

The Visual Identity of the Sumenep Royal Museum: Continuity and Cultural Legacy in Contemporary Branding Practice

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Abstract

The royal emblem of the Sumenep Palace, which remains unchanged since the era of the Madurese kingdom, embodies a rich cultural fusion of Madura, Europe, and China. This study aims to identify the visual identity of Madurese civilization as represented in the Sumenep royal museum logo. Through a deeper interpretation of its symbols namely the unicorn, dragon, crown, and armor the research uncovers historical layers of meaning rooted in power, diplomacy, and cultural openness. The objective is to understand how this visual identity reflects the values of Madurese civilization and how these values contribute to the branding and business relevance of the Sumenep Palace Museum in the modern era. The study employs a qualitative purposive sampling method, using data triangulation through observation, interviews, and documentation. Findings reveal that the logo, despite never being redesigned, maintains strong historical value and operates effectively within a Blue Ocean Strategy framework distinguishing the museum from others through its authentic heritage. Interpreted semiotically and hermeneutically, the emblem illustrates how the kingdom once embraced modern ideas and external cultures, showing a rare open-mindedness in its time. This identity, preserved visually, continues to shape the museum's cultural and economic relevance today.



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Introduction

Visual identity plays a crucial role in shaping cultural perception and reinforcing institutional authenticity, especially within heritage-based organizations such as royal museums. The logo of the *Sumenep Royal Museum*, which has remained unchanged since the *Madurese* kingdom era, represents a rare case of visual continuity that transcends time, political regimes, and evolving design trends. This emblem, which features a unicorn, a dragon, a crown, and armor, reflects a complex narrative of *Madurese* civilization interwoven with European and Chinese influences. Its preservation over centuries raises important questions about cultural resilience, historical branding, and the relevance of visual semiotics in contemporary museum practice (Cecchinato et al., 2021).

While many modern museums choose to rebrand to align with market trends and audience appeal, the *Sumenep Palace Museum* deliberately retains its original identity. This decision presents a unique case of resisting global branding pressures and favoring authenticity over modernization. It invites deeper exploration into how such a visual symbol operates not merely as a historical artifact but also as a strategic component of cultural branding and institutional positioning. Through the lens of visual communication design, the logo serves more than a decorative function; it acts as a living representation of cultural memory, authority, and philosophical worldview that spans generations (Chen et al., 2024).

Historically, the *Sumenep Palace* functioned not only as a center of political power but also as a cultural bridge between local traditions and foreign influences. The presence of hybrid visual elements in its logo, such as the unicorn from European heraldry, the dragon associated with Chinese mythology, and the crown and armor symbolizing royal sovereignty and protection, demonstrates that *Madurese* identity was never culturally insular. Instead, it embraced syncretism, which remains visually encoded in the emblem that continues to represent the palace today (Johnson & Martinez, 2024). This study aims to understand how the logo has endured in form and meaning while continuing to resonate with present-day audiences. By analyzing its visual components, historical origins, and interpretive layers, this research explores how the logo functions both semiotically and hermeneutically, investigating how its symbols are decoded by various audiences—locals, tourists, and scholars—and how meaning is negotiated between the past and the present (Christodoulou & Stylianou-Lambert, 2023).

Previous literature has emphasized the power of visual identity in establishing credibility and cultural resonance. Wheeler (2017) argues that a consistent identity system is essential for institutional trust and recognition, while Olins (2015) highlights that brand authenticity has become increasingly valued in heritage-based branding. Rentschler and Hede (2015) examined museum branding and noted the tension between preserving historical integrity and appealing to contemporary audiences. Semioticians such as Roland Barthes (1977) and Umberto Eco (1986) offer conceptual tools to decode the signs and myths embedded within logos and symbolic representations. However, the case of a non-altering visual identity that survives centuries of social, political, and cultural change—particularly in Southeast Asian heritage institutions—remains underexplored.

