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Performing locality through design: vernacular typography and the visual politics of Indonesian regional identity

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ABSTRACT

Background: Indonesian regional identity is increasingly mediated through vernacular typography across tourism branding, heritage signage, vendor lettering, packaging, murals, and public visual systems, yet typography is still often treated as ornament rather than as a political medium of spatial visibility. **Objective:** This study examines how vernacular typography performs locality, organizes regional legibility, and negotiates heritage, commerce, institutional authority, and everyday visual practice in Indonesian public and semi-public design contexts. **Method:** This study applies qualitative multimodal content analysis, visual semiotics, and linguistic landscape analysis to 17 publicly verifiable typographic artifacts drawn from official sources, scholarly documentation, tourism communication, cultural signage, market lettering, craft-based type design, and regional visual identity materials. **Results:** First, standardized visual identity systems appear as this most frequent pattern, showing how locality is increasingly stabilized through logos, guidelines, packaging systems, and typographic rules. Second, spatial visibility is distributed between institutional authority and market or platform circulation, indicating that regional identity is produced through both official and everyday channels. Third, mediation occurs mainly through institutional branding and heritage memory, revealing typography as both cultural preservation and commodifiable identity code. **Implication:** This study demonstrates that vernacular typography functions as a semiotic infrastructure through which Indonesian locality becomes visible, mobile, and politically negotiated. **Novelty:** This study advances vernacular typography research by integrating typographic form, spatial authority, and regional identity mediation within one analytical framework.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's regional identity is increasingly mediated through designed surfaces: market signs, cultural-gate lettering, tourism slogans, packaging, murals, municipal logos, and street-facing typographic displays. This visual condition matters because Indonesia is not a culturally uniform nation but a large archipelagic polity whose public identity must constantly negotiate diversity, scale, and legibility. BPS [1] describes Indonesia's ethnic and regional-language diversity through Long Form Population Census outputs, while World Bank [2] profiles Indonesia as the world's fourth most populous country, comprising more than 17,000 islands and more than 300 ethnic groups. In such a setting, typography is never merely ornamental. Letterforms can translate regional scripts, craft motifs, architectural silhouettes, food cultures, and local symbolic vocabularies into public visibility. Vernacular typography therefore becomes crucial because it

provides a material site where locality is made readable, marketable, and politically recognizable within everyday space.

Recent scholarship has established important foundations for studying Indonesian visual locality, yet significant analytical gaps remain. Pratama and Kasmana (2021) [3] and W., Fauzi, and Maulana (2025) [4] examine vernacular lettering among Bandung snack vendors, showing how informal commercial typography carries local visual knowledge. Fadillah and Benedikta (2024) [5] connect *Rumah Gadang* to vernacular typography, while Fahmi, Adi, and Isnaini (2026) [6] extend such inquiry into modern visual identity systems. Wider studies of Indonesian linguistic and visual landscapes have addressed multicultural signage, urban graffiti, political posters, tourism advertising, spatial inequality, and machine-readable urban images [7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [12]. However, these works tend to treat typography, architecture, street visibility, and branding as separate domains. What remains underexamined is how vernacular typography performs regional identity through its combined typographic form, spatial placement, symbolic citation, and institutional circulation.

This study addresses that gap by asking how Indonesian regional identity is performed through vernacular typography in public and semi-public design contexts. More specifically, this study examines how letterform, ornament, colour, materiality, script reference, layout, and placement produce locality as a visible and interpretable social form. It also asks how typographic artifacts negotiate between everyday local expression, commercial visibility, heritage discourse, tourism promotion, and official branding. This inquiry is not concerned with proving whether a design is authentically local in an essentialist sense. Instead, this study investigates how "locality" is constructed as a visual effect and how that effect becomes available for recognition, consumption, governance, or contestation. By combining linguistic landscape analysis, multimodal discourse analysis, visual semiotics, and critical regionalism, this study treats typography as a semiotic infrastructure rather than a decorative supplement to language.

The central argument proposed here is that vernacular typography performs locality through a double movement: it preserves situated visual memory while also translating that memory into standardized, mobile, and often commodifiable identity forms. This argument builds on studies of vernacular architecture, local wisdom, heritage signage, and regional branding, which show that Indonesian locality is frequently produced through selective references to traditional houses, ornaments, crafts, monuments, batik, market aesthetics, and cultural symbols [13], [14], [15], [16], [17]. Yet this translation is politically ambivalent. Typography can widen regional visibility, but it can also simplify cultural difference, privilege dominant symbols, or convert living vernacular practice into a consumable visual code. This study therefore contributes by repositioning vernacular typography as a visual-political practice through which Indonesian regional identity is not simply represented, but actively designed, authorized, and negotiated.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Vernacular typography

Vernacular typography refers to letterforms produced, adapted, or circulated through situated local practices rather than through fully standardized professional design systems. In graphic design studies, it is often understood as everyday lettering shaped by materials, commerce, handwriting, craft, and spatial improvisation, as shown in studies of Bandung snack vendors and street-based commercial signs [3], [4]. In heritage-oriented design, however, vernacular typography is interpreted as a translation of cultural forms, such as *Rumah Gadang*, bamboo craft, or traditional ornament, into typographic systems [5], [18]. This difference matters because vernacular typography may be both informal practice and designed heritage.

