



The 2nd International Conference on Multidisciplinary Engineering (2nd ICOMDEN 2024)



The 2nd International Conference on Multidisciplinary Engineering: 00084 (2024)

<https://doi.org/10.29103/icomden.v2.xxxx>

Volume 2, 2024

eISSN: xxxx-xxxx

Research Original Article

Place Identity of Urban Heritage in Medan City (Case Study of Medan Post Office)

Baitha Ariyanti¹ Yenny Novianti^{✉2} Sisca Olivia³

¹Department of the Architecture, Malikussaleh University, Lhokseumawe, Aceh, 24315, Indonesia

baitha.200160038@mhs.unimal.ac.id

²Department of the Architecture, Malikussaleh University, Lhokseumawe, Aceh, 24315, Indonesia

yenny.novianti@unimal.ac.id

³Department of the Architecture, Malikussaleh University, Lhokseumawe, Aceh, 24315, Indonesia

sisca.olivia@unimal.ac.id

✉Corresponding Authors: yenny.novianti@unimal.ac.id | Phone: +6285296073300

Abstract

The concept of place identity examines the relationship between personal identity and physical location, emphasizing the importance of location in the lives of people and the communities that inhabit them. In the last twenty years, place identity has become an important issue in urban planning and design, especially in conservation or preservation. This research aims to identify the place identity of the Medan Post Office as one of the urban heritage in Medan City to maintain the historic building sustainably. Medan Post Office was chosen because it is located in the city center which is the center of accessibility with the area with the highest concentration of pedestrians and tourists so it is referred to as Medan's Zero Point. This research used descriptive qualitative and quantitative methods. This research combines qualitative and quantitative methods through direct observation and interviews as well as conducting questionnaires to obtain information on respondents' characteristics and perceptions of place identity variables. The results showed that the place identity formed in Medan Post Office as an effort to maintain urban heritage is supported by self-efficacy and self-esteem variables as the strongest identities. In contrast, continuity and distinctiveness variables are the weakest identities. The self-efficacy variable becomes the strongest identity due to the accessibility indicator at Medan Post Office, followed by self-esteem with high evaluation value. However, the continuity variable that reflects the value of the place still needs to be improved because its value is the lowest. So it needs further development to increase the continuity or distinctiveness of the place following its potential as urban heritage.

Keywords: Place identity, urban heritage, Medan Pos Office, Medan City

INTRODUCTION

Urban heritage holds architectural values such as space, construction, history, cultural beauty, and technology that contribute to the development of the city. The historical and cultural value of a building increases are the building ages. Unfortunately, many historic buildings are demolished for various reasons, which shows that there is a lack of attention to these values. Balanced and robust architectural works from the past to the future are essential if the connection with history is to be maintained. Leading architects around the world believe that by studying past architecture, they can create quality works.

The concept of place identity has become an important issue in urban planning and development, especially in conservation or preservation. With increasing globalization, there are concerns about losing originality and variety around the world. Place identity is also shaped by land use and function, building style and size, pedestrian open space, circulation and parking, street furniture, and activities in a particular area [1]. Breakwell's (1986) theory developed by Twigger-ross & Uzzell (1996) is one theory that addresses place identity. Identity is seen as a dynamic social product of memory interaction. In this theory, there are four principles discussed, namely continuity, distinctiveness, self-esteem, and self-efficacy.

Some historic buildings in Medan City are revitalized with the conversion of buildings for commercial and other modern uses. This can threaten the authenticity and integrity and can change the historical value of the city in the building [4]. This shows how important it is to maintain the identity of urban places by balancing modern development with the



preservation of urban heritage [5]. To establish sustainable policies that protect historic buildings while meeting the needs of urban development, cooperation involving the roles of local authorities, stakeholders, and communities is required. A wise and sustainable method can maintain a local identity while accepting technological advancement in Medan City. The Medan City Government designated the Kesawan area as a conservation area for historic buildings because there is a path known as historic buildings. After all, there is a path known as the historic corridor of Medan City. Along this road are many urban heritage buildings with historical value that still stand strong, one of which is the Medan Post Office. This building is located in front of Merdeka Square, previously known as Esplanade. This colonial building stands out from other colonial buildings in the area. This building is also one of the city’s heritage that was revitalized and changed its function in 2021 to become Pos Bloc Medan which functions as a center of creativity and a creative hub that allows the development of local talents and supports various creative communities and accommodates micro, small and medium enterprises in Medan City.

