

DYNAMIC VISUAL IDENTITY DESIGN FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL MSME BASED ON BRAND VALUE AND BRAND ACTIVATION STEPS

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Abstract

The rapid development of urban lifestyles in major cities in Indonesia has encouraged the emergence of various Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) from novice business players. This has led to many MSMEs experiencing differentiation challenges with competitors in the market. One of the challenges faced is the implementation of branding, including visual identity, which is not yet optimal, so that the brand value that is intended to be conveyed is not properly communicated to the audience. This study aims to develop a framework for designing a visual identity system for MSMEs that is dynamic and based on the brand value they wish to convey. This framework is developed based on academic and practical perspectives, with a synthesis of the results of a study of dynamic visual identity theory, observations of the workflow of practical branding designers, and categorization based on brand activation steps.

Keywords: Brand Activation, Dynamic Visual Identity, Brand Value, MSME

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of urban lifestyles in major Indonesian cities has led to the emergence of many Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). MSMEs play a vital role in the regional economy by creating job fields, but many of them are started by novice entrepreneurs without careful planning, mainly due to the difficulty of finding employment ¹. With increasingly fierce competition in the market, MSMEs face many obstacles and challenges, including a shift in consumer preferences towards digital media and marketplaces ² and the development of MSME centers that are merely places to sell goods, without any guidance from the local MSME Office for MSME entrepreneurs ³.

In this era of digital marketing, MSMEs are required to build strong branding, especially a dynamic visual identity system that can be applied to various media as needed and based on the brand values they want to convey to consumers, thereby creating clear differentiation between MSMEs and their competitors. Unfortunately, many MSME owners still have limited understanding of the importance of the

¹ Andika Primasiwi, "Masalah Branding Masih Jadi Salah Satu Kelemahan UMKM, Perlu Dibangun Ekosistem Yang Saling Membantu," *Suara Merdeka*, August 2024, <https://www.suaramerdeka.com/ekonomi/0413342645/masalah-branding-masih-jadi-salah-satu-kelemahan-umkm-perlu-dibangun-ekosistem-yang-saling-membantu>.

² Hakim Baihaqi, "Penataan Kawasan Batik Trusmi Cirebon Hanya Pindahkan Masalah, UMKM Tetap Merana," *Bandung Bisnis*, August 18, 2025, <https://bandung.bisnis.com/read/20250818/550/1903396/penataan-kawasan-batik-trusmi-cirebon-hanya-pindahkan-masalah-umkm-tetap-merana>.

³ (Pikiran Rakyat, 2025)

relationship between branding and dynamic visual identity with brand values ⁴, so differentiation is hampered because visual identity is not used effectively ⁵. Branding is often viewed merely as a logo or simple packaging, whereas a consistent and dynamic visual identity can build consumer trust and a positive brand image ⁶

Visual identity as a system encompasses brand values, personality, and positioning. A dynamic visual identity system has a stable yet adaptive core structure that can be used across various media according to context, media, culture, and time so that brand values can be effectively conveyed to the audience⁷. Brand values generate positive perceptions and emotional value that differentiate it from competitors through positioning⁸. This value communication can be enhanced through brand activation—a three-stage process: strategic planning, creative execution, and evaluation & analysis—which has an impact on increasing awareness, loyalty, sales, social interaction, and integrated marketing⁹.

This study emphasizes the importance of brand activation by applying it to the steps of visual identity design based on brand values formulated from the theory of dynamic visual identity and observations of the work steps of branding designers. This serves as a solution for MSMEs to build strong branding despite their various limitations in their efforts to differentiate themselves in an increasingly competitive market.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach through observation, interviews, and theoretical analysis. Observation and interview methods were used to observe the work steps of branding designers, both freelance designers and designers from creative studios, in designing visual identities for MSMEs, and to determine the elements that need to be considered in designing a good visual identity system for MSMEs. In this study, three branding designers were involved in the observation and interview stages. The first designer was freelance designer Yusuf Akbar, followed by Fahmi Zuhri from Atelier F.Z. studio and Ananda Rizqy from Studio Quint. Dynamic

⁴ Chuzaimah Batubara et al., "Strategi Pengembangan Identitas Visual UMKM Melalui Pembuatan Logo: Studi Kasus Pada Program Kuliah Kerja Nyata (KKN) Di Desa Aras," *Journal Of Human Education (JAHE)* 3 (2023): 420–27.

