Local responsive branding for MSMEs: a culturally adaptive design framework based on Nusantara philosophy

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ABSTRACT

MSMEs often struggle to build consistent, authentic, and competitive brand identities, especially within culturally rich local contexts. The primary issue is the limitation of branding strategies that fail to adequately represent local identity and are less responsive to audience needs. This research addresses this gap by aiming to design and evaluate the application of the local responsive design (LRD) method on the culinary MSME OppaBay to strengthen its brand differentiation and competitiveness. The methodology employs a qualitative approach through observation, interviews with the business owner, and questionnaire-based evaluations involving design experts and partners/clients. The study introduces LRD as a novel framework integrating local aesthetic, linguistic, and cultural elements into MSME branding. The results demonstrate that LRD successfully produced a consistent visual identity, an authentic, culturally based narrative, and brand communication that is familiar and audience-relevant. Expert evaluation confirmed the design's suitability with principles of visual communication, aesthetics, and cultural branding. Concurrently, partners found the design practical, easy to implement, and supportive of improving professional image and consumer trust. The conclusion confirms that LRD provides both theoretical utility, enriching the study of local branding, and significant practical value for small business sustainability. Future research should focus on strengthening culture-based digital storytelling and measuring the relationship between cultural branding and consumer loyalty.

1. Introduction

Branding is a vital strategy for MSMEs because it can differentiate products in a competitive market, increase consumer trust, expand market reach, and drive sales growth [1]–[4]. A strong branding strategy enables MSME products to stand out among competitors and fosters long-term loyalty [5]–[9]. Digital platforms further support this process by allowing broader market penetration through social media, websites, and e-commerce engagement [10]–[15]. However, despite these well-recognized benefits, many local MSMEs, particularly culinary MSMEs, continue to face fundamental branding challenges, including limited resources, a lack of design literacy, and inconsistent visual identity. These structural weaknesses significantly reduce the effectiveness of branding strategies and represent the core contextual problem this study seeks to address.

Consistency in visual identity, including logos, colors, typography, and packaging, plays a crucial role in establishing a professional image and fostering emotional closeness with consumers [5], [8], [16]–[19]. Attractive and consistent design elements strengthen brand recognition and credibility, especially in digital environments where visual competition is intense [17], [18]. Nevertheless, many local MSMEs struggle to maintain this consistency due to the absence of dedicated design teams, limited time, and a lack of technical proficiency in managing visual branding across platforms. These weaknesses must be clearly articulated at the outset because they directly motivate the need for a more adaptive, context-responsive branding approach. Competition in the culinary industry is particularly intense. Without differentiation, MSMEs often fail to create a lasting impression and risk being overshadowed by similar products. Product innovation, brand storytelling, and strong visual identity have proven effective in strengthening MSME competitiveness [20]–[26]. Existing studies predominantly emphasize product or marketing-oriented solutions and rarely address how branding methods can be structurally adapted to the cultural, emotional, and operational realities of small local businesses. This gap highlights the need for a design-centered framework that is not only theoretically grounded but also adaptable to the practical constraints of MSMEs.

Culinary MSMEs typically face significant barriers in building strong brand identity due to limited human resources, minimal branding knowledge, and inadequate digital marketing capabilities [24], [27], [28]. Collaboration and mentoring, especially with universities or design practitioners, have shown promise in supporting MSMEs toward better branding outcomes [29], [30]. However, existing interventions tend to be generic and lack sufficient grounding in local cultural identity. They often overlook the importance of transforming indigenous knowledge, local linguistic styles, and everyday symbolic expressions into structured branding strategies. This unresolved issue forms the central research gap of the present study. Past research highlights that incorporating local cultural elements, language, and symbols can enhance emotional closeness and differentiation in culinary MSME branding [31]–[37]. Visual designs incorporating local colors, motifs, and patterns enhance authenticity and shape consumer perceptions [42]–[48]. While these studies confirm the importance of local culture in branding, they rarely provide a systematic method for translating local values into a coherent design process. They stop short of explaining *how* designers should operationalize cultural elements into adaptable visual systems suitable for MSMEs with limited capacity. This oversight highlights a significant theoretical and methodological gap. While prior research emphasises the importance of cultural elements, it does not provide a structured, locally responsive design method that MSMEs can practically implement. In building a brand, MSMEs must highlight their unique offerings while presenting strategies that respond to local cultural contexts. Local wisdom, such as traditional food heritage, communal values, and recognizable motifs, remains an untapped resource for shaping brand identity and emotional resonance [36], [37]. Language style and communication tone also affect trust, familiarity, and message acceptance [38]–[41]. Yet despite this growing body of evidence, previous studies have not explained how these cultural variables can be integrated into a replicable branding methodology. Nor do they address why existing branding approaches remain insufficient in the context of resource-limited culinary MSMEs. These unanswered questions further demonstrate the need for a methodological contribution that bridges cultural theory and design practice.

