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Optimizing Visual Identity City Branding Grobogan Through Design Thinking and Cakra Manggilingan Concept

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ABSTRACT

Grobogan Regency promotes its regional potential through city branding entitled The Miracle of Charm inspired by the Javanese philosophy "Cakra Manggilingan". This concept symbolizes the cycle of life and environmental balance reflected in the visual identity of the region. Using qualitative research through the Design Thinking approach, this study analyzes the visual identity to align with local values. The process includes understanding the needs and aspirations of the community through questionnaires, interviews and literature studies (empathize), formulating problems (define), developing innovative idea concepts (ideate), creating a prototype of the city branding visual identity (prototype), and testing the effectiveness of the design (test). The novelty of this research lies in the integration of the Cakra Manggilingan concept with Design Thinking, which has not been widely explored in city branding by offering an innovative model for other cities in Indonesia to utilize local wisdom in branding. This study contributes to enriching the theory of city branding by showing that local cultural values can be a representation of the visual identity of Grobogan city branding carried by the tagline "The Miracle of Charm" which unites the diversity of Grobogan's potential.

INTRODUCTION

Visual identity in city branding is a crucial strategy in the era of globalization to build a positive image, promote superior potential, attract investment, and encourage economic growth of a region to make it one of the city's marketing strategies (Desfitawarni et al., 2022). This strategy development is based on experiences created together by empowering communities in decisions around brand positioning, representation and ownership (Satria & Fadillah, 2021). This also aims to make a region have a strong positioning in the field of tourism globally (Ayyub & Aditya, 2016). Visual identity is the starting point in achieving the planning goals of marketing a region (Putri, 2023) Visual identity plays an important role in building trust (Arifah et al., 2023). This shows that strong city branding through visual identity plays an important role in increasing investor and public trust in reflecting the character, credibility, and prospects of a region.

Grobogan Regency has many leading tourism objects, both natural, cultural and artificial tourism (Wijayanti et al., 2020). Leading natural tourism such as Bledug Kuwu which has a mud volcano phenomenon (Ariyani et al., 2015). As well as the Green Lake tourist attraction, Banjarejo Fossil House, Ki Ageng Selo Tomb and Kedung Ombo Reservoir which are also used for irrigation, raw water supply, power generation and fisheries (Setyawan et al., 2019). This shows the importance of optimizing the visual identity

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city branding strategy in increasing awareness and competitiveness, considering that this potential has not been optimally utilized. Based on 2023 data form Disporapar Central Java Province, the number of domestic tourists in Grobogan only reached 639,485 people, far behind Magelang Regency (3,191,668), Kudus (1,707,397), Solo City (4,019,566), and Banyumas (3,526,643). The graph shows that Grobogan is still not a leading destination in Central Java. In fact, Grobogan has many tourist destinations based on data on tourist visits to Grobogan Regency in 2021-2023 from the Grobogan Regency Youth, Sports, Culture, and Tourism Office, there has been an increase in the number of tourist attractions from 20 to 33 tourist attractions.

Data on the number of domestic tourists in 2023
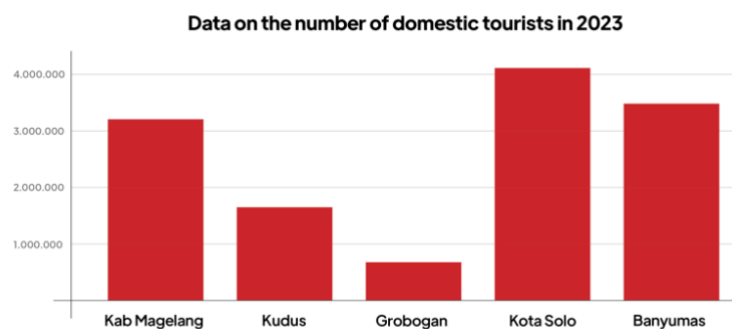
Figure 1. Grobogan's position relative to other cities regarding tourist data
(Source: Disporapar Central Java Province, 2023)

One of the causes is the absence of a strong visual identity for city branding. While other areas already have widely recognized brands such as Melanglang Magelang, The Taste of Java (Kudus), The Spirit of Java (Solo), and Better Banyumas, Grobogan does not yet have a visual image that can strengthen its tourist appeal. This condition emphasizes the importance of strengthening Grobogan's tourism branding to increase competitiveness and tourist visits. Grobogan Regency faces several problems in designing the visual identity of city branding, including: lack of public awareness of the potential of Grobogan Regency, less than optimal utilization of tourism and cultural potential, and the weak image of Grobogan Regency. In overcoming these problems, a visual identity city branding strategy is needed that is not only able to accommodate the image and reflect the dynamics of sustainable development of Grobogan Regency, but is also rooted in local wisdom. As emphasized by Prof. Diah Kristina (professor at UNS), "the branding needed is umbrella branding that is able to accommodate the timeless image of Grobogan." Local wisdom values, such as the philosophy of *Cakra Manggilingan*, can be a strong visual foundation.