⁵ Kezia Arum Sary et al., "Perancangan Visual Branding Untuk Meningkatkan Identitas Dan Daya Saing UMKM Binaan Otorita Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN)," *Jurnal Pengabdian Nusantara (AbdiNus)* 9 (2025): 200–211.

⁶ Novan Muji Nugroho et al., "Penerapan Strategi Branding Pada UMKM Lokal Sebagai Upaya Meningkatkan Nilai Tambah Produk," *Journal of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Business (RIGGS)* 4 (2025): 5364–76; Hesti Rahayu and Lisa Amalia, "Perancangan Identitas Visual UMKM Bidang Kuliner 'Bu Naf' Di Yogyakarta : Upaya Menyintas Pasca Pandemi," *DeKaVe* 17 (2024): 110–24.

⁷ Antonio Pedro Alves, "Brand Identity Canvas: A Framework to Bring Clarity and Relevance to Brands" (ESCOLA SUPERIOR DE PROPAGANDA E MARKETING – ESPM, 2022); Mei Bingfeng and Md Nagib Padil, "From One to Diversity: Explore the Design Principles of Flexible Branding Visual Identity and Its Application on Design Practice," *Ideology* 9, no. 2 (2024): 55–66.

⁸ Nataliia Hurzhii, "Brand Value and Brand Equity: Essence, Difference and Relationship," *Management and Entrepreneurship: Trends of Development* 4 (2022): 36–45; Anders Parment, "Distribution Strategies for Volume & Premium Brands in Highly Competitive Consumer Markets," *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 15, no. 4 (2008): 250–65; Musa A. Eskiev, "The Meaning and Role of the Positioning Process in Brand Management," in *SHS Web of Conferences* (EDP Science, 2023).

⁹ Rashid Saeed et al., "Brand Activation: A Theoretical Perspective," *Journal of Marketing and Consumer Research* 13 (2015): 94–98; Dentsu Indonesia, "What Is Brand Activation? How Does It Work and What Is Its Impact on Business?," Dentsu, 2024.

visual identity and brand activation theory analysis was conducted as the scientific basis for formulating the visual identity design framework in this study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Brand activation is an effort to convince consumers to choose a brand's products or services over its competitors by building positive value through interaction. This interaction can be built through direct and interactive emotional relationships with consumers based on participation. Brand activation generally consists of three main cyclical stages, namely strategic planning, creative execution, and evaluation and analysis. The strategic planning stage focuses on formulating objectives, identifying target audiences, understanding brand value, and developing positioning that is relevant to consumer needs. The creative execution stage is the process of translating strategy into real experiences through visual execution, content, and interactive activities, both physical and digital. Finally, the evaluation and analysis stage is used to measure the effectiveness of the activation through analysis of consumer engagement, audience response, and the achievement of key performance indicators as a basis for evaluation and development of the next strategy (Dentsu, 2024).

With brand activation, communicating brand value to consumers becomes easier to achieve. The effectiveness of brand activation depends on the brand's ability to communicate the features, values, and uniqueness of its products experientially, so that the interaction created is not only cognitive but also affective (Saeed et al., 2015).

In 1959, Karl Gerstner designed an identity for the Boîte à musique store in Basel, Switzerland. This visual identity became the forerunner of the Flexible Branding Visual Identity theory. Previously, the principles of 20th-century modernism branding adhered to the idea that a logo must be simple, consistent, and unchanged even when applied to various media, with the slogan "less is more." The trend of dynamic visual identity shifted the principles of modernist branding with a visual identity model that has a stable core structure but is flexible to be applied to various media as needed.