Based on these limitations, the present research introduces a locally branding approach that expands existing branding theory by integrating local visual culture, everyday linguistic practices, and regional aesthetic preferences into a flexible design method tailored explicitly for MSMEs. Unlike previous studies that emphasise cultural elements descriptively, this research proposes a structured process, grounded in Murtono et al.'s local responsive design (LRD) framework [49] and phenomenological principles [50] to operationalise local values into actionable design decisions. This methodological refinement constitutes the primary novelty and scholarly contribution of the study. This research is based on the problem formulation of designing locally

responsive branding for OppaBay to increase its recognition, trust, and competitiveness in the culinary industry. The research objectives are to identify local characteristics of OppaBay, develop a locally responsive branding strategy based on interview results, and provide design recommendations for relevant touchpoints. By clearly articulating the research gap, namely, the absence of a structured, culturally grounded branding methodology for culinary MSMEs, and by proposing an operational framework that transforms cultural meaning into practical design outputs, this study contributes both theoretically and practically to the evolving discourse on local branding and design methods for MSMEs.

2. Methods

The research is a design action that actively involves the OppaBay MSME, adhering to the principle of collaborative work. The design method adopts the ideas of Murtono *et al*. [49] regarding LRD. This method was deliberately chosen because it provides a structured yet flexible framework developed explicitly for design research involving MSMEs with limited resources. Unlike conventional branding methods that assume ideal conditions such as full design teams or stable marketing systems, the method emphasizes locality, user participation, and adaptive decision-making, three elements that align with OppaBay's real constraints and cultural context. This method is considered the most relevant theoretical and practical foundation for developing a branding system that is both culturally embedded and technically feasible for MSMEs.

2.1. Basic Concept

This concept emphasizes that design should not strive for absolute perfection, but rather adapt to the local context to create authentic and relevant branding for MSMEs. Partner limitations are viewed as opportunities for innovation, with a focus on user experience to produce meaningful designs. Integrating Nusantara philosophy into the design reflects an inclusive approach that connects the emotions, culture, and practical needs of partner MSMEs (Fig. 1). To operationalize this concept, the research directly translated the principle of local adaptation into concrete activities, such as collecting vernacular culinary narratives, identifying everyday language used by owners and customers, and documenting the visual environment of Solo, including signage, colour palettes, and local batik motifs. Meanwhile, the Nusantara philosophical principle of relativism was operationalised by allowing iterative design revisions based on the owner's lived experience, emotional preferences, and practical constraints, rather than imposing idealised academic standards. In practice, this meant accepting non-linear feedback, adjusting prototypes according to cultural meaning rather than technical precision, and prioritizing designs that felt "warm", "familiar", and "blessing-oriented" in the owner's perception.
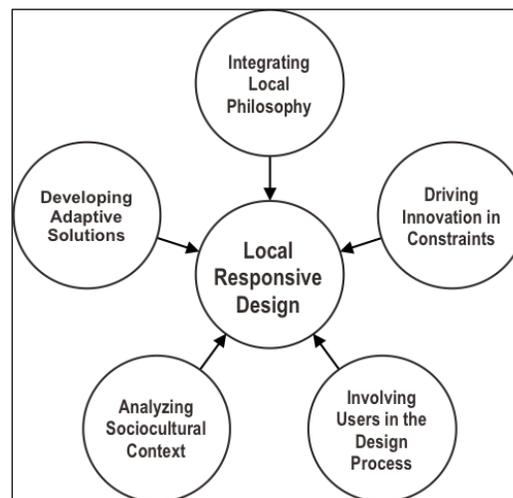

Fig. 1. Local responsive design concept chart [49]