Its main indicators include letterform structure, ornamentation, materiality, production technique, script reference, colour, layout, and relation to local visual culture. Studies on vernacular typography and visual identity show that regional signs are often constructed through stylized curves, handmade irregularity, decorative motifs, and references to architecture, textile, craft, or food culture [6], [19]. Research on batik logos, handwritten batik identity, and local product packaging further shows that typographic locality is frequently supported by visual symbols beyond letters themselves [15], [17], [20]. Thus, typographic meaning emerges through multimodal combination.

2.2. Regional identity

Regional identity is commonly defined as a shared sense of place-based belonging, but design research shows that such identity is never simply inherited. It is selectively composed, displayed, and institutionalized through visual references to architecture, memory, landscape, language, and heritage. Indonesian studies of vernacular architecture argue that locality is shaped by environmental responsiveness, cultural continuity, and negotiated adaptation to modern living [13], [21]. Yet architectural identity studies also warn against reducing regional identity to iconic silhouettes or decorative traditionalization [22], [23]. Regional identity therefore needs to be read as constructed, not merely expressed.

Its analytical indicators include symbolic reference, spatial anchoring, cultural specificity, institutional framing, and degree of simplification. Work on Tobong Monument, Balairung Hotel, contemporary mosques, and cultural village signage demonstrates how built forms and public signs transform local symbols into recognizable identity markers [14], [24], [16]. Participatory design research adds that locality can also emerge through community practice and indigenous values rather than official branding alone [25]. This distinction is crucial: regional identity may be community-generated, commercially packaged, or institutionally authorized. This study therefore treats identity as a mediated visual process.

2.3. Visual politics

Visual politics concerns how visibility, representation, and spatial authority are organized through images, signs, and design. In linguistic landscape studies, public signs do not merely communicate information; they distribute recognition, hierarchy, and belonging. Indonesian research has examined ethnolinguistic signage, multilingual inequality, hotel and restaurant landscapes, street art, political posters, and tourism advertising as arenas where public visibility is unevenly produced [7], [26], [11], [10], [9], [8]. Museum and heritage studies further show that representation may also operate through absence, marginality, and selective visibility [27]. Typography is therefore political because it organizes who and what becomes publicly legible.

The indicators of visual politics include placement, scale, language hierarchy, institutional authorship, symbolic dominance, audience address, and exclusion. Studies of tourism media, heritage signage, commemorative murals, creative markets, and AI-generated urban imagery suggest that Indonesian locality is increasingly shaped by platforms, branding regimes, memory practices, market aesthetics, and algorithmic visualization [28], Hastuti (2026), [29], [30], [31], [12]. Foundational work in multimodal discourse, geosemiotics, and spatial theory supports this reading by linking form, emplacement, and social power. This study therefore positions vernacular typography as a semiotic infrastructure through which regional identity is performed, stabilized, commodified, and contested.

3. METHOD

This study uses typographic artifacts as its unit of analysis: public visual materials in which letterform, layout, ornament, colour, material, naming, or logo arrangement participates in constructing Indonesian regional identity. The corpus contains 17 public and verifiable items: six primary visual or visual-context items, eight secondary scholarly items, and three contextual sources. These materials cover national branding, Yogyakarta heritage interfaces, Banyuwangi city-branding discourse, Ternate textile tourism, Bandung snack-vendor lettering, *Rumah Gadang* typography, Kampung Budaya signage, Bali bamboo craft typeface, Salatiga batik identity, Pasar Santa branding, and Sikka packaging design. Each item was assigned a unique document code.

Table 1. Composition of dataset

Code Range	Data Type	Source	Period	Quantity	Characteristics
VTY-PRI-001–006	Primary visual/context data	Official tourism, heritage, palace, and regional-government sources	2021–2026 / active official pages	6	Brand guideline, heritage website, palace interface, city-branding page, tourism-cultural article
VTY-SEC-001–008	Secondary scholarly data	Journal articles, proceedings, Garuda-indexed records	2021–2026	8	Vernacular typography, signage, typeface, visual identity, packaging, market branding
VTY-CTX-001–003	Contextual data	Tourism communication, museum visibility, brand-rule context	2022–2025 / active page	3	Supports interpretation of branding, visibility, and institutional framing
Total	Mixed corpus	Official and scholarly public sources	2021–2026	17	Deduplicated by title, URL, region, and artifact type

