

Visitor Loyalty of Commercial Buildings with Colonial Architecture Concepts in Indonesia

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Abstract:

This study examines the loyalty of visitors to commercial buildings with a colonial architecture concept in Indonesia as an effort to offer a unique and different experience for visitors. One of the historical and cultural heritage that is important to preserve and utilize optimally is colonial architecture. Commercial buildings with a colonial architecture concept have aesthetic and identity values that are shown through the semiotics of architecture and interior to convey certain meanings, which can attract visitors' interest in an effort to increase their loyalty. Visitor loyalty is one of the factors that affect the success and sustainability of business (Rahardja, 2022). Research on visitor loyalty to commercial buildings with a colonial architecture concept using a semiotic approach has not been done yet, so it needs to be further studied. The purpose of this study is to examine the loyalty of visitors to the semiotics of commercial buildings with a colonial architecture concept in Indonesia. The research method used in this study is a literature review method to collect, analyze, and synthesize literature that is relevant to the research topic from various scientific sources, such as journals, books, theses, dissertations, and others, related to commercial buildings, colonial architecture, semiotics and visitor loyalty in Indonesia. The results of this study are expected to provide a comprehensive overview of visitor loyalty to commercial buildings with a colonial architecture concept in Indonesia.

Keywords: Commercial Building, Colonial Architecture, Semiotic, Visitor Loyalty

Introduction:

Commercial buildings serve as essential structures for trade, services, and business activities. They play a crucial role in the economy, society, and culture, serving as venues to attract both local and foreign visitors by offering unique and distinct experiences (Aminah, 2018).

These distinctive experiences can be achieved through strong architectural character or imagery, particularly by employing captivating and

distinctive architectural concepts in commercial buildings (Aminah, 2018). Architectural character reflects the values, culture, history, and identity of a community. Furthermore, architecture influences visitors' perceptions, emotions, and behavior toward a building.

One such architectural concept used in several commercial buildings in Indonesia is colonial architecture. Colonial architecture emerged during the Dutch colonial period in Indonesia, blending

European elements with local culture. Preserving and leveraging colonial architecture is crucial, as it represents cultural and historical heritage (Esther, 2022). Examples of commercial buildings with colonial architectural concepts in Indonesia include Gedung Sate in Bandung,

Lawang Sewu in Semarang, and others. These buildings possess unique aesthetics and distinctive identities that attract visitor interest and satisfaction.

Visitor loyalty encompasses attitudes and behaviors that demonstrate allegiance, trust, and commitment to a brand, product, or service. Among the factors influencing business success and sustainability, visitor loyalty stands out (Rahardja, 2022).

However, specific research on visitor loyalty toward commercial buildings with colonial architectural concepts in Indonesia remains scarce. Particularly, lacking studies that employ semiotic approaches to analyze the meanings and messages embedded in colonial architecture and factor affecting visitor interest, satisfaction, and ultimately, loyalty. Therefore, further research is needed.

This study aims to explore visitor loyalty using a semiotic approach toward commercial buildings with colonial architectural concepts in Indonesia. It is hoped that this research will contribute new insights to the fields of architecture, business, and tourism.

Method:

In this study, a literature review is employed. This review is conducted systematically, explicitly, and reproducibly. The purpose of the literature review is to identify, assess, and organize research works and ideas produced by researchers and practitioners (Rahayu, 2015). Literature reviews are used to collect, analyze, and synthesize relevant literature on the research topic from various scholarly sources, such as journals, books, theses, dissertations, and more. For this study, the literature to be examined pertains to commercial buildings, colonial architecture, semiotics, and visitor loyalty in Indonesia due to their relevance to

the discussed phenomenon. The literature assessment conducted will inform interconnected discussions and conclusions.

Body Text:

Commercial buildings serve as structures used for business activities, such as shops, restaurants, hotels, offices, and more (Aminah, 2018). These buildings require unique aspects that can attract and retain visitors while enhancing sales. One such unique aspect is the colonial architecture concept, which originates from the colonial era and is influenced by European architectural styles. Colonial architecture holds aesthetic, identity, historical, and cultural values that provide distinct meanings and experiences for visitors. These meanings and experiences can impact visitor loyalty—the attitudes and behaviors demonstrating loyalty, satisfaction, and repeated intent to visit the commercial building (Rahardja, 2022).

