

## Role of physical elements in the image formation of a creative city Case study of Pekalongan Batik City

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Received January 06, 2021 Received in revised form Jan. 24, 2021 Accepted Sep. 11, 2021 Available online December 01, 2021</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> City design elements City image City tourism Creative city</p> <p>*Corresponding author: Retno Widodo Pramono Urban and Regional Planning, Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia Email: <a href="mailto:pramono.wid@ugm.ac.id">pramono.wid@ugm.ac.id</a> ORCID: <a href="https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4070-5550">https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4070-5550</a></p>	<p><i>Several creative cities aim at becoming tourist destinations, due to the support of physical elements supported by visual identity. Furthermore, due to the low number of tourist visits, most cities have optimally embraced creativity during development, thereby making it a driving force for its citizens' welfare. Therefore, this research aims to identify the physical elements as associated with the image formation of Pekalongan City based on the assessments of residents and visitors. This is a deductive research with the quantitative and qualitative method used for analysis and data were obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through observation, questionnaires, and interviews, while secondary were obtained from literature studies and content searches on the internet. The results showed that the design of a city's physical element through cultural works and folk arts, create unique attributes that attract tourists. Furthermore, these results are expected to encourage city planners and designers to help city managers to understand the importance and uniqueness of visual image for branding formation in an effort to strengthen its competitiveness and attract tourists.</i></p>

### Introduction

The creative economy is associated with the generation or exploitation of knowledge and information. This has become the basis for city development, especially with its high added value and multiplier effect on the tourism sector. According to the [Indonesian Ministry of Trade \(2008\)](#), the creative economy is an effort to develop a sustainable city through creativity in accordance with a competitive economic climate. [Manisyah \(2009\)](#) stated that any place that has been successfully developed based on a creative economy is referred to as a creative city. Furthermore, [Landry and Bianchini \(1995\)](#) specifically defined a creative city as a place with unique people that carry out various activities creatively. Therefore, such cities are identified by (1) Developing potential and creative economy,

(2) Maintaining a creative class, and (3) Having a plan and development towards the realization of a creative environment ([Landry 2006](#); [Bawole 2020](#); [Purbadi and Lake 2019](#)).

One of the cities in the world that has succeeded in making the creative economy sector its powerhouse is Duran, located in Ecuador. The excellence of this city is based on the ability to embrace creativity. In addition, its culture serves as a driving force for the welfare of the citizens. This was realized by developing a relationship between modern creative fields and local folk arts ([Sawe 2017](#)). In Indonesia, this sector was also promoted by implementing various policies, such as preparing incentives to bolster the development of culture-based creative industries, designing an innovative roadmap by involving the government and private sector, developing programs to drive the creative economy, providing legal protection,

incentives and facilities for creative industry work, and actors [Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy \(2018\)](#). According to the survey data obtained from the [Central Statistics Agency \(2016\)](#), the GDP of this sector from 2010 to 2015 increased from 525.96 trillion to 852.24 trillion, which is equivalent to an average yearly rise of 10.14%.

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stated that Pekalongan, Bandung, and Ambon are creative cities with the intension of becoming tourist destinations. However, they are not supported by visual identity as an image-forming element ([Anshori 2019](#)). According to [Lestari \(2016\)](#), [Adona, Nita, and Mafrudoh \(2017\)](#), and [Ziyae \(2018\)](#), the visual identity is the branding process used to build a distinctive city image in order to differentiate it from others and make it a tourist attraction center ([Saputri, Fauzi, and Irawan 2018](#); [d'Ovidio and Cossu 2017](#); [Puspitasari 2016](#)).

On December 1, 2014, Pekalongan was named the World Creative City in Craft and Folk Arts by UNESCO. [Latifah and Damayanti \(2016\)](#) reported that the identity-formation in this city is mostly obtained by non-physical aspects in the form of creative tourism activities and the batik industry. Furthermore, the physical components' existence plays an important role in forming the city's visual identity and its life system ([Budiman, Rondonuwu, and Tungka 2018](#); [Hilman and Megantari 2018](#)). Unfortunately, continuous growth in this condition in the long term tends to hamper the branding of Pekalongan as a Creative City.

Therefore, to economically support this city's optimal development, it is necessary to carry out research that understands the processes and elements relevant for the formation of the physical visual identity. This understanding is expected to become the foundation for organizing and designing the physical components needed in a creative city. Therefore, this research tries to determine how the image level of Pekalongan is perceived by the wider community and the contribution of the city's physical visual elements to its image formation.

