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DEVELOPMENT OF A MASCOT DESIGN AND ITS APPLICATION IN THE INFORMATION MEDIA OF DUSUN SEMILIR, SEMARANG REGENCY

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Abstract

This study aims to develop a comprehensive visual identity system for the Dusun Semilir tourist area in Semarang Regency to address issues of spatial navigation and branding inconsistencies. Using a research and development (R&D) methodology with a modified 3D model, specifically the Define, Design, and Develop phases, this study focuses on redesigning the existing beaver mascot, creating custom typography, and refining the tourist map. The results indicate that transforming the generic mascot into a 3D character with a strong personality enhances visitors' emotional connection. Additionally, a custom typography inspired by the mascot's anatomy was successfully created to ensure consistency across all promotional media. These elements were then fully integrated into the tourist map, designed with a systematic layout and visual hierarchy. Through this research, it was found that combining a 3D mascot, custom typography, and a tourist map into a unified system (bundling system) proved effective in addressing navigation challenges in large scale tourist areas. This integrated approach strengthens the destination's professional image and enhances the quality of the visitor experience.

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INTRODUCTION

The growth of the recreational tourism industry in Central Java, particularly in Semarang Regency, requires each destination to offer not only a comprehensive range of attractions but also an integrated visitor experience. Dusun Semilir stands out as a premier tourist destination with a vast landscape, offering a blend of nature, culture, and family entertainment. In managing large scale spatial areas, the quality of Destination Branding and Environmental Graphic Design (EGD) becomes a crucial indicator. Corporate identity development must be efficient and integrated with other visual identities, and must align with the impression the company aims to convey (Luzar & Monica, 2013). Effective destination branding requires a well planned strategy that follows the latest trends with an engaging approach to reach the desired target audience (Prasetyo et al., 2020). In the tourism industry, the visitor experience is a very important aspect. Today's tourists not only seek natural beauty and the charm of their surroundings but also demand convenience and comfort while exploring a destination (Alfarizki & Firman, 2024).

As the primary representation of a visual identity, a mascot serves as a brand persona that conveys the values of the establishment through visual storytelling and enhances audience recall. A mascot not only represents businesses and services but also builds an emotional connection between consumers/visitors and tourists, making the mascot easier to remember and recognize (Alamsah & Muhamad, 2022).

The village of Semilir already has an official mascot in the form of an otter. However, based on a review of existing designs, it was found that the representation of the character's physical attributes and narrative does not yet fully capture its specific identity. According to Wianto & Dimas (2025), a mascot character is considered capable of attracting visitors' attention because its presence embodies the values of a particular entity, product, or community. The presence of a mascot can strengthen brand identity, serve as part of a marketing strategy in advertising, and its use is even considered more effective than the use of public figures, who are often employed in promotional activities for products, brands, and companies.

The shortcomings of this mascot have led to the ineffectiveness of other visual communication tools onsite. Observations show that visitors often become confused due to the vast size of the Dusun Semilir area. The existing tourist map and wayfinding system (wayfinding infographics) have not provided effective navigation guidance. The main issues lie in low legibility, confusing information hierarchy, and a lack of alignment between the mascot, maps, and directional signs. Yet, according to Harahap et al. (2024), signs and wayfinding systems are highly suitable for conveying information because they minimize the need for verbal communication with strangers while searching for a destination. In addition to helping visitors find their destination, signs and wayfinding systems can also enhance a place's image. Directional signs are used to inform people about a specific direction or location, while wayfinding helps visitors move from one point to another within a specific area.

Based on these observations, it was found that Dusun Semilir's digital promotional and communication materials lack consistent typographic standards across banners, posters, and social media posts. In modern visual identity design, a custom typeface is more than just a textual element; it serves as the brand's "voice." The absence of an exclusive font results in inconsistent brand communication. Many major brands are easily recognized and remembered by audiences because they use distinctive and consistently applied typeface designs. Choosing the right font can help maximize the role of typography in brand-building. Additionally, typography is crucial for supporting a brand's strategic positioning and ensuring readability so that information is effectively conveyed (Rosyada & Muh, 2022). This aligns with what Dewi and Handriyotopo (2019) stated that typography is specifically designed to make the process of recognizing a mascot easier, so the public can better recognize and understand it. Furthermore, the type of font used can create a specific impression or image in a design piece, which influences how users read and interpret the text (Tambunan et al., 2023).