This research aims to identify the place identity of Medan Post Office as an urban heritage of Medan City in an effort to maintain the historic building sustainably. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with direct data collection in the field by observation and documentation of the object of observation and collecting the results of observations and distributing questionnaires. The results of the analysis were collected from the data to solve the research problem and produce conclusions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Place Identity

Place identity is defined by Ischak (2018) as the existence of objectivity of space and place that can place a person in an internal relationship with the environment and physical space as a person’s mental image of a place. Place identity also includes an object that is in a place that is different from other objects and can be recognized because of its unique identity. Place identity is based on a sense of belonging and an understanding of everyone’s different ways of life. Place identity theory talks about structures and processes, but it also addresses the relationship between people and the environment psychologically. Place identity talks about the relationship between who we are, where we live, and how our environment affects our lives [7]. So identity is shaped by the attachment of identity to place and the integration of components. Therefore, place identity can be defined as the physical and non-physical attributes that define how a place is different from others because it has its characteristics. Place identity is also determined by the sense and relationship formed between people and the place, apart from its physical attributes. Overall, place identity is shaped by four variables, namely continuity, distinctiveness, self-esteem, and self-efficacy.

Table 1. Place Identity Variable

Variable	Indicator	Instrument
Continuity	Value	Architectural value
		Historical value
		Cultural value
	Memory	Memorable
Distinctiveness	Familiarity	Place interaction
	Landmark	Landmark of city
		Uniqueness
	Particular Character	Characters that are not shared by other places
Different Perception	Envision the place well.	
Self-esteem	Evaluation	A feeling of wanting to spend time in that place
		Pride
	Attachment	Place attachment through interest
	Commitment	Attention to contribute
Self-efficacy	Comfort	Comfortable facilities
		Cleanliness of the place
	Confidence	Confident in recommending the place
	Safety	Not prone to accidents and crime
	Accessibility	Strategic place Reachable by public transportation Adequate pedestrian path Adequate parking lot conditions

Urban Heritage

Urban heritage refers to the cultural and historical value of the city, Karlstrom (2014) argues that urban heritage is the physical remains of urban areas that have architectural and historical value, as well as historical areas, places, churches, and other religious buildings. Hernandez et. al (2019) in Mandaka and Ikaputra (2021) define urban heritage as a unique cultural property, especially related to neighborhoods, city centers, and historic areas. The second definition includes a

collection of heritage elements present in urban areas, such as archaeological remains and historic buildings. The presence of heritage and historic buildings and the stories of their past are key components that shape the city's identity. Historic buildings contribute to the identity and character of a place, distinguishing it from others and providing a sense of belonging and attachment to the people who live around it. This makes historic buildings close to the source of one's memory. Medan City is one of the many modern and attractive cities that have many historic buildings. Placing part of the city in a tourist area shows the desire to become a tourist city. To maintain and strengthen urban heritage, the identity, the culture of a community, and cultural diversity need to be promoted and increased understanding and appreciation of existing cultural heritage, preservation and protection of cultural heritage involves conservation, restoration, documentation, education, and research. In identifying the characteristics of urban heritage, we can refer to urban heritage criteria based on previous research that discusses urban heritage.

- a. Historic buildings are more than 50 years old
- b. Has a tourist attraction
- c. Located in the city center.
- d. Public buildings

The above criteria allow urban heritage preservation to be carried out because the definition refers to heritage in an urban environment that includes elements such as historic buildings and historic areas that require preservation. These criteria became the benchmark in selecting the research case study, Medan Post Office.

