

1 **A Comparative Study of Visual Identity Designs of the Central Universities** 2 **in Uttar Pradesh**

3 **Abstract**

4 Visual identity shapes higher educational institutions' branding and communication strategies.
5 This study examines the visual identity designs of four central universities in Uttar Pradesh—
6 Aligarh Muslim University, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Banaras Hindu
7 University, and the University of Allahabad. It explores key visual elements such as logos,
8 emblems, typography, and colour schemes to understand their historical evolution, current
9 applications, and potential innovations. The research highlights how universities integrate
10 traditional and contemporary design elements to maintain relevance in the digital era.
11 Findings indicate that while some universities have successfully rebranded their visual
12 identities, others require updates to meet modern communication needs. The study
13 emphasises the importance of strategic visual identity design in fostering institutional
14 recognition, engagement, and consistency across diverse platforms. The paper recommends
15 that universities adopt adaptable, aesthetically refined visual identity systems to enhance their
16 branding and communication effectiveness.

17 **Keywords: Visual Identity Design, Central Universities Branding, Logo, Emblem,**
18 **Typography, Colour Scheme**

19 **Introduction**

20 Visual identity creates a distinctive and recognisable image for a brand, organisation, or
21 institution. It primarily includes a logo, colour scheme, typography, graphics, and other visual
22 design elements that strengthen and maintain brand consistency. These design elements
23 establish a lasting impression in the minds of consumers, reflecting the brand's uniqueness.
24 Visual identity design is crucial to the branding process, enhancing the brand's presence and
25 appeal.

26 The visual identity design of an educational institution comprises all visual elements that
27 represent the institution's uniqueness. This includes the university's logo, official seal, colour
28 scheme, typeface, and visual standards, which are applied across various media such as
29 websites, brochures, campus signage, and merchandise. "Visual identity design is the
30 strategic use of graphic elements that help create a distinctive and recognisable image of a
31 brand, ensuring consistency across various communication platforms." (Wheeler, 2017) A
32 well-organized visual identity creates a professional image for the institution, establishes
33 trust, and makes it distinctive and memorable for the public, faculty members, and students.
34 Balmer and Liao (2007) highlight that visual identity should be an integral part of an
35 institution's branding strategy, as it creates a long-lasting impression and strengthens
36 stakeholder engagement.

37 This research paper focuses on the branding of higher educational institutions in India and
38 their visual identity design. Since their inception, India's higher education institutions have
39 been nationally recognised, and their visual identities have evolved. In the modern era of
40 communication, the advancement of visual identity and the essential design elements that

41 should be incorporated or modified according to contemporary needs form the core of this
42 study. Universities that successfully integrate their historical legacy into contemporary design
43 frameworks establish a balance between tradition and modernity, making them more
44 appealing to diverse audiences (Chapleo, 2015).

45 India is a progressive country that has significantly contributed to the field of education. The
46 scope of higher educational institutions in India is vast. Keeping this in mind, this research
47 paper conducts a comparative study of the visual identity designs of four central universities
48 in Uttar Pradesh—Aligarh Muslim University (Aligarh), Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar
49 University (Lucknow), Banaras Hindu University (Varanasi), and the University of Allahabad
50 (Prayagraj). The study examines their practical aspects, design development, current status,
51 and potential innovations from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

52 In the visual identity design process of educational institutions, logos, emblems, colour
53 schemes, typography, etc., should be given priority to ensure their seamless application across
54 various communication mediums. Hence, a detailed understanding of these elements is
55 essential.

56 **Logo**

57 A logo is a unique symbol or mark visually representing an institution, product, or service. It
58 effectively conveys the organisation's objectives, values, and vision concisely and
59 impactfully. Logos typically consist of a symbol, a wordmark, or a combination of both,
60 making the brand easily recognisable. The purpose of a logo is to establish a stable and
61 consistent brand image in the minds of consumers and users. A logo design involves carefully
62 selecting colours, shapes, typography, and symbols to ensure the brand's message is
63 communicated clearly and effectively. Duxiu (2018) emphasizes that logos are pivotal in
64 shaping and solidifying corporate identity through visual communication. Similarly, Kim and
65 Lim (2019) highlight that logos serve as visual cues that help firms communicate their unique
66 identities and capture consumers' attention.

67 **Emblem**

68 An emblem is a symbolic design used to represent an organisation, institution, or brand. It
69 often combines images, symbols, and words. Wu and Cheong (2021) emphasize that visual
70 elements like logos and typography are designed as effective semiotic resources to signify a
71 university's brand identity. Similarly, the study by El Qadhi (2023) highlights that logos,
72 through their symbolic indications, affect the sensory and emotional perception of the
73 recipient, contributing to building a positive mental image that reinforces national identity.
74 Emblem designs are generally more complex and detailed, making them a prominent form of
75 visual identity. They are commonly used for government institutions, educational
76 establishments, sports teams, or prestigious organisations. An emblem conveys an
77 institution's uniqueness, prestige, and history. It is a permanent and effective symbol,
78 reinforcing the institution's long-term identity and credibility.