## Method

### Data collection

The ability to determine whether Pekalongan is known as batik or creative city is carried out in 2 ways. Firstly, by recognizing and measuring the popularity attribute in cyberspace, and secondly through questionnaires distributed among members of the local community and tourists.

Furthermore, to determine its popularity, the internet contents associated with the city were analyzed. This method is logically used to identify trending news regarding this area on electronic media. The search was carried out using the following keywords, *Kota Batik* (Batik City, Batik Region, Batik Society), and *Kota Kreatif Batik* (Batik Creative City). The more often Pekalongan City appears as a search result or is reported using these keywords, the stronger its identity as a popular Batik or Creative City. The number of occurrences is compared to other cities with similar keywords. These led to a ranking related to the identity strength at the community level. Furthermore, the keywords "Kota Pekalongan (Pekalongan City)" is often to analyze the term *Kota Batik*, or *Kota Kreatif Batik*, on websites associated with Pekalongan City.

Questionnaires were distributed among the local community and tourists to obtain data related to identity strength. The 130 respondents were selected through purposive nonprobability sampling technique, based on the following criteria, such as the need to be an indigene of the local community and tourists that have or are currently traveling to Pekalongan City.

The questionnaire contains questions regarding significant physical elements, which are the main characteristics of Pekalongan as Batik, or Creative City. These questions are compiled from the results of the elaborated literature deduction. Therefore, it is separately used to identify the physical elements which shape the respondents' perceptions of Pekalongan as a Batik, or Creative City.

Based on the theoretical deduction results, the questionnaire contains seven variables of the physical elements, as shown in [table 1](#).

**Table 1.** Elaboration of city visual element variable

No	Total site findings	Theory source	Keywords asked the respondents	Local forms/terms cited as examples
1	District	Lynch 1960, Shirvani 1985, Trancik 1986	Block	Village area
2	Path (transportation network)	Lynch 1960, Shirvani 1985, Trancik 1986	Highway, pedestrian, and bicycle paths	Highway, sidewalk
3	Street furniture	Shirvani 1985, Trancik 1986	Road facilities	Pedestrian paths, street lights, bus stops, traffic signs, shade plants, chairs
4	Edges	Lynch 1960, Trancik 1986	City limits	River, railroad cut, highway
5	Preservation	Lynch 1960, Shirvani 1985, Trancik 1986	Historical legacy	Ancient buildings
6	Landmark/icon	Lynch 1960, Shirvani 1985, Trancik 1986	Monument or icon	Monument, building
7	Open space	Shirvani 1985, Trancik 1986	Garden	Square, field

Source: (Lynch 1960; Shirvani 1985; Trancik 1986)

The technique used to analyze the image popularity level of Pekalongan as batik and creative city was based on the internet search results, which compared its popularity with other cities. Therefore, to assess the extent of its popularity, the news area's coverage level was utilized in a hierarchical order from local, regional, national to international scales. Although each level has a score, the popularity of Pekalongan City's identity at the international level was based on the highly scored percentage, which rapidly increased.

The identity strength was measured in real-time using a questionnaire, requesting the local community respondents and tourists to rate the Pekalongan City's popularity as a Batik Creative area. Furthermore, the questionnaire also contained questions on respondents' physical elements in assessing the city's image. Their

responses were analyzed by comparing the scoring results of the percentage values obtained from each physical element, based on descriptive statistics. Additionally, the analysis results were used to identify the highest score elements in the very strong category. These elements are regarded as the main characteristics of identity due to their significant contributions to the city identity formation measured in the real world.

Furthermore, this was carried out to recognize the variety of physical elements and their strengths in forming identities based on the respondent's questionnaire. The assessment of each element was carried out using a 1 to 3 Likert scale approach. Each score was awarded based on the criteria that served as a reference in the assessment. The scoring hierarchy is shown in table 2.