2.2. Principles

The method is based on two main principles of user-driven design and the principle of relativism (Fig. 2). The principle of user-driven design prioritizes the full participation of MSME actors at every stage of the design process, ensuring that the design reflects their local identity and needs. This principle aligns with the phenomenological approach [50], which emphasizes subjective user experience. User-driven design was implemented through in-depth interviews, co-sketching sessions, participatory workshops, and continuous prototype testing in which the owner acted as both an informant and evaluator. Each stage required the owner to validate meaning, select visual directions, and determine the feasibility of design applications in real operational contexts. The principle of relativism acknowledges that design does not have to be technically perfect. Instead, it needs to be grounded in strong emotional and cultural values, inspired by the relativism of Nusantara philosophy. This relativistic principle was concretely implemented by prioritizing cultural coherence, such as the meaning of "freshness," "hospitality," and "blessing," over rigid aesthetic perfection, ensuring that the final design resonated with local emotional realities rather than only academic standards.
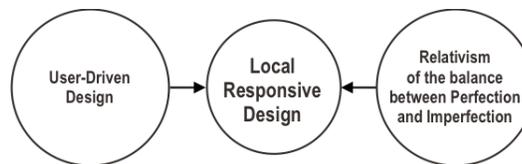

Fig. 2. Local responsive design principles chart [49]

2.3. Design Procedure

The procedure consists of six cyclical stages (Fig. 3), beginning with social resonance, meaning-making, idea formulation, adaptive prototyping, responsive evaluation, and ongoing implementation. This section explains how each stage was concretely implemented during the research process, including the instruments and assessment indicators used by both experts and MSME partners.
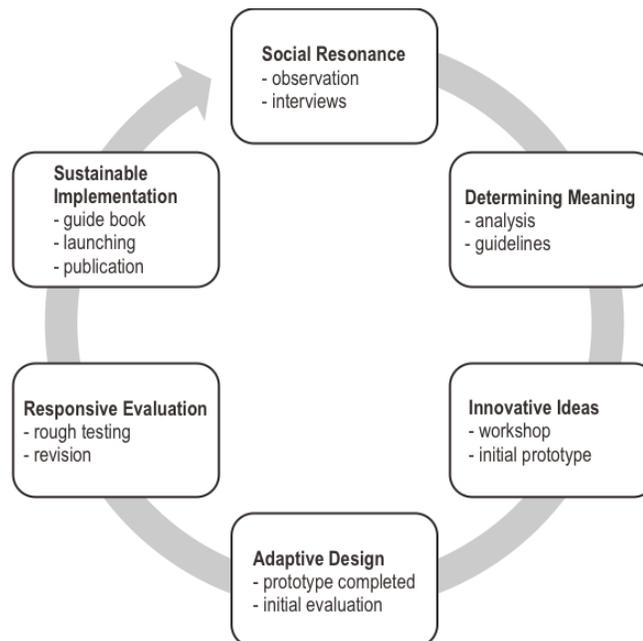

Fig. 3. Research Procedure [49]

- The first stage, social resonance, was implemented through field observations, semi-structured interviews, and participatory mapping. Instruments included interview guidelines, visual documentation sheets, and partner-generated doodles. The success indicator for this stage was the identification of OppaBay's core values, operational challenges, emotional expectations, and culturally relevant symbols.
- The second stage, determining meaning, involved thematic analysis of interview data using coding sheets to extract central concepts such as "freshness," "hospitality," "local flavor," and "blessing." The outcome was considered successful when the meaning clusters could be translated into design guidelines usable for the next stage, including preferred colors, language styles, cultural elements, and brand narratives.
- The third stage, formulating ideas, involved collaborative workshops that included brainstorming, co-design sketching, and selecting initial prototypes. Workshop instruments included ideation boards and prototype evaluation sheets. Indicators of success were the production of at least three feasible visual directions aligned with OppaBay's identity and practical capabilities.
- The fourth stage, adaptive design, focused on developing prototypes of logos, packaging, promotional media, and digital assets. This stage used layout grids, mockups, and application trials. Success indicators included technical usability across media, perceived cultural appropriateness, and owner-approved functionality.
- The fifth stage, responsive evaluation, employed a dual-evaluation model that involved design experts and business partners. Experts assessed the prototypes using criteria such as visual consistency, aesthetic quality, cultural authenticity, readability, and clarity of communication. Partners are evaluated based on practicality, emotional resonance, operational ease, and business relevance. The evaluation instruments included questionnaires, open-ended feedback sheets, and application trials in real settings.
- The sixth stage, sustainable implementation, involved final adjustments, the creation of brand guidelines, partner training, and the preparation of digital assets. Success indicators consisted of owner readiness to apply the design independently, clarity of implementation guides, and compatibility across various touchpoints.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Social Resonance: Exploring Identity and Challenges