MATERIALS & METHODS (11PT, BOOK ANTIQUA)

1. Research Location

This research was conducted in an area that served as the center of Dutch power in the past and was surrounded by colonial constitutional and commercial buildings with Art Deco and Renaissance architectural styles, one of which is the Medan Post Office. Medan Post Office was chosen because it is located in the city center which is the center of accessibility with the area with the highest concentration of pedestrians and tourists so it is referred to as Medan's Zero Point [10]. Moreover, the city center in a city has always been a component of urban heritage tourism, especially historic buildings of urban heritage [5]. In addition, the area has a distinct historical value, including culture, activities, and physical features that reflect their authority during the colonial period which makes the area different from another area. Medan Post Office is located at Balai Kota Street No. 1, Kesawan. Seen in the figure around the site are other urban heritage buildings such as Hotel De Boer (Grand Inna Hotel), Bank Indonesia, Old City Hall, Grand City Hall, Balai Kota's Bank Mandiri, and City Railway Station.

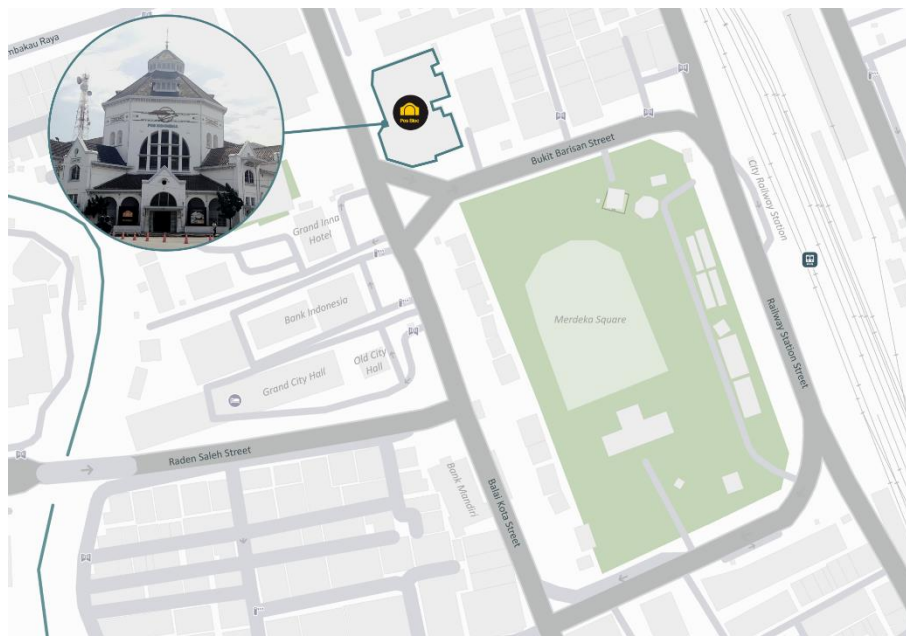


Figure 1. Research Location

2. Methods

This research uses mixed methods which is a combination of descriptive qualitative and quantitative methods. The stages of this research method are carried out by collecting data through observations, interviews, and collecting quantitative data through questionnaires. The questionnaire was conducted to obtain information about the respondent's profile (age, gender, status), purpose of visiting, and perceptions of place identity variables (continuity, distinctiveness, self-esteem, self-efficacy). The observation process was carried out by recording all data seen, felt, and heard descriptively. After all the data was recorded, it resulted in the conclusion of the results even though it was in an uneven state. Furthermore, the authors make focused observations on certain parts of the data related to the application of place identity variables in the research object. Images of buildings and facilities that support place identity should be collected in data collection, and documentation is used to refine the information that has been collected. All collected data will be analyzed by triangulation or discussing and combining the discussion results from each method. The elements of historical buildings, historical stories, nostalgia, and the availability of additional elements must be well maintained to support the identity of place [5].