Based on the preliminary study that has been conducted, three main issues were identified in the current design of the area. First, the design of the mascot its a beaver named "Osil" has not yet

reached its full potential as a visual communication tool. This is because the character still appears too generic and lacks distinctive attributes that can represent the identity or local character of Dusun Semilir (Figure 1).

Second, the currently available tourist maps present information in a disorganized manner and therefore do not yet provide adequate navigational guidance (Figure 2).

Third, other public communication media lack a cohesive visual integration (Figure 3), particularly the absence of a typographic standard that aligns with the mascot illustration's character.

According to the management of Dusun Semilir during an interview (2026), the main challenge they face is that the current visual identity urgently needs to be updated. The management feels that the otter mascot currently in use is merely a formal "display" and does not yet possess a strong enough character to emotionally engage visitors. Operationally, the management also frequently receives feedback that visitors often find it difficult to navigate the vast tourist area, while the currently available maps are not considered helpful enough for on-site navigation.

Furthermore, management highlighted the challenge of maintaining consistency in their promotional materials. Until now, the fonts and designs across different media have often appeared inconsistent or varied. The management hopes that with a more lively mascot character, informative maps, and distinctive typography standards, Dusun Semilir can achieve a consistent visual identity. The hope is that this will not only enhance the visual appeal but also make visitors feel more comfortable, less likely to get lost, and always remember the unique experience they had during their visit.

In response to this issue, there is an urgent need to design a comprehensive visual identity prototype integrated into a single bundled system. This design process begins with the redesign of the beaver mascot in both 2D and 3D forms, incorporating clothing elements and a visual style that conveys a cheerful, fun, family friendly, and back to nature vibe. The identity of this mascot is then translated into a distinctive custom font design, which will be consistently applied across all promotional media. Finally, all these visual elements (the mascot and typography) are

implemented into the design of interactive tourist maps and wayfinding infographics at various points throughout the area.



Figure 1. Dusun Semilir Existing Mascot

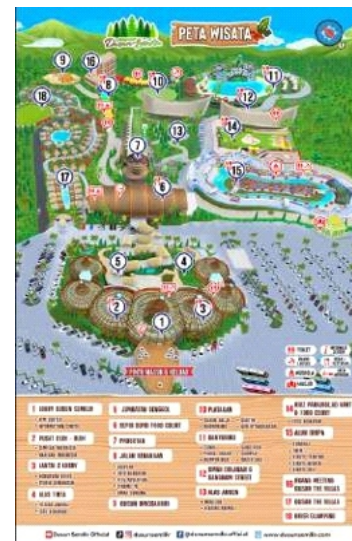


Figure 2. Dusun Semilir Tourist Map



Figure 3. Dusun Semilir Public Information Media

The development of a cohesive brand identity system is a key requirement in visual identity design (Winata & Jonathan, 2025). This is because the use of consistent visual elements not only serves to attract attention but also conveys the impression that the organization is reliable and professional (Hidayatulloh, 2025). Furthermore, well planned design integration serves as a tool to foster an emotional connection with consumers while ensuring content is effectively organized for the audience (Winata & Jonathan, 2025). Additionally, fashion attributes and visual styles are essential to visual identity because the development of these elements in a mascot is not merely about aesthetics, rather, they serve as communication tools to convey a friendly, cheerful message and the unique identity of a region to visitors.

Furthermore, the right font also helps a brand stand out from its competitors, creates a strong visual identity, and captures users' attention (Tambunan et al., 2023). For this reason, a custom font is used. Custom fonts are essential to visual identity because a custom font design that aligns with the brand's identity can help create a strong and cohesive impression.

Fonts have a significant impact on readability and information retention. Choosing the right font and ensuring clear typography can improve text readability, ensuring that the message is clearly understood by readers. Custom fonts must be applied consistently across all promotional media, as noted by Novitasari (2024), who states that the availability of uniform visual elements across various platforms is crucial for creating a brand image. Inconsistencies, such as variations in logo colors or inconsistent design patterns across different media, can confuse consumers and damage the brand's identity.