**Table 2.** The classification determination of the physical component attribute strength levels

Score	Classification	If the elements forms Batik City identity	If the elements forms Batik Creative City identity
3	Very strong	If the respondent thinks that the existence of physical elements in question is the main characteristic of Pekalongan as a Batik City	If the respondent thinks that the existence of physical elements in question is the main characteristic of Pekalongan as a Creative City with Batik commodities
2	Quite strong	If the respondent thinks that the existence of the physical elements in question is a characteristic, although not the main one of Pekalongan as a Batik City	If the respondent thinks that the existence of the physical elements in question is a characteristic, although not the main one, of Pekalongan as a Creative City with Batik commodities
1	Not strong	If the respondent thinks that the existence of the physical elements in question does not characterize Pekalongan as a Batik City	If the respondent thinks that the existence of the physical elements in question does not characterize Pekalongan as a Creative City with Batik as the main commodities

## Result and discussion

Pekalongan City popularity as a batik creative city in cyberspace

Table 3 and figure diagram 1 show a recap of the search results on the internet using the keyword *Kota Batik* (Batik City, Batik Region, Batik Society) without mentioning Pekalongan City and *Kota Kreatif Batik* (Batik Creative City) without including Pekalongan.

**Table 3.** Recapitulation percentage of the Pekaolongan City identity search results on the internet

Keyword	Total site findings	Site findings containing Pekalongan City			The occurrence of Pekalongan City
		Total	Internal source	External source	
<i>Kota Batik</i> (Batik city, batik region, batik society)	317.000	186.000	77.300	108.700	59%
<i>Kota Kreatif Batik</i> (Batik creative city)	402.000	129.000	51.273	77.727	32%



**Figure 1.** Pekalongan City popularity level in cyberspace

Based on the calculated results, it was understood that Pekalongan is quite popular in cyberspace and known as the Batik or Creative City. In addition, it is also dominant in the batik industry world with a percentage of 59%, while 32% indicates that it is a Batik Creative City. It is also regarded as a city based on the creative economy. However, when this condition is searched using only the Creative City keyword, few findings directly related to Pekalongan City was discovered.

The popularity level of Pekalongan City's image a Batik Creative City

Based on the questionnaires distributed to 130 respondents consisting of 85 members of the local community and 45 tourists regarding the perception of Pekalongan City's image as a Batik Creative City, 59% of the locals and 44% of tourists stated that the popularity level is at the regional, national and global scale as shown in figure 2.



**Figure 2.** The popularity level of Pekalongan City as a Creative City

Ranking of the image forming elements on Batik City and Batik Creative City

This study intends to measure 7 physical elements or variables based on the deduction of city form and design theory used to identify the main characteristic features of the Pekalongan image as a Batik and Creative City. The elements scored on a Likert scale of 1 to 3 percent are tabulated in a diagram for easy in-depth analysis. In accordance with the identification results of the 7 physical elements analyzed, only 4 significant areas characterized it as Batik and Creative City based on the results of its ranking aggregation. The ranking sequence of the 4 physical elements that characterize it as a Batik City includes (1) preservation, (2) landmarks, (3) open spaces, and (4) districts. Meanwhile, the following characterized it as a Creative city (1) landmarks, (2) preservation, (3) districts, and (4) open spaces. The physical elements from the deduction of the naming theory are adjusted to the scientific city form and design, although each has more detailed objects that are easily understood by the public.

**Table 4.** Percentage of respondents' answers on the strength of identity forming elements

Variable (analysis unit)	Perception as the Batik City							Perception as the Batik Creative City								
	Community			Tourist			Total score	Rank	Community			Tourist			Total Score	Rank
	SK	CK	TK	SK	CK	TK			SK	CK	TK	SK	CK	TK		
District	40	37	8	20	17	8	304	4	39	35	11	22	19	4	306	3

Variable (analysis unit)	Perception as the Batik City					Perception as the Batik Creative City										
	Community			Tourist		Total score	Rank	Community			Tourist		Total Score	Rank		
	SK	CK	TK	SK	CK			TK	SK	CK	TK	SK			CK	TK
Path	30	47	8	17	24	4	295	5	6	11	68	7	27	11	194	7
Street furniture	20	50	15	16	23	6	275	6	4	68	13	8	36	1	258	5
Edges	18	45	22	10	10	25	241	7	20	18	47	9	9	27	215	6
Preservation	68	15	2	26	16	3	349	1	44	37	4	27	13	5	322	2
Landmark	59	21	5	33	11	1	346	2	68	15	2	32	12	1	357	1
Open space	53	29	3	26	15	4	332	3	48	5	32	27	17	1	302	4

Assessment of image forming elements as Batik City and Batik Creative City

The questionnaire discovered that objects were used to represent elements, namely the district, path, street furniture, edges, preservation, landmarks, and open spaces, as reported by the respondents. The distribution of these objects is shown on the following map.