3. Research Population and Sample

Population is an object or subject that has the qualities and characteristics set by authors to study and then draw conclusions. Population determination is needed to provide an overview of information or data as a whole [11]. The population of this research is all urban heritage buildings including constitutional and commercial buildings in the Dutch colonial era in the Kesawan area. The authors set the Medan Post Office as the research sample based on the most influential urban heritage building from the Dutch era in the Kesawan area. As for the determination of the respondent sample, the authors set 90 visitors to the Medan Post Office (domestic visitors).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Medan Post Office now known as Pos Bloc Medan is one of the iconic historical buildings of Medan City. The building is famous for its ancient Medan architecture and it still functioning today. The building was built in 1909 and opened to the public in 1911. Not many buildings this old are still in use without undergoing significant physical changes. The building has kept pace with the history of the city that was once known as the Paris van Sumatra. Medan Post Office is located on Jalan Balai Kota which was built in a strategic location in the city center and adjoins government offices. Balai Kota Street is still a very busy and strategic street that is easily accessible from anywhere [12].



Figure 2. Medan Post Office (Pos Bloc Medan)

This building is a heritage of Medan City and represents the development as a colonial city that is different from other colonial buildings, such as Bank Indonesia, Grand City Hall, and Grand Inna Hotel. Losing this building will damage the architectural structure of the city center both visually and functionally. Although it has been revitalized and converted by the Medan City government for creative spaces and accommodating micro, small, and medium enterprises, the building remains in good use without any changes to its architecture. Many traces of history are stored in Pos Bloc, such as collections that were damaged due to various factors. This aims to maintain the collection as complete as possible even though it has been converted no longer as a postal service center [13].



Figure 3. Collection at Medan Post Office

1. Respondent Characteristics

Overall, the study found that 73.30% of them were female and 26.70% were male, and 65.60% of them were in the age range of 12 to 25 years old (teenagers). Furthermore, 58% of the respondents are students and 42% are workers. A student has a great curiosity and interest in learning history by visiting historical buildings. Based on city of origin, 81.10% of respondents came from Medan City and 18.90% from outside Medan City. The authors consider it important to know the opinions of residents and tourists to help the government improve tourism in Medan City. The results of the questionnaire did not differ much between the opinions of respondents from local people and tourists. The biggest purpose of respondents visiting the city's heritage objects is for traveling (73.30%), or just looking around (57.80%) the historical buildings which certainly have their characteristics and hold interesting historical stories.

2. Continuity in the place identity of Medan Post Office

This variable explains the desire to continue to develop the concept of place so that its existence helps maintain, and develop the identity of the place. The existence of historical buildings that continue to display their history, will revive memories from the past. The results showed that Medan Post Office dominated in the value instrument by 31.10% of respondents. Conversely, the Medan Post Office has low cultural value indicators.

Table 2. Continuity in the place identity of Medan Post Office

Continuity					
	Value		Memory	Familiarity	Average
a	b	c	d	e	
7.80%	31.10%	2.20%	11.10%	28.90%	16.22%

Instrument description

- a : Historical value
- b : Architectural value
- c : Cultural value
- d : Memorable
- e : Place interaction

The architect of this building designed the building to be flexible for the tropical environment. By combining classical European styles from old Europe and local elements such as Malay building characteristics, the culture of the area. By using a high soaring roof, it forms a large and tall cavity inside. The walls and roof of the Post Office are heavily Dutch in style, adding to the monumental feel of the grand space.