To explore the relationship between commercial buildings with colonial architectural concepts and visitor loyalty, this study employs semiotics—an academic discipline that examines signs and the meanings generated by those signs (Ratnamaya & Mudra, 2021). By using semiotics, researchers can analyze how commercial buildings with colonial architectural concepts communicate aesthetic, identity, historical, and cultural values, ultimately influencing visitor loyalty.

a. Commercial Buildings: The Role of Architectural Character in Enhancing Business and Customer Loyalty

Commercial buildings serve as structures designed and utilized for business activities, including shops, restaurants, hotels, offices, and more (Diwarni Safitri, Musani, 2017). Various aspects must be considered during their design to support commercial functions, such as building aesthetics, efficiency considerations, security, and development opportunities (Diwarni Safitri, Musani, 2017). Additionally, the perceived spatial experience by customers is a crucial component in commercial building design (Primadewi et al., 2021).

One highly influential aspect in commercial building design is architectural character. Architectural character represents the distinctive features that set a building apart from others, evoking specific impressions intended by the owner or manager (Primadewi, 2022). Strong character or imagery can capture the attention, interest, and curiosity of commercial building users (Aminah, 2018). Furthermore, effectiveness and increased economic value are essential requirements for successful commercial buildings (Aminah, 2018).

Designing commercial buildings necessitates considering various aspects that support their commercial functions, and architectural character is one of them. A robust architectural character can create spatial experiences for commercial building users while enhancing business outcomes and customer loyalty.

b. Colonial Architecture: A Blend of European Influence and Local Adaptation

Colonial architecture holds a significant place in Indonesia's architectural history. It emerged during the period between 1624 and 1820 when European settlers sought to replicate elements of their home countries in their colonies. However, this architectural style evolved and adapted due to variables such as construction techniques, materials, and climate, resulting in distinct designs that differed from their original forms (Esther, 2022).

Dutch colonial architecture in the East Indies (now Indonesia) underwent several transformations from the 16th to the 20th century. Initially, Dutch architecture imitated European styles, utilizing materials like brick and stone. They constructed fortified cities to protect against attacks and uprisings. Notably, Batavia (now Jakarta) featured canals, town halls, churches, and multi-story houses within its fortifications. However, Dutch architectural choices clashed with the local climate

and environment, leading to health and social challenges (Esther, 2022).

Chinese immigrants brought by the Dutch as laborers and traders also influenced East Indies architecture. They built shop houses, temples, and large homes that blended Chinese, Dutch, and indigenous elements. Notable Chinese buildings include Tjong A Fie's House in Medan and the Candranaya Building in Jakarta (Esther, 2022).

In the 19th and 20th centuries, Dutch architecture in the East Indies underwent further changes due to political, economic, and cultural factors. The Dutch constructed grand buildings in neo-classical and Empire styles to showcase their colonial power. They relocated the center of Batavia to Weltevreden (now Central Jakarta), creating a more modern and orderly urban environment. During this period, Dutch architecture also incorporated elements from traditional Indonesian architecture, resulting in a hybrid or eclectic style (Esther, 2022).

According to Handinoto (2012) in an article (Esther, 2022), the colonial architecture that developed in Indonesia can be categorized into three styles: Indische Empire style (18th-19th century), Transitional Architecture (1890-1915), and Modern Colonial Architecture (1915-1940):

1. Indische Empire Style (18th-19th Century)

During the governorship of Herman Willem Daendels (1808-1811), Dutch architecture in the East Indies underwent significant changes. Daendels introduced the "Empire" architectural style from France, which influenced subsequent designs. Notably, Daendels initiated the construction of the *Gouvernements Hôtel* in Batavia (now Jakarta), designed by J. Jongkind. He also relocated the city center to Weltevreden (Jatinegara) and proposed new residences and offices for the Governor-General. The grand *Gouvernements Hôtel* stood approximately 10 kilometers from old Batavia, and to fill the void, Daendels also built *Societeit De Harmonie* and *Fort Lodewijk* in Surabaya (Purnomo et al., 2017) (Tamimi et al., 2020).