The philosophy of the rotation of the wheel of life in the cakra manggilingan can be applied in the Grobogan government's work culture which is dynamic, responsive to change, and prioritizes balance between cultural preservation and regional progress. The concept of city branding based on local wisdom was chosen because it contains valuable life values that are worthy of being preserved and developed in the context of modernity (Galih & Achmad, 2020). *Cakra Manggilingan* was chosen as the concept of Grobogan's city branding because it reflects the dynamics of change, balance, and continuity that are in line with the vision of regional development to develop without leaving behind cultural roots. Based on its historical journey, Grobogan is known as the burial place of the ancestors of the Mataram kings. Grobogan has been established since 1726, which means it has been almost three centuries, having a long journey of time that will be rich in meaning and in harmony with the philosophy of *Cakra Manggilingan*. This philosophy teaches about the Tri Wikrama time

cycle, namely three phases of life that include the past, present, and future which describe the meaning of change that is closely related to time and the cycle of life in each phase of life (Hartatik, 2022). *Cakra Manggilingan* emphasizes the importance of respecting the past, utilizing the present, and planning the future wisely. The *Cakra Manggilingan* concept can be applied in the visual identity of Grobogan city branding by reflecting the dynamics of Grobogan's development from the past to the future through the life cycle, maintaining a balance between preserving cultural heritage and developing modern infrastructure.

This study integrates *Cakra Manggilingan* with the Design Thinking approach to develop an effective visual identity city branding. Design Thinking was chosen because this approach is user-centered and emphasizes the process of repeated iteration in finding innovative solutions. The Design Thinking stages (empathize, define, ideate, prototype, test) will be applied to analyze and develop the visual identity city branding of Grobogan based on *Cakra Manggilingan*. The empathize stage is carried out by understanding the needs and aspirations of the community towards the image of the Grobogan area. Formulating the visual identity city branding problems faced is carried out at the define stage. The ideate stage is carried out by developing innovative idea concepts based on the values of *Cakra Manggilingan* which is continued by creating a city branding prototype (logo, tagline, colors and letters) at the prototype stage. At the end, the test stage is carried out by evaluating the effectiveness of the visual identity city branding that has been developed.

Based on the description, this study aims to explore and analyze the application of the *Cakra Manggilingan* philosophy in designing the visual identity of the city branding of Grobogan Regency using the Design Thinking approach. In research (Yong et al., 2023) discussing the importance of visual identity to strengthen the city brand in general without discussing the integration of local cultural concepts specifically. (Siana et al., 2022) analyzing the *Cakra Manggilingan* motif mostly focuses on the analysis of semiotics, meaning, and visuals of wastra motifs (traditional cloth), such as that conducted by Roffi Siana et al., who studied the meaning and message in the *Cakra Manggilingan* Wastra motif in Jepara, but have not linked it specifically to city branding or the development of the city's visual identity. So that this study offers novelty by integrating the *Cakra Manggilingan* concept which has not been widely explored in previous studies. The focus of this study is the analysis of visual and verbal elements of city branding, namely the use of logos, taglines, colors and fonts. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of visual identity city branding that is rooted in local wisdom, reflects the dynamics of regional development, and increases the competitiveness of Grobogan Regency.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with the Design Thinking method to examine the optimization of visual identity city branding Grobogan based on the *Cakra Manggilingan* concept. Qualitative research is research that aims to explore the deeper meaning of an event or incident (Alamsyah et al., 2023). The design of this study aims to understand the Grobogan phenomenon in depth, as well as identify important elements in the *Cakra Manggilingan* concept that can be integrated into the visual identity city branding strategy. The research location is Grobogan Regency, chosen because it has significant cultural and tourism potential but has not been optimal in city branding. The research subjects consisted of the main stakeholders, the local government, namely the Youth, Sports, Culture and Tourism Office of Grobogan Regency, the Regional Development Planning Agency of Grobogan Regency, tourism business actors, community leaders, and local residents who are directly involved in developing the city's image.