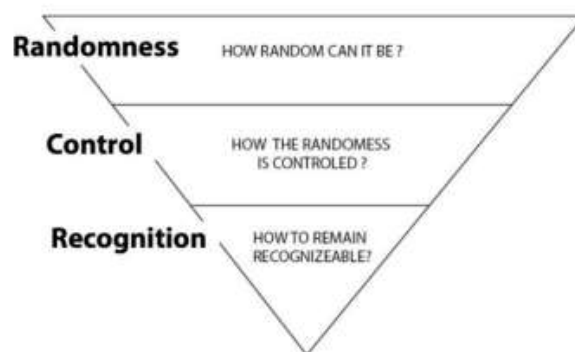


Figure 1. Controlled Randomness¹⁰

A dynamic and flexible visual identity has the ability to adapt to needs without losing its essence ¹¹. Although flexible, a dynamic visual identity can change according to needs but must remain under system control so that it can still be recognized as part of a brand's visual identity system. This principle is called controlled randomness ¹².

From a practical perspective based on interviews with branding designers, designer Yusuf Akbar explained that the process of designing the visual identity of MSMEs begins with direct interviews with clients, in this case MSME owners, to explore basic information about MSMEs, such as their profile, vision and mission, and client preferences. Next, this data is processed into keywords, concept maps, competitor research, mood boards, and finally sketches and digital finalization that are ready to be applied in various media.

Meanwhile, Fahmi Zuhri and Ananda Rizqy Ramadhan from Atelier F.Z. and Studio Quint liken brands to humans, each with their own personalities, making the exploration of brand personality and brand values a crucial first step. A collection of keywords can be used to explore brand personality and values. Visual identity does not need to be done with a complicated philosophy because it will be more difficult to convey the brand values that you want to display to consumers. Instead of using philosophy, emotional and sentimental aspects are used to display brand values and make consumers feel that they have a personal and emotional connection to an MSME brand. Competitor research also needs to be done to map the brand positioning of client MSMEs.

Analysis/Discussion

Based on the theoretical study and MSME branding steps obtained from the practical branding designers above, a dynamic visual identity design framework for MSMEs based on brand values is formulated as follows:

¹⁰ Riky Azharyandi Siswanto and Jasni Dolah, "The Paradox of Dynamic Corporate Identity," in *6th Bandung Creative Movement International Conference in Creative Industries 2019* (Bandung, 2019).

¹¹ Hedda Martina Šola, Sarwar Khawaja, and Fayyaz Hussain Qureshi, "Neuroscientific Analysis of Logo Design: Implications for Luxury Brand Marketing," *Behavioral Sciences (Basel)* 15, no. 4 (2025): 502.

¹² Siswanto and Dolah, "The Paradox of Dynamic Corporate Identity."

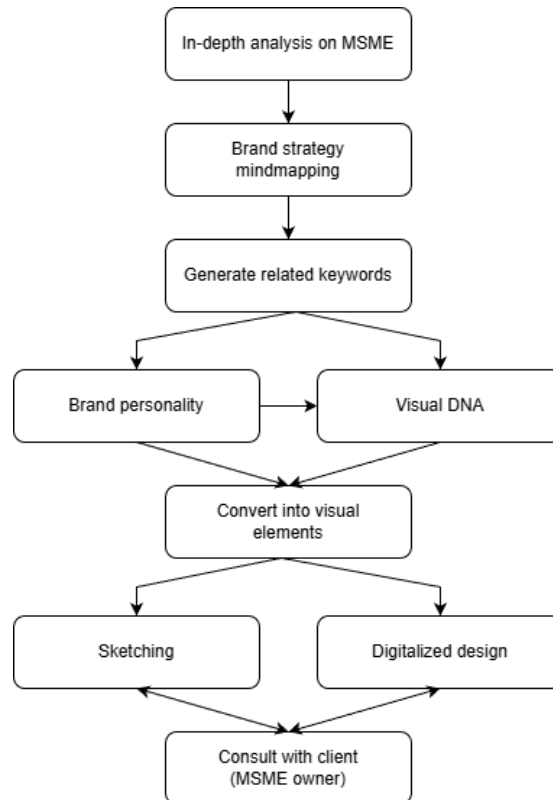


Figure 2. Dynamic Visual Identity Based on Brand Value Framework. Source: Research result

