

Research Article

Escalation of Visual Accentuation of the Connecting Corridor of the Grand Mosque Bakrie Area for Strengthening the Identity of Kisaran City

Shirin Alya Yasmin*, Rinaldi Mirsa, and Muhammad Abdul Rahman

Department of Architecture, Universitas Malikussaleh, Aceh Utara, Indonesia, 24351

*Corresponding Author: shirin.210160029@mh.s.unimal.ac.id | Phone: +6282161603022

ABSTRACT

The Bakrie Mosque is a religious tourism area with strategic potential in shaping the identity of the city. This study discusses the concepts of accentuation and escalation in the development of the mosque area as an effort to strengthen its appeal, social function, and city image. Accentuation is understood as the affirmation of the visual, architectural, and narrative character of the area, while escalation refers to the increase in capacity, facilities, and diversification of tourism activities. The study aims to identify visual characteristics and formulate design guidelines that align the public corridor with the mosque's grandeur. Using a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study strategy, data were collected through structured observation and visual recording of street elements within a 500-meter radius. The results indicate that applying these concepts contributes significantly to creating a sustainable tourism ecosystem and positioning the Bakrie Mosque as a representative city icon. The analysis reveals a visual disparity between the landmark and micro-street elements, necessitating a "Visual Harmonization" strategy. This article provides a conceptual perspective that can be utilized in development strategies for other religious tourism areas.

Keywords: City Identity; Malay Architecture; Grand Mosque Bakrie; Street Elements; Place Making

1. INTRODUCTION

Kisaran City possesses strong roots as a Malay region in Asahan, characterized by its origins as a small settlement of the Malay community developing around the Silau River. This river played a vital role as a major trade and transportation route. The city's early cultural identity is deeply intertwined with folklore such as the Kisaran Naga Legend, which continues to live on and serves as a symbol of heritage within the local community. Although the city underwent significant modernization following the arrival of the Dutch and now functions as an administrative center, its cultural and historical foundations based on the Malay community and traditions remain key elements in the historical narrative and identity of Kisaran City (Tampubolon, 2016).

Amidst this strong Malay identity, the H. Achmad Bakrie Grand Mosque stands as a primary landmark and symbol of religiosity in Asahan. This mosque is the largest and grandest in the region, established on a four-hectare site and inaugurated between 2009 and 2019. The presence of this mosque is highly prominent in the city center, reinforcing the identity of Asahan Regency as a center of religious and cultural activities (Ali & Mohd, 2023). Architecturally, the building displays a unique blend of rich Asahan Malay nuances and profound traditional Islamic elements, characterized by a modern dome and a striking yellow-green color combination, earning it the nickname "The Malay Taj Mahal" (Ghazali & Abdullah, 2020).

The unique design of the H. Achmad Bakrie Grand Mosque is not limited to its façade but is also evident in the minimalist interior details, creating a sense of spaciousness and openness (Anjani, 2025). The building is further accentuated by four gallant high minarets, as well as supporting facilities such as gardens and fountains within the complex. The mosque has transcended its primary function as a place of worship; it has transformed into a mandatory religious tourism object and a center for learning (Zainal, 2022). Its facilities include a miniature Kaaba for Hajj simulations, a library, a tahfidz house, and spaces for Islamic organizations, thereby increasing the mosque's appeal as a comprehensive center for religious and cultural activities and strengthening local community bonds (Hasan, 2024).



Figure 1. Exterior View of H. Achmad Bakrie Grand Mosque as a City Landmark.

Although the H. Achmad Bakrie Grand Mosque functions as a community hub and religious tourism site attracting up to 6,000 congregants, physical accessibility and functional integration for pedestrians remain critical weak points. The need for wide, smooth, and protected sidewalks is absolute, especially considering that the Trans-Sumatra Highway (Jalinsum) inherently prioritizes private vehicles. Pedestrian accessibility, particularly for those with special needs, is often neglected, cut off by vehicle entrances, or obstructed by disorganized street furniture, thereby reducing safety and comfort. Despite its proximity to the City Square (Alun-alun) and City Forest, the effectiveness of this connection relies heavily on the quality of connecting elements such as pedestrian bridges, clear zebra crosses, and adequate lighting.