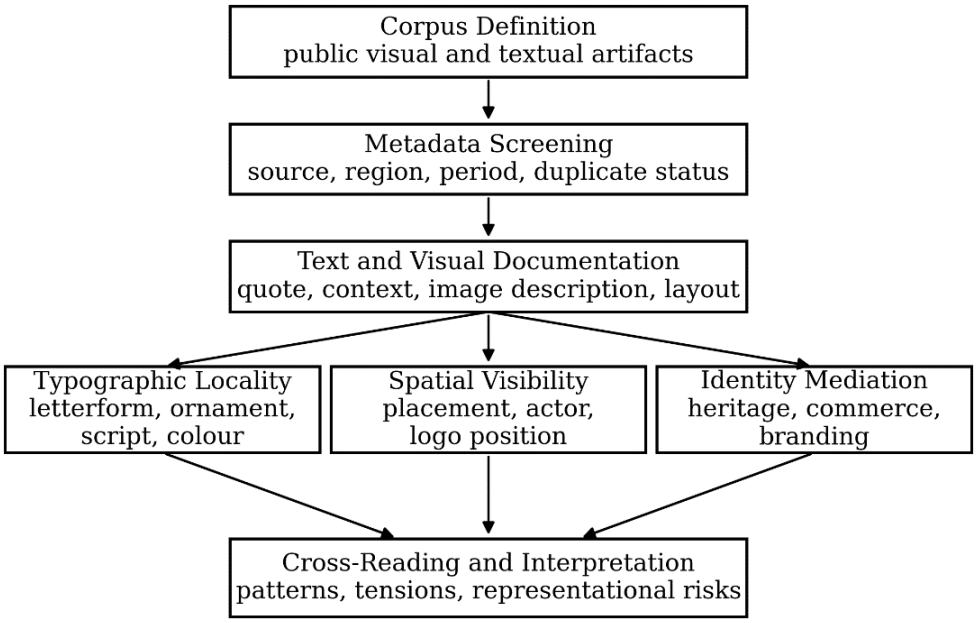
This study applies qualitative multimodal content analysis supported by visual semiotics and linguistic landscape analysis. This design is appropriate because vernacular typography is not reducible to written text; it combines lettering, image, material, spatial placement, institutional authorship, and cultural reference. Following work on Indonesian signage, street lettering, tourism visuality, cultural branding, and vernacular design, this study reads typography as a situated semiotic resource rather than an isolated graphic feature. This design does not measure audience reception or causal influence. Its purpose is interpretive: to identify

how public typographic artifacts make locality visible, legible, standardized, or contested across different design contexts.

Information was drawn from three source layers. Primary sources include official websites and public-facing visual materials from Indonesia Travel, Jogja Heritage Track, Karaton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat, Banyuwangi government channels, and tourism-cultural pages. Secondary sources include scholarly studies on Bandung street-vendor typography, *Rumah Gadang*-based typographic translation, Kampung Budaya signage, bamboo *keben* typeface development, batik visual identity, Pasar Santa branding, and Sikka packaging transformation. Contextual sources support interpretation of tourism branding, representational visibility, and institutional logo hierarchy. This layered corpus allows this study to compare everyday, scholarly documented, and institutionally authorized forms of locality without merging them into one empirical category.

Data collection followed a documented search and screening protocol. Keywords included "vernacular typography Indonesia," "*tipografi vernakular*," "street vendor lettering Bandung," "*Rumah Gadang* typography," "bamboo *keben* typeface," "Kampung Budaya signage," "visual identity batik Salatiga," "Pasar Santa visual branding," "Majestic Banyuwangi," and "Wonderful Indonesia brand guidelines." Items were included when they contained visible or documented typographic relevance, regional identity markers, public accessibility, and source traceability. Items were excluded when they lacked design relevance, duplicated another entry, contained unverifiable claims, or required inaccessible private data. Metadata, source URL, quotation, visual description, context, and coding notes were stored separately.

Analysis proceeded in three stages. First, typographic locality was coded through letterform, ornament, script reference, materiality, colour, and layout. Second, spatial visibility was examined through placement, visual actor, logo position, frame, institutional authorship, and public-facing context. Third, identity mediation was interpreted by tracing how artifacts moved between heritage memory, commercial visibility, tourism branding, regional authority, and modern design systems. Coding confidence and need for visual verification were recorded to prevent unsupported claims. This procedure keeps description, interpretation, and theoretical discussion distinct while allowing this study to explain vernacular typography as a visual-political infrastructure of regional identity.



Source: constructed from corpus_metadata, corpus_text, corpus_coding, and initial codebook

Figure 1. Operational matrix of analysis

4. RESULTS

4.1. Typographic locality and vernacular form-making

Vernacular typography in this corpus appears as a continuum between everyday lettering and formal identity systems rather than as a single visual category. The largest proportion of coded items concerns standardized visual identity systems, indicating that regional identity is often stabilized through guidelines, logos, packaging systems, and supergraphic arrangements. Heritage naming, cultural signage, material culture, and architecture-based references also occupy substantial positions, showing that locality is built through both verbal naming and visual translation. This distribution is consistent with Indonesian design studies that connect typography with street commerce, architecture, craft, signage, and branding systems [3], [5], [6]. The table therefore frames typographic locality as a designed relation among form, source, and spatial-cultural reference.

The dominant pattern is the movement from vernacular reference toward institutional or semi-institutional design. Four items show locality through formalized systems, including the Wonderful Indonesia brand guideline, Sendang Pengilon visual identity, ChoSik packaging design, and tourism dual-brand context. The corpus phrase "visual identity including a logo, typography, color variations, supergraphics, guidelines" is especially important because it places typography inside a complete identity apparatus rather than as isolated lettering. Heritage-based items follow closely, with Jogja Heritage Track's "Explore, Learn, And Preserve Our Heritage" and Karaton's official naming demonstrating how regional memory becomes publicly readable through institutional display. Handmade lettering remains significant, but it appears as one pathway among several, not as the only basis of vernacular typography.

This pattern suggests that Indonesian vernacular typography works through mediation, not preservation alone. Local forms become visible when they are selected, stylized, positioned, and circulated through public-facing surfaces, whether vendor carts, cultural websites, packaging, tourism pages, or heritage signage. Studies on batik logos, bamboo *keben* typeface, *Rumah Gadang* typographic translation, and cultural signage support this reading because each shows locality being transformed into design structure rather than merely copied as ornament [18], [15], [16]. This also raises a visual-political tension: formalization can strengthen recognizability, yet it may simplify cultural difference into manageable brand codes. This study therefore reads vernacular typography as a semiotic infrastructure of regional visibility.