In addition to semiotic and hermeneutic perspectives, this research incorporates insights from Blue Ocean Strategy (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005), a business framework that promotes differentiation and uncontested market space. By preserving its original, historically grounded logo, the *Sumenep Palace Museum* positions itself uniquely within the cultural tourism sector, where other museums often compete through innovation and visual rebranding. This approach enables the museum to distinguish itself not by reinventing its identity but by emphasizing what makes it irreplaceable: its authentic connection to royal history (Thompson & Davies, 2024).

The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of the *Sumenep Palace* logo within the framework of visual communication design, examine how the logo represents the visual identity of *Madurese* civilization along with its cross-cultural elements, and evaluate the impact of this visual identity on the museum's cultural positioning and business sustainability in the contemporary era. This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how visual continuity can serve as an effective cultural strategy while preserving historical authenticity. The benefits of this study include theoretical contributions, by expanding the scholarship on heritage branding and visual semiotics within cultural institutions rooted in royal legacies, as well as practical implications for museum managers and cultural tourism practitioners, by offering

strategic guidelines for leveraging visual identity to differentiate, strengthen reputation, and enhance appeal to both local and international visitors.

Materials and Methods

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive methodology to examine the visual identity of the *Sumenep Royal Museum* logo, which has remained unchanged from the era of the *Madurese* kingdom until today. The decision to use a qualitative approach is grounded in the need to deeply interpret symbols and visual narratives that reflect historical, cultural, and philosophical dimensions. This method allows the researcher to explore the layers of meaning embedded in the logo's elements such as the unicorn, dragon, crown, and armor and relate them to broader cultural and institutional contexts. The visual emblem under investigation is more than a graphic representation; it is a cultural artifact that carries the symbolic memory of an entire civilization. The qualitative approach facilitates not only the identification of visible elements but also the interpretation of their cultural significance. Semiotics, as introduced by Roland Barthes and later expanded by Umberto Eco, offers the conceptual framework for analyzing how visual signs communicate meaning. Hermeneutics is equally essential in this research, as it addresses how those meanings shift and evolve depending on time, context, and viewer interpretation (Lombard & Bertrand, 2018).

In addition to the interpretive frameworks, this study integrates Blue Ocean Strategy as a business lens to evaluate the museum's positioning. The museum's decision not to alter its logo reflects a strategy of differentiation through authenticity. In contrast to institutions that adopt modern logos to attract wider audiences, the *Sumenep Palace Museum* embraces its original identity to maintain its unique cultural value. By doing so, it positions itself in a "blue ocean" where it does not compete on conventional branding terms but leverages its uniqueness as a key strength. Field research was conducted in *Sumenep*, East Java, specifically within the palace grounds and nearby cultural sites from May to June 2025. The site was chosen for its direct connection to the research object, allowing the researcher to observe, document, and analyze the logo in its original context. Observations were conducted at key palace landmarks, including the *Labang Mesem* gate, throne room, and museum interiors. These locations offered insights into how the logo is displayed, perceived, and interpreted by both staff and visitors.

This study employed purposive sampling to select participants who possess deep cultural knowledge or direct involvement with the museum. The main informants included curators, local historians, cultural department officials, and long-time residents of *Sumenep*. These individuals were chosen for their ability to articulate the symbolic meanings of the logo and its relation to *Madurese* identity. Interviews were conducted using semi-structured formats, enabling rich, in-depth dialogue while still guiding the discussion according to key research questions.

Data collection in this study followed a triangulated technique to ensure credibility and validity. The first technique was participant observation, where the researcher immersed in the museum environment, recording visual details of the logo and related cultural objects. The second technique involved in-depth interviews with selected informants, allowing the researcher to capture oral interpretations and cultural memories tied to the logo. The third technique was documentary analysis, in which archival materials, museum catalogs, academic articles, and historical manuscripts were reviewed to trace the evolution of the visual identity. The data from these three sources were carefully cross-checked to identify consistency and variation in interpretation. Observations were recorded using field notes and photography, capturing not only the logo but also the surrounding context such as placement, lighting, public interaction, and signage. Interviews

were transcribed and coded manually, with emerging themes such as "royal symbolism," "cultural openness," "visual hybridity," and "branding preservation." Documentary data were analyzed to understand how the logo was historically used, what meanings were officially assigned, and how it has been interpreted in different publications.