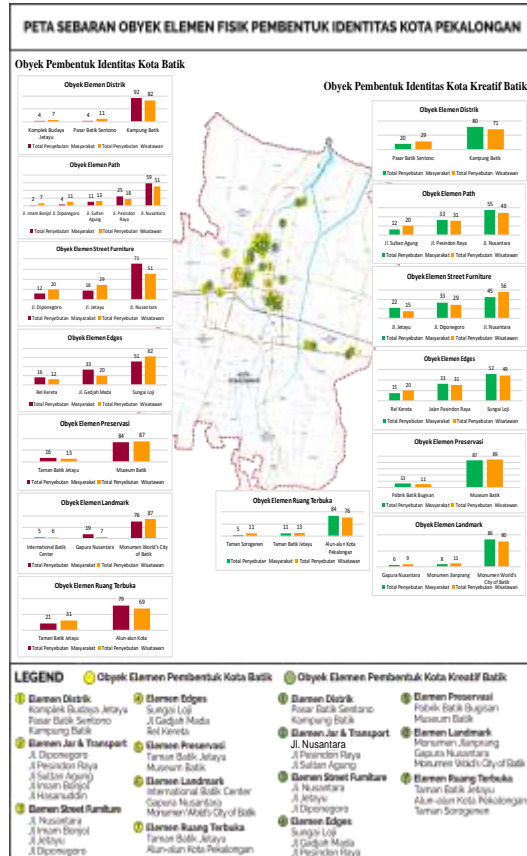


Figure 3. Map of the physical elements object distribution

1) District element

District elements in Pesindon and Kauman Batik Villages are identified as strong perceptions

in shaping the Pekalongan image as a Batik and Creative City. Furthermore, 93% of the local community respondents and 82% of tourists reported that this object is a characteristic of the Batik City identity. Meanwhile, 80% of the local community respondents and 71% of tourists characterized it as a Creative City.

The interviews carried out with several respondents, showed that the Pesindon and Kauman Batik Villages had strong impression due to the attachment of the term “batik”. Secondly, the larger communities recognized the two villages as centers for batik craftsmen, with 31 production houses in Pesindon and 24 in Kauman. These two batik centers have become tourist destinations. Many tourists are also interested in witnessing the traditional process of Batik production in the district daily. Although Kauman Village does not include batik in the pronunciation, it is still regarded as a popular tourist destination. This is because it is the oldest batik producing village. Therefore, its existence creates an extremely strong impression to support the strengthening of the batik image in Pekalongan City.



Figure 4. District situation of Kauman and Pasindon Batik Village

These two villages have better popularity than the Jetayu Cultural Complex and the Setono Batik Market, which are regarded on a national scale as cultural heritage and batik shopping center objects. The loss of the two district objects' popularity, which plays an important role in the production and marketing chain, is because the Jetayu Cultural Complex relies on seasonal activities in developing the batik city image.

Meanwhile, the Setono Batik Market has a fairly good reputation due to its location in the suburban area, which makes its existence less prominent than Pesindon and Kauman Batik Villages in characterizing their batik images.

As districts, the Jetayu Cultural Complex and the Setono Batik Markets are still classified as strong image forming elements of the Batik City compared to the path, street furniture, edges, preservation, landmarks, and open spaces. This is because the two districts have a strong relationship due to their cultural activities and batik marketing, thereby leading to their ability to form a batik city image compared to the other physical elements.

## 2) Path and street furniture elements

The Nusantara Street object is strongly perceived to represent the path element in forming the Batik City and the Batik Creative City image in Pekalongan. Moreover, approximately 59% of the local community respondents and relatively 51% of tourists reported that this object is a characteristic of the Batik City identity. Meanwhile, 55% of the local community respondents and relatively 49% of tourists stated that it is a characteristic of the Batik Creative City identity.

Meanwhile, the results were confirmed through observation, the roads are completely designed, with batik-patterned dominance attributes. Therefore, this condition creates attractiveness and a strong impression on the public regarding the Pekalongan image as a Batik and Creative City.