Figure. 1 *Gouvernements Hôtel* with Waterloo Monument in Batavia (Esther, 2022)



Figure. 2 *Societeit De Harmonie* (Esther, 2022)

Milano (as cited in Hadinoto, 2012, in an article (Esther, 2022)) state that characteristics of Indische Empire architecture include:

- 1) Symmetrical floor plans with a central “middle room” connecting the front and back terraces.
- 2) Spacious terraces often adorned with rows of Greek columns.
- 3) Separate rear sections for the kitchen, bathrooms, storage, and service areas.

- 4) In some cases, pavilions alongside the main building served as guest bedrooms.

Initially, the Dutch believed that row houses, canals, and thick enclosed walls would protect them from tropical diseases. Over time, they adjusted to local architectural features, including verandas, porches, large windows, and ventilation openings. Rural Dutch East Indies houses in the mid-18th century exemplified colonial buildings that combined Indonesian architectural elements while adapting to

the climate. These houses featured elongated layouts, *joglo* and *limasan* roof structures typical of Javanese architecture, and neo-classical columns surrounding the verandas. This blend was known as the Indies Style. Despite its colonial origins, this architectural legacy remains an integral part of Indonesia's history.

2. Transitional Architecture (1890-1915)

Architects who studied at TH Delft, such as Ir. J. Van Hoytema and Ir. S. Snuyf, were among the many transitional architects who emerged in the Dutch East Indies during the late 1800s and early 1900s. The Colonial Public Works Department (BOW) was responsible for nearly all colonial government buildings. The book "Kromoblanda" extensively documents this transitional architectural era. Dr. Charles Thomas Nix considers it an adaptation of European Romantic architectural styles. In Indonesia, the Dutch colonial era reached its zenith in the early 20th century.

Handinoto and Hartono, in an article (Esther, 2022), categorize transitional architecture as a form of modern colonial architecture, characterized by the following features:

- 1) Floor Plan Resembling Indische Empire Style: Symmetrical layout with front and rear terraces connected by a central middle room.
- 2) Side Buildings (Pavilions) in Large Houses: Large houses often included side structures known as pavilions.
- 3) Absence of Greek or Roman Columns: Unlike earlier styles, there were no Greek or Roman columns.
- 4) Revival of *Gevel* (Gable) Design: *Gevel* design regained popularity in Dutch architecture.
- 5) Romantic Appearance with Towered Entrances: Entrances featured romantic elements, including towers.
- 6) Materials and Limited Windows: Wood and brick were the primary building materials, and window usage remained restricted.
- 7) Hipped Roof Shapes with Tiled Shields: Roofs had hipped shapes with additional ventilation.

- 8) Additional Roof Ventilation: Roofs featured hipped shapes and tiled shields with added ventilation.

This transitional architecture reflects a fascinating blend of European influences and local adaptations, leaving a lasting legacy in Indonesia's architectural history.

3. Modern Colonial Architecture (1915-1940)

In an article (Esther, 2022), Handinoto (1993) asserts that modern colonial architecture deliberately diverged from the French-inspired Empire Style, which had fallen out of favor in the Netherlands. Key characteristics of modern colonial architecture include:

- 1) Varied Floor Plans: Modern colonial architecture embraces more diverse floor plan designs.
- 2) Asymmetry and Sunshades: It avoids symmetrical shapes and eschews surrounding terraces, opting instead for sunshade elements.
- 3) Clean and Functional Aesthetics: Modern colonial buildings exhibit a clean, functional design philosophy (form follow function).
- 4) Concrete Construction: Concrete serves as the primary construction material.
- 5) Hipped or Shield Roofs: Most roofs are hipped or shield-shaped, covered with tiles or shingles.

This architectural style represents a departure from tradition, emphasizing functionality and adaptability.

4. Colonial Architecture (1920s to 1940s)

During this period, both national and international influences shaped modern colonial architecture. In the Dutch East Indies, this architectural style emerged as an eclectic blend, drawing from various influences, including traditional Indonesian culture.