The theoretical model used in this research combines three pillars: semiotics, hermeneutics, and Blue Ocean Strategy. Semiotics helps to decode the signs and symbols present in the logo. Each symbol is seen as a signifier with denotative and connotative meanings. The dragon, for instance, may denote power or strength but also connote a cross-cultural diplomatic presence when seen in the context of Chinese influence. Hermeneutics, on the other hand, offers the lens to interpret how these meanings evolve through time, depending on who sees them and in what setting. Blue Ocean Strategy completes the model by explaining how the logo's uniqueness contributes to the museum's non-competitive yet successful positioning. The design of the research followed an inductive logic, where understanding emerged from the ground up. The researcher did not impose fixed assumptions onto the field but rather allowed data to shape interpretations. This openness allowed for new discoveries, such as how younger generations view the logo differently than elders or how certain elements have taken on new meanings in the digital era. This approach aligns with McDonough and Shaw (2012), who argue that inductive models are ideal for exploring culturally loaded subjects.

Data analysis involved several stages: coding, categorizing, interpretation, and synthesis. The researcher first coded all interview transcripts and observation notes, identifying repeated patterns and keywords. These codes were then grouped into broader categories such as visual heritage, historical adaptation, symbolic politics, and emotional branding. The interpretation stage involved applying theoretical lenses to each category to draw meaning. Finally, the synthesis combined all findings into a narrative that connects visual identity with cultural strategy, institutional legacy, and public perception. One of the core strengths of this research lies in its use of triangulation to enhance validity. By drawing data from three different sources—observation, interview, and documentation—the study ensures that interpretations are not based on a single perspective. This triangulation not only increases credibility but also provides a fuller picture of how the *Sumenep* logo operates as a living symbol. For example, an observation of the dragon ornament might capture its aesthetic placement, while an interview might reveal its association with ancient diplomatic ties, and a document might trace its artistic lineage to Chinese design. To further support trustworthiness, the research included member checking and peer debriefing. After each interview, summaries were validated by the informants to confirm that their views were accurately captured. In addition, initial findings and interpretations were discussed with academic peers and cultural researchers. This process minimized researcher bias and ensured that the symbolic analysis did not rely solely on the researcher's assumptions. Such verification methods are critical in qualitative research and align with methodological best practices as outlined by Czichos and Saito (2006).

Regarding the theoretical interpretation, the study pays close attention to both form and meaning. The form of the logo—including line, shape, color, and symmetry—is analyzed using visual communication principles. The meaning is derived through layered interpretation: what the visual means denotatively (its literal form) and what it connotes culturally or politically. For example, the unicorn in Western heraldry typically symbolizes purity or fantasy, but in the *Sumenep* context, it also signifies openness to foreign influence and the ability of the *Madurese* court to integrate external values. Another key feature of the research is its attention to temporal dynamics. The logo has survived through multiple periods: the era of royal sovereignty,

the Dutch colonial period, post-independence modern Indonesia, and the digital era of tourism. Each era has shaped the interpretation and public reception of the logo differently. By placing the logo within these historical frames, the study shows how a single symbol can evolve in meaning while remaining visually unchanged. This aligns with hermeneutic principles that emphasize the historicity of meaning and the dialogic nature of interpretation.