Previous studies on mascots have generally focused only on their function as elements of branding and identity promotion. On the other hand, research on wayfinding and tourist maps is mostly limited to the purely technical aspects of spatial navigation (Kiatama & Brian, 2025). Similarly, typography studies often stand alone as reinforcements of visual identity, where their use tends to merely align with the mascot's theme without integrating the unique characteristics that form the essence of the mascot's visual identity. To

date, there has been little research specifically exploring the integration of mascot design, custom typography (custom fonts), and spatial navigation systems as a unified integrated information media system (bundling system) within the context of family tourist destinations.

In response to this gap, this study aims to integrate and develop design approaches that were previously separate. This study supports Abdurrohman's (2023) view that mascots serve as effective communication tools and promotional media for building short term awareness and fostering long term loyalty. In addition to conventional 2D mascots, this work emphasizes the development of the beaver character into 3D projections and the application of a distinctive custom font, making it an integral part of the spatial navigation system's governance. This research supports the view that mascots not only function as effective communication tools and promotional media but also expand their role from mere branding elements to become an integral part of the area's public information system.

The objectives of this study are: (1) to develop a locally contextualized 2D and 3D design for a beaver mascot, (2) to integrate a custom font that complements the illustrated character, and (3) to produce a prototype for public information media and an intuitive visual navigation system for visitors to the Dusun Semilir area.

METHODS

This study employs a Research and Development (R&D) methodology by adapting Thiagarajan's 4D development model, which comprises the Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate stages. In this study, the model was modified into three stages: Define, Design, and Develop, omitting the Disseminate stage. The removal of this stage is considered appropriate because the final product resulting from this research and development will not be widely distributed (Pratama et al., 2016). This modification was made because the research focuses on the design process and validation of design products, specifically visual identity and wayfinding in the Dusun Semilir tourist area, so that development is focused on internal validation through expert testing and limited testing.

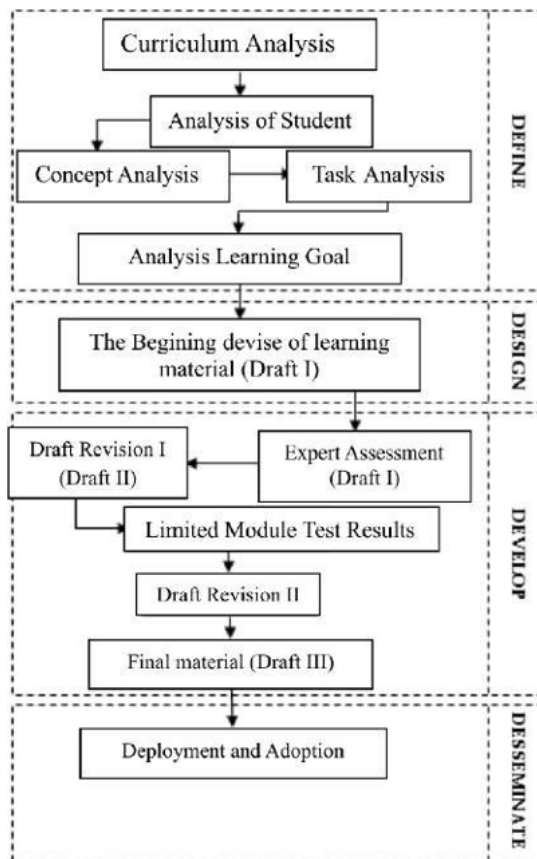


Figure 4. The 4D Development Model Modification Process
Source : Rahmatsyah & Kusumawati, 2021

1. Define

This phase is crucial for empirically identifying the root causes of visual issues in the field. Data collection is conducted through participatory observation to understand visitors' navigation behavior and identify design elements on the tourist map that may cause disorientation. Additionally, in depth interviews were conducted with management to align with the branding vision the company aims to achieve in the future. This phase concluded with a visual audit analysis of existing assets, such as the old mascot and tourist maps, to identify inconsistencies that have been disrupting the tourist experience. The primary focus of this stage is to establish success metrics for the new mascot design as well as the effectiveness of the tourist map to be created.