The data collection techniques used in this study were interviews, questionnaires, and literature studies by analyzing documents that are relevant to the visual identity of city branding and the *Cakra Manggilingan* concept. The research method used in this study is the Design Thinking approach from David Kelly and Tim Brown which consists of five main stages: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. Design Thinking is used because it is considered to be able to overcome change and find opportunities for innovation (Muallimah, 2022). This approach was chosen because it is able to explore community needs and produce innovative solutions to visual identity city branding problems in Grobogan Regency based on the local concept of *Cakra Manggilingan*.
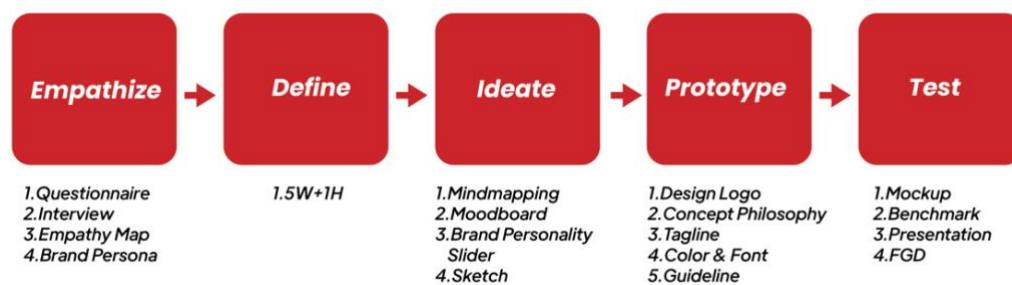

Figure 2. Design Thinking Process (Source: Romadhon, 2025)

In its application to the visual identity city branding of Grobogan city, the selection of the design thinking approach process is because it can produce more optimal solutions and is in accordance with socio-cultural dynamics. It is carried out through five stages, namely empathize, define, ideate, prototype and test. The empathize stage is carried out by understanding the needs, aspirations, and perceptions of the community towards the image of the Grobogan area through questionnaires, interviews, empathy maps and brand personas. Then validation is carried out through triangulation with questionnaire and interview data, reports from the Department of Youth, Sports, Culture and Tourism of Grobogan and inter-researcher checks are carried out to ensure consistency, according to qualitative academic standards. The information obtained helps researchers to gain in-depth insight into local values that are important to the Grobogan community. At the define stage, the data collected at the empathize stage is analyzed through 5W + 1H to formulate the main problems in the visual identity city branding of Grobogan city.

This process involves identifying challenges and opportunities in building a positive regional image that is in accordance with local values. The result of this stage is a clear and focused problem formulation, which is the basis for developing an innovative city branding visual identity. The ideate stage is carried out by developing various concepts of innovative city branding visual identities based on *Cakra Manggilingan* values through moodboards, mindmapping, brand personality sliders and sketches. In this stage, various ideas are collected to produce several alternative design concepts that reflect the uniqueness and potential of Grobogan. The prototype stage involves creating a prototype of the city branding design, including the logo, tagline, colors and letters that have been developed in the ideate stage. Then it is carried out through testing at the test stage through mockups, presentations, benchmarks and FGD to be a reference for long-term improvements so that the Grobogan city branding visual identity strategy continues to develop adaptively and sustainably.

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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Nini Thowong carries a mystical atmosphere. She was symbolically resurrected from the dead to answer human questions about life: illness, disaster, harvest, and drought. In her performance, Nini Thowong is accompanied by ritual songs such as "Ilir-Ilir" and mantras sung along with hand clapping. This dance can be performed by one or seven female dancers who act as manifestations of Nini Thowong. The performance takes place in a sacred atmosphere that is also theatrical, bridging the spiritual dimension and the empirical world. In this process, it is believed that spirits from other realms can communicate with the community.

1. *Empathize*

At the Empathize stage, research is conducted with the aim of understanding the needs, aspirations, and public perception of the image of the Grobogan area. This process involves a data collection method, namely a questionnaire involving the criteria of respondents aged 18-25 years (Gen Z) and actively interacting through social media. The selection of these respondent criteria is based on the fact that social media is the channel most frequently accessed by Generation Z to access and search for information and news (Rossalyn et al., 2022). Gen Z is also considered the generation that is most aware of conditions or things that need to be known by others.

Figure 3. Sample questions from the questionnaire (Source: Romadhon, 2025)

Based on the results of the questionnaire, the level of public recognition of Grobogan Regency is still limited, with only 8.3% of respondents claiming to be very familiar with it, while the majority (45.8%) were only fairly familiar and 35.4% were less familiar with the area. In addition, almost half of the respondents (45.8%) did not know the famous icon of Grobogan, although Bledug Kuwu (27.1%) was the most well-known choice. The lack of regional differentiation is also a challenge in Grobogan's city branding, as 43.8% of respondents did not see any significant differences between Grobogan and other areas in Central Java, although some highlighted the richness of culture and history (25%) and natural tourism (18.8%) as superior potentials. These findings indicate the need for stronger efforts in building a distinctive identity and increase public awareness of Grobogan's unique attractions.