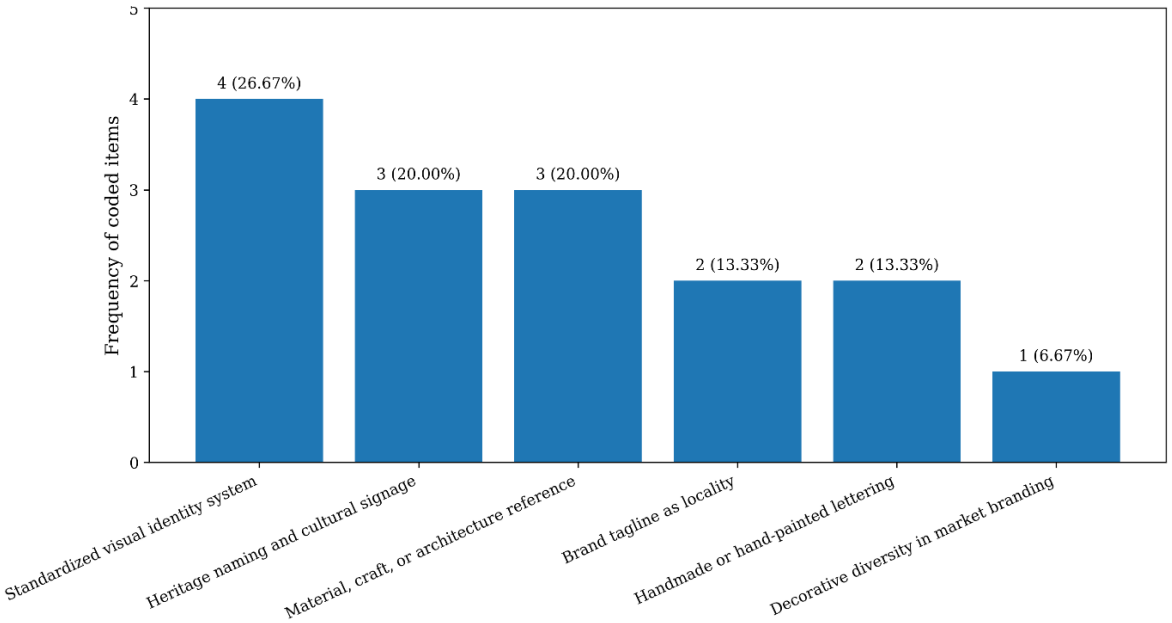


Figure 2. Distribution of typographic locality patterns

Table 2. Typographic locality, vernacular form-making, and regional identity performance

Main Category	Subcategory	Indicator	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Example / Corpus Excerpt	Data Code
Standardized visual identity system	Brand guideline, logo system, packaging typography, supergraphics	Locality is organized through typography, colour rules, logo hierarchy, or formal identity manuals	4	26.67%	National tourism brand, batik visual identity, packaging redesign, dual-brand tourism context	"visual identity including a logo, typography, color variations, supergraphics, guidelines"; "shape, color, illustration, and typography were analyzed"	VTY-PRI-001; VTY-SEC-006; VTY-SEC-008; VTY-CTX-001
Heritage naming and cultural signage	Regional naming, palace identity, cultural-village signage	Local identity appears through heritage terms, institutional names, slogans, or signage tied to cultural memory	3	20.00%	Heritage route website, palace interface, cultural-village signage	"Explore, Learn, And Preserve Our Heritage"; "*Situs web resmi Kasultanan Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat*"	VTY-PRI-002; VTY-PRI-003; VTY-SEC-003
Material, craft, or architecture reference	Textile, traditional house, bamboo craft, architecture-to-letterform translation	Letterform or typographic identity draws from craft, built form, textile motif, or regional material culture	3	20.00%	Ternate textile, *Rumah Gadang*, Balinese bamboo *keben*	"*Kain Tenun Ternate: Warisan Budaya Bernilai Tinggi*"; "using Minangkabau traditional house at West Sumatra named *Rumah Gadang* as sample"	VTY-PRI-006; VTY-SEC-002; VTY-SEC-005
Brand tagline as locality	Regional slogan, city-branding label, destination identity	Locality is condensed into a short verbal-visual brand label	2	13.33%	Banyuwangi regional branding and interregional city-branding article	"*Melalui brand* 'Majestic Banyuwangi'"; "city branding *adalah strategi menyeluruh untuk membangun citra dan identitas unik sebuah kota*"	VTY-PRI-004; VTY-PRI-005
Handmade or hand-painted lettering	Vendor carts, street signage, traditional scripts, informal lettering	Vernacularity appears through manual production, street-facing display, and non-standardized lettering practice	2	13.33%	Bandung snack-vendor cart typography and cross-regional street-signage examples	"Cimol traders usually use carts equipped with text or writing that is included in vernacular typography"; "street signage, hand-painted lettering, traditional scripts"	VTY-SEC-001; VTY-SEC-004
Decorative diversity in market branding	Localized ornament, creative-market identity, visual placemaking	Locality is mediated through decorative variation rather than a single typographic system	1	6.67%	Jakarta creative market branding	"localized decorative elements and visual branding strategies contribute to their resilience and identity formation"	VTY-SEC-007

4.2. Spatial authority, visibility, and public legibility

Spatial visibility in this corpus is not concentrated in one type of place. It is distributed across official institutions, street and market surfaces, heritage routes, local enterprises, craft-based design discourse, and product packaging. The two most frequent patterns are institutional authority and public, platformed, or market visibility, each appearing in four coded items. This balance is important because it shows that vernacular typography is not only produced from below through informal lettering, nor only imposed from above through official branding. Instead, regional identity becomes visible through overlapping spatial regimes: state platforms, palace websites, tourism pages, vendor carts, public signage, creative markets, and commodity surfaces. This finding remains descriptive and does not claim audience reception.

