



Creative Cities and Brand Activation Strategies in Enhancing Reputation and Attracting Tourists

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of brand activation strategies on enhancing reputation and attracting tourists to Indonesia's creative cities. In response to the rapid growth of the creative economy and the rising importance of city branding in global competition, the research aims to evaluate how these strategies are employed to drive urban development and economic growth. Utilizing a qualitative approach, including interviews, observations, and document analysis, the study provides insights into the practical implementation of brand activation across multiple Indonesian cities. The findings suggest that effective brand activation, deeply rooted in local culture and creativity, is essential for shaping a city's identity and appeal. The research concludes that successful brand activation requires a multifaceted approach, involving stakeholder collaboration, effective marketing, and a commitment to preserving cultural heritage. However, it is important to note that this study has limitations, such as the focus on a specific region and the qualitative nature of the research. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. This approach is vital for Indonesian cities establishing themselves as prominent creative hubs in the ASEAN region. The study concludes with practical recommendations for policymakers and branding professionals to strengthen city branding efforts and improve the reputation and tourist attraction of Indonesia's diverse urban landscapes.

Keywords

City branding; creative economy; cultural heritage; effective marketing; stakeholder collaboration

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of brand activation and the reputation of creative cities has been a significant topic of discussion for over a decade, as these two concepts are closely intertwined in the pursuit of enhancing a city's image and attracting talent, investment, and tourism (Ciuculescu & Luca, 2024; Dastgerdi & Luca, 2019; Um et al., 2021). Creative cities, which leverage their cultural and creative industries, utilize brand activation as a

strategic tool to foster urban development and economic growth (Alsayel et al., 2022). Through targeted efforts to boost a city's brand value, brand activation is critical in shaping how a city is perceived globally, contributing to its identity as a vibrant, innovative, and attractive destination. This relationship between brand activation and city reputation is crucial for cities that seek to position themselves at the forefront of global urban centers, making them not only

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hubs of creativity but also magnets for global attention and resources (Wijngaarden et al., 2019).

Cities in the fast-changing world are increasingly grappling with attention, capital, and tourists. Among them, creative cities — urban areas with rich cultural assets, innovative industries, and vibrant arts communities have resorted to brand activation strategies to distinguish themselves (Gathen et al., 2020; Prayudi et al., 2022a). Brand activation, according to Angeline et al. (2019) is the process of giving life to a city's brand through involving experiences that residents and visitors can interact with and enjoy. These tactics go beyond marketing destinations for such cities but involve telling stories reflecting their singular essence and cultural dynamism (Ghaisani & Afifi, 2022). When passed across successfully, this narrative could boost a city's image, drawing in tourists eager for its cultural offerings.

Creative cities recognized under UNESCO's Creative Cities Network, like Belo Horizonte, have understood how vital brand activation can be in creating global prominence (Prayudi et al., 2022a; Setiadi et al., 2021). These municipalities employ their artistic fields (such as art, music, design or cuisine) to immerse visitor experiences into their unique local cultures. Festivals, public art installations, or food tours are not merely events but rather strategic tools for activating brands that associate the city's creative output with an overall branding statement. By implementing such initiatives, creative cities may enhance their cultural capital, making them more attractive to visitors looking for authentic and educational encounters.

Creative cities utilize brand activation strategies to enhance their reputation and attract tourists through a multifaceted approach that integrates cultural assets, innovative marketing, and community engagement. Central to this strategy is the concept of brand city, which emphasizes the strategic development of a city's identity to appeal to visitors. By leveraging branding, cities can reinforce positive

perceptions and enhance their image as desirable tourist destinations (Schade et al., 2018). One effective method employed by creative cities is the implementation of branding campaigns. These campaigns focus on re-imagining the city by promoting its unique cultural and creative attributes, attracting tourists seeking authentic experiences (Rozikin, 2019). For instance, cities often organize flagship events and cultural festivals that showcase local talent and engage the community, creating a vibrant atmosphere that draws visitors (Simeunčević-Radulović & Stupar, 2016). This event programming is crucial as it stimulates tourism and enhances the city's reputation as a cultural hub. The case study of Barcelona exemplifies how strategic actions can improve a city's positioning in the global tourism industry. Barcelona's approach involved refining its tourist product through effective promotion, commercialization, and enhancing transport infrastructure, collectively contributing to its success as a tourist attraction (Pisonero, 2013). The city's marketing strategies, which utilize geographic data to inform marketing decisions, further optimize promotional efforts by targeting specific demographics, thus increasing the effectiveness of its branding initiatives.