2. Design

This phase involves transforming the results of data analysis into a comprehensive creative concept. During this phase, the narrative for the otter mascot character is developed to establish a

personality foundation for the visuals to be created. The creative process begins with the creation of various alternative sketches for the mascot in 2D format, highlighting the appeal and uniqueness of the tourist destination. Additionally, typographic exploration is conducted to design a custom font that reflects the friendly and modern character of Dusun Semilir. The design of the tourist map also begins at this stage, focusing on information hierarchy, color palette, and layout that can intuitively guide visitors through effective visual communication.

3. Develop

The development phase is a comprehensive digital production process aimed at transforming the final design concept into a ready to use visual asset. This process involves system integration and technical exploration, beginning with the digitization of the mascot character using Procreate software. This step results in a 2D character image that offers high visual clarity and scalability.

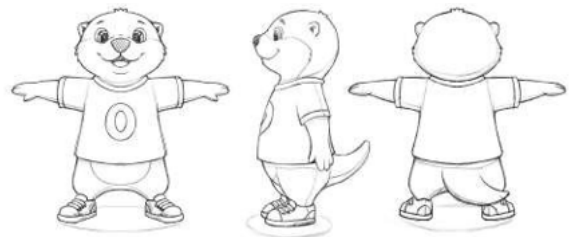


Figure 5. 2D mascot character sketch
Source: Researcher documentation, 2026

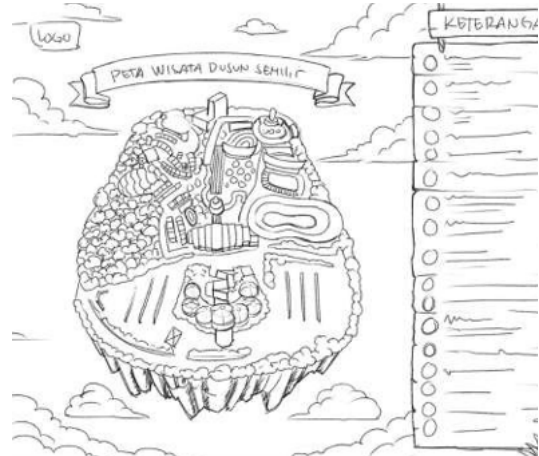


Figure 6. Tourist Map Sketcher and the Development of Typographic Anatomy.
Source: Researcher documentation, 2026



Figure 7. Sketches on the Development of Typographic Anatomy.

Source: Researcher documentation, 2026

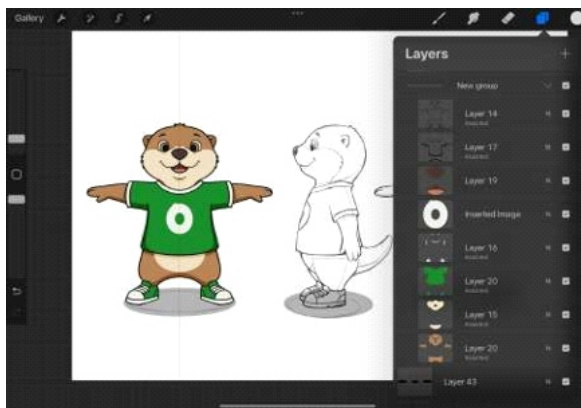


Figure 8. The Process of Creating a 2D Mascot Source: Researcher documentation, 2026



Figure 9. The Process of Creating a 3D Mascot Source: Researcher documentation, 2026

The 2D characters created serve as the primary blueprint for developing 3D models using Blender software. This transformation aims to create a sense of depth and produce more dynamic and interactive visuals. The technical stages of 3D modeling include modeling, coloring, and rendering.

At the same time, the custom font was digitized using Adobe Illustrator. This process involved meticulous attention to the letterforms to ensure they align with the mascot's visual identity. The custom font elements will be used consistently across all informational media, such as tourist maps, to ensure visual consistency.

The completed mascot elements and custom typography were then fully integrated into the tourism map design. The map creation process involved several strategic steps, beginning with an analysis of information hierarchy to systematically design the layout, aiming to address navigation challenges in large areas and reduce visitors' cognitive load. This step was followed by visual exploration and the selection of an easily understandable color palette to ensure the information on the map is clearly readable by all age groups.

Through the synergy of the bundling system, the mascot character is integrated into the map to provide a more communicative and human centered approach compared to standard technical maps. The integration of all these elements ultimately aims to create strong visual consistency within a single system package.