In relation to Blue Ocean Strategy, the research illustrates how the museum's consistent use of an ancient logo can serve as a strategic advantage. In a cultural economy where many institutions compete by modernizing their visual identity, the *Sumenep Royal Museum* stands out by maintaining its originality. This uniqueness creates value not through novelty but through depth, continuity, and heritage. The logo becomes not only a brand mark but also a cultural differentiator that appeals to both local pride and international curiosity. The study also considers the impact of audience perception in shaping the meaning of the logo. While the original intent of the symbols may be rooted in royal codes, the way visitors and local communities interpret the logo today is often shaped by their personal experiences, education, and exposure to media. Some younger visitors perceive the dragon as a reference to fantasy culture or martial arts, while elders see it as a reminder of diplomatic relations with Chinese envoys in the past. This variety in perception underscores the logo's flexibility in cultural communication.

To trace the visual continuity of the logo, the researcher examined multiple archival documents dating back to the 18th century, including family manuscripts, letters from colonial officials, and museum design blueprints. The results showed a remarkable visual consistency: despite political and social changes, the logo's form has remained intact. This unbroken use suggests a conscious effort by palace administrators to preserve identity through visual symbols. It also highlights the symbolic durability of the logo, which has withstood decades of historical transformation without redesign. In terms of data integrity, all interview data were stored securely, transcribed promptly, and labeled according to thematic categories. The use of digital tools such as NVivo was avoided in favor of manual coding to preserve cultural nuance. Themes such as "guardianship of heritage," "symbolic diplomacy," and "visual resistance to modernity" emerged naturally from the data. These themes were not predefined but rather allowed to surface through the hermeneutic cycle of reading, interpretation, and validation. This inductive process was essential in capturing authentic voices from the field.

In interpreting symbols, the researcher remained aware of the cultural and historical context of *Madura*, particularly its royal tradition of openness, hospitality, and syncretism. For instance, the armor symbol is not interpreted as a sign of aggression but as a form of cultural defense—a visual statement that the kingdom was prepared to preserve its values while engaging peacefully with foreign powers. Such interpretations are rooted in interviews with local historians and the museum's own educational materials, lending them both empirical and cultural credibility. Finally, the methodology of this research aims not only to explain the visual identity of the *Sumenep Palace Museum* logo but also to contribute to broader academic discussions about cultural branding, semiotic continuity, and visual strategy. By grounding the analysis in lived experiences, historical sources, and visual evidence, the study seeks to offer both depth and relevance. The research model may also serve as a reference for other institutions aiming to preserve their identity through visual language without succumbing to the pressures of rebranding or commercial redesign.

Throughout the research, the researcher maintained reflexivity by keeping a journal that documented personal biases, assumptions, and positionality as an outsider to *Madurese* culture. Reflexive journaling allowed constant awareness of how interpretation may be influenced by the researcher's own background. This step was especially important during interviews, where certain

cultural nuances could be misunderstood or overly generalized without careful reflection. By acknowledging this, the study strengthens its transparency and academic integrity. Ethical considerations were prioritized from the outset. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were made aware of the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any stage. The study also respected cultural boundaries—interviews were conducted with proper courtesy, attire, and timing, in line with local customs. When photographing visual artifacts, permission was sought, and cultural sensitivities around sacred objects were carefully observed.

One challenge in the field was managing linguistic variation and symbolic ambiguity. Several symbols in the logo carry multiple meanings, depending on the cultural lens. To address this, interpretations were validated by comparing multiple perspectives and historical sources. The research also embraced symbolic ambiguity as part of the logo's richness, rather than a limitation. In semiotic terms, polysemy—the capacity for a symbol to carry many meanings—is considered a strength of meaningful visual identity. This methodological framework is thus positioned at the intersection of qualitative rigor, cultural sensitivity, and strategic relevance. It allows the researcher to move beyond superficial design critique and instead explore how visual identity functions as a living narrative, shaped by power, history, memory, and intention. The combination of semiotic decoding, hermeneutic understanding, and branding analysis ensures that findings are not only descriptive but also analytical and reflective of deeper institutional meaning.