The owner has 17 years of experience at PT. Astra provided strong marketing skills, enriching Oppa Bay's identity as a culinary MSME that began as a home business and has since expanded into restaurant and catering services since 2019. The interview with the owner also revealed the philosophy behind the brand name, which is derived from the words "Oppa," meaning grandmother, as a symbol of nostalgic food, and "Bay" from the name Bayu, the business owner's husband. This combination of personal history, emotional symbolism, and culinary nostalgia forms a necessary narrative foundation for the branding strategy because LRD highlights meaningful cultural and personal stories as core elements of identity construction. The emphasis on "grandmother" evokes warmth, comfort, and heritage, which conceptually supports the brand's values of friendliness and blessings. The inclusion of the husband's name reinforces a sense of family, relational closeness, and trust. These personal meanings become central touchpoints that guide visual decisions, such as the soft aesthetic, local motifs, and warm communication style, ensuring the brand identity is rooted in authentic lived experiences rather than imposed design conventions. OppaBay offers a flexible menu of Chinese and Indonesian cuisine, tailored to meet customer demand. Local potential is evident in the presentation of Solo specialties, such as Solo-style sausage, the incorporation of batik motifs into its visual identity, and the concept of word-of-mouth as a natural means of promotion. Interviews also revealed major obstacles, including limited digital promotion due to a lack of time and ability to create content, inconsistencies in

visual design (such as logos, packaging, and promotions), and limited signage that makes business locations less visible. These findings directly inform the design strategy, showing that the visual identity must not only represent culture but also address functional issues such as recognizability, digital practicality, and low cognitive load, enabling the owner to apply it consistently (see Table 1).

Table 1. OppaBay Social Resonance

Aspects	Interview Findings
Philosophy and Identity	The name comes from "Oppa" (grandmother) and "Bay" (husband), meaning friendly, fresh, full of blessings.
Products and Advantages	Various Chinese & Indonesian menus, including authentic Solo snacks (Solo-style sausage).
Local Values	Batik motifs in visuals, the concept of word-of-mouth promotion.
Main Problem	Limited digital promotion, weak visual consistency, and less visible signage.
Targets and Expectations	Want to be seen as a trusted business for families and communities.

3.2. Determining Meaning: Core Values and Locality

Based on the interview results, the core values of OppaBay's brand identity can be formulated. The business owners view the brand as representing hospitality, freshness, and blessings. This hospitality is reflected in close customer relationships, warm service, and long-term partnerships. Freshness is evident in the consistently presented fresh and varied food, tailored to meet customer needs. Meanwhile, the meaning of blessings serves as a philosophical foundation, emphasizing that this business is not only a source of income but also brings goodness to families, customers, and the surrounding environment. From a local perspective, OppaBay emphasizes its identity through word of mouth, a term still prevalent in the Solo community. The use of batik motifs in its visual identity and nostalgic culinary delights, such as Solo-style sausage, evoke a sense of familiarity for those who live away from home and their families. These values strengthen OppaBay's distinction as a local culinary brand rooted in tradition yet adaptable to modern needs (see Table 2).

Table 2. Determining the Meaning of OppaBay

Aspects	Interview Findings
Brand Core Values	Friendly: Warm service and close relationships with customers. Fresh: food is always fresh and varied. Blessing: the business is seen as bringing benefits to all parties.
Local Meaning	Local language: promotion through word-of-mouth. Visual identity: use of Solo batik motifs. Nostalgic culinary: authentic Solo snacks like Solo-style sausage.

3.3. Formulating Innovative Ideas

The innovative concept for Oppa Bay was formulated based on a deep understanding of the business's needs, philosophy, and challenges. Every element of the innovation, from workshops between designers and business owners to prototyping, was designed to address specific challenges and strengthen the existing brand identity. This initial step was crucial because it was based on challenges directly recognized by the owners. The workshop aimed to map their branding needs (Table 3) comprehensively.

Table 3. Formulation of innovative ideas

Aspects	Ideas
Identify Key Problems	Business owners stated that the main challenge lies in marketing. Specifically, online marketing requires content innovation and management, which are complex to handle in-house due to time constraints. Promotion via Instagram is also acknowledged as being inconsistent. This problem aligns with the brand's goal of creating innovative content and managing product sales through social media.