Based on the three stages of brand activation, the strategic planning stage consists of an in-depth analysis of the MSMEs whose visual identities will be designed. This analysis is intended to obtain various basic information about the MSMEs, such as a brief profile, products offered, target consumers, and positioning research comparing the MSMEs with their competitors. This analysis can be conducted through direct interviews with the client, who in this context is the MSME owner, and can also be done by observing documents and assets owned by the MSME as supporting information. The results of this analysis are then compiled into a brand strategy with the help of mind mapping. At this stage of mind mapping the brand strategy, data in the form of a collection of keywords relevant to the client's MSME will be obtained.

From this collection of keywords, we can then conclude the brand personality of the MSME, which is adapted from Studio Quint's approach of likening a brand to a human being with its own personality. Brand personality is used to determine how MSMEs communicate with their target consumers in the form of taglines and storytelling. From this collection of keywords, we will also obtain data in the form of visual DNA. This visual DNA contains visual criteria that will be used in visual identity design, so that the visual identity designed will still have DNA and application references to achieve dynamism while remaining structured and recognizable, as referred to as controlled randomness according to Siswanto and Dolah (2019).

In the second stage of brand activation, namely creative execution, the visual DNA that has been obtained is then translated into visual form through sketches. The sketching stage is carried out in accordance with the keywords and visual DNA that have been obtained previously, and must contain the brand values that are to be displayed. Several alternative sketches are created, which are then consulted with the client to select which sketch will be used for the digital form. The sketching and digitization stages are iterative, so they can be repeated as needed.

The final stage of brand activation is evaluation and analysis. At this stage, the results of the sketches and digitized designs can be evaluated repeatedly as needed to achieve the desired goals, until an agreement is reached with the MSME owner to finalize the visual identity design.

Brand activation is successful when all three stages are carried out in an integrated manner, so that consumers not only see the design, but can also feel the value of the MSME in the visual identity design they see, thereby triggering an emotional connection and encouraging them to actively participate in finding out more about the MSME, trying its products, sharing stories, and developing a sense of belonging when using the MSME's products. The results: a deeper understanding of brand value, strong emotional connections, and business impacts such as long-term loyalty, word-of-mouth, and higher sales. In the context of SMEs that face many limitations in implementing visual identity as a branding strategy, this framework is highly relevant because it can be applied at an affordable cost through simple digital storytelling or small demos, addressing the issue where the value of sustainability has not yet been communicated to the audience.

CONCLUSION

One of the obstacles to MSME differentiation in the market is the limited understanding of the importance of branding and visual identity as assets to demonstrate excellence through brand value to audiences and consumers. Before deciding to choose a product, consumers will certainly consider the reasons for choosing a particular MSME product over its competitors. Therefore, strong branding and dynamic visual identity applied to various media need to be used as a means of communicating brand value to consumers.

Brand activation is used in an integrated manner with visual identity design steps obtained from a study of dynamic visual identity theory with the work steps of branding designers to design a visual identity that is representative of the MSME brand value, so that despite all its limitations, an emotional connection with consumers can be established appropriately, thereby enabling an SME to achieve differentiation in the market. Consumers are expected to choose that SME over its competitors because they understand the advantages of the brand value conveyed through its visual identity.

Theoretically, these findings enrich the branding development framework, particularly representative visual identities for MSMEs in Indonesia, as a bridge between brand value and practical activation as a means of differentiation in the market. Thus, MSMEs with their limitations will have a dynamic visual identity system that is in line with their brand value for their promotional activities. Meanwhile, in practical terms, recommendations for implementing this framework in MSMEs that experience real differentiation challenges can be carried out in further research.

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