In conclusion, the research methodology employed in this study offers a comprehensive and culturally grounded approach to visual identity analysis. Through purposive sampling, triangulated data collection, and interpretive analysis grounded in theory, this study seeks to understand not just how the *Sumenep* logo looks, but what it means, how it endures, and why it matters. This approach may benefit other researchers and cultural institutions who wish to explore how heritage symbols can function both as cultural memory and branding strategy in the modern era.

Flow Charts

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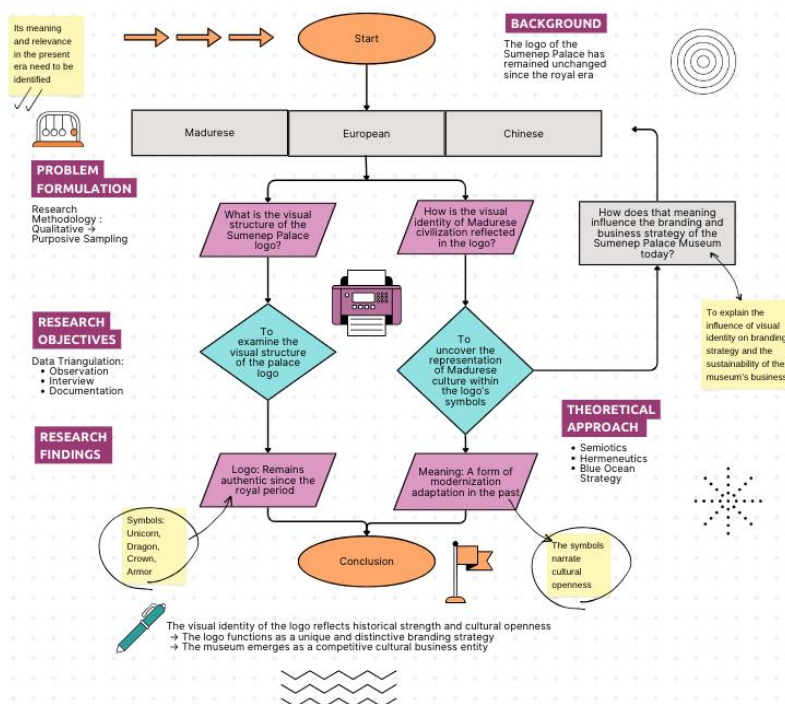


Figure 1. framework of thinking

Results and Discussions

The research revealed that the logo of the Sumenep Palace Museum has maintained visual consistency since the royal era. Observational data show that the logo appears on the main gate (Labang Mesem), museum publications, and official documents without any modern alterations. The logo prominently features four main symbols: a unicorn, a dragon, a crown, and armor. These symbols are visually arranged with symmetry and stylized flourishes in red and gold. Interview data confirmed that each symbol holds deep cultural significance: the unicorn is associated with spiritual purity and openness to foreign ideas; the dragon represents protection and historical relations with Chinese dynasties; the crown signifies royal authority; and the armor symbolizes the kingdom's cultural defense. Documentary analysis supports these findings, showing the same iconographic elements in 18th-century palace manuscripts and official seals.

The visual consistency of the logo over centuries reinforces its role as a cultural anchor. The unchanged design serves not only as a historical symbol but also as a strategic branding asset. Unlike modern museums that frequently rebrand to attract attention, Sumenep's logo stands out by embracing tradition. Semiotically, the symbols communicate a narrative of openness, strength, and continuity. Hermeneutically, they reflect how Madurese civilization adapted modernization without losing its identity. Within a Blue Ocean Strategy framework, this stable visual identity positions the museum uniquely in the cultural tourism market free from competition and focused on authenticity. These findings suggest that visual heritage can serve as both memory and market value, providing long term brand identity without sacrificing historical integrity.