According to Handinoto's 1996 book, the key characteristics of colonial buildings during this era include:

- 1) Gable (*Gevel*): Triangular in shape, following the roofline.
- 2) Tower (*Menara*): Exhibits various geometric forms.

- 3) Dormer or Faux Chimney: Provides ventilation and lighting; reminiscent of Dutch fireplaces.
- 4) Tympanon (*Tadah Angin*): Ornamentation with pre-Christian origins, featuring tree-of-life, horse head, or sunwheel motifs.
- 5) Balustrade: Concrete railing often used as balcony or deck boundaries.
- 6) Bouvenlicht: Opening in the building designed for improved thermal comfort.
- 7) Weather Vane (*Penunjuk Angin*): Decorative element atop the roof ridge, indicating wind direction.
- 8) Nok Acroterie: Ornamentation at the roof peak, traditionally made from thatch. Initially used in Dutch peasant homes.
- 9) Geveltoppen (Front Roof Peak Ornaments): Voorschot, a triangular decoration on the front of houses.

This fusion of styles reflects the dynamic cultural exchange during the colonial period.

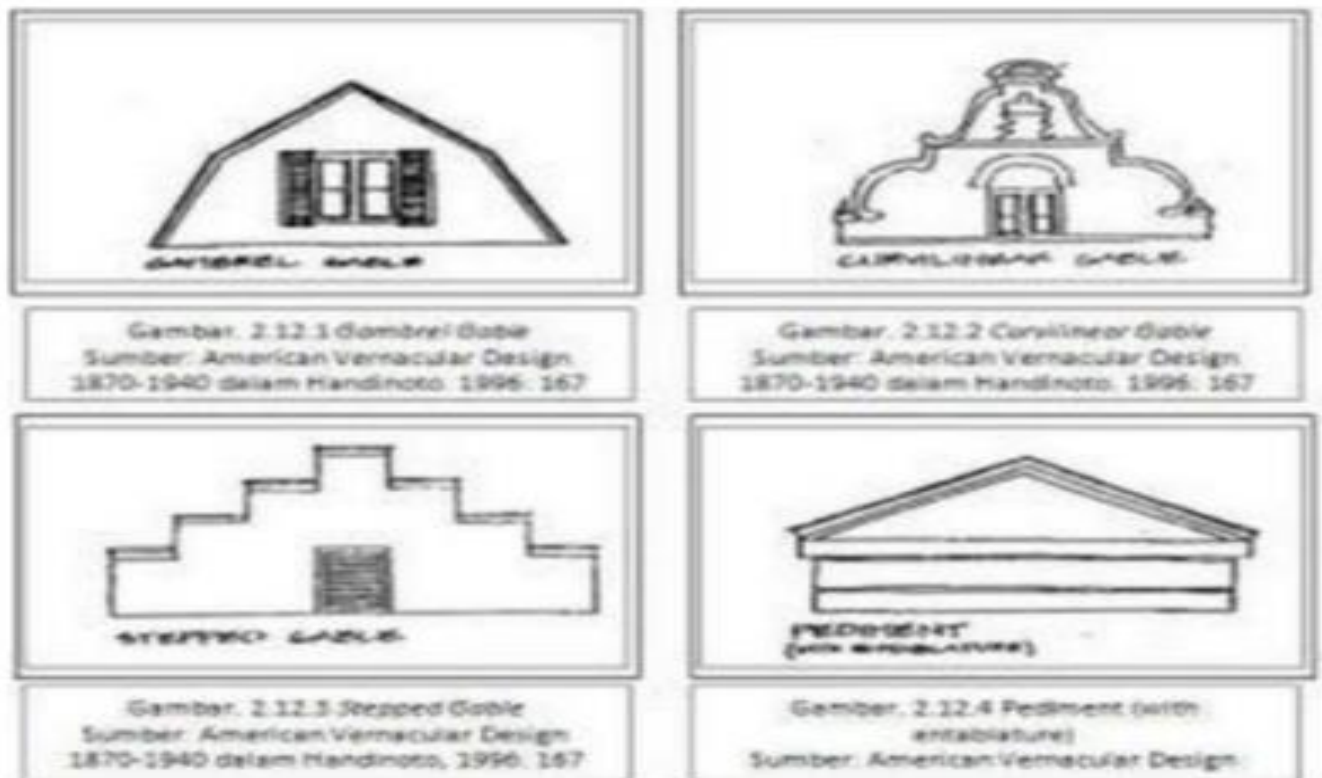


Figure. 3 Gevel Type of Colonial Buildings (Esther, 2022)