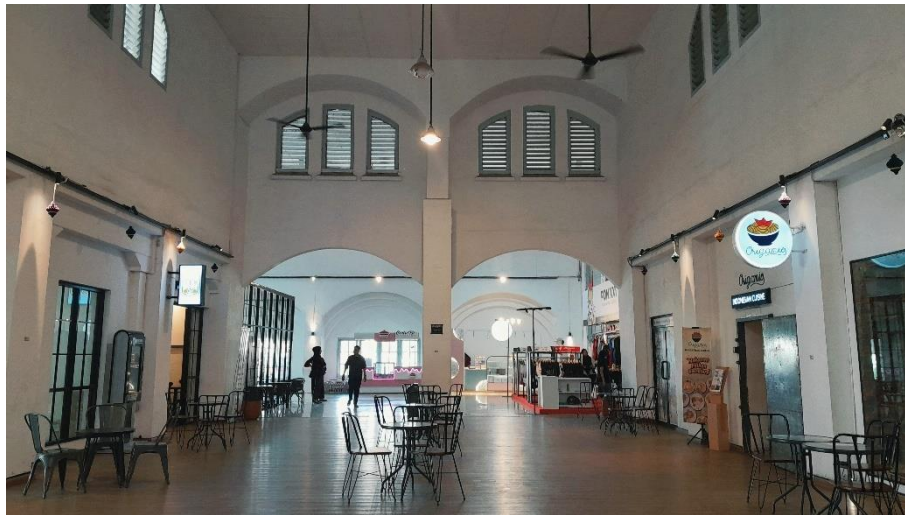


Figure 4. Soaring Roof

3. Distinctiveness in the place identity of Medan Post Office

Distinctiveness can shape a person's relationship with their environment or make their perception of their place so that it cannot be compared or equated with other places. The results show that objects that have a certain character will produce different perceptions compared to other objects. So that the object is easy to remember, recognize, and even describe, where it also functions as a city landmark.

Table 3. Distinctiveness in the place identity of Medan Post Office

Distinctiveness					
Landmark	Uniqueness		Particular Character	Different Perception	Average
a	b	c	d	e	
28.90%	6.60%	2.20%	21.10%	21.10%	15.98%

Instrument description

- a : Landmark of city
- b : Unique cultural diversity
- c : Unique cultural activities
- d : Characters that are not shared by other places
- e : Envision the place well

In the distinctiveness variable, Medan Post Office has the highest percentage in the landmark indicator (28.90%). Medan Post Office is one of the landmarks of Medan City supported by Perda Kota Medan No. 2 Tahun 2012 dan UU No. 10 Tahun 2010, the building is designated as a Cultural Heritage Building. Meanwhile, the weakest indicator is uniqueness in the unique cultural activity instrument. Medan Post Office functions as a place to accommodate creative activities, but from the research results, it has not supported effectively to accommodate cultural activities. The observation results show that Medan Post Office more often holds creative events such as art exhibitions, music, sketching, and others.



Figure 5. Architecture Exhibition in Medan Post Office

4. Self-esteem in the place identity of Medan Post Office

The results of the self-esteem analysis conducted on the object of this study show that buildings different from each other. The indicators of evaluations, pride, attachment, and commitment are part of the self-esteem evaluated in this study. Medan Post Office is valued by both locals and tourists when they see it and proud of its history and characteristics. In fact, the sense of pride to the sense of belonging has a strong bond as the local community's participation in the preservation of the urban heritage.

Table 4. Self-esteem in the place identity of Medan Post Office

Self-esteem					
Evaluation	Pride		Attachment	Commitment	Average
a	b	c	d	e	
26.70%	16.70%	12.20%	17.80%	15.60%	17.80%

Instrument description

- a : A feeling of wanting to spend time in that place
- b : Proud historical buildings
- c : Proud historical story
- d : Place attachment through interest
- e : Attention to contribute

Medan Post Office has a high percentage on the evaluation instrument, which means if a place is evaluated as good or bad, it shows whether the place is worth visiting or not. Evaluation of urban heritage is influenced by many elements and is related to visitor's satisfaction with the place [14]. 26.70% of respondents chose Medan Post Office as the right place to spend time there. This relates to visitor's comfort with the facilities available.