The interview process was conducted online via the Zoom platform as part of the Empathize stage in the Design Thinking approach. Meanwhile, the transcription process was carried out verbatim from the Zoom interview using Transcribe software for efficiency. This interview was conducted after the data collection process through a questionnaire, with the aim of deepening the initial findings and obtaining more contextual insights. This interview involved several sources from different backgrounds to explore their perceptions, cultural values, and expectations of Grobogan's visual identity. The interview results show that the general public's views and knowledge of Grobogan's existence at the national level are still relatively minimal, so a strong branding strategy is needed to increase regional visibility and competitiveness. This finding is an important foundation in developing a relevant branding concept that reflects the authentic character of Grobogan.

Thematic coding with NVivo identified patterns such as 'lack of visual promotion' and 'local cultural values' from the transcripts and questionnaires. The results of the questionnaire and interviews clarified the main challenges in building the visual branding identity of Grobogan city, which is in line with the findings in the empathy map. In the empathy map process, analysis was conducted on respondents based on the perspective of What they see, hear, say & do, think & feel.

1. **What do they see?**
   Respondents, namely the general public, saw a lack of attractive visual promotion related to Grobogan branding. And other cities/regencies in Central Java have stronger branding than Grobogan.

2. **What do they hear?**
   Lack of positive talk about Grobogan as a tourist or cultural destination. Local people do not talk much about city branding, due to a lack of awareness and involvement.

3. **What do they say and do?**
   Business actors and tourism have not actively campaigned for local identity. Lack of community involvement in discussions or city branding programs initiated by the government. And tourists who come are mostly for other reasons (for example, work or family trips), not because of Grobogan's tourist attractions.

4. **What do they think and feel?**
   Most people do not feel a sense of ownership of Grobogan's branding identity. As well as the lack of pride in the region due to weak branding and minimal promotion that builds a positive image.

The brand persona "Wawan" represents a 22-year-old generation Z who is the main target in designing the visual identity of Grobogan city branding. This persona was formed after going through an empathy map process, interviews, and filling out questionnaires aimed at understanding more deeply about the needs, hopes, and frustrations of the audience. Wawan is a young man who is active on social media, open to new things, and has a high curiosity about the identity and potential of his hometown. Although he is proud of Grobogan, Wawan often feels that his area is not widely known, both nationally and among his friends. This makes him want to see Grobogan have a stronger and more prominent image, so that it can increase the sense of pride of the local community and attract wider public attention.
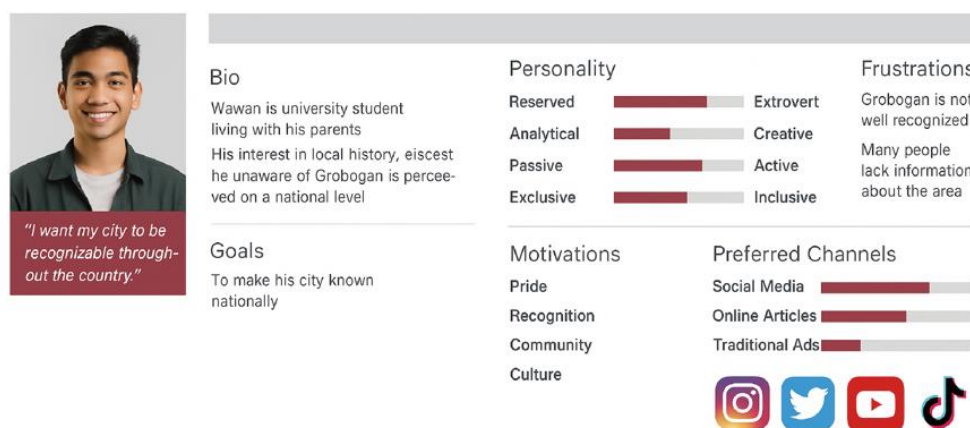
Figure 4. Brand Persona (Source: Romadhon, 2025)

The function of the persona "Wawan" is as a reference in designing a visual identity that is right on target, which is able to reach and communicate with the younger generation like himself. By understanding Wawan's characteristics and needs, the design team can create branding that is not only modern and attractive, but also authentic and relevant to the traditional values of Grobogan. This persona plays an important role in ensuring that the branding developed can address the issue of Grobogan's lesser-known existence, while strengthening the region's identity in a way that suits the way of thinking and preferences of generation Z. The "Wawan" persona also helps to balance between tradition and modern trends, making it a guide in creating a visual image that appeals to a wider audience.