Moreover, creative place branding plays a significant role in this process. By harnessing the creative sector and cultural assets, cities can develop distinctive brands that resonate with potential visitors, enhancing their overall appeal (Insch & Stuart, 2015). This is particularly relevant in cultural tourism, where the interaction between culture and tourism fosters a competitive and multicultural city identity (R. B. Lestari, 2016). Integrating cultural tourism into branding strategies attracts visitors and reinforces local pride and community engagement, contributing to a unified regional identity (Viglia et al., 2018). Digital marketing has also emerged as a vital tool for creative cities, allowing them to effectively leverage online platforms and social media to promote their brand. This modern approach enables cities to

reach a broader audience and engage with potential tourists innovatively, enhancing their reputation and attractiveness (Hazime, 2010). In summary, creative cities leverage brand activation strategies through a combination of cultural promotion, community engagement, strategic marketing, and digital outreach, all of which work synergistically to enhance their reputation and attract tourists.

Besides this fact, the effectiveness of brand activation strategies depends on whether they engage various stakeholders, including local populations, artists' businesspeople, and tourists in creative cities. This approach incorporates multiple parties during brand activation so that it would not only mirror the cultural values of the place but also be inclusive enough; hence it reflects diversity within the population mix, some of whom come from different parts of the world. Municipalities can develop stronger global-local unified identities by engaging different groups in creating and running brand activation campaigns. Such an all-inclusive strategy assists in instilling pride among locals, thereby leading to a positive word-of-mouth reputation required for attracting visitors.

According to Prilenska (2012), the studies on branding and creative cities indicate that city branding plays a crucial role in influencing urban development and economic growth. By effectively branding a city as sustainable, socially responsible, and environmentally conscious, cities can attract investments, businesses, tourists, and residents. This positive image can increase economic activities, job opportunities, and growth. Cities like Copenhagen, Ljubljana, and Singapore have successfully utilized branding strategies to showcase their commitment to sustainability, boosting economic development (Putri, 2024). Therefore, city branding can significantly impact urban development and foster economic growth.

Previous studies on branding and creative cities suggest that branding can impact urban development and economic growth by focusing on dimensions like tourist attractions, security,

public services, and government-community coordination (Zahrah, 2023). Promoting cultural and culinary diversity, enhancing public services and security, and introducing mascots are crucial in building successful city branding. Overcoming obstacles like the need for government-community coordination, inadequate facilities, and unclear branding concepts is essential for cities to utilize branding for urban development and economic growth effectively.

There is potential for creative cities to exploit branding strategies and attract tourists. These cities use their rich cultural heritage combined with state-of-the-art branding techniques to create experiences that promote tourism while at the same time reinforcing the city's identity and improving its global ranking (Dastgerdi & Luca, 2019). As competition among cities toughens, those who manage to activate their brand properly through creative and engaging strategies have an advantage in the global market. Future scrutiny may further try to understand which brand activation styles have worked most effectively in various creative cities and how they can be adjusted to fit several cultural and geographical settings. Thus, it is interesting to see how a creative city elaborates its brand activation strategy.

Why creative cities in Indonesia? Examining the brand activation strategies of creative cities in Indonesia is essential for several compelling reasons. First, Indonesia is home to a rich cultural heritage and diverse creative industries that offer unique opportunities for city branding. By studying how these cities activate their brands, we can gain insights into how local traditions and modern creativity can be harmonized to create a distinctive urban identity that resonates both locally and globally. Second, Indonesia's rapidly growing economy and increasing global visibility make it a crucial case study for understanding how emerging creative cities can leverage brand activation to compete internationally. As Indonesian cities strive to attract tourists, investors, and creative talent,

their brand activation strategies offer valuable lessons in positioning and differentiation in a crowded global market (R. B. Lestari, 2016). Furthermore, Indonesia's unique socio-political landscape, emphasizing decentralization and regional autonomy, provides a fertile ground for exploring, as Anttiroiko (2015) highlights, how city branding can be tailored to local values and aspirations while aligning with national and global objectives. By focusing on the brand activation strategies of Indonesian creative cities, we can contribute to broader discussions on sustainable urban development and cultural preservation in the face of globalization.