5. Self-efficacy in the place identity of Medan Post Office

The results of the analysis of self-efficacy variables occur when a person believes that they can do what they want in their environment. In addition, they must ensure that their environment is also well organized [3]. Medan Post Office has the highest percentage in the most strategic place instrument (53.50%) on the accessibility indicator. This is supported by the geographical location of the object which is located in the center of Medan City, precisely at the Medan's Zero Point. So it strongly supports the Post Office to be reached by various mobility, such as public transportation and private vehicles. The effectiveness of a city tourist spot, good accessibility is very necessary. A place is considered accessible when everyone has the same opportunity to use the public space. A person's interest in visiting a place will increase along with ease of access [15].

Table 5. Self-efficacy in the place identity of Medan Post Office

Self-efficacy								
Confidence	Comfort		Safety	Accessibility				Average
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	
25.70%	27.80%	15.60%	8.90%	53.50%	53.30%	2.60%	13.30%	28.06%

Instrument description

- a : Confident to recommend the place
- b : Comfortable facilities
- c : Cleanliness of the place
- d : Not prone to accidents and crime
- e : Strategic place
- f : Reachable by public transportation
- g : Adequate pedestrian path
- h : Adequate parking lot conditions

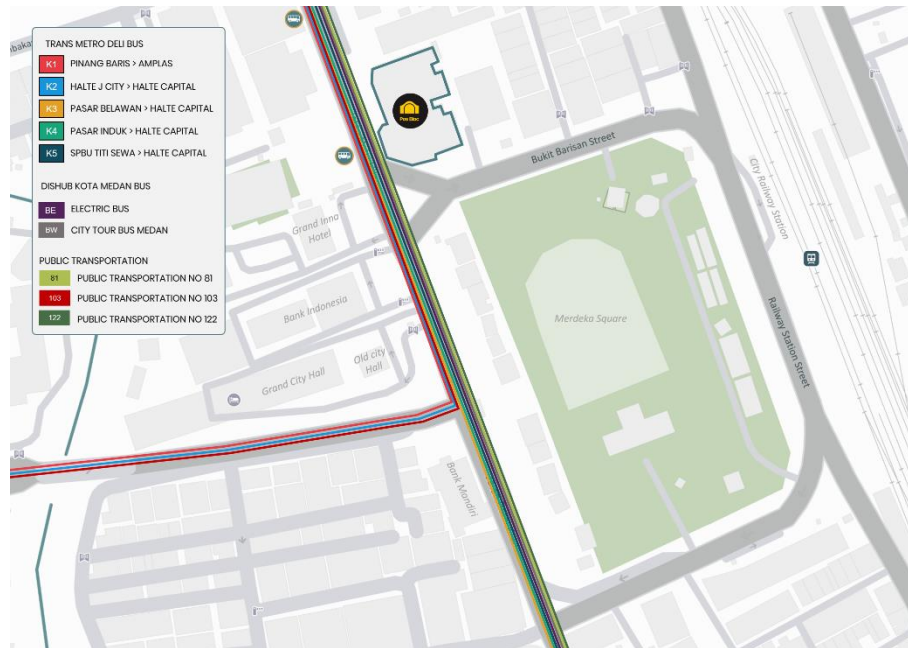


Figure 6. Accessibility at the Medan Post Office

The routes listed in the figure show that Medan Post Office is traversed by five Trans Metro Deli bus corridor routes, then electric buses, tour buses of the Medan City Transportation Agency, and other city transportation. So that respondents also think that Medan Post Office meets accessibility in terms of being easily reached by public transportation. A person's ability to find their way is related to the public transportation system. When public transportation is easily accessible in urban heritage tourism areas, it indicates good accessibility [16].