Examine the visual structure of the palace logo

The palace logo of Sumenep is carved prominently into the stone surface of the main gateway known as Labang Mesem. The logo is symmetrically arranged, occupying the central top section of the gate's facade, directly above the wooden double doors. At first glance, the design is

composed of four primary symbols each placed within a shield like contour and surrounded by ornamental flourishes. The unicorn figure is positioned to the left. It is carved in profile, facing right, with a long spiraled horn, arched neck, and slightly raised front leg. The body is slim and muscular, with clearly defined joints and hooves. The tail is wavy and extends downward in a soft curve. The mane is carved in delicate lines flowing backward as if blown by wind.

On the right side, mirroring the unicorn, is the dragon. This figure is also carved in profile, facing left. It features a long serpentine body, clawed limbs, and a scaled texture across its torso. Its mouth is open with visible fangs and a forked tongue. Above its head are two pointed horns, and its tail curls up behind its back. Flames and clouds are carved around its body. Above both animals, in the center, lies the crown, carved with five upward-pointing peaks. Each peak is decorated with a rounded motif resembling pearls. The crown's base has cross-hatched detailing. Below the crown, positioned at the very center, is the armor a chest plate with shoulder ridges, rivet lines, and a crest-like emblem in the middle. The edges are bordered with small bolts, and the surface has shallow engravings to indicate its metal texture.



Figure 2. The Logo of Sumenep Royal Museum

Uncover the representation of Madurese culture within the logos symbols

The visual symbols engraved on the Sumenep Palace gateway unicorn, dragon, crown, and armor do more than decorate the facade they carry embedded layers of cultural meaning. Through Roland Barthes semiotic lens, the unicorn, for instance, acts as a signifier of nobility and fantasy, but in the Madurese context, it signifies openness to foreign ideas and spiritual nobility. Barthes stated, “Myth is a type of speech chosen by history” (Barthes, 1972), and here, the unicorn becomes a mythical symbol redefined by royal identity and intercultural diplomacy.

The dragon, carved with fierce expression and flame motifs, can be read denotatively as a beast of strength, but connotatively, it reflects Sumenep's historical alliance with Chinese traders and envoys. The crown, centrally positioned above the animals, serves as a direct sign of power and rule. Yet when interpreted hermeneutically, Gadamer's notion of the “fusion of horizons” becomes relevant: the viewer's cultural horizon interacts with the symbol's past context to reshape meaning (Gadamer, 2004). Thus, the crown becomes a vessel for the continuity of leadership rooted in moral legitimacy rather than sheer authority. The armor, rigid and centered beneath the crown, is not merely protective gear; it reflects Madurese values of defense not in militaristic terms, but cultural preservation. This aligns with Barthes' idea that myth transforms history into nature. Through both semiotic decoding and hermeneutic depth, these symbols together articulate a uniquely Madurese worldview: proud, open, diplomatic, and deeply rooted in visual tradition.