Previous studies have extensively explored the concepts of city branding and creative cities, highlighting their significance in fostering economic development, cultural identity, and global competitiveness. For instance, (Escobar-Farfán et al., 2024; Fernández-Cavia, 2013) discuss the dynamic process of city branding, emphasizing the role of identity and image alignment in creating successful and sustainable urban brands. Similarly, Setiadi et al. (2021) examine how a creative city as a rebranding strategy can accelerate a new economic city. The study looks at Indonesia's city development strategy to build a new economic center by integrating ideas, society, and industries in developing Indonesian creative cities. These studies illustrate that effective city branding can transform the perception of urban spaces, making them more appealing and competitive internationally.

Despite the growing body of literature on city branding and the development of creative cities, there remains a noticeable gap in research explicitly focusing on brand activation strategies within this context, particularly in emerging economies like Indonesia. Existing studies tend to concentrate on broad branding concepts and the identification of creative assets but often overlook the practical implementation and activation of these brands to engage target audiences effectively (Alsayel et al., 2022; Arina, 2014; Ciuculescu & Luca, 2024, 2024; Guo &

Hsu, 2023) Understanding how creative cities in Indonesia employ brand activation strategies to enhance their reputation and attract tourism is crucial for developing more nuanced and effective branding practices supporting sustainable urban growth and cultural preservation. Addressing this gap will provide valuable insights into the strategic processes that underpin successful city branding in diverse cultural and economic settings.

The aim of this study is to critically examine how creative cities in Indonesia leverage brand activation strategies to enhance their reputation and attract tourists. By focusing on the practical aspects of brand activation, this research seeks to fill the existing gap in the literature, providing a deeper understanding of the methods and strategies that drive successful city branding in the context of Indonesian creative cities. Specifically, the study will explore the unique challenges and opportunities faced by these cities in implementing brand activation strategies to identify best practices that can be applied to other emerging creative hubs both within and beyond Indonesia.

In sum, this study contributes to the broader discourse on city branding and creative cities by offering new insights into the role of brand activation in shaping urban identities and attracting global attention. By investigating the experiences of Indonesian creative cities, the research aims to provide actionable recommendations for policymakers, city planners, and branding professionals seeking to enhance the effectiveness of city branding initiatives. Ultimately, this study addresses a significant gap in the current literature and aims to inform future efforts to develop sustainable and resilient urban brands that resonate with both local and international audiences.

METHOD

Qualitative techniques are crucial for understanding the implementation of brand activation strategies in creative cities in Indonesia. They provide a comprehensive

analysis of branding strategies, stakeholder engagement, and the impact of these strategies on enhancing the city's reputation. This study explicitly investigates the role of brand activation in creative cities in Indonesia, focusing on how these strategies attract tourists and foster urban development.

Data collection procedures are essential in qualitative research as they capture the nuances and intricacies of human behavior and societal trends. These techniques must be carefully aligned with research aims to ensure accurate results (Advances in Library and Information Science, 2024). Standard methodologies include interviews, observations, document analysis, and visual methods, offering unique insights into the subject under study. Interviews are a widespread technique in qualitative research, valued for their ability to provide a thorough understanding through direct interaction with individuals. These interviews may be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured, allowing for an in-depth analysis of the participants' perspectives.

Observations involve systematically recording behaviors and interactions in their natural settings, while document analysis examines existing documents to extract relevant information, providing a historical or contextual framework for the research. In qualitative research, the choice of data collection methods should be guided by the research objectives, the type of data required, and the study's specific context. This approach ensures a comprehensive and meticulous understanding of the investigated subject matter.

The qualitative methodologies employed in this research are meticulously chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of brand activation strategies within Indonesia's creative cities. By focusing on detailed data collection techniques such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, this study aims to uncover the nuanced dynamics of how brand activation contributes to enhancing a city's reputation and

tourism attraction. The insights gained from this research are crucial, as they contribute to the existing body of knowledge on city branding and urban development and offer practical implications for policymakers and stakeholders involved in fostering sustainable growth in creative cities. Through a comprehensive exploration of these strategies, this study aspires to inform more effective and contextually relevant approaches to brand activation in Indonesia's rapidly evolving landscape of creative urban environments..

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Brand activation and creative cities in Indonesia

The Indonesian Creative Economy Agency is pivotal in developing creative cities by orchestrating strategic communication campaigns designed to engage various stakeholders. These campaigns actively involve the government, economic actors, and the broader community to cultivate a culture of creativity and innovation essential for the creative economy's growth. By fostering creative behavior, as Prayudi et al. (2022b) note, the Agency encourages the production and consumption of creative goods and services and emphasizes the importance of protecting intellectual property rights, which are crucial for sustaining the creative industries. Through these efforts, the Agency ensures that creative cities become vibrant ecosystems where creativity is valued, nurtured, and safeguarded, thereby contributing to urban areas' economic and cultural vitality across Indonesia.