Aspects	Ideas
The Need for Visual Consistency	The owner expressed a desire for a consistent visual identity. A friend created the logo that has been used since the business's inception. Meanwhile, the catering packaging design frequently changes because the owner gets bored easily. Therefore, a new color scheme was needed to provide consistency to the business.
Clear Design Requirements List	The result of this mapping is a particular list of design requirements, which includes: Logo. Various types of packaging (snack boxes, rice boxes, rice bowl stickers, bento labels). Digital promotional materials (Instagram feed and story designs). Physical promotional materials (banners, X-banners, signage). Corporate assets (company profiles, business cards, uniforms).

3.4. Adaptive Design Prototype

The design outcome for Oppa Bay is a comprehensive and integrated visual identity system, designed to address each need identified during the interview process and aligned with the established brand strategy. The design aims to create a strong, consistent, recognizable identity that reflects Oppa Bay's philosophy and vision.

1) Visual Direction

The prototype idea for this visual identity did not emerge randomly, but rather as a synthesis of Oppa Bay's core values and identity. The central concept of Oppa Bay's visual identity is a blend of modernity and local Solo traditions. The visual direction specifically adapts a motif from Solo's hand-drawn sogan batik, called "lotus petals" (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. Lotus petals batik motif

This choice directly responds to the owner's desire to incorporate batik references into a visual identity that emphasizes Solo's distinctive, elegant local nuances. Graphic elements and patterns derived from this motif are used consistently across various media. In addition to batik, the design also maintains a humanist style, incorporating floral elements as its signature feature. This floral element aligns with the owner's statement that her business is synonymous with the shape of leaves, which represent freshness. The owner explicitly stated that her business is synonymous with the shape of leaves and green, representing freshness. This "fresh" value is also one of the words chosen to describe the nature of Oppa Bay's business and is a primary goal regarding food quality. The brand guide then establishes green and vanilla white as the primary colors to represent freshness. The owner wanted to incorporate distinctive Solo elements into her business, one of which was using batik references as a visual identity design. This color choice aligns with the desire for a packaging design that emphasizes the distinctive nuances of Solo's local identity, which are elegant and batik-inspired. The brand guide then details that this visual identity adapts the hand-drawn batik motif of Solo's sogan ceplok lotus, which is applied as a graphic element and supporting pattern. The new primary logo was designed to reflect the brand's fresh, modern, friendly, and accessible essence, in line with the desired brand persona of "Friendly while maintaining tradition and freshness."

2) Logo

The logo is designed in several variants to ensure flexibility across various media while maintaining the brand's essence. The primary logo (Fig. 5) embodies a fresh, modern, friendly, and accessible nature, serving as the official representation of Oppa Bay. Instead of being treated as merely a technical or aesthetic object, the logo in this study is understood as a visual manifestation of the principles of LRD. The combination of floral curves, soft forms, and batik-inspired visual rhythm translates the owner's core values, freshness, warmth, and blessings, into symbolic visual language. This approach aligns with a local responsive framework, which emphasizes that design decisions must arise from user narratives, local culture, and emotional resonance.

Fig. 5. Primary logo

The lotus-petal-inspired curvature used in the symbol is not only decorative but also conveys continuity with Solo's batik heritage. At the same time, the friendly character of the typography reflects the relational closeness embedded in the brand's origin story ("Oppa" as a term of endearment, akin to "grandmother"). By combining cultural symbolism, user values, and practical needs of MSMEs, the logo becomes an applied example of how local meaning is operationalized into a visual identity. A secondary logo, Fig. 6 (a), supports horizontal applications, and the simplified symbol allows visibility in small media such as social media icons, Fig. 6 (b), Fig. 6 (c). These variations are aligned with the principle of adaptability in LRD, ensuring the identity remains functional across diverse and constrained MSME touchpoints without losing cultural meaning.
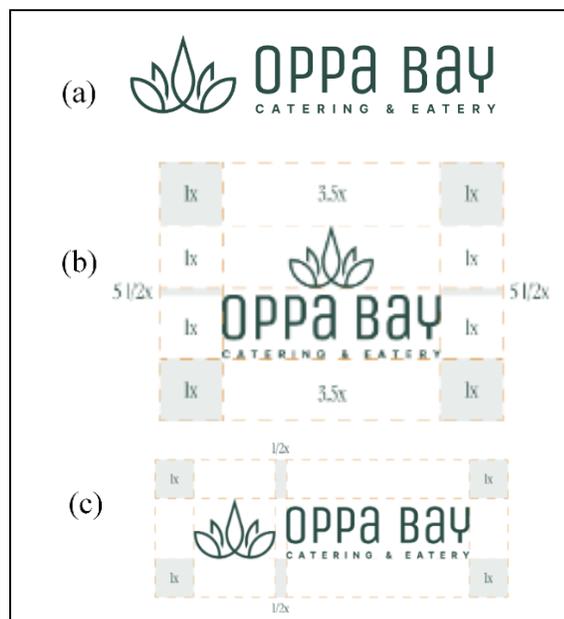
Fig. 6. Secondary logo (a); (b) Logo safe area; (c) Logo safe area