2. *Define*

Define also means defining, namely describing and analyzing in detail the core of the problem so that an answer can be found as a solution in the next stage (Yulius & Pratama, 2021). The points found in the empathize stage are then analyzed with 5W+1H as follows:

a. **What** : What is the main identity of Grobogan?

Answer : Natural potential, culture, history, or typical culinary that can be. become the main attraction in Grobogan city branding.

b. **Who** : Who is the target audience in designing Grobogan's visual identity?

Answer : Includes three main groups, namely tourists, investors, and local communities.

c. **When** : When will the implementation of Grobogan's visual identity city branding begin?

Answer : Planned to be implemented as a long-term plan, with implementation that will begin immediately after going through a series of long study considerations.

d. **Where** : Where will the planning of Grobogan's visual identity city branding be implemented?

Answer : Grobogan's visual identity city branding will be implemented on various platforms and strategic locations throughout the Grobogan area, both physically and digitally.

e. **Why** : Why is visual identity city branding important for Grobogan?

Answer : Creating a strong and consistent visual identity for Grobogan Regency in increasing brand awareness by communicating local values to promote characteristics and identity. The existence of visual identity city branding also aims to build the image and reputation of Grobogan Regency in the international world.

f. **How** : How can the implementation of visual identity city branding run effectively?

Answer : Implementing consistent visual identity city branding according to brand guidelines to create a strong and well-coordinated impression on billboards, websites, and social media.

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3. *Ideate*

The Ideate stage in the visual identity city branding process begins with the exploration of innovative ideas based on the values of *Cakra Manggilingan*, which represent the cycle of life, balance, and continuity. To build a strong concept, the first step is to create a moodboard, namely a collection of visual references that reflect the character of Grobogan.

Figure 4. Moodboard visual collection (Source: Romadhon, 2025)

This moodboard contains images of Grobogan's unique identity, such as the Boyong Grobog culture, culinary, the beauty of the Kendang mountains, agricultural products such as corn and soybeans, and the charm of the eternal fire of Mrapen. With the moodboard, the aesthetic direction of the visual identity of city branding can be more focused, ensuring that each visual element is in line with the vision and unique character of Grobogan that you want to display. After the moodboard is formed, the next stage is mindmapping, which is a mapping of ideas that helps connect the main concept with its supporting elements. Visual identity character mapping was conducted using Brand Personality Sliders. The results of the analysis show that Grobogan's identity tends to be traditional, serious, elegant, and exclusive, reflecting the depth of strong Javanese culture, professionalism, and a prestigious impression. On the other hand, feminine and complex elements also appear, which describe the nature and value of wealth that underlies regional identity. These findings are the basis for developing visual elements and communication strategies to align with the philosophy of *Cakra Manggilingan*, ensuring that Grobogan's city branding has a distinctive, strong, and relevant identity with the times.

Figure 5. The process from mind mapping to brand personality slider to sketch (Source: Romadhon, 2025)

After the mind mapping process in designing the visual identity of Grobogan city branding, a brand character mapping was carried out using the Brand Personality Slider to understand the perceptions and values that were to be built. The results showed that the

character of Grobogan tends to be traditional, serious, elegant, and exclusive, reflecting a strong Javanese cultural identity, deep historical values, and an authoritative and classy regional image. On the other hand, feminine and complex traits emerge as a balance, indicating the flexibility and diversity of rich local values. These findings are an important foundation in directing the direction of visual branding to be relevant to regional characteristics and can form a strong and authentic image. Sketches allow exploration of shapes, symbols and compositions before entering the digitization stage. In this process, various design alternatives are created and selected to find the form that best suits the city's identity. With a systematic approach through moodboards, mindmapping, and sketches, the Ideate Stage ensures that the resulting city branding visual identity is not only visually appealing, but also has a strong meaning and is relevant to local values.

4. *Prototipe*

Prototypes are used to validate, test, and iterate ideas before they are fully implemented (Azzam et al., 2023). Prototype stage, the visual identity concept of Grobogan city branding that has been developed at the ideate stage begins to be realized in a visual design prototype that includes a logo and tagline that represents the regional identity. In its implementation, the software used is CorelDraw in designing the logo and tagline. Grobogan's visual city branding is arranged in a circle from several icons to form a unity that reflects the various characteristics of tourism, social, cultural, religious, culinary and agribusiness fields that strengthen Grobogan as Keajaiban Pesona (The Charm of Wonders).