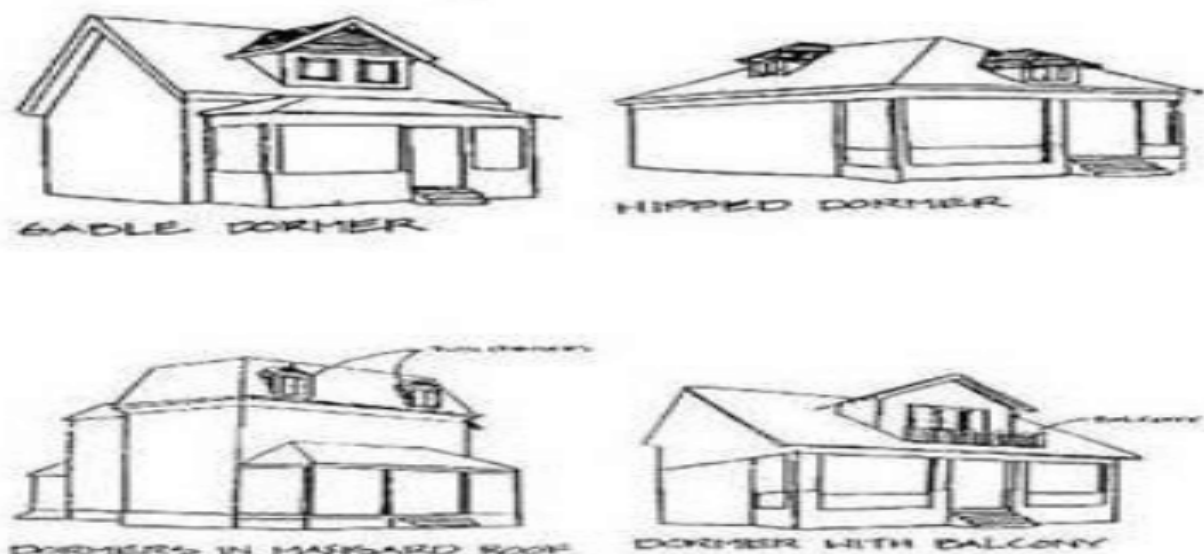


Figure. 4 Colonial Building Dormer Element Detail (Esther, 2022)