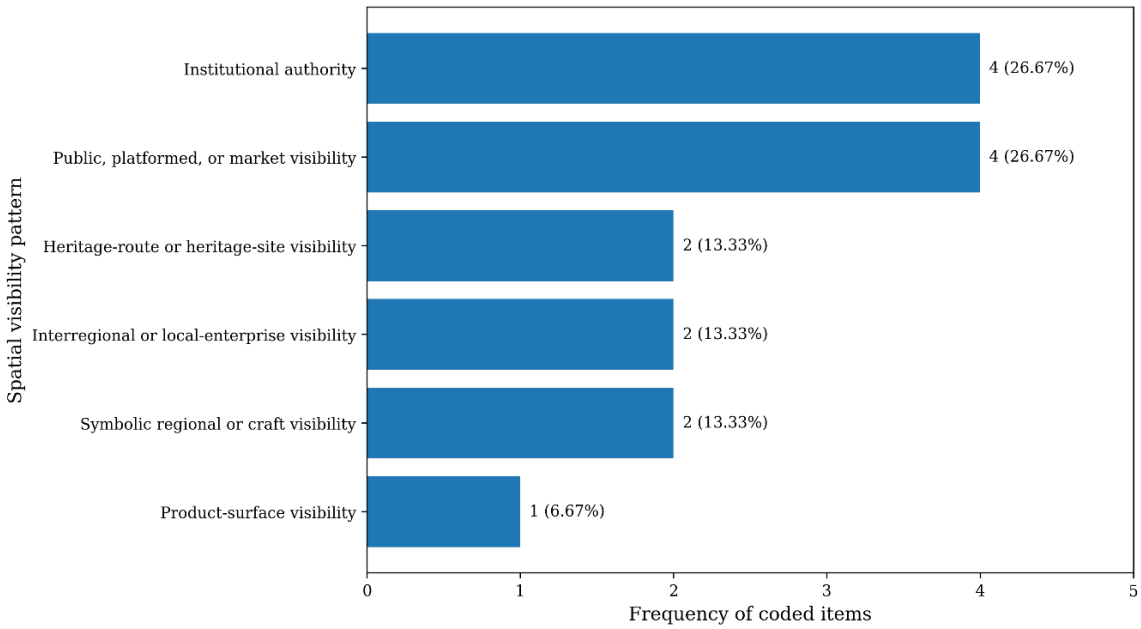


Figure 3. Spatial visibility and authority patterns

The dominant pattern concerns the coexistence of official authorization and everyday circulation. Institutional authority appears through phrases and forms such as "Logo Wonderful Indonesia," "*Situs web resmi Kasultanan Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat*," and "Majestic Banyuwangi," where regional or national identity is stabilized through official channels. By contrast, market and platform visibility appears in corpus excerpts such as "Cimol traders usually use carts equipped with text or writing" and "*Kain Tenun Ternate: Warisan Budaya Bernilai Tinggi*," where locality is displayed through commercial mobility or tourism-cultural circulation. Heritage-site visibility remains more spatially bounded, while product-surface visibility is the least frequent pattern. The distribution therefore shows multiple pathways of public legibility rather than one dominant spatial form.

Spatial authority sharpens how vernacular typography should be interpreted as visual politics. Studies of Indonesian linguistic landscapes, tourism advertising, street art, political posters, and metropolitan peripheries show that signs distribute recognition unevenly across public space [7], [8], [10], [9], [11]. In this corpus, authority is not limited to state institutions; it also emerges through vendors, cultural communities, craft practices, and market actors. Yet official channels carry stronger standardizing power because they frame which symbols, names, and visual forms become publicly legitimate. This study therefore reads spatial visibility as a negotiated field where regional identity is displayed, authorized, circulated, and selectively made legible.