The final product was validated through expert reviews and functional evaluations to ensure that the design met standards for visual ergonomics and aesthetics and addressed the

identified navigation issues. The validators were practitioners with expertise in mascot design, visual identity, and typography. The validation tool used was an expert validation form.

This study employs a qualitative descriptive analysis approach to process field findings as the basis for developing a design strategy. The visual analysis process focuses on the principles of Environmental Graphic Design (EGD), particularly regarding the legibility and ease of understanding of the navigation map. A comprehensive evaluation of the prototype was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the integration between the mascot character, typography, and map elements in strengthening the brand identity and facilitating visitor orientation within the Dusun Semilir area. This series of steps ensures that the resulting design solutions are grounded in a theoretically and practically sound foundation.

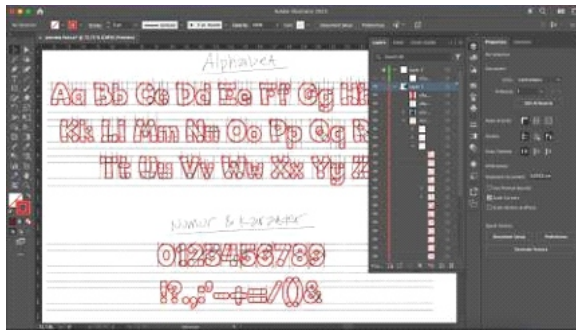


Figure 10. The Process of Creating Custom Fonts Source: Researcher documentation, 2026



Figure 11. The Process of Creating a Tourist Map Source: Researcher documentation, 2026

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The redesign of the otter mascot, named "Osil," demonstrates a significant shift from a generic character to a unique visual entity, as examined through an analysis of messaging, visual aesthetics, and technical aspects. Based on message analysis, the use of animals in mascot creation is grounded in a more efficient communication strategy rather than merely aesthetic reasons. Through the concept of anthropomorphism, designers can imbue animal characters with human traits and emotions, allowing the audience to feel an emotional connection without being constrained by strict realism. Mascots attract people's attention and encourage interaction because their cute and entertaining nature is widely appreciated by the public. Mascots are universal and appealing, making them easily accepted by all demographics, from children to adults (Sutanti & Martadi, 2025). Additionally, animals possess universal symbolism understood by the general public, allowing a brand's meaning to be conveyed quickly. Animal characters tend to have neutral traits because they

do not represent a specific race or social group, making them a highly flexible choice. This message is further reinforced through the mascot's open body language (welcoming gestures), which, from a semiotic perspective, positions Osil as a proactive guide to reduce tourists' cognitive load when navigating directions.

From an aesthetic visual analysis perspective, the mascot's anatomy is designed with super deformed (chibi) proportions to optimize the audience's focus on its facial expressions. Osil is depicted wearing a green T-shirt that directly references the color palette of the Dusun Semilir logo, symbolizing the natural beauty and unique architecture of the destination. Anatomically, the use of rounded shapes and the selection of bright color tones aim to reinforce a fun and family friendly impression. This aligns with the findings of Glory et al. (2025), who state that color also functions as an efficient communication tool between the character and the audience. Color can highlight unique traits and characteristics, influence mood, and express emotions, making it easier for the audience to recognize the character's behavior and enhancing the effectiveness of communication. The mascot's distinct identity is conveyed through the inclusion of the letter "O" on the shirt as an initial of the name, as well as visual details such as the tuft and fur texture that emphasize the otter's physical characteristics.

Meanwhile, from a technical analysis perspective during the 2D design phase, character creation begins with the exploration of digital sketches, which are then converted into a lossless vector format. The decision to design in vector format, combined with flat color, offers technical advantages in producing sharp, distinctive silhouettes with high legibility, even when applied in small sizes on digital platforms or in tourism map infographics. As a subsequent development stage of the 2D prototype, the implementation of 3D modeling techniques is a crucial point in this discussion. In addition to providing a more realistic sense of volume, 3D assets allow for flexibility in merchandise production and simplify the animation process without the need for frame by frame redrawing. Through 3D assets, greater artistic freedom and flexibility are achieved to create creative and unique worlds, characters, and

special effects that cannot be produced with traditional 2D assets (Kastawa et al., 2024). This addresses the challenge of efficiency in the production of visual communication media in the future.