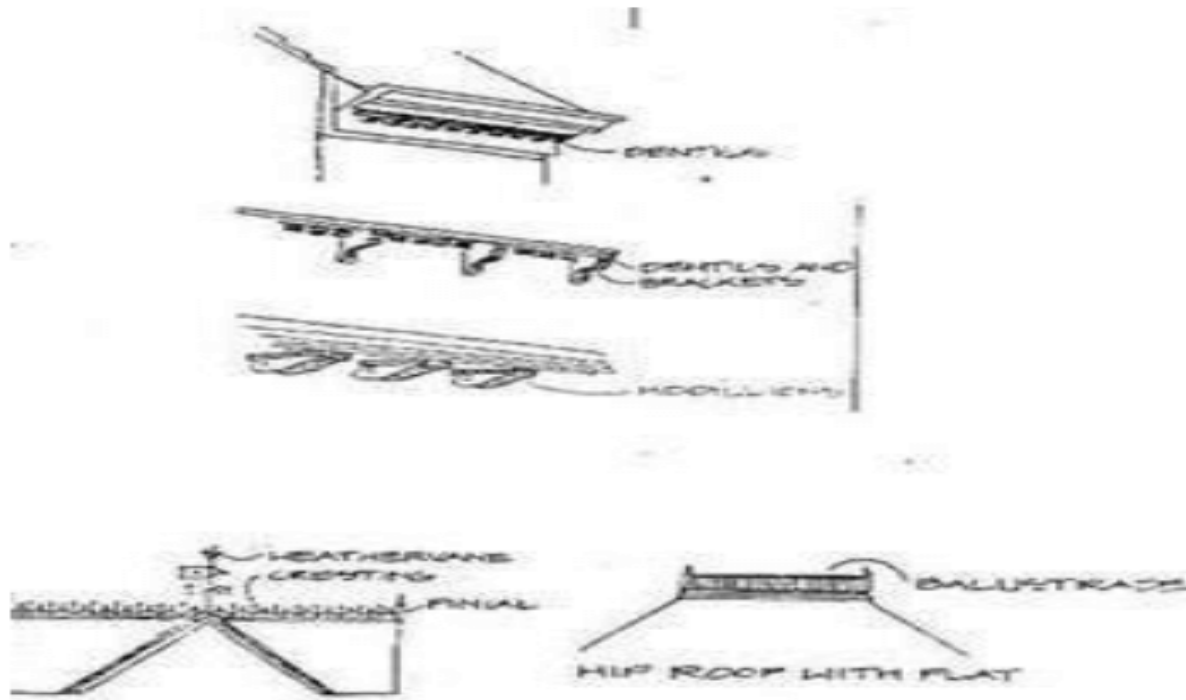


Figure. 5 Colonial Building Element Detail (Esther, 2022)

c. Semiotics: Understanding Signs and Their Influence

According to Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) (Ratnamaya & Mudra, 2021), semiotics is grounded in the idea that signs play a crucial role in meaning-making and communication. Peirce identified three essential components involved in the interpretation of signs: the sign itself (also called the representamen), the object it represents, and the interpretant. The third meaning emerges from the interaction between the sign and its object. Peirce further categorized signs into three types: icons, indexes, and symbols.

1. Icons: Icons are signs that resemble their objects, such as pictures, maps, or indexes.
2. Indexes: Indexes have a cause-and-effect relationship with their objects, like smoke indicating fire or footprints signifying someone's presence.
3. Symbols: Symbols have conventional or arbitrary associations with their objects, such as words, numbers, or symbols themselves (Peirce, 1955; Eco, 1976; Chandler, 2007) (Ratnamaya & Mudra, 2021).

Peirce's semiotic theory is relevant to your research because it explains how colonial architecture, as a

sign, communicates with visitors (the recipients of signs). Visitors, in turn, respond to colonial architecture as the object of signs. By adapting the categories of icons, indexes, and symbols to the characteristics of Indonesian colonial architecture, you can explore meanings that influence visitor loyalty. However, it's essential to acknowledge that this theory may encounter challenges in interpreting subjective, ambiguous, or contradictory meanings, as introduced by the author.

d. Visitor Loyalty: Exploring the Impact of Colonial Architecture:

Assessing customer loyalty toward commercial buildings with colonial architectural concepts involves applying customer experience theory. This theory assumes that customer experiences occur intentionally when companies use products and services as platforms for individual interactions. It introduces four dimensions of customer experience: aesthetics, education, entertainment, and escapism (Juliana et al., 2023).

1. Aesthetics Dimension:

Aesthetic experiences relate to the beauty and harmony of a service. In this context, aesthetics involve how a building showcases unique,

attractive, and historically valuable colonial architectural features. Well-designed colonial commercial buildings can create positive aesthetic impressions, enhancing visitor satisfaction and loyalty (Juliana et al., 2023).

2. Education Dimension:

Education pertains to knowledge or skill acquisition from a service. For colonial architecture, this dimension involves providing information or facilities that enhance visitors' understanding of colonial architectural elements. Features like informational boards, brochures, guided tours, or workshops contribute to positive educational experiences, influencing visitor satisfaction and loyalty (Juliana et al., 2023).

3. Entertainment Dimension:

Entertainment encompasses pleasure or excitement derived from a service. Colonial buildings can offer entertainment through activities like music, dance, games, or performances. Well-executed entertainment enhances visitor enjoyment, positively impacting satisfaction and loyalty (Juliana et al., 2023).

4. Escapism Dimension:

Escapism involves experiences that transform or transport customers. Colonial architecture can provide an escape from daily life, evoking feelings of nostalgia, romance, or exoticism. Buildings that excel in escapism create positive impressions, contributing to visitor satisfaction and loyalty (Juliana et al., 2023).

