built. It is the guiding idea or vision that drives the creation of a product, space, or experience. In essence, the concept serves as the blueprint for every decision made during the design process, reflecting the designer's understanding of the problem at hand and their approach to solving it. A strong design concept is clear, consistent, and cohesive, acting as a thread that ties together all aspects of the project. As Lawson (2019) explains, a design concept is not just an initial idea but an evolving framework that adapts and transforms throughout the process, shaped by feedback, iteration, and critical thinking.

In interior design, the concept often encompasses the intended atmosphere, style, and functional goals of a space, as well as cultural, historical, or personal influences. It considers how the design will engage users and how they will interact with the space. The design concept goes beyond aesthetic choices, such as color schemes, materials, and layouts; it also includes practical elements like

spatial flow, ergonomics, and sustainability. Pile (2021) argues that a well-constructed design concept must address both the sensory and functional needs of the user, ensuring that the space is not only visually pleasing but also comfortable and efficient.

For instance, a minimalist design concept may focus on simplicity and clean lines, with a limited color palette and a strong emphasis on functionality. On the other hand, a more eclectic concept could combine diverse styles, colors, and materials to create a dynamic, personalized space. Regardless of the approach, the design concept serves as the backbone of the design, ensuring that all elements work cohesively to fulfill the vision and meet user needs. Boffi and Avraamides (2020) suggest that the concept must remain adaptable and flexible, capable of responding to changes and new insights while maintaining its core values.

Ultimately, the design concept is more than just an idea, it is a strategic plan that guides the transformation of abstract ideas into tangible, meaningful spaces or products. In today's design landscape, concepts also need to address global challenges, such as sustainability and environmental impact, while still engaging users creatively. Kim and Lee (2022) note that the design concept must balance aesthetic appeal with ecological and social responsibility, ensuring that design is both innovative and mindful of its broader effects on the environment and society.

3. Interior Design Aesthetics: Design Research

Design research plays a pivotal role in shaping the aesthetics of interior design by providing insights into how people perceive, interact with, and experience spaces. As a field, it aims to understand the relationship between form, function, and sensory perception, guiding designers in creating spaces that resonate with users on an emotional and experiential level. According to Koskinen et al. (2019), design research is an iterative process that not only investigates the physical characteristics of design elements, such as materials, textures, and colors, but also considers the psychological and cultural factors that influence how these elements are interpreted by users.

In interior design, aesthetics is not just about creating visually pleasing environments but about fostering a deeper connection between people and their surroundings. Research into interior design aesthetics explores how elements like spatial configuration, light, color, and materiality impact users' moods, behaviors, and overall well-being. As Cohen and Kalantari (2021) note, understanding the sensory experience of space is crucial for designers, as it helps them to balance aesthetic appeal with functional and emotional needs.

Design research also involves examining how cultural, historical, and social contexts influence aesthetic preferences and perceptions. Heskett (2020) argues that aesthetics in interior design must not only address universal principles of beauty and harmony but also be responsive to the diverse needs and values of different user groups. By incorporating insights from design research, interior designers can create environments that are not only visually stimulating but also meaningful and culturally relevant to the people who use them.

4. Case Study: Student Design Projects

In the design of student work A, seen in the interior design of the Tunggal Inti Kahuripan Souvenir Shop and Café, the concept is "down the memory lane." In the context of interior design, this concept means creating an atmosphere reminiscent of the past, inviting users to reconnect with the nostalgic feel of bygone times. The application of the 'down the memory lane' concept in the new Tunggal Inti Kahuripan interior design includes the use of decorations, color palettes, shapes, and furniture that reference the 'Classic Dutch East Indies' style or elements, aiming to evoke a strong sense of Indonesia's historical past. This creates a unique experience for visitors, transporting them back in time through visual elements and the atmosphere brought forth by the interior design of a commercial public space.