Figure 6. Logo design results (Source: Romadhon, 2025)

**Figure 7**. Philosophy of logo meaning (Source: Romadhon, 2025)

The Grobogan city branding logo is designed by combining various visual elements that represent the region's identity as a whole. Each symbol in this logo not only has aesthetic value, but also carries a deep meaning that reflects the main sectors in Grobogan, ranging from agribusiness potential, delicious culinary specialties, the beauty of natural tourism, social and historical values, to the richness of culture and religion that are the pride of the community.

Figure 8. Basic concept of logo (Source: Romadhon, 2025)

Overall, the logo forms a Javanese philosophy, namely *Cakra Manggilingan*, which has the essence of Tri Wikarma Time (Past, Present and Future). The representation of the meaning of Tri Wikarma time describes the journey of Grobogan from 1726 to the present and the following, starting from the Past, which was once the place of the origin of the Mataram kingdom, then developing until now into a cultural city that holds various potentials to be developed in the future into a developed city in various fields without leaving local wisdom. In the midst of the emergence of various taglines, the public is actually increasingly confused by the identity of Grobogan that they want to build. In fact, the tagline has an important role as a medium to increase awareness (Dewi & Rusdianto, 2023).

Each tagline seems to represent only one particular field without reflecting the diversity and uniqueness that should be the main value. Without a clear and comprehensive concept, each slogan will be just words without a significant impact in building a cohesive image. Therefore, synergy is needed in designing a tagline that is not only attractive, but also able to represent various aspects comprehensively in order to give a stronger and more effective impression.
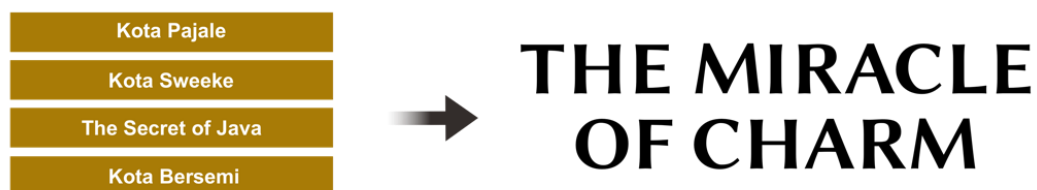
**Figure 9**. Old tagline to new tagline (Source: Romadhon, 2025)

From this tagline, it shows that Grobogan has a variety of charms that are not just visual beauty, but also a blend of culture, history, cuisine, and affection that create an unforgettable experience. The Miracle of Charm or Pesona Keajaiban becomes the identity of the new tagline that strengthens and unites the previous tagline/nickname so that it becomes an identity that represents Grobogan as a whole. More than just a tagline, "The Miracle of Charm" is a reflection of a strong identity, presenting a specialty that cannot be found anywhere else. The magic that is stored in every story, the uniqueness in every tradition, and the charm that continues to live from time to time. Miracles are not only about extraordinary things that can be felt, but also about how that charm is manifested in various colors. The

choice of color in a branding must be right because color can influence a person's perception (Sutejo & Zamzamy, 2020).

Figure 10. Color code and font concept (Source: Romadhon, 2025)

The use of yellow symbolizes prosperity, glory, and warmth in people's lives. While brown represents the strength of cultural roots and local wisdom that are maintained. The red color symbolizes the spirit, courage, and energy that continues to build the progress of Grobogan Regency. And the black color has a strong philosophy in building the image of Grobogan as a solid, dignified, elegant, and full of potential area. The selection of fonts for a brand/regional identity has an important function because the type of font also affects the style and function of its use (Fenus et al., 2022). The thickness of the font used is inspired by the style of Javanese script which reflects the history of the legend of Ki Joko Tarub, Ki Ageng Selo, Aji Soko who gave birth to Javanese script. The use of the Linux Biolinum font type looks firm, elegant and clear from its level of readability. Using the Linux Biolinum font type which has a 100% free license so it is safe to use for commercial purposes.
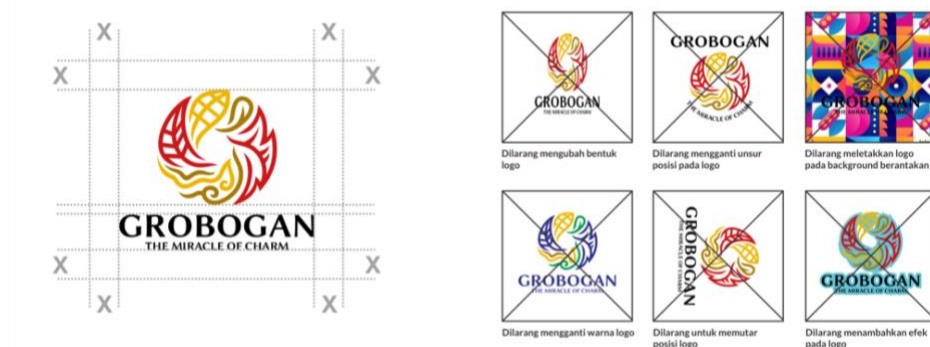
Figure 11. Safe limits and guidelines for logo usage errors (Source: Romadhon, 2025)