Figure 2. Satelite Location



Figure 3. Site Location

This research specifically seeks to identify the visual and spatial characteristics of the existing corridor, analyze the opportunities and challenges in integrating typical Asahan Malay architectural elements into public spaces, and produce spatial design guidelines and supporting street elements that can align the public corridor's image with the grandeur of the mosque as a landmark (Keumala, 2018). The unique contribution of this research lies in filling the gap of previous studies which tend to be static (Mutiaru et al., 2024; Ramli, 2020; Alparuki, 2024). Therefore, this study focuses on the conceptual integration of "visual accentuation" and "escalation" to provide design recommendations that not only enhance aesthetics but also effectively communicate local narratives and strengthen the "Sense of Place" of Kisaran (Carmona, 2019; Lynch, 2018).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study strategy focusing on the public corridor of the H. Achmad Bakrie Grand Mosque in Kisaran, Asahan Regency (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018). The primary objective is to analyze physical design elements in the public corridor within a very close proximity (500-meter radius) from the main gate of the H. Achmad Bakrie Grand Mosque (Dartiningsih, 2016). This limited location was chosen to isolate the analysis to the area most directly interacting with the mosque mass, thereby eliminating the complexity of inter-regional connectivity analysis (Wulandari, 2023). This approach allows the researcher to focus exclusively on the characteristics of Street Elements and their potential to reflect local identity, serving as the main variable substituting for broader spatial concepts (Napitupulu, 2024).

Primary data were collected through Simple Structured Observation and Visual Recording (Groat & Wang, 2017). Structured observation was conducted by documenting in detail the physical condition of every street element found, including: the inventory and typology of street furniture (lamp posts, trash bins, and public benches), analysis of patterns and materials of paving or sidewalk finishing, and identification of the use of colors and ornaments (Amri, 2024). Data analysis was performed by describing physical characteristics to determine visual consistency and alignment with the mosque architecture, in accordance with architectural methodology principles (Hadi, 2021).

The final stage of the research is the Descriptive Analysis of Local Identity, involving a direct comparison between the physical characteristics of existing street elements and Asahan Malay architectural design references (geometric shapes, motifs, and typical color palettes). The goal is to formulate a design concept that is highly applicable and focused on detail. The results of this comparison will serve as the foundation for generating specific design recommendations for instance, redesigning lamp posts with Malay ornaments or selecting paving patterns that mimic local fabric motifs to create strong and immediately visible visual consistency around the mosque. Thus, the research successfully links micro-street element design with the strengthening of local identity embodied by the Grand Mosque landmark.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The H. Achmad Bakrie Grand Mosque functions as a religious icon, a tourism site, and a center for social activities (Masitha, 2017). The discussion focuses on strengthening the identity of Kisaran City through street elements, in line with the research objectives. The results are presented through three subsections analyzing the condition of the public corridor, starting from the identification of visual gaps to the formulation of micro-design concepts.

3.1 Visual Contrast Analysis: Disparity Between Landmark Identity and Micro Street Elements

The H. Achmad Bakrie Grand Mosque stands as a unique macro identity template. It is not merely a place of worship but a strong visual focal point that should serve as the ideal standard for comparison with micro-elements in the surrounding corridor (Ali & Mohd, 2023). The mosque's color palette is its most prominent visual aspect. The dominant colors are light beige to pale ivory yellow, with green on specific accents. In Malay tradition and traditional architecture, these colors symbolize sovereignty, glory, and fertility (Omar, 2021). This color combination must serve as a mandatory reference for any recommendations.



Figure 6. Analysis of the Dominant Color Palette of the Mosque (Beige and Yellow).



Figure 5. The Combination of Green Accents Symbolizing Traditional Values.



Figure 4. Architectural Elements Serving as Visual References for Micro Design.

Ornamental patterns are a rich source of Malay-Islamic identity to be adapted to the micro-scale. Motifs containing Malay flora, such as Pucuk Rebung (elongated triangles), must be analyzed for their escalation potential. The Pucuk Rebung motif or stylized flower leaves need to be applied to the surfaces of street furniture or paving to provide a specific touch of cultural identity to street elements. The use of this motif ensures that the micro-design is not only aesthetic but also laden with philosophical and regional meaning.