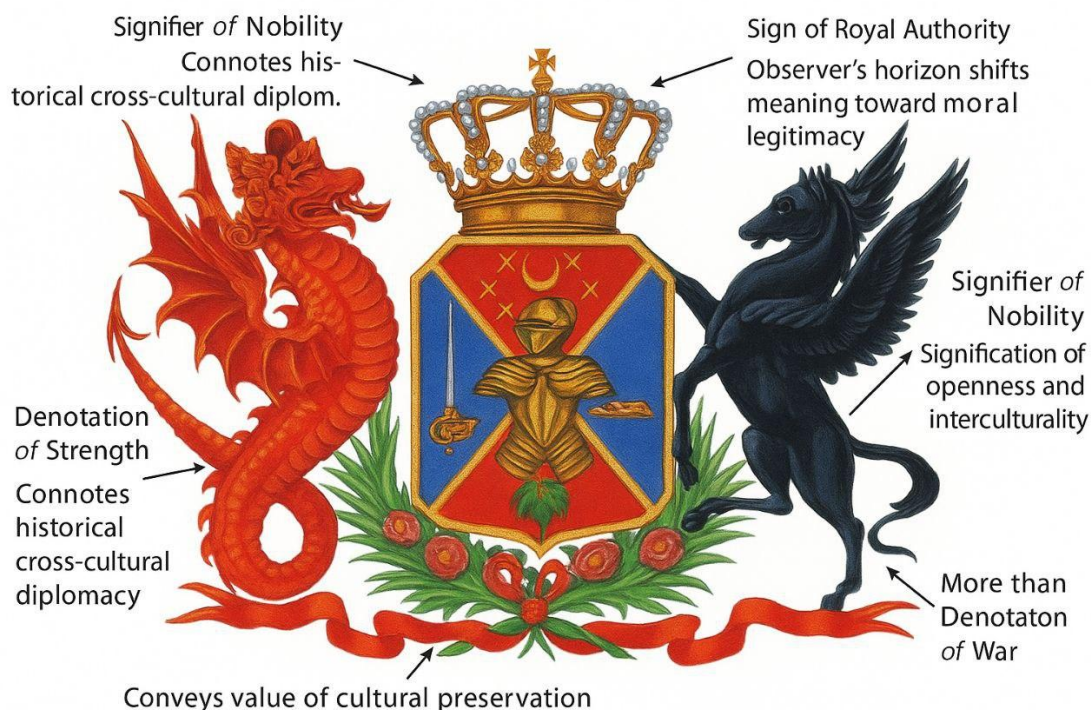


Figure 2. Sign and Signifier Logo of Sumenep Royal Museum

Explain the influence of visual identity on branding strategy and the sustainability of the museums business

The visual identity of the Sumenep Palace Museum especially its logo, which has remained unchanged since the era of the royal court plays a central role in the institutions long-term branding strategy (Wu et al., 2023). Unlike many museums that rebrand regularly to remain visually relevant in the modern tourism industry, the Sumenep Palace Museum retains its original coat of arms, carved in stone, embroidered on uniforms, and printed across brochures and signage. This visual consistency is not a limitation but a strength. It establishes the museum as a cultural authority with deep historical roots, offering visitors not just attraction, but authenticity. By preserving its original identity, the museum positions itself uniquely within the cultural tourism market. It avoids direct competition with more commercialized heritage sites, embracing what Kim and Mauborgne (2005) describe as a "Blue Ocean Strategy", where organizations create "uncontested market space and make the competition irrelevant". Here, tradition becomes innovation. The unchanged logo itself becomes a storytelling device a symbol of resilience, continuity, and trust.

As visual branding builds perception over time, this static logo allows the museum to strengthen its reputation not through novelty but through historical credibility. Visitors associate the emblem not with outdatedness, but with dignity and authenticity. In a fast changing world, this enduring visual mark becomes a stabilizing brand anchor, ensuring the museum's relevance, loyalty, and long-term sustainability in the cultural economy.

The visual identity of the Sumenep Palace Museum preserved without alteration since the era of the royal kingdom is more than just a logo. It is the distilled essence of historical continuity, cultural pride, and strategic branding. This unchanging visual mark, which features a unicorn, a dragon, a crown, and armor, is not a passive relic of the past but a dynamic tool that has helped

shape the museum's identity in modern times. From the moment the palace transitioned into a public cultural institution, the visual symbols remained intact engraved on the Labang Mesem gate, embroidered on staff uniforms, and displayed across official signage and communication materials. Its stability over time conveys an intentional decision to preserve heritage while communicating institutional integrity.

Field data confirms this phenomenon. Interviews with cultural leaders and local residents such as Mohammad Iksan (Head of the Cultural Office of Sumenep) emphasized that ornamental motifs and visual elements in the palace including the logo are understood as symbolic representations of Madurese civilization. The dragon and unicorn carved into the palace wall are not arbitrary; they reflect the intercultural architectural legacy of Lau Piang, a Chinese architect invited by Panembahan Natakusuma to blend Chinese, European, and Javanese aesthetics. The armor and crown are also consistently repeated on palace furniture, textiles, and ceremonial costumes demonstrating how the visual system of the palace transcends mere decoration.