The second element designed within this visual system is the development of a custom font. To address the inconsistencies of the previous typography, a new custom font was developed, drawing direct inspiration from the physical elements of the Osil mascot. Based on an aesthetic visual analysis, visual consistency was achieved by adopting a sans-serif typeface with a rounded silhouette to maintain a cheerful and relaxed impression. One of the unique characteristics of this typographic aesthetic is the inclusion of visual elements resembling otter fur or a tuft of fur in the letter's structure (such as at the ends of the stems or terminals).



Figure 12. Result of the 2D Mascot Redesain Source: Researcher documentation, 2026



Figure 13. 3D Model Projection Results Source: Researcher documentation, 2026

FFrom a message analysis perspective, this custom typeface serves to convey values of friendliness, warmth, and an informal approach that align with the destination's family recreation concept. The typeface is designed so that the audience subconsciously associates the text with the Osil mascot. This aligns with the findings of

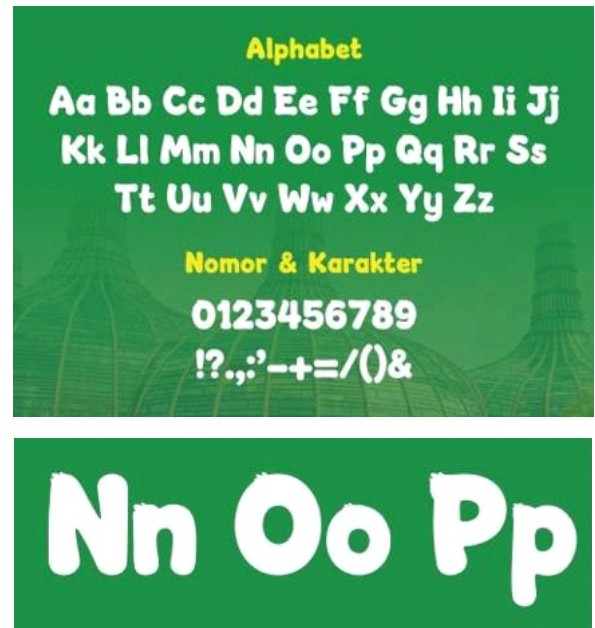


Figure 14. Digital Custom Typography Implementation Source: Researcher documentation, 2026

Tambunan et al. (2023), who state that the right font also helps a brand become more recognizable compared to competitors, creates a strong visual identity, and sparks user interest. This integration of messaging ensures that every text appearing in Dusun Semilir's public communication media no longer stands alone but becomes part of a unified visual language that proactively strengthens the brand image in the eyes of visitors.

To support its functional aspects, the technical analysis of this typography places strong emphasis on legibility and readability, given that the font will be used in Environmental Graphic Design (EGD) or wayfinding. Technically, the typeface was designed using a vector format, making it scalable and ensuring it does not pixelate when applied to large scale print media such as tourist maps and billboards. Additionally, technical adjustments regarding letter spacing (kerning) and stroke weight (weight) are carefully calibrated to ensure that information on signage can be clearly, quickly, and accurately read by tourists on the move or from a distance.

The redesign of the tourist map prioritized navigational functionality and clarity of information, which were thoroughly examined through message analysis, visual aesthetics, and technical considerations. From a message analysis perspective, this tourist map was designed not

merely as a geographical representation, but as a communication tool that conveys a sense of ease and comfort. The placement of the Osil mascot within the map is not merely decorative but a strategy to strengthen visual identity while serving as an interactive navigation guide that gives visitors the impression of being “accompanied.” With a more logical travel flow, the message conveyed is that Dusun Semilir is an organized and tourist-friendly destination, thereby fostering a sense of security and reducing spatial disorientation in the expansive area.

From an aesthetic visual analysis perspective, the previously irregular numbering and layout have now been reorganized based on a systematic visual hierarchy. This aligns with the findings of Yuhanda, M., & Nurmalitasari, G. (2025), who state that visual hierarchy plays a role in directing visitors' attention toward the most significant objects or information. The use of a custom font in the map ensures alignment with the new visual identity, while the dominance of green is used to maintain relevance to the logo and mascot and reinforce the impression of a lush environment. The map's aesthetics are maintained through a balance between white space and information density, ensuring that the visual presentation remains clean, appealing, and does not overwhelm the eye when viewed briefly.