**Figure 5.** Cross-section of roads and empirical conditions of Nusantara Streets

The road facilities on Nusantara Street, which includes the availability of pedestrian paths, street lights, and bollards with batik motifs, are strongly identified as an image forming element of Pekalongan as a Batik and Creative City. Subsequently, 71% of respondents from the local community and 51% of tourists stated that these objects characterize the Batik City identity. Meanwhile, 45% of the local community

respondents and 49% of tourists stated that the objects on this street are used in characterizing the Batik Creative City identity.



**Figure 6.** Facility attribute object on Nusantara Street

The popularity of Nusantara Street, with its fairly distinctive batik-nuanced facilities, creates a good impression compared to Diponegoro and Jetayu Streets, which constitutes the main roads and connecting strategic locations in Pekalongan as well as used in characterizing the Batik City identity. This is because the arrangement of designs and facilities on the two streets are classified as incomplete and lack the batik nuances, thereby giving out a fairly strong impression than the objects found in Nusantara.

## 3) Edges elements

Loji River represents strong edge forming elements in identifying the Pekalongan image as a Batik and Creative City. Consequently, approximately 51% of the local community respondents and 62% of tourists stated that this object is a characteristic of Batik City's identity. Meanwhile, in characterizing the Batik Creative City identity, 52% of the local community respondents and 49% of tourists mentioned the Sungai Loji. According to several respondents, the Loji River displays an appropriate impression. Firstly, its flow stretches to the Pekalongan City from north to south, serves as a barrier or trading route to several areas such as the Jetayu Old City. Secondly, it flows through strategic areas, namely the Batik Museum, Bugisan Batik Factory, as well as Pesindon and Kauman Batik Villages, therefore it exhibits a proper impression.



**Figure 7.** Existing condition of the Loji River object  
Source: (Innayah 2018)

The Loji River's existence tends to create a properly emphasized popularity compared to Gajah Mada Street, which is also one of Pekalongan City's boundaries, especially in characterizing Batik City and Batik's identity as Creative City. This condition is because the Gajah Mada Street as an aspect of its edge elements both in design and completeness of the batik-nuanced attributes is still minimal. Therefore, the impression and popularity are not strong as the Loji River, which is part of the strategic object in characterizing Batik City image.

#### 4) Preservation elements

The Batik Museum is strongly identified as representing the preservation element in forming Pekalongan's image as Batik City and Batik Creative City. However, approximately 84% of the local community respondents and 87 tourists stated that this object is a characteristic of Batik City's identity. Meanwhile, 87% of the local community respondents and 89% of tourists stated that it is used in characterizing the identity of Batik Creative City. Based on this observation, the Batik Museum displays an appropriate impression because of its status as a center for batik preservation of Indonesian cultural heritage. In fact, its existence is able to attract tourists, to either learn ways of producing batik, or investigate the culture.



**Figure 8.** Existing condition of the Batik Museum object

Source: (Inayah 2018)

The existence of the Batik Museum has good popularity and impressive level compared to the Bugisan Batik Factory, an object in reflecting the identity of Batik and Creative City. Irrespective of the fact that the Bugisan Batik Factory is one of the largest and has a marketing coverage categorized on a foreign scale, it is less popular than the Batik Museum. This is because it is usually closed, in the sense that it is not opened to the public or tourists like the Batik Museum, which serves as the center for the Indonesian cultural batik preservation and is opened daily for

tourist activities, therefore its popularity keeps increasing among members of the local community, tourists, and in cyberspace.

#### 5) Landmark element

The landmark element strongly captured by the community as the main characteristic feature of Batik City is in the form of the World's City of Batik Monument. Approximately 76% of the local community respondents and 87% of tourists stated that this object is a characteristic of Batik City's identity. Meanwhile, in characterizing the Batik Creative City identity, 86% of the local community respondents and 80% of tourists mentioned the World's City of Batik Monument. Based on several respondents' confirmation, the World's City of Batik Monument is perceived to have a significant impression by a larger community. This is because its design resembles a traditional weaving machine that depicts that the local community's source of income is the batik weaving sector. Furthermore, the second reason is based on the fact that the name matches the city branding used by Pekalongan City.



**Figure 9.** The World's City of batik monument object

Based on the existence of the World's City of Batik Monument, it has a good popularity and impressive level compared to Gapura Nusantara in characterizing Batik and Creative City's identity. This is because Gapura Nusantara, is a new icon in the public space, and is not yet widely known compared to the World's City of Batik Monument, which has become a tourism promotion icon for Batik City Pekalongan since 2014 after it was named as part of the Creative City Network by UNESCO.