3) Color Palette

The color selection is based on the brand's philosophy and character. The primary colors are green (#2B4E47) and vanilla white (#FEFEE2). In contrast, yellow-orange (#E09036) and brown (#8D624F) serve as complementary colors (Fig. 7). Visually, the green–vanilla combination produces high harmony and low visual strain, reinforcing perceptions of freshness and naturalness that align with culinary products and the owner's value of "fresh" food quality. Psychologically, green is associated with nourishment, balance, and trust, making it a suitable color for a family-oriented culinary brand. Meanwhile, vanilla white conveys cleanliness, simplicity, and sincerity, traits that align with the brand's humble, home-based origins. The secondary colors add warmth and grounding; yellow-orange evokes energy and friendliness, while earthy brown ties the identity to traditional Solo aesthetics and the organic tone of batik sogan. Together, this palette not only fulfills functional visibility but also strengthens emotional associations that are central to culturally rooted branding aesthetics [42]–[48].

Fig. 7. Primary and secondary color palette

4) Visual Elements and Typography

A distinctive graphic element and typography system were created to support the visual identity. Graphic elements and patterns reference the lotus petals batik motif (Fig 8). These elements are used as backgrounds or decorations on various design materials to reinforce the local Solo feel.
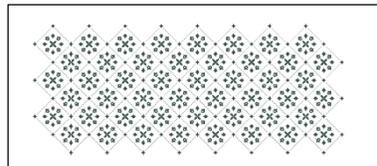
Fig. 8. Pattern elements of the lotus petals batik motif

The Unica One and Inter typefaces are used to create the logo's visual identity. A combination of Instrument Serif and Inter typefaces is used in various other media (such as company profiles or social media). This system ensures the text remains legible while maintaining the brand's character (Fig 9).

Fig. 9. Types of letters used

5) Design Implementation

All design elements, including corporate assets and promotional materials (Table 4), are consistently implemented across the media required by Oppa Bay. Business cards, company profiles, Instagram feeds, packaging, signage, and uniforms adhere to a consistent visual style. To strengthen the conceptual grounding, each design implementation decision is directly linked to LRD principles: the choice of simple packaging structures accommodates MSME production constraints and ensures design sustainability; the application of batik-based motif patterns on boxes and labels increases cultural distinctiveness; the enlarged logo and strong color contrast on signage respond to visibility issues caused by the store's alley location; and the proportional layout of digital visual content is designed to reduce cognitive load for the owner, enabling easier self-managed content creation.

Size and shape decisions, such as the compact snack box, the sturdy rice box with dual components, or the elongated paper belt for hampers, are not arbitrary but are adapted to local consumption habits, gifting culture, and the practical routines of Solo's catering ecosystem. These design choices illustrate how visual and structural elements must respond to user needs and cultural context, embodying the core logic of local responsive branding. Overall, the design implementation translates Oppa Bay's brand strategy and philosophy into functional visual assets. Every design element, from size to color, has been carefully considered to build a strong, consistent, and memorable brand identity, supporting Oppa Bay's vision of becoming the number one catering service in Solo.