Brand activation and developing creative cities in Indonesia represent a dynamic intersection of cultural promotion, economic strategy, and urban innovation. In this context, brand activation refers to bringing a brand to life through experiences that engage consumers and foster a deep emotional connection with the local culture (Dastgerdi & Luca, 2019). In Indonesia, a nation prosperous with diverse traditions, art, and creative expression, brand

activation is not just about marketing products or services; it is about crafting narratives that resonate with the unique cultural identities of different regions. These narratives, in turn, become the bedrock for developing creative cities—urban areas that are economically vibrant, culturally enriched, and innovative.

The concept of creative cities in Indonesia is anchored in integrating creative industries, including fashion, art, design, music, and digital media. These industries are pivotal in driving economic growth, particularly in urban areas facing the challenges of rapid urbanization. By embedding these industries into the urban fabric, cities can transform into hubs of creativity and innovation. This transformation is not merely physical; it encompasses revitalizing local identity and heritage, making them central to the city's brand. In doing so, cities can attract tourists and investors, drawn by the unique blend of tradition and modernity, offering a rich tapestry of experiences.

Strategic branding plays a crucial role in this transformation, as it helps cities craft and communicate their unique identities globally. For instance, cities like Yogyakarta, known for its arts and crafts, or Bandung, with its burgeoning fashion industry, have used branding to position themselves as creative capitals of Indonesia. This branding goes beyond logos and slogans; it creates a coherent narrative linking the city's historical roots with its contemporary creative scene. These cities activate their brand through events, festivals, and public art, making it a living part of the urban experience.

Moreover, the development of creative cities in Indonesia is a strategic response to the challenges of urbanization (Prayudi, Ardhanariswari, et al., 2017). Traditional economic centers like Jakarta are increasingly congested and overburdened, leading to the need for alternative hubs that can distribute economic activity more evenly across the country. By developing creative cities, Setiadi et al. (2021) emphasize that Indonesia can address overcrowding and inequality issues while

promoting sustainable economic growth. These cities become laboratories for innovation, where creative industries can thrive and contribute to the broader economy in inclusive and environmentally conscious ways. Probolinggo City, for example, is actively working towards becoming a creative city by leveraging local resources and culture. The city's strategy involves collaboration among government, academics, businesses, media, and communities to fulfill creative city indicators such as creative economy, groups, and environment (Fitria, 2023).

Brand activation and the development of creative cities in Indonesia are closely intertwined, as both aim to leverage local culture and creativity to foster economic growth and urban development. Creating creative cities in Indonesia involves integrating creative industries, local identity, and strategic branding to transform urban areas into vibrant economic centers (Prawoto, 2022). This approach promotes local culture and addresses urbanization challenges by creating alternative economic hubs. City branding in Indonesia often showcases local identity through physical landmarks, cultural products, and community characteristics. This approach is evident in the infographics produced by the Creative Economic Agency of Indonesia, which highlight the unique identities of cities like Malang, Yogyakarta, and Jakarta (Wiradharma et al., 2021). Also, an example of the use of local culture as part of city branding and further activated is the "Tara La No Ate" branding at the 2019 Indonesia Creative Cities Festival (ICCF) in Ternate, which exemplifies how local wisdom and history are utilized to promote the city as a creative economy hub (Simabur & Simabur, 2022). This branding strategy includes elements such as brand name, logo, and visual appearance, which are designed to convey a positive image and engage stakeholders and the community.

Several interrelated factors influence the success of brand activation strategies in creative cities across Indonesia. One of the primary

elements is the active involvement of government support, which plays a crucial role in fostering the growth of creative industries and facilitating effective brand activation initiatives (Um *et al.*, 2021). This support is often complemented by stakeholder collaboration, where various entities, including government, businesses, and local communities, work together to create cohesive and impactful branding strategies (Ariwibowo & Prasetyo, 2023). Another significant factor is a vibrant creative class comprising individuals engaged in creative professions. Their activities can significantly enhance brand activation strategies, particularly in urban settings, by driving innovation and cultural engagement (Mahfudz & Hasbianysah, 2023). The strength of local culture also plays a pivotal role; a rich cultural heritage can enhance the appeal of creative industries and brand initiatives, making them more relatable and attractive to locals and tourists (Mihardja *et al.*, 2019). Organizing creative events, such as festivals, is another effective strategy for enhancing city branding. These events promote local culture and attract tourism and investment, thereby contributing to the overall economic vitality of the city (Ciuculescu & Luca, 2024).