4.1 Implementation of harmony of theme, and style

The interior design applies a Heritage theme with a Classic Dutch East Indies style or Indies style, with some adjustments to remain relevant in the context of the modern era. Interior design should not only aim to create visually aesthetic spaces but also ensure that the space meets current needs and lifestyles. Classic elements that evoke nostalgia will be integrated with modern materials, technologies, and design concepts, creating harmony between the legacy of the past and the demands of the present. The goal is to create a space that is not only visually appealing but also meets the functional needs of today's world.

The choice of the Classic Dutch East Indies or Indies design style for the interior was selected because it perfectly aligns with the "down the memory lane" concept, which holds deep meaning in creating a nostalgic atmosphere, inviting users to reconnect with the ambiance of the past. The chosen design style is not merely visual aesthetics but also serves as a tool/media to take users on a nostalgic journey to the past, reminding them of the experiences and beauty of old Indonesia. Thus, the space focuses not only on functionality but also

becomes a medium that brings memories to life, connecting past and present generations, creating a space filled with stories and captivating nostalgia.



Figure 1. Design reference to be applied



Figure 2. Application of interior themes and styles

4.2 Implementation of harmony of colour and material

The choice of the Classic Dutch East Indies or Indies design style for the interior was selected because it perfectly aligns with the "down the memory lane" concept, which The color scheme used in the interior of the Tunggal Inti Kahuripan Souvenir Shop and Café will predominantly feature white and brown tones. This color choice is derived from the interior palette of the building, which embodies the classic Indies style. White, as a neutral and clean color, is chosen to create a sense of spaciousness and clarity within the space. It serves as a backdrop that enhances the other design elements, while also giving the space a timeless, elegant feel. White is also a dominant color traditionally used in the interiors of Dutch colonial buildings, symbolizing a sense of purity and openness.

Brown, on the other hand, is inspired by the natural color of wood, which was commonly used in the Dutch East Indies era. The warm, earthy tone of brown evokes a sense of comfort and connection to nature. It creates a welcoming atmosphere, making the space feel cozy and grounded. The combination of white and brown creates a harmonious balance, evoking both the simplicity and richness of the past while ensuring a modern, inviting atmosphere. This color palette aligns with the overall heritage theme, reinforcing the nostalgic ambiance while catering to contemporary design sensibilities.



Figure 3. Color scheme

The selection of materials is also crucial, as the materials used in the elements that form the space and the furniture indirectly provide the identity and character of the interior. The materials chosen for the interior design of Tunggal Inti Kahuripan include plain key tiles, patterned key tiles, HPL laminate, plain white ceramics, gypsum, and teak wood. Each of these materials was carefully chosen not only for its aesthetic value but also for its ability to enhance the overall design concept. Textures play a significant role in the design, as they contribute to the sensory experience of the space. The smooth surface of plain white ceramics contrasts with the textured richness of teak wood, creating visual depth and tactile interest. The patterned key tiles add a layer of historical reference, evoking the Dutch East Indies period and reinforcing the nostalgic atmosphere of the design. The combination of these materials creates an interplay between traditional and modern elements. The use of natural materials like teak wood brings warmth and timeless appeal, while the more contemporary finishes like HPL laminate and gypsum introduce a clean, modern touch. Together, these materials work in harmony to strengthen the design concept, offering a space that is not only visually appealing but also rich in texture, history, and sensory experience.



Figure 4. Material Board

4.3 Implementation of the "down the memory lane" concept in rendering visualization

The implementation of the "down the memory lane" concept in rendering visualization focuses on creating a nostalgic atmosphere that transports users to a past era through visual representation. In interior design, this concept is brought to life by using design elements like color schemes, materials, and furniture that evoke memories of a specific time period. The rendering process plays a crucial role in translating these ideas into a visually compelling and immersive experience. By incorporating textures, lighting, and spatial arrangements, the rendered visualization can simulate the ambiance of the past while highlighting the historical elements of the design. For example, warm tones like brown and beige, along with vintage furniture styles, help enhance the nostalgic feel.