Table 3. Spatial visibility and authority in vernacular typographic artifacts

Spatial Visibility Pattern	Authority / Visual Actor	Channel or Frame	Indicator	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Example / Corpus Excerpt	Data Code
Institutional authority	Tourism ministry, palace institution, regional government, national tourism brand	Official website, brand guideline, government news, tourism communication	Typography and visual identity are authorized through official channels, logo systems, institutional naming, or branding discourse	4	26.67%	National tourism brand, Karaton website, Banyuwangi branding, dual-brand tourism context	"Logo Wonderful Indonesia"; "*Situs web resmi Kasultanan Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat*"; "Majestic Banyuwangi"	VTY-PRI-001; VTY-PRI-003; VTY-PRI-004; VTY-CTX-001
Public, platformed, or market visibility	Street vendors, tourism platform, public-environment documentation, creative-market actors	Vendor cart, tourism article, public photographic corpus, creative-market branding	Locality becomes visible through street-facing, market-facing, or platform-distributed surfaces	4	26.67%	Bandung cart lettering, Ternate textile tourism page, cross-regional public signage, Pasar Santa branding	"Cimol traders usually use carts equipped with text or writing"; "*Kain Tenun Ternate: Warisan Budaya Bernilai Tinggi*"	VTY-PRI-006; VTY-SEC-001; VTY-SEC-004; VTY-SEC-007
Heritage-route or heritage-site visibility	Cultural office, heritage-route managers, cultural-village actors	Heritage-tourism website, cultural village signage	Regional memory is organized as a visitor-facing and spatially navigable sign system	2	13.33%	Jogja Heritage Track and Kampung Budaya Sindang Barang	"Explore, Learn, And Preserve Our Heritage"; "signage as a medium to strengthen cultural identity"	VTY-PRI-002; VTY-SEC-003
Interregional or local-enterprise visibility	Regional agency, local craft enterprise	City-branding article, local visual identity system	Locality circulates as a model, differentiator, or enterprise identity beyond immediate place	2	13.33%	Banyuwangi city-branding learning model, Batik Sendang Pengilon visual identity	"city branding *adalah strategi menyeluruh*"; "logo, typography, colour variations, supergraphics, guidelines"	VTY-PRI-005; VTY-SEC-006
Symbolic regional or craft visibility	Designers, scholars, craft communities	Typographic object, digital typeface discourse	Regional visibility is mediated through iconic architecture or craft material translated into type	2	13.33%	*Rumah Gadang* typography and bamboo *keben* typeface	"*Rumah Gadang* as sample"; "Bamboo Keben Craft as an Opportunity of Creating Digital Typeface"	VTY-SEC-002; VTY-SEC-005
Product-surface visibility	Packaging designer, regional product producer	Product packaging	Local identity appears on mobile commodity surfaces rather than fixed public signage	1	6.67%	ChoSik Sikka packaging transformation	"shape, color, illustration, and typography were analyzed"	VTY-SEC-008

4.3. Regional identity mediation and visual-political negotiation

Regional identity in this corpus is mediated through five interconnected pathways: institutional standardization, heritage preservation, craft translation, everyday commerce, and commodity circulation. The two most frequent patterns are institutional branding and heritage memory, each accounting for four coded items. This balance indicates that locality is neither produced only through official branding nor only through inherited cultural memory. Instead, regional identity becomes visible when institutions, cultural sites, craft objects, market actors, and product designers convert local references into legible typographic forms. This pattern is consistent with studies of Indonesian city branding, cultural signage, vernacular architecture, batik identity, and craft-based typeface development, which show that locality is repeatedly transformed into designed public recognition.

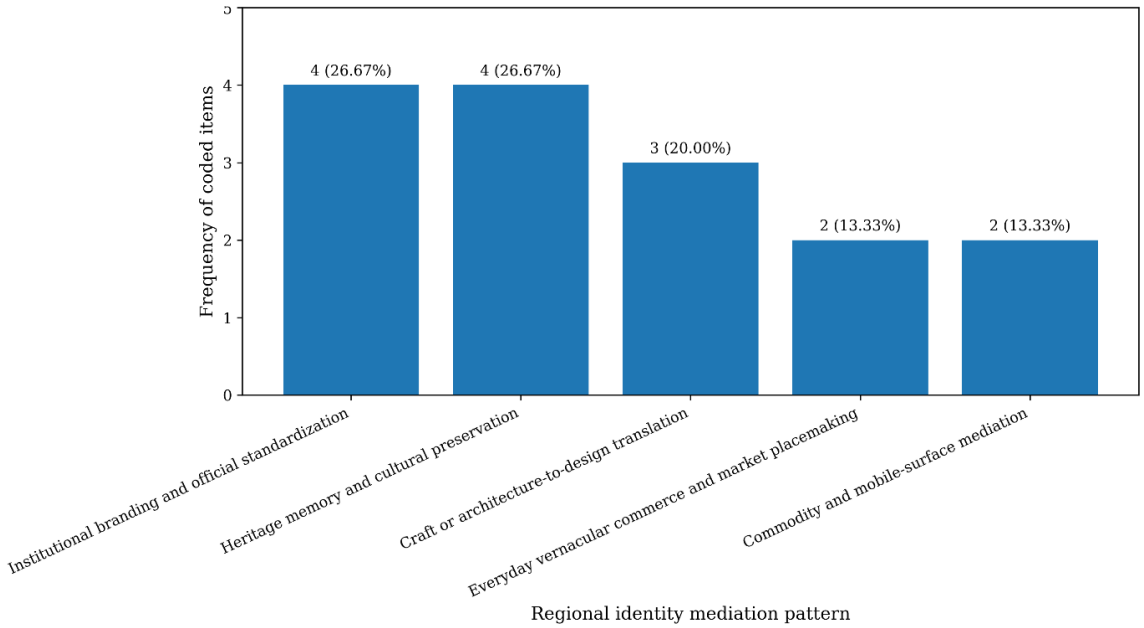


Figure 4. Regional identity mediation patterns

The dominant pattern lies in the relation between authorization and preservation. Official forms such as "Logo Wonderful Indonesia," "Majestic Banyuwangi," and "city branding *adalah strategi menyeluruh*" frame locality as a strategic identity asset, while heritage-oriented phrases such as "Explore, Learn, And Preserve Our Heritage" and "*Kain Tenun Ternate: Warisan Budaya Bernilai Tinggi*" frame locality as memory, continuity, and cultural value. Craft translation appears through "*Rumah Gadang* as sample," "Bamboo Keben Craft," and batik-based visual identity, where local forms are abstracted into design systems. Everyday commerce and commodity surfaces are less frequent, yet they remain important because they show locality moving through vendor carts, markets, packaging, and mobile signs.