Furthermore, community engagement is essential in ensuring that branding strategies reflect the identity and values of residents. This engagement fosters authenticity and strengthens the connection between the community and the brand (Wahid & Sultana, 2023). The operational environment for brand activation is also shaped by institutional arrangements, which refer to the organizational structures and governance frameworks that guide these initiatives. Adequate institutional arrangements can facilitate smoother implementation of branding strategies and ensure alignment with community needs (Christin, 2015). Additionally, public policy coordination is vital; aligning public policies with community aspirations enhances the effectiveness of branding efforts (Ariwibowo & Prasetyo, 2023). Lastly, understanding the

creative economy framework is crucial for promoting the dynamics of creative industries in cities. A coherent framework helps stakeholders navigate the complexities of the creative economy, ensuring that brand activation strategies are well-informed and strategically sound (Setiadi *et al.*, 2021). A city's historical context and development trajectory, known as path dependence, also influence these strategies' effectiveness, shaping the unique characteristics and opportunities available for brand activation (Aritenang, 2013). Thus, the interplay of government support, stakeholder collaboration, local culture, community engagement, institutional arrangements, public policy coordination, and an understanding of the creative economy framework are key factors that collectively influence the success of brand activation strategies in Indonesia's creative cities.

In summary, brand activation and developing creative cities in Indonesia are deeply interconnected processes that leverage local culture and creativity as catalysts for economic and urban transformation. By integrating creative industries with local identity and strategic branding, cities can position themselves as vibrant economic centers that attract investment and tourism and offer solutions to the challenges of rapid urbanization. This holistic approach ensures that urban development is sustainable, inclusive, and deeply rooted in the region's cultural fabric, ultimately contributing to Indonesia's cities' long-term resilience and prosperity.

Indonesia Creative Cities Brand Activation: challenges and opportunities

Activating creative city brands in Indonesia presents significant challenges and promising opportunities. The creative economy, which encompasses industries reliant on individual creativity and talent, is a vital driver of economic growth in urban areas (Prawoto, 2022). However, successfully implementing creative city initiatives requires effective stakeholder

engagement among government, businesses, academics, media, and communities. This collaboration is essential to navigate urban development's complexities and ensure that diverse interests are represented (Prayudi, 2018). One of the primary challenges in activating creative city brands is the need for supportive government policies. These policies provide the necessary funding, regulations, and strategic planning that underpin creative city initiatives (Mihardja et al., 2019; Sari & Iskandar, 2021). Without a robust policy framework, efforts to promote cultural and creative industries may falter, limiting the potential for economic vitality and local identity enhancement (Prayudi et al., 2022b).

Additionally, the creative class, which includes professionals in creative fields, plays a pivotal role in driving innovation and economic growth. However, attracting and retaining this talent can be problematic due to inadequate infrastructure and resources (Dastgerdi & Luca, 2019). Opportunities for brand activation arise from fostering local economic development through creative industries, which can significantly reduce urban poverty and enhance the quality of life in cities (Dastgerdi & Luca, 2019). By empowering local communities through creative economic initiatives, cities can enhance resilience and foster social cohesion, creating a more vibrant urban environment (Kusumaningrum et al., 2024). Furthermore, cultural events and festivals effectively showcase local creativity and engage the community, strengthening the creative city brand. Another critical aspect is balancing modern creative industries and preserving traditional cultural practices. This balance is essential for sustainable urban development, particularly in Indonesia, where cultural heritage plays a significant role in local identity [8]. Effective branding strategies are also necessary to position these creative cities as attractive destinations for tourism and investment, which can further bolster their economic prospects

(Fathinnah et al., 2022; Ripoll Gonzalez & Gale, 2022).