In terms of technical analysis, the design of this map employs an information design approach that places significant emphasis on the readability of symbols and pictograms. Technically, the map is rendered in a functional vector format that allows for application flexibility, whether in the form of large-scale physical print media on-site (EGD) or for digital platform needs. Each coordinate point for attractions and public facilities is mapped by considering the line of sight and the visitor's perspective on-site. A technical layering based color system is also applied to distinguish between main paths, green areas, and buildings, thereby facilitating future information updates. Through the integration of these three analyses, the tourism map is now capable of serving as an effective navigation tool while also possessing high aesthetic value.

This indicates that integrating identity elements into tourist maps offers dual benefits, it facilitates visitor mobility while strengthening the brand's presence throughout the area. Since many

tourist maps remain rigid and technical, the findings of this study offer a more human centered solution through the design of mascots. A comparison with the study by Stefvany et al. (2025) also confirms that good design helps convey information smoothly, reduces feelings of confusion, and enhances the travel experience. Thus, this bundling system has proven reliable in simultaneously uniting the aesthetic aspects of the persona with the functionality of navigation.



Figure 15. Tourist Map Prototype Source: Researcher documentation, 2026



Figure 16. 2D & 3D Mascot Implementation Source: Researcher documentation, 2026



Figure 17. Tourist Map Mockup Source: Researcher documentation, 2026

Based on the validation results conducted by experts, there are several crucial points that serve as the primary focus for refining the design. Regarding typography, although the text is already legible from a functional standpoint, improvements will focus on exploring the typographic anatomy to enhance the design's vitality and visual concept. This is closely tied to the effectiveness of the message. If the font size is too small, the essence of the design concept will not be fully conveyed. Therefore, adjustments to the font size have been made for key informational elements such as "ATM Center," "Information Center," and similar labels to minimize the risk of readability issues for visitors, especially since this signage will be placed in outdoor areas that require legibility from a distance.

Regarding the development of the mascot character, revisions have been made to the costume details and the depth of the character. In response to the validators' feedback regarding the clothing, a lower section will be added, and the character's full name will be incorporated in addition to the logo's initials on the clothing to strengthen its identity. Furthermore, to create a more communicative impression, the mascot will be depicted in various action poses with more detailed facial expressions through close up shots. This step aims to ensure that the mascot is not merely a static visual element, but is capable of conveying diverse emotions and functions across various media applications.

Finally, regarding the map and wayfinding system, changes have been made to enhance the user experience and make it more intuitive. The original numbering system will be modified or

supplemented with universal pictograms or icons representing tourist attractions. These changes are intended to allow visitors to grasp information instantly without having to read the text in detail. The map's layout has also been reorganized to prevent confusion, accompanied by special effects or color adjustments to the Dusun Semilir logo to make it more contrasting and easily recognizable. Overall, the focus of the map improvements is on visual hierarchy and the size of supporting text, ensuring that information remains accurate and easily accessible to visitors in outdoor settings.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that integrating a 2D–3D mascot, custom typography, and a tourist map into a unified visual identity system provides a coherent design solution for Dusun Semilir's branding and spatial communication needs. The redesign transformed Osil from a generic mascot into a more distinctive visual persona, while the custom typography translated the mascot's visual characteristics into a consistent graphic language. Their integration into the tourist map further strengthened information hierarchy, legibility, and visual coherence. Expert validation also identified specific refinements in typography, mascot attributes, pictograms, and map hierarchy, indicating that the effectiveness of the proposed system depends not merely on individual design elements but on their consistency and functional integration.

The main contribution of this study therefore lies in positioning the mascot, typography, and tourist map not as separate design outputs, but as an integrated visual communication system in which brand identity and spatial navigation reinforce one another. However, because the study was limited to the Define, Design, and Develop stages and primarily relied on expert validation, its effectiveness in actual visitor navigation has not yet been empirically measured. Future research should therefore examine the system through visitor-based usability testing, wayfinding performance, and real-world implementation. Further development may also explore augmented reality or location-based navigation while maintaining the visual consistency established by the proposed system.

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