This distribution clarifies the visual-political ambivalence of vernacular typography. On one side, typographic mediation expands the visibility of regional culture by enabling local symbols to travel across websites, streets, markets, packaging, and official campaigns. On another side, mediation can narrow locality into selected motifs, slogans, silhouettes, or brand codes. Purwaningrum (2022) [22] and Purwaningrum et al. (2023) [23] caution against reducing architectural identity to forced traditionalization or iconic silhouettes, while studies of signage and visual representation show that visibility is always selective [7], [27], [11]. This study therefore positions vernacular typography as a negotiated design practice that both sustains and regulates Indonesian regional identity.

Table 4. Regional identity mediation in vernacular typographic artifacts

Regional Identity Mediation Pattern	Mediating Mechanism	Visual-Political Indicator	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Example / Corpus Excerpt	Data Code
Institutional branding and official standardization	Locality is formalized through official identity systems, slogans, logos, or tourism-branding discourse	Regional identity becomes legitimate through institutional authorship, brand hierarchy, and controlled visual circulation	4	26.67%	National tourism brand, Banyuwangi branding, interregional city-branding article, national-regional tourism context	"Logo Wonderful Indonesia"; "Majestic Banyuwangi"; "city branding *adalah strategi menyeluruh untuk membangun citra dan identitas unik sebuah kota*"	VTY-PRI-001; VTY-PRI-004; VTY-PRI-005; VTY-CTX-001
Heritage memory and cultural preservation	Locality is mediated through palace identity, heritage routes, cultural signage, and textile memory	Typography supports continuity, preservation, and public recognition of regional memory	4	26.67%	Jogja heritage route, Karaton official interface, Ternate woven textile, cultural-village signage	"Explore, Learn, And Preserve Our Heritage"; "*Kain Tenun Ternate: Warisan Budaya Bernilai Tinggi*"; "signage as a medium to strengthen cultural identity"	VTY-PRI-002; VTY-PRI-003; VTY-PRI-006; VTY-SEC-003
Craft or architecture-to-design translation	Local material culture is converted into type, logo, or visual identity structure	Regional identity is abstracted from craft, built form, textile practice, or architectural icon	3	20.00%	*Rumah Gadang*-based typography, bamboo *keben* digital typeface, batik visual identity	"*Rumah Gadang* as sample"; "Bamboo Keben Craft as an Opportunity of Creating Digital Typeface"; "visual identity including a logo, typography, color variations, supergraphics, guidelines"	VTY-SEC-002; VTY-SEC-005; VTY-SEC-006
Everyday vernacular commerce and market placemaking	Locality is displayed through vendor lettering, market decoration, and informal commercial visibility	Vernacular identity emerges from ordinary selling practices and market-facing visual forms	2	13.33%	Bandung snack-vendor lettering and Pasar Santa decorative branding	"Cimol traders usually use carts equipped with text or writing"; "localized decorative elements and visual branding strategies contribute to their resilience and identity formation"	VTY-SEC-001; VTY-SEC-007
Commodity and mobile-surface mediation	Regional identity appears on packaging or transportable visual surfaces	Locality circulates beyond place through product identity, design redesign, and mobile consumption	2	13.33%	ChoSik Sikka packaging and cross-regional public-signage documentation	"shape, color, illustration, and typography were analyzed"; "street signage, hand-painted lettering, traditional scripts"	VTY-SEC-008; VTY-SEC-004

5. DISCUSSION

The distribution of typographic-locality patterns shows that vernacular typography in Indonesian regional identity does not operate only as informal lettering, but increasingly functions as a formal mechanism for making locality visible and administratively readable. This matters because standardized visual identity systems were the most frequent pattern, suggesting that regional signs are often stabilized through logos, guidelines, packaging systems, supergraphics, and controlled visual arrangements. Such a finding extends studies that locate vernacular typography in street-vendor lettering or handmade commercial display [3], [4], because this corpus shows vernacularity moving into institutional and semi-professional design systems. The function is therefore double: typography can preserve local visual references while also making them portable across tourism, branding, and product surfaces. Its dysfunction lies in possible reduction, where living regional forms become simplified into decorative identity codes.

This tendency emerges because vernacular typography occupies a structural intersection between cultural memory, design professionalization, and market recognition. Local letterforms become more publicly effective when they are translated into repeatable systems, yet that translation requires abstraction, selection, and visual discipline. Studies of *Rumah Gadang* typography, bamboo *keben* typeface design, batik visual identity, and modern visual identity systems support this interpretation because each shows cultural material being converted into typographic or branding logic [5], [18], [17], [6]. However, Purwaningrum (2022) [22] and Purwaningrum et al. (2023) [23] caution that identity translation may become forced traditionalization when regional culture is compressed into instantly recognizable silhouettes. This study therefore suggests correlation rather than causation: stronger formalization tends to increase legibility, but it may also narrow cultural complexity.