The safe limit of the Grobogan city branding logo design – The Miracle of Charm is the minimum empty space around the logo determined by the unit "X" to ensure optimal visibility, readability, and design balance. This space prevents interference from other elements such as text or images, so that the logo remains prominent and easily recognized in various media. By maintaining this safe limit, Grobogan's visual identity remains professional, aesthetic, and consistent in both digital and print use, ensuring the logo functions optimally without losing its appeal. In order to avoid mistakes in the application of visual identity, a list of common mistakes in the use of logos is also compiled, such as inappropriate color changes, distortion of shape, or placement on a background that reduces readability. This guide aims to maintain uniformity and professionalism in Grobogan branding, so that the image of the region remains strong and attracts the eyes of the public and tourists.

5. *Test*

In the testing phase, visual identity city branding of Grobogan Regency was tested by making mockups in various media. The designs that have been developed are applied to various products, such as tote bags, lanyards, and bags, to see how far the moment and visual appeal are in various formats. This test aims to ensure that the visual identity of the city branding that is designed is not only aesthetically appealing, but can also be applied well in the needs of regional promotion and identity.

Figure 12. Examples of visual identity application media (Source: Romadhon, 2025)

In addition to print media and merchandise, testing was also carried out through the application of 3D printing designs on certain buildings. This simulation was carried out to see how city branding designs can be integrated into architectural elements and public spaces, so that they can provide a strong visual identity for Grobogan Regency. With this application, it is hoped that branding will not only be a symbol, but also part of the city environment that can increase people's memory of regional identity. Next, benchmarking was carried out on the visual identity city branding of Grobogan Regency by comparing it with the visual identity city branding of other cities.


Figure 13. Benchmark among other regional visual identities (Source: Romadhon, 2025)

This step aims to cover the extent of competitiveness, uniqueness, and relevance of the designs that have been developed in the context of regional branding. By making this comparison, it is expected to find advantages and aspects that need to be improved so that the visual identity of Grobogan city branding is stronger and more effective in representing regional identity. Furthermore, a presentation process is carried out to various stakeholders. This presentation aims to introduce the elements of the visual identity that have been

designed—including the logo, tagline, color, and typography—and explain the basic philosophy that underlies it, namely *Cakra Manggilingan*.
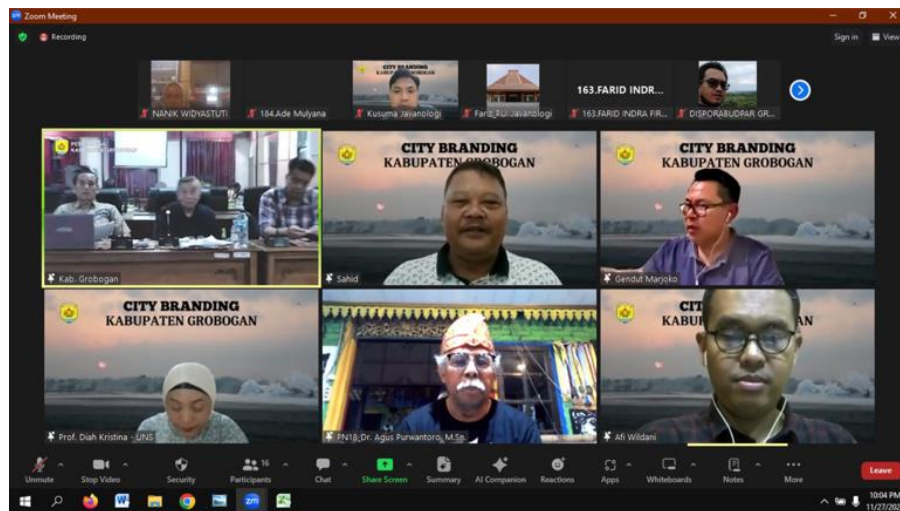
Figure 14. Presentation process in front of stakeholders
(Source: Dinas Pemuda Olahraga, Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Grobogan, 2023)