#### 6) Open space element

The community strongly considers this object to represent an open space element in characterizing Pekalongan's image as Batik City and Batik Creative City. In addition, 79% of the local community respondents and 69% of tourists stated that this object is a characteristic of Batik City's identity. Meanwhile, in characterizing the Batik Creative City identity, the square was

mentioned 84% of the local community and 76% of tourists.

In accordance with the interviews conducted on several respondents, it was confirmed that Pekalongan Square exhibits an absolute impression on the larger community due to the nuances of street furniture and batik-patterned landmarks. Furthermore, parts of the square also act as public creative spaces that accommodate social, cultural, and environmental activities.



**Figure 10.** Object condition of Pekalongan City square

Pekalongan City Square's popularity level is quite impressive in characterizing the Batik and Creative City identity, compared to the Batik Jetayu Park. The lack of popularity is because its design facades do not maximally support the creation of creative spaces with batik nuances compared to the Pekalongan City Square, which is properly designed to support social and local cultural activities.

The results of this research show that the visual attributes and physical elements of Pekalongan City symbolize the batik industry's economic base activities. It also comprises of processes, transactions, and training regarded as important factors in forming the city's image. This is significant, especially when the physical elements are old enough, therefore it tends to have more historical value regarding the long tradition of the local community. In fact, it also causes these elements to support the city identity formation firmly. The long and distinctive traditional batik nuances, were not found in other cities, therefore it is perceived as an icon worth visiting, with documentations. Furthermore, this greatly supports tourism promotion. Therefore, the more visual documentation of these iconic elements, the stronger the city's identity is perceived by, the larger community. These findings are consistent with several previous

studies carried out by [Lestari \(2016\)](#), [Adona, Nita, and Mafrudoh \(2017\)](#) and [Ziyae \(2018\)](#). According to these studies, the essence of the branding process occurs through the creation of a distinctive city image, which is differentiated from other cities, thereby attracting tourists ([Saputri, Fauzi, and Irawan 2018](#); [d'Ovidio and Cossu 2017](#); [Puspitasari 2016](#)).

In the case of Pekalongan City, iconic distinctiveness strongly emerged through 4 physical elements, namely (1) preservation, (2) landmarks, (3) open spaces, and (4) districts. Preservation has a distinctive, impressive strength compared to the historical elements inherent in heritage objects such as the Batik Museum, which is also a cultural tourism destination. The landmark element has an impressive iconic distinctiveness derived from the city monuments according to the design compositions that contain batik nuances and acts as tourism promotion icons. Meanwhile, open space has a strong distinctiveness potential, which supports the development of creative spaces for the public. Meanwhile, district elements have a distinctive strength based on the existence of batik villages, which acts as centers for batik craftsmen as well as a pioneer for its formation.

The uniqueness of each physical element is an important potential in creating attractiveness and supporting urban branding. Irrespective of the empirical conditions of the aforementioned physical elements, occasionally, some tourists visit to witness the visual uniqueness of these elements or objects. Therefore, these conditions are consistent with the previous research carried out by [Budiman, Rondonuwu, and Tungka \(2018\)](#), which stated that the existence of a distinctive and visually unique physical component of the city is the main attraction element for tourists. Therefore, in the long term, its support also affects the city's way of life because the physical element's uniqueness tends to become the city's spirit and identity ([Hilman and Megantari 2018](#)).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the iconic design of the city's physical elements, which express or symbolize the unique creative economic base activities, support the city's image formation. This condition also serves as an opportunity to support the

process of strengthening branding in creative cities. Therefore, the stronger the uniqueness of the city's visual image perceived through branding, the more influential the condition to increase tourist visits.

Meanwhile, increasing tourist visits also has the potential to increase the scale of the city's creative economy. This is because tourists always make a purchase either in the form of facilities or souvenirs. When this occurs massively, it also affects tourist demand for a unique tour service or a souvenir, thereby increasing the city's creative economic income.

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**Author(s) contribution**

**Edy Abdurrahman Syahrir** contributed to the research concepts preparation, methodologies, investigations, data analysis, visualization, articles drafting and revisions.

**Retno Widodo Dwi Pramono** contribute to the research concepts preparation and literature reviews, data analysis, of article drafts preparation and validation.