The spatial-visibility pattern indicates that regional typography functions as a public technology of recognition. Institutional authority and market or platform visibility appeared as equally frequent patterns, meaning locality is not produced from one source of power. Official tourism brands, palace interfaces, government pages, vendor carts, market surfaces, and tourism-cultural platforms all participate in making locality visible. This has important implications for linguistic landscape studies. Aini (2026) [7], Artawa et al. (2023) [26], Sartono (2026) [10], Pahlawan (2026) [9], and Sain and Assya'bani (2026) [11] show that public signs organize visibility, hierarchy, and belonging. This study adds that typography is one of the mechanisms through which such organization takes place. Its function is to anchor identity in public surfaces. Its dysfunction appears when visibility becomes uneven: officially authorized symbols may dominate, while minority or less marketable regional expressions remain peripheral.

This spatial pattern can be explained by the unequal authority of different display channels. A government website, tourism guideline, palace interface, or official brand page does not merely show design; it legitimizes particular versions of place. By contrast, vendor carts, market signs, and handmade lettering circulate locality through everyday practice, but often without the same institutional durability. This difference clarifies why spatial visibility must be read alongside authorship and placement. Hidayat (2026) [8] shows that tourism advertising constructs destinations through spatial framing, while Faradis (2026) [28] links cultural space to platformization, and Kartika (2026) [12] demonstrates that urban visual landscapes are increasingly processed at scale through technological systems. These studies help explain why public legibility depends not only on what typography looks like, but also where it appears, who controls its circulation, and which visual forms are made repeatable. Fawaid et al.'s (2019) [32] account of contested mosque architecture in Java offers a parallel from built form, where the representation of locality and the nation-state is negotiated through who controls sacred space.

The mediation of regional identity further shows that vernacular typography is politically ambivalent. Institutional branding and heritage memory were the strongest mediation pathways, indicating that locality is commonly framed either as a strategic identity asset or as cultural continuity. This matters because typography becomes a bridge between memory and market, preservation and promotion, local attachment and external recognition. Studies of cultural signage, monument symbolism, mosque regionalism, participatory rural design, and architectural identity similarly show that Indonesian locality is repeatedly negotiated through designed forms rather than simply inherited [14], [24], [16], [25], [13]. The function of mediation is to enable circulation across publics. Its dysfunction is that mediation may privilege visually convenient symbols over complex social histories, especially when heritage becomes a brandable surface.

The underlying structure of this mediation lies in the selective conversion of place-based signs into mobile design codes. Regional identity becomes transferable when it can be condensed into typographic curves, ornaments, slogans, colour systems, or packaging surfaces. This explains why craft and architecture-to-design translation occupies a significant position in this corpus: it allows material culture to move beyond its original setting. Pangestu et al. (2024) [15], Sari et al. (2022) [18], and Karrol and Hidayatullah (2025)

[20] support this reading by showing how *wayang*, bamboo craft, and packaging typography become vehicles of visual identity. Yet Prianti et al. (2025) [27] remind us that visibility can also conceal through selective representation, while Wasiqah (2026) [31] problematizes cultural authenticity within mediated urban imagery. This study therefore positions vernacular typography as neither pure preservation nor mere commodification, but as a negotiated visual-political infrastructure. Fawaid et al.'s (2022) [33] reading of Javanese aesthetics as a medium of political imagination of Islam likewise suggests that regional aesthetic forms are seldom politically neutral.

6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that vernacular typography is a decisive visual practice through which Indonesian regional identity is performed, authorized, and circulated across public, institutional, commercial, and heritage-oriented spaces. Its most important lesson is that locality is not merely preserved in letterforms; it is actively designed through typographic structure, spatial placement, symbolic selection, and media circulation. By connecting vernacular typography with linguistic landscape analysis, multimodal discourse, visual semiotics, and critical regionalism, this study renews perspective on regional identity as a visual-political process rather than a fixed cultural essence. Its contribution lies in treating typography as an analytical variable for examining visibility, mediation, and belonging.

This study is limited by its reliance on public and documentable visual-textual sources, which restricts claims about audience interpretation, designer intention, production history, and lived community reception. Since this corpus emphasizes visible artifacts and publicly accessible documentation, this study cannot determine how local residents, tourists, designers, or institutions experience these typographic forms in everyday interaction. Future research should therefore combine corpus-based visual analysis with interviews, ethnographic observation, participatory design workshops, and reception studies across specific Indonesian regions. Comparative research between metropolitan, peripheral, tourism-oriented, and Indigenous contexts would also clarify how vernacular typography negotiates authority, authenticity, commodification, and regional belonging under different spatial and institutional conditions.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Author states no conflict of interest.

AI USE DECLARATION

The author used artificial intelligence tools to assist with the generation of illustrative figures and with the formatting and layout of this manuscript. AI was not used to generate the substantive content, conceptualization, data, analysis, or conclusions of the research, all of which remain the sole responsibility of the author.

INFORMED CONSENT

Not applicable – this study did not involve direct human participants. Data consisted solely of publicly accessible typographic artifacts drawn from official tourism, heritage, and government sources, and peer-reviewed scholarly documentation.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research did not involve human or animal subjects; it analyzed publicly accessible typographic artifacts, tourism and heritage sources, and scholarly literature on Indonesian vernacular typography and regional identity, and therefore no institutional review board approval was required. Where research does involve human subjects, the author affirms that such research would be conducted in full compliance with all relevant national regulations and institutional policies, in accordance with the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki, and would be approved by the author's institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The corpus of publicly accessible typographic artifacts, secondary literature, and contextual documents analyzed in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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