CONCLUSIONS

The results showed that the place identity formed at Medan Post Office as an effort to maintain urban heritage is supported by self-efficacy variables (28.06%) and self-esteem (17.80%) as the strongest identity, while continuity variable (16.22%) and distinctiveness (15.98%) are the weakest identities. The self-efficacy variable is the strongest identity due to the accessibility indicator (53.30%) at Medan Post Office, followed by self-esteem with a evaluation (26.70%). However, the continuity variable that reflects the value of the place still needs to be improved because its value is the lowest. In conclusion, the strongest place identity in Medan Post Office is good accessibility and self-esteem of evaluation, but further development is needed to increase the continuity or distinctiveness of the place in accordance with its potential as urban heritage. So, to improve competitiveness and attract more tourists, the identity of the place should be promoted by involving visual and social elements. The government and the community need to work well together in promoting the urban heritage of Medan City.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank the support given by the parents and the guidance from the academic advisor in the process of this research. Because of their support and guidance, the authorss was able to complete this research well. Hopefully this research can be useful and for all readers.

REFERENCES (11PT, BOOK ANTIQUA)

- [1] H. Shirvani, *Proses Desain Perkotaan*. New York: Perusahaan Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1985.
- [2] G. M. Breakwell, *Coping with threatened identities*, 1st ed., vol. 5. Methuen, 2015. doi: 10.4324/9781315733913.
- [3] C. Twigger-ross and D. Uzzell, "Place and identity processes," *J. of Environmental Psychol.*, vol. 16, no. January 1996, pp. 205–220, 1996.
- [4] A. Andalucia, N. Ginting, D. N. Aulia, and D. L. Hadinugroho, "Spirit of place as an attraction of heritage area in Medan City, Indonesia," *Environ. Proc. J.*, vol. 8, no. 23, pp. 287–293, 2023, doi: 10.21834/ebpj.v8i23.4577.
- [5] N. Ginting and N. V. Rahman, "Preserve Urban Heritage District based on Place Identity," *Asian J. Environ. Stud.*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 67–77, 2016, doi: 10.21834/aje-bs.v1i1.145.
- [6] M. Ischak, "Peran place identity dalam menciptakan community resilience di wilayah urban fringe.," *J. Arsit. Zo.*, 2018, doi: <https://doi.org/10.17509/jaz.v1i2.12254>.
- [7] J. Ernawati, "Hubungan Aspek Residensial Dengan Place Identity Dalam Skala Urban," *J. Enviromental Eng. Sustain. Technol.*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 21–32, 2014, doi: 10.21776/ub.jeest.2014.001.01.4.

- [8] A. Karlstrom, "Urban heritage," *Smith C. Encycl. Glob.* 74, 2014, doi: https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-0465-2_1137.
- [9] M. Mandaka and I. Ikaputra, "Urban heritage tourism sebuah konsep pelestarian melalui pendekatan pariwisata," *J. Arsit. Kolaborasi*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 67–75, 2021, doi: 10.54325/kolaborasi.v1i2.13.
- [10] Ponirin, T. Rambe, S. N. Saragih, P. B. Parhusip, and J. L. Ginting, "Laporan Akhir Penelitian Produk," 2021.
- [11] Sugiyono, "Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D," *Bandung Alph.*, 2019.
- [12] S. Juwono and R. S. Rukayah, *Bangunan Heritage Kantor Pos Medan*, no. September. 2018.
- [13] D. Ratmono, "Pelestarian Buku Langka di Pusat Preservasi dan Alih Media Bahan Perpustakaan Perpustakaan Nasional RI," *Maktabatuna*, vol. 4, pp. 17–31, 2022.
- [14] N. Ginting, "How self-efficacy enhance heritage tourism in Medan historical corridor, Indonesia," *Procedia - Soc. Behav. Sci.*, vol. 234, pp. 193–200, 2016, doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.10.234.
- [15] N. Ujang and K. Zakariya, "The notion of place, place meaning and identity in urban regeneration," *Procedia - Soc. Behav. Sci.*, vol. 170, pp. 709–717, 2015, doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.01.073.
- [16] N. Ginting, "Being Manageable through Self-efficacy in Heritage Tourism Development," *Asian J. Qual. Life*, vol. 3, no. 11, pp. 29–38, 2018, doi: 10.21834/ajqol.v3i11.119.