Table 4. Implementation of design elements

Design Media	Design Implementation
Business card design	
Company profile cover view	
Instagram feed design	
Instagram story design	

Design Media	Design Implementation
X-banner and signage	
Snack box and rice box packaging	
Paper belt and sticker design on bento and rice bowl packaging	
Employee uniform design	

3.5. Responsive Evaluation

The evaluation results showed that the implementation of LRD on OppaBay was positively assessed by both experts and partners (Table 5). From the design experts' perspective, OppaBay's visual identity was consistent, easily recognizable, and met the principles of visual communication. Local elements were deemed appropriate in strengthening the brand's distinctive character, and the narrative conveyed was deemed capable of representing Solo culture authentically and relevantly. The visual aesthetic was considered attractive and in accordance with design principles, while the communication strategy and digital promotion were deemed effective in building rapport with the audience. Experts emphasized the importance of creating brand guidelines, conducting regular evaluations, and undertaking a deeper exploration of storytelling to maintain design sustainability and serve as a reference for good practices for other MSMEs. From the partner/client perspective, the locally responsive design clarified OppaBay's identity and aligned with the business vision. The storytelling presented was considered to strengthen the brand's appeal and help business owners explain the uniqueness of the product to consumers. The stable visual identity was also perceived as facilitating implementation across various promotional media, both offline and online. The client assessed that brand communications aligned with the business's character, although consistent management was needed to strengthen the friendly and close customer image. In the future, the partner emphasized the importance of design consistency, professionalization of social media management, and measuring the impact of branding on sales and consumer trust. Overall, the evaluations from both parties demonstrated that locally responsive design is not only theoretically and aesthetically relevant but also practical and beneficial for business sustainability. The combined input from experts and partners led to

recommendations for maintaining identity consistency, deepening local culture-based storytelling, and ensuring sustainable branding across all touchpoints.

Table 5. Expert and Partner Feedback

Evaluation Aspects	Expert Feedback (Academic/Design)	Partner Feedback (Business Owner/OppaBay)
Visual Identity Consistency	The visual identity is consistent, easily recognizable, and adheres to the principles of visual communication. Brand guidelines should accompany it to ensure long-term consistency.	The visual identity aligns with the business, clarifies its image, and facilitates its application across various media. It should be maintained and not changed frequently.
Storytelling & Local Cultural Representation	The brand narrative was deemed authentic and "very Solo." It was suggested that further exploration be done through digital content and product storytelling.	Storytelling enhances a brand's appeal and helps explain the product's unique value. It should be reflected in taglines and everyday communications.
Communication & Brand Language	The language style is familiar and relevant, making it appropriate for the target audience. Consistency and selective use of local terms are recommended to avoid overuse.	Communication aligns with the business's character. It's recommended to maintain a friendly and consistent approach to strengthen the brand image.
Aesthetics and Visual Design	Visual design is appealing and pleasing to the eye, per sound design principles. Maintaining readability and functionality, especially on signage and small packaging, is recommended.	The visual identity is clear and stable. Signage and promotional designs must align with the shop's layout.
Digital Media and Promotion	Digital promotion is already effective. It's recommended that a regular content strategy be created and educational/interactive content added to increase engagement.	The identity is ready to be implemented in digital media. More professional social media management is recommended, with a content calendar, high-quality product photos, and consistent hashtags.
Sustainability and Impact	The design meets academic standards and has the potential to become a best practice. Periodic evaluation every six months is recommended to maintain relevance.	The design aligns with the business vision and is ready for implementation. Maintaining branding consistency and measuring its impact on sales and customer loyalty are recommended.

3.6. Reflexion

Research on the OppaBay MSME indicates that a locally responsive branding strategy can effectively address the primary challenges, including limited digital promotion, visual inconsistency, and signage. By emphasizing core values, friendly, fresh, and blessed, and integrating local elements such as the Solo lotus petals batik motif and the nostalgic culinary delights of Solo-style sausage, OppaBay's branding successfully creates a down-to-earth yet adaptive identity. These findings reinforce previous theories regarding the importance of local culture, language, and symbols in building differentiation and emotional connection with consumers.

- First, research by Faadhillah *et al*. [31] confirms that using Indonesian or popular terms relevant to the time can enhance the impression of authenticity and create a culinary experience that aligns with consumer culture. The use of popular terms is evident in OppaBay's strategy of incorporating local terms, such as word of mouth, into its brand narrative. A simple, familiar, and locally contextualized language approach has been proven to increase consumer trust, as supported by research by Deng *et al*. [39], Sundar and Cao [40], and Van Herck *et al.* [41] regarding the role of language style in strengthening trust and engagement on social media.

- Second, the incorporation of local culture into OppaBay's visual identity aligns with the views of Diatmika and Rahayu [32], Noor [33], and Wijandari *et al*. [34], who suggest that cultural elements such as traditional motifs and culinary heritage can create significant differentiation. In this case, Solo batik motifs are used not merely as visual ornaments but

as symbols of authenticity and emotional connection with the Solo community. This opinion reinforces Htet's [35] findings that integrating cultural stories and symbols into packaging and promotions can strengthen a brand's image while increasing consumer loyalty.