3.2 Inconsistency of Design and Potential for Accentuation of Malay Motifs

Observations of the landscape show that the existing paving pattern is dominated by a contrasting combination of brick red and beige colors. This pattern must be evaluated as it does not reflect the mosque's dominant color palette, creating a visual disconnection. Hardscape design should serve as a cultural medium through patterns that reflect local heritage (Mahmud,

2023).



Figure 8. Condition of Existing Landscape and Pedestrian Corridor.



Figure 7. Detail of Existing Paving Blocks Showing Color Inconsistency.

Furthermore, observational results indicate that existing street elements, while functional, are visually culturally neutral a finding that severs the identity narrative firmly established by the mosque's architecture (Lamparter, 2018). The absence of ornaments and local patterns on street furniture causes the corridor to feel detached from its cultural environment. Critically, these generic elements reduce the "Sense of Place" of the area, as they fail to provide a unique and meaningful spatial experience for pedestrians (Wicaksono, 2022).



Figure 9. Existing Fence and Street Furniture Lacking Design Unity.

3.3 Micro Design Formulation Concept: Visual Harmonization as a City Identity Strengthening Strategy

Based on the analysis of visual inconsistency, this study formulates the main concept of Visual Harmonization of Micro Elements with Mosque Architecture. This concept aims for every street element to act as a "visual ambassador" for the landmark's identity, creating a cohesive visual flow from the ground surface to the majestic architecture of the mosque. The implementation of this strategy is translated through specific design recommendations:

3.3.1 Street Furniture Recommendations (Vertical Accentuation Design)

Street furniture design must be transformed into cultural artifacts that enhance city identity (Yusof, 2020). It is recommended to adopt the vertical silhouette of the mosque's minarets with a touch of filigree Pucuk Rebung motifs. The recommendation proposes a new lamp post design that minimalist-ically resembles a small minaret. This can be achieved by maintaining a cylindrical shape and adding filigree (thin carving) touches of Malay motifs, such as stylized Pucuk Rebung at the base or capital of the lamp post. Additionally, supporting street furniture (such as trash bins and park benches) should use a beige/ivory yellow color palette as the base, with green or golden yellow accents on ornamental details.

3.3.2 Pavement Recommendations (Integration of Pattern and Color)

The use of paving materials is recommended to switch to interlock blocks that combine golden yellow and green colors, arranged in repeating geometric patterns (Mahmud, 2023). To address the visual contrast of existing paving (brick red and beige), the sidewalk recommendation focuses on integrating the mosque's pattern and color palette. The paving layout should no longer be random or generic but arranged in patterns resembling local batik or songket. For example, geometric patterns resembling Islamic octagons or Malay woven patterns can be used in the main sidewalk zone to strengthen the cultural narrative and create visual rhythm at the surface level.

3.3.3 Impact and Identity Strengthening Strategy

This strategy systematically strengthens the "Sense of Place" and the quality of public space, impacting the well-being of urban space users (Carmona, 2019; Ewing & Handy, 2019). Overall, this Visual Harmonization concept confirms that intervention at the micro-scale is the most efficient, applicable strategy with direct impact to bridge the gap between the majestic landmark architecture and the surrounding public space quality. By making every street element an extension of the mosque's visual identity and Malay culture, this strategy systematically reinforces the identity of Kisaran City, transforming a functional corridor into a public space with character and meaning.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that intervention at the micro-scale of street elements is the most efficient, applicable, and directly impactful strategy for strengthening the identity of Kisaran City. By establishing every street element as an extension of the mosque's visual identity and Malay culture, the Visual Harmonization strategy successfully bridges the gap between the majestic landmark architecture and the quality of the surrounding public space. The study found that while the mosque serves as a strong macro-identity template, the existing micro-elements create a visual disconnection. The proposed design interventions specifically regarding street furniture mimicking minaret silhouettes and paving patterns reflecting Malay motifs transform generic elements into "visual ambassadors" of the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that the Asahan Regency Government adopt these micro-design guidelines as a mandatory regulation for the Trans-Sumatra Highway (Jalinsum) corridor surrounding the Islamic Center. This is essential to ensure long-term visual consistency and to stimulate a unique "Sense of Place" for tourists and the local community. Future researchers are encouraged to explore the social impact of these visual changes on community engagement.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the data collection, analysis, and writing of the final manuscript. Shirin Alya Yasmina led the field research and design formulation. Rinaldi Mirsa and Muhammad Abdul Rahman supervised the methodology and conceptual framework development.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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