Figure 5. Shop Rendering Perspective by Thio Rahman



Figure 6. Shop Rendering Perspective by Thio Rahman

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Figure 7. Photo Spot Rendering Perspective by Thio Rahman

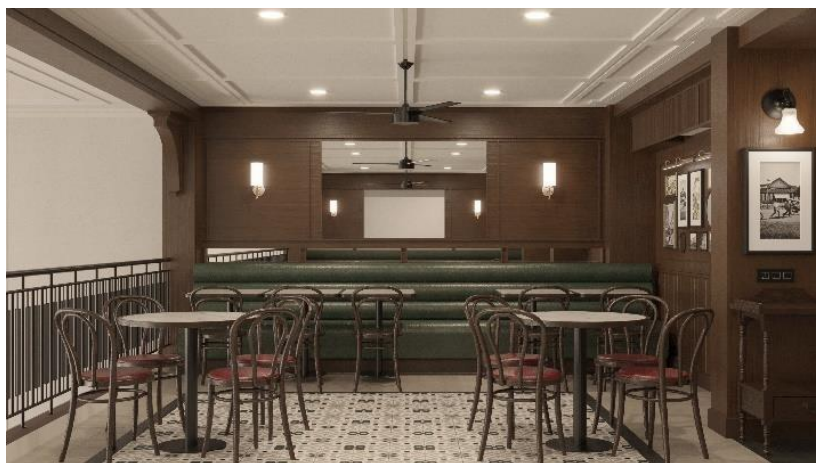


Figure 8. Seating Area Rendering Perspective by Thio Rahman

5. Discussions

The integration of the "down the memory lane" concept in the interior design of Tunggal Inti Kahuripan Souvenir Shop and Café creates a unique fusion of nostalgia and modernity. The choice of incorporating elements from the Dutch East Indies period, such as the Classic Indies style, allows the design to evoke a sense of historical connection while maintaining relevance to contemporary sensibilities. The use of white and brown tones, inspired by colonial-era aesthetics, plays a significant role in reinforcing this nostalgic atmosphere, with white symbolizing purity and clarity, and brown evoking warmth and earthiness, reminiscent of the natural materials used during that era.

This blending of old and new highlights the importance of materiality in interior design. Classic materials such as teak wood and patterned key tiles are juxtaposed with modern finishes like HPL laminate and gypsum, resulting in a harmonious space that reflects both the heritage of the past and the demands of the present. The strategic use of textures; smooth ceramics, rich wood grains, and patterned tiles, adds a tactile dimension to the space, enhancing the sensory experience for visitors. These elements, when combined with carefully designed lighting and spatial arrangements, successfully bring the concept to life in a way that is not only visually appealing but also emotionally resonant.

The theory of Environmental Psychology by Mehrabian & Russell (1974) supports this approach by stating, "Environmental stimuli can influence emotional responses, such as pleasure or displeasure, which in turn affect perceptions and behavior in a space." By using nostalgic design elements, the space is likely to evoke positive emotions tied to the past. According to Alvord and Reeve (2016), "Design character is the emotional response that a space evokes through its arrangement, materials, and form." This perspective emphasizes that interior design goes beyond aesthetic value; it creates an identity that connects users to the space on a deeper, more meaningful level. Furthermore, O'Neill (2017) asserts that "Meaningful spatial experiences are created when design elements resonate emotionally with users, forming a holistic connection that impacts their perception and interaction with the space." This theory supports the notion that interior spaces are not just functional environments but have the power to create lasting impressions by engaging users' senses and memories.

Furthermore, the implementation of this concept through rendering visualization allows for a clear and immersive preview of the space, enabling clients to experience the atmosphere before physical construction. The rendered images provide an opportunity to evaluate how well the concept communicates its intended message, ensuring that the space will evoke the desired nostalgic experience once completed. This process underscores the vital role of visualization in interior design, allowing for refinement and adjustments before implementation.

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