In summary, aesthetics significantly influence visitor loyalty. A building's aesthetics reflect its identity, values, and messages, capturing visitors' attention, interest, and curiosity. Positive aesthetic experiences contribute to comfort, satisfaction, and loyalty. Therefore, unique and appealing colonial architectural designs play a crucial role in enhancing visitor loyalty to commercial buildings.

Results and Discussion

a. Meaning of Colonial Architectural Styles:

1. Indische Empire Style (18th-19th Century)

The colonial architecture of the Indische Empire Style, introduced by Governor-General Herman Willem Daendels in the early 19th century, adapted

French Empire architectural elements while incorporating local features from Indonesia. This style reflected Dutch colonial power, grandeur, and arrogance, emphasizing superiority over the colonized nations. It also showcased a cultural fusion of Dutch, Indonesian, and Chinese influences, evident in the architectural elements drawn from all three cultures.

2. Transitional Architecture (1890-1915)

Emerging in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, this architectural style resulted from modernization and the adaptation of European Romantic architectural features to local Indonesian contexts. It symbolized technological advancements, creativity, and aesthetic beauty during the peak of Dutch colonialism. The transitional architecture blended classical Indische Empire elements with more contemporary Modern Colonial features.

3. Modern Colonial Architecture (1915-1940)

Resulting from European architectural modernization and innovation, this style reflected technological progress, efficiency, and functionality during the late colonial period. It shifted away from the decorative and expressive Romantic style toward simpler, more rational architectural designs.

b. Semiotics of Colonial Architecture:

In semiotic analysis, we explore the meanings embedded within signs. Semiotics involves two components: the signifier (or *penanda*) and the signified (or *petanda*) (Felix, 2020). The signifier represents the tangible form of the sign, while the signified refers to the idea or concept it represents. In architecture, signs can take the form of shapes, colors, materials, ornaments, and symbols used in a building.

1. Semiotics of Indische Empire Style (18th-19th Century)

a. Icon: Buildings using this style exhibit similarities to French Empire architecture. It reflects France's influence as a dominant European power during that period and also demonstrates the Dutch desire to emulate this style as a form of homage or competition.

- Examples include the *Gouvernements Hôtel* in Batavia (designed by J. Jongkind) and *Fort Lodewijk* in Surabaya (constructed by Daendels).
- b. Index: These buildings have a cause-and-effect relationship with Indonesia's climate, social context, and culture. They adapt to the hot and humid tropical climate by incorporating high roofs, spacious verandas, large windows, and ample ventilation to ensure good airflow. Additionally, they integrate elements from Javanese and Chinese cultures. Socially, they use architectural features to signify status, such as Greek-style columns.
 - c. Symbol: Buildings in this style convey conventional or arbitrary meanings intended by their creators or owners. They incorporate architectural elements with specific historical, cultural, or political significance. These buildings symbolize power, grandeur, arrogance, cultural fusion, adaptation, and identity. For instance, *Societeit De Harmonie* in Batavia served as a social club for Europeans, using Greek-style columns as a symbol of Western culture and towering roofs to adapt to the tropical climate.
2. Semiotics of Transitional Architectural Style (1890-1915)
 - a. Icon: Buildings that adopt this style bear similarities to European Romantic architecture. Romantic architecture emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries, emphasizing creativity, beauty, and free expression. This style reflects European influence as a source of inspiration and reference for Dutch architects who studied at TH Delft.
 - b. Index: These buildings have a cause-and-effect relationship with Indonesia's climate, social conditions, and culture. They adapt to the hot and humid tropical climate by using hipped roofs and shielded tiles, spacious front and back terraces, large windows, and ample ventilation for good airflow. Additionally, they incorporate architectural elements from Javanese and Chinese cultures, such as *limasan* roofs, intricately carved columns, and triangular-shaped gables. Socially, these buildings convey their function, status, and identity through features like entrance towers, varied ornaments, and symbols representing colonial authorities.
 - c. Symbol: Buildings in this style establish conventional or arbitrary connections with meanings intended by their creators or owners. They employ architectural elements with specific historical, cultural, or political significance. These buildings convey meanings related to modernization, creativity, beauty, cultural fusion, adaptation, and dominance.
 3. Semiotics of Modern Colonial Architecture (1915-1940)
 - a. Icon: Buildings in this style share similarities with European Rationalist architecture, which developed in the early 20th century, emphasizing function, structure, and materials. The influence of European knowledge and technology is evident in these Dutch architects' designs.
 - b. Index: These buildings have a cause-and-effect relationship with Indonesia's climate, social conditions, and culture. To adapt to the hot and humid tropical climate, they feature flat concrete roofs, horizontal facades, large windows, and abundant ventilation for optimal airflow. They also incorporate elements from Javanese and Chinese cultures, such as basic building forms, colors, and ornaments. Socially, these buildings convey function, status, and identity through their shape, materials, and symbols representing colonial authorities or specific institutions.
 - c. Symbol: Buildings in this style establish conventional connections with meanings intended by their creators or owners. They utilize architectural elements with specific historical, cultural, or political connotations. These buildings convey meanings related to modernization, efficiency, functionality, cultural shifts, adaptation, and dominance.
- c. **Loyalty of Visitors to Commercial Buildings with Colonial Architecture Concept**