During the presentation session, several constructive inputs were obtained to strengthen the effectiveness of visual communication. One of the main inputs is the need to present the tagline in the Indonesian version, so that the message to be conveyed can be more easily understood and accepted by the local community. Although the tagline in a foreign language is considered visually and globally attractive, the use of Indonesian aims to build emotional connection with the local audience. In addition, input was also given on the delivery of the *Cakra Manggilingan* concept which was considered too abstract and philosophical. Therefore, it is suggested that the explanation of this concept be simplified and packaged in a more communicative visual narrative, so that its meaning can be conveyed clearly without eliminating the essence of the local values contained therein. As part of the improvement process, the Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah (Bappeda) of Grobogan Regency held a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on the Grobogan Regency Branding Study.
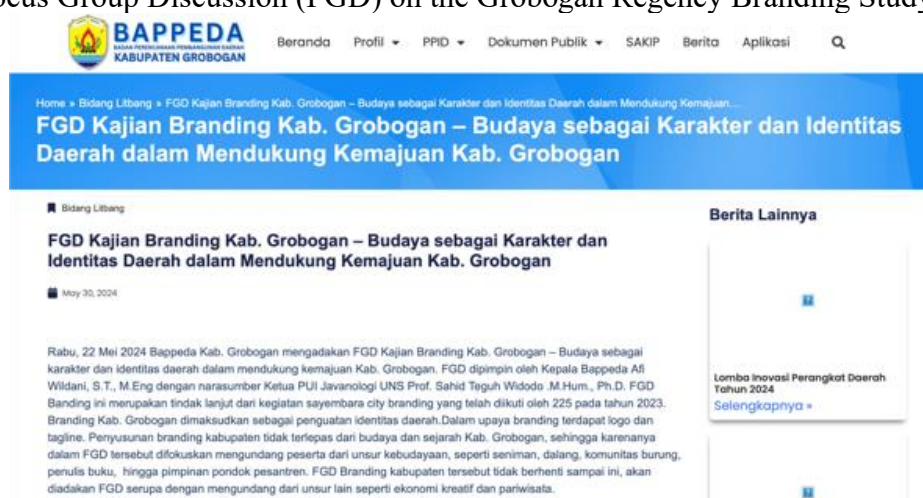
Figure 15. FGD news coverage of Grobogan branding study (Source: Romadhon, 2025)

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involved various stakeholders, including scientists, creative industry players, government representatives, and local communities, to explore input and broader perspectives on the visual identity of the city branding that had been designed. This discussion became a strategic forum to ensure that the proposed branding not only had aesthetic value but was also able to reflect the character, potential, and aspirations of the Grobogan community. This benchmarking and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) activity was a follow-up to the city branding design competition that was held in 2023, which succeeded in attracting the participation of 225 participants from various backgrounds. The competition was the first step in building a strong visual identity of Grobogan, and through iteration stages and in-depth studies, it is hoped that the resulting city branding design of Grobogan Regency can be an effective promotional tool, increase the attractiveness of investment, tourism, and strengthen people's pride in their region.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on a comprehensive series of processes implemented through the Design Thinking method, the development of the visual identity for the city branding of Grobogan Regency has successfully undergone multiple phases of iteration, refinement, and validation. This structured approach has ensured that the resulting visual identity is not merely an aesthetically pleasing design, but a strategic communication tool that is deeply rooted in the cultural values, collective aspirations, and socio-economic potential of the region. Every decision in the design process—from the formulation of ideas to the creation and testing of prototypes—was informed by extensive community input, qualitative analysis, and contextual understanding, positioning the final output as a design product that resonates authentically with its audience.

The integration of the *Cakra Manggilingan* philosophy—an indigenous Javanese concept symbolizing the cycle of life, balance, and continuity—serves as a critical foundation for this branding effort. It provides not only a symbolic structure but also a philosophical narrative that aligns with Grobogan's historical depth, current transformation, and future vision. By embedding this philosophy into the core of the visual identity, the design communicates more than just surface-level representation; it tells a story of time, cultural endurance, and dynamic regional growth. The narrative power of *Cakra Manggilingan* elevates Grobogan's branding beyond visuals, offering a sense of heritage and direction.

This study further demonstrates the effectiveness of the Design Thinking approach in addressing complex, culturally embedded design challenges. Its emphasis on empathy, co-creation, and iterative problem-solving allows the branding process to remain flexible yet focused, innovative yet grounded. The result is a visual identity that is adaptive to change while preserving the authenticity of local wisdom.

As such, the finalized visual identity of Grobogan Regency is expected to serve not only as a symbol of regional marketing but also as an emblem of civic pride and socio-cultural empowerment. It reflects the character of Grobogan not only as a tourism destination but as a vibrant, living culture with unique values to offer on both the national and international stage. Ultimately, city branding is not just about logos or taglines—it is about constructing

a narrative of place, belonging, and future identity, all of which are embodied within this thoughtful and culturally embedded design.

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