- Third, the local responsive branding strategy implemented by OppaBay is also consistent with the arguments of Aprilani [36] and Karnawijaya [37], who emphasize the importance of local wisdom as the basis of MSME brand identity. Collaboration with universities in the design process at OppaBay demonstrates that culture-based mentoring can lead to product innovation and a visual identity that aligns with community values.
- Fourth, the aesthetic aspects of visual design on OppaBay align with the theories proposed by Pratama [42], Liu [43], and Davvetas and Halkias [44], which suggest that the use of regional colors, symbols, and patterns enhances the perception of authenticity and cultural closeness. The green color and floral motifs chosen in OppaBay's identity not only emphasize the freshness of the product but also provide a more substantial sensory and emotional experience, in accordance with the research results of Lee [46], Wang [47], and Shi *et al.* [48] regarding the influence of aesthetics on brand recall and loyalty.

OppaBay branding can be understood as a concrete application of local branding theories: familiar language fosters trust [38], [39], [40], while cultural elements contribute to differentiation [32], [35]. And local aesthetics enhance perceived value [42], [44]. The integration of these three aspects demonstrates that branding is not just about creating a visual image, but also a means of fostering emotional and social connections with consumers. The OppaBay case demonstrates that locally responsive branding design is theoretically relevant and practically applicable in increasing the competitiveness of MSMEs in the competitive culinary market. This strategy can serve as a model for other MSMEs facing similar challenges: limited digital promotion and a lack of consistent visual identity.

4. Conclusion

This research shows that applying local responsive design (LRD) methods to the OppaBay MSME successfully strengthened its brand identity while creating differentiation relevant to the Solo cultural context. Integrating local visual elements, culturally based narratives, and consistent communication made OppaBay's identity recognizable, authentic, and relatable to consumers. Expert evaluation confirmed that the resulting design aligns with the principles of visual communication, aesthetics, and cultural branding, and can potentially become a reference for good practices for other MSMEs. Meanwhile, the partners considered this design practical, easy to apply in various promotional media, and supportive of enhancing the professional image and consumer trust. These findings demonstrate that LRD provides added value and offers both theoretical and practical benefits for the sustainability of small businesses, while bridging academic interests and field needs. The main findings of this research highlight three crucial contributions. First, the study demonstrates that locally responsive branding, built from user narratives, cultural symbols, and contextual aesthetics, can produce a coherent identity system that remains functional despite the resource limitations of MSMEs. Second, the research confirms that the integration of local cultural elements such as batik motifs, everyday language styles, and Solo culinary nostalgia significantly strengthens emotional resonance and brand authenticity, aligning with cultural branding theories [31]–[37], [42]–[48]. Third, the responsive evaluation involving experts and partners demonstrates that this method not only meets the academic principles of visual communication but also provides practical usability for MSMEs' daily operations. These findings collectively affirm the conceptual and operational relevance of the LRD method as a culturally grounded approach capable of addressing MSME branding challenges. The practical implications of these findings for MSMEs are substantial. The results show that a consistent visual identity, supported by culturally relevant narratives, can increase brand recognition, ease digital content creation, and help owners maintain stable promotional materials even with limited resources. Packaging designs tailored to

local consumption habits, signage adapted to environmental constraints, and digital templates optimized for non-expert users demonstrate how LRD can reduce operational burdens while improving brand professionalism. The implementation process further suggests that MSMEs benefit greatly from participatory methods, in which their emotional, cultural, and practical needs are directly embedded into visual decisions, ensuring long-term adaptability and sustainability. For future research, this study opens several vital directions. Researchers may investigate how local, responsive branding affects consumer loyalty and perceived authenticity across various cultural regions. Comparative studies between cities or culinary categories could examine the scalability of this design method beyond Solo. Further studies may also integrate digital analytics to measure the quantitative impact of culturally embedded storytelling on engagement, sales, and customer trust. Additionally, expanding the design method into digital-first branding ecosystems, such as social media automation, template-based content systems, or AI-assisted vernacular visual generation, could enhance its applicability for micro-enterprises in diverse digital environments. This research contributes theoretically by refining the concept of LRD as a culturally grounded and user-centered approach, while also offering practical, replicable strategies that can strengthen MSME competitiveness in both local and global markets.

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Declarations

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