According to Roland Barthes' semiotics, a logo becomes myth when the symbol is no longer merely visual but carries collective memory and cultural coding. Similarly, Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics explain how such meaning evolves through the interaction between the past and the viewer's present horizon. As these logos remain unchanged while the institution transforms from royal residence to colonial office to museum they accumulate new layers of interpretation without losing original intent. What makes the case of Sumenep exceptional is the museums conscious refusal to adapt its visual brand to modern commercial tastes. In an age where institutions rush toward digital identity, minimalism, or trend-driven aesthetics, Sumenep maintains its historic coat of arms as a declaration of authenticity. The decision not to redesign is a branding choice aligned with Blue Ocean Strategy, which advocates for creating uncontested market space and avoiding direct competition (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005). Through its preserved logo, the museum distinguishes itself as a cultural product not replicable by others, because its brand is tied to legacy, land, and lineage.

Moreover, the visual identity contributes directly to the museum's sustainability. Cultural tourism in Sumenep benefits not only from the uniqueness of the architecture or events such as jamāsan pusaka, but also from the storytelling power of visual elements. Visitors recognize the symbols, photograph them, and share them turning the logo into a digital-cultural artifact. The museum's consistent branding across materials, guided tours, souvenirs, and education programs builds trust and recognition over time. From a socio-cultural standpoint, this identity functions as a source of pride for the local community. While several interviewees admitted that the general public often sees palace decoration merely as "beautiful," figures like Lian Antasaya and Pak Marzuki emphasized the deeper role of visual continuity in connecting present generations to royal values. Despite the decline of the monarchy in 1929 and colonial interventions, the visual identity of the palace remains a symbolic stronghold of Madurese refinement, philosophy, and ethical codes.

In summary, the Sumenep Palace Museum demonstrates that preserving an authentic visual identity can serve as an effective cultural and branding strategy. Its logo stands as an enduring bridge between history and modernity, memory and market relevance. This case highlights the potential for heritage institutions to leverage visual continuity not as a constraint but as a competitive strength affirming that true cultural branding is rooted not in novelty, but in resilience and meaning.

Conclusion

The *Sumenep Palace Museum* exemplifies how preserving an authentic visual identity can function as a strategic cultural and branding tool, with its logo—featuring a unicorn, dragon, crown, and armor—acting as a dynamic repository of historical continuity, cultural pride, and institutional integrity. Field data and interviews with cultural leaders confirm that these symbols encode *Madurese* civilization and intercultural architectural heritage, blending Chinese, European, and Javanese aesthetics, while consistently appearing across gates, uniforms, signage, and ceremonial objects. Drawing on semiotic and hermeneutic perspectives (Barthes, 1977; Gadamer, 1986), the logo has evolved into a mythic sign, accumulating interpretive layers without losing its original intent, and positioning the museum uniquely in the cultural tourism sector in line with Blue Ocean Strategy principles (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005). This preserved identity not only differentiates the museum from trend-driven branding practices but also supports sustainability by fostering visitor engagement, social recognition, and digital-cultural dissemination, while reinforcing community pride and cultural continuity. Compared to prior studies on museum branding and visual identity (Rentschler & Hede, 2015; Olins, 2015), which largely focus on adaptive or commercially driven identity changes, this research fills a gap by examining the advantages of visual continuity over centuries in a Southeast Asian royal heritage context. Consequently, this study aims to analyze the function of the *Sumenep Palace* logo in communicating *Madurese* identity, its role in cultural positioning, and its impact on business and tourism sustainability. The findings benefit heritage managers and cultural tourism practitioners by offering guidance on leveraging authentic visual identity for competitive differentiation, visitor engagement, and cultural preservation, and suggest that similar institutions can strategically maintain historic logos while integrating interpretive storytelling, interactive exhibitions, and digital promotion to enhance both cultural resonance and economic sustainability.

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