Activating city brands in Indonesia's creative cities presents challenges and opportunities. These cities aim to enhance their competitiveness and attractiveness through city branding, yet they face hurdles such as resource limitations, lack of coordination, and insufficient public engagement. However, opportunities exist to leverage local identities and sustainable practices to create unique and appealing city brands. One prominent example is integrating city branding with ecocity principles, which offers a chance to improve environmental quality and enhance competitiveness in investment and tourism. This approach can help cities develop a positive image while addressing sustainability concerns (Sulistiowati et al., 2023). Overcoming obstacles such as inadequate policies, lack of community involvement, and insufficient private sector support is crucial. With firm commitment and collaboration among government, society, and the private sector, Indonesian creative cities can successfully activate their city brands by leveraging the potential of sustainable development and environmental sustainability. Cities like Bandung can capitalize on their unique cultural and creative assets to strengthen their brand identity. Cities can enhance their attractiveness and competitiveness by fostering a supportive environment for creativity and identifying economic potential (Prayudi, Probosari, et al., 2017). Another opportunity is that encouraging collaboration across different sectors can lead to more cohesive and effective city branding strategies. This involves engaging various stakeholders, including government, community groups, and the private sector, to ensure a unified approach (F. Lestari et al., 2020).

The challenges of city branding are further compounded by the need for a cohesive regulatory framework that supports creative industries. Without robust policies, cities struggle to foster the necessary environment for

innovation and collaboration among creative sectors. Local government support is crucial in this regard, as municipal authorities play a vital role in facilitating the growth of creative industries through targeted initiatives and resources (Prawoto, 2022; Rozikin, 2019). On the opportunity side, integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into city branding strategies can enhance urban development while promoting sustainability. This alignment attracts investment and positions cities as forward-thinking and responsible, appealing to a global audience increasingly concerned with environmental issues (Morrison & Coca-Stefaniak, 2024).

Moreover, the creative economy, which encompasses various creative industries, can significantly contribute to economic growth in urban areas. By leveraging the creative economy, cities can stimulate job creation and reduce unemployment, thus enhancing their overall economic resilience (Indrawati, 2022; Kusumaningrum *et al.*, 2024). Creative clusters, which are geographic concentrations of interconnected creative industries, also present opportunities for cities to foster innovation and collaboration. These clusters can enhance the visibility of a city's brand by showcasing its unique cultural and creative assets, thereby attracting both talent and investment. Furthermore, investment in creative industries is essential for sustaining growth and ensuring cities remain competitive globally (Brzozowska, 2016; Dolfman *et al.*, 2007; Fitriana, 2014). In summary, while Indonesian creative cities face significant challenges in activating their city brands—primarily due to legal constraints and the need for supportive policies—they also have substantial opportunities to leverage their creative economies, integrate sustainability, and foster innovation through creative clusters. Cities like Semarang can effectively enhance their identities and drive economic development by addressing these challenges and capitalizing on available opportunities.

In sum, while activating creative city brands in Indonesia faces policy support and infrastructure challenges, it also presents opportunities through community empowerment, local economic development, and cultural heritage preservation. By addressing these challenges and leveraging opportunities, Indonesian cities can enhance their creative identities and drive sustainable urban growth.

CONCLUSION

The concept of Creative Cities in Indonesia is pivotal for enhancing urban reputation and attracting tourists through effective brand activation strategies. By integrating culture and creativity into urban policy, cities can leverage their unique attributes to foster tourism and economic growth. This approach is exemplified by various Indonesian cities that have adopted city branding initiatives, aiming to create a distinct identity that resonates with locals and visitors. Branding campaigns are crucial in re-imagining cities, promoting their cultural heritage and unique experiences to attract tourists. For instance, events programming, such as the Denpasar Festival, showcases local creativity and serves as a significant city branding initiative, enhancing the city's overall appeal. These events engage the public and create memorable experiences that tourists associate with the city, influencing their perception and loyalty.

The relationship between city branding and city image is critical; a positive city image can significantly influence tourists' decisions to visit. In cities like Yogyakarta, strategic tourism development programs have been implemented to enhance infrastructure and services, essential for supporting the influx of visitors and improving the overall tourist experience. However, it is essential to note that while branding can enhance a city's reputation, it must be rooted in sustainable practices to avoid issues such as gentrification and loss of cultural distinctiveness. Flagship buildings also contribute to the branding of creative cities by serving as iconic structures that draw attention

and tourism. Combined with a focus on cultural tourism, these buildings can create a vibrant urban environment that attracts domestic and international visitors. Integrating these elements into a cohesive branding strategy is essential for cities aiming to position themselves as creative hubs within the ASEAN region. In conclusion, the activation of brand strategies in Indonesia's creative cities is a multifaceted approach that requires collaboration among stakeholders, effective marketing, and a commitment to preserving cultural heritage. By focusing on unique cultural attributes and enhancing the overall city image, Indonesian cities can attract tourists and improve their global standing as creative destinations

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Informed Consent

The authors have obtained informed consent from all participants.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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