Commercial buildings with a colonial architecture concept in Indonesia represent a cultural and historical heritage that holds aesthetic, educational, entertainment, and escapist value for visitors. These buildings showcase varied colonial architectural styles and reflect a fusion of Dutch, Indonesian, and Chinese cultures through the use of architectural elements from all three traditions. Additionally, they demonstrate a shift from more decorative and expressive architectural styles to simpler, rational designs. These colonial-style commercial buildings can positively influence businesses and visitor loyalty by creating satisfying and memorable customer experiences. According to the theory developed by Pine and Gilmore (1998) as cited in (Juliana et al., 2023), customer experiences can be categorized into four dimensions: aesthetics, education, entertainment, and escapism. Here's how colonial-style commercial buildings in Indonesia fulfill these dimensions:

1. **Aesthetics:** These buildings offer beauty and harmony through their unique, attractive, and historically significant colonial architectural designs. They convey the identity, values, and messages intended by the building owners or managers, capturing visitors' attention, interest, and curiosity. Aesthetic appeal enhances the business's image, reputation, and visitor satisfaction.
2. **Education:** Colonial-style commercial buildings provide knowledge and skills related to colonial architecture, history, culture, and social context. Informational resources such as signage, brochures, guides, or workshops contribute to visitors' learning and skill development. Educating visitors adds value and differentiation to the business, fostering satisfaction and loyalty.
3. **Entertainment:** These buildings offer pleasure and excitement through activities or entertainment provided on-site. Whether it's music, dance, games, or performances, colonial-style commercial buildings enhance visitors' enjoyment. Entertainment contributes to the business's attractiveness

and visitor frequency, ultimately boosting satisfaction and loyalty.

4. **Escapism:** By providing a different atmosphere or experience from visitors' daily lives, colonial-style commercial buildings offer a form of escape. Nostalgic, romantic, or exotic settings allow visitors to feel transformed. This escapist element encourages repeat visits and strengthens loyalty while enhancing overall satisfaction.

Therefore, it can be concluded that commercial buildings with a colonial architecture concept in Indonesia have the potential to positively impact businesses and visitor loyalty. They achieve this by creating satisfying and impressive customer experiences across four dimensions: aesthetics, education, entertainment, and escapism. However, to realize this potential, effective strategies and management from building owners or managers are essential. These strategies aim to maintain and enhance the quality and quantity of customer experiences offered by colonial-style commercial buildings in Indonesia.

Conclusion:

The results of the previous discussion lead to the conclusion that commercial buildings with a colonial architecture concept in Indonesia have the potential to positively impact businesses and visitor loyalty. They achieve this by creating satisfying and impressive customer experiences across four dimensions: aesthetics, education, entertainment, and escapism. These buildings also carry varying meanings, depending on the specific colonial architectural style used. They can communicate with visitors as receivers of signs and influence visitors' responses as signifiers. However, to realize this potential, effective strategies and management from building owners or managers are essential. These strategies aim to maintain and enhance the quality and quantity of customer experiences offered by colonial-style commercial buildings in Indonesia.

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