79

80

81 **Color Scheme**

82 The colour scheme is a vital component of visual identity design that helps communicate the
83 brand's message and strengthen its recognition. The selection of colours is based on the
84 brand's values, objectives, and target audience. Gupta and Dingliwal (2023) emphasize that
85 "colours are a pervasive source of knowledge," and their strategic use "can help distinguish
86 products from rivals as well as affect perceptions towards products by altering the moods and
87 feelings of the target consumers." Understanding the psychological impact of colours
88 enhances brand communication. Colours profoundly affect the human mind; for example,
89 blue represents trust and stability, red signifies energy and excitement, and green symbolises
90 freshness and balance. Shukla (2023) notes that "Colour Psychology plays an important role
91 and thus every marketing team should give utmost importance to Brand or Product Colours."
92 Choosing the right colour scheme highlights a brand's emotional identity.

93 Selecting the appropriate colours can differentiate and define a brand's uniqueness. Since
94 colour meanings vary across different cultures and social contexts, it is crucial to ensure that
95 the chosen colours align with the target audience's cultural sensitivities and contextual
96 relevance.

97 **Typography**

98 Typography refers to the art and technique of arranging letters and words to make them clear,
99 readable, visually appealing, and impactful. It is a crucial aspect of graphic design that
100 enhances visual communication effectively. Bringhurst (1992) defines typography as "the
101 craft of endowing human language with a durable visual form." Typography includes
102 essential elements such as font selection, size, letter spacing (kerning and letter spacing), line
103 length, and word spacing. These elements work together to give the text a distinct form and
104 impact, leaving a strong impression on the reader.

105 Typography plays a vital role in defining a brand's personality. For instance, a luxury brand
106 may use classical and refined fonts, while a youthful brand may opt for playful and modern
107 typefaces. It also ensures readability and clarity, allowing the message to be conveyed
108 effectively without communication barriers. Typography can emotionally impact the
109 audience; for example, bold letters represent strength and stability, while thin letters signify
110 delicacy. The choice of typography also considers cultural sensitivities to ensure it aligns with
111 the context and emotions of the target audience.

112 After understanding the various elements of the visual identity design process, we can
113 analyse the visual identity designs of the four central universities in Uttar Pradesh, which are
114 as follows:

115 **Aligarh Muslim University (Aligarh)**

116 Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) is one of India's premier central universities, and it is
117 located in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh. It was established in 1875 as the Muhammadan Anglo-
118 Oriental (MAO) College by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, a social reformer and educationist who
119 envisioned modernising Muslim education in India. In 1920, under the AMU Act, the
120 institution was granted full university status.



121

122 **Fig 1: The Emblem design for the visual identity of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).**

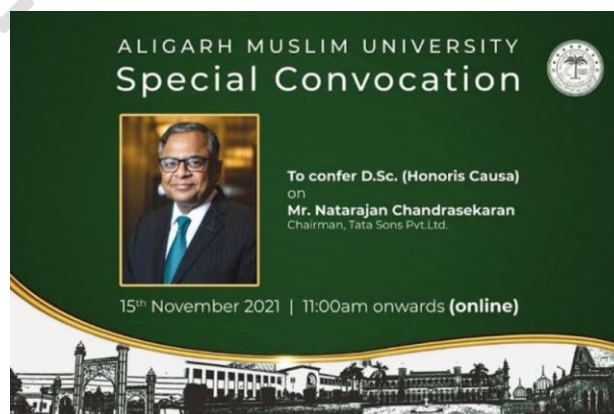
123 The visual identity of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) highlights its existence through the
124 colonial and post-colonial eras. This visual identity is designed in a circular format as an
125 “emblem.” (Fig. 1) At the centre of the emblem is a date palm tree, with an open book on the
126 right and a crescent moon and star on the left, symbolising knowledge, enlightenment, and
127 Islamic heritage. The emblem also features the university's motto inscribed in Arabic:
128 "Allama-al-insana ma lam ya'lam" (Allah taught man what he knew not), emphasising the
129 significance of education.

130 The AMU emblem predominantly uses a sans-serif font representing heritage and
131 scholarship. Additionally, Arabic calligraphy is used, particularly in cultural and formal
132 design elements.

133 The primary colour scheme of AMU is green and white, symbolising knowledge, growth,
134 peace, and the influence of Islamic culture. Maroon (deep red) and gold are used in
135 convocation robes and certificates, representing royal dignity and academic prestige.

136 **Key Features of AMU's Visual Identity**

137 The emblem design reflects a harmonious blend of knowledge, faith, and tradition. Its simple
138 lines and minimal colours align with modern design trends while preserving its heritage-
139 based aesthetics.



140

141 **Fig 2: The visual identities are used in the digital banner design created for the special**
142 **convocation ceremony of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).**

143 AMU's visual identity is traditionally applied across various communication mediums,
144 including websites, social media (Fig. 2), and digital campaigns, and it plays a vital role in
145 establishing strong connections with students and alumni.

146 **Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (Lucknow)**

147 Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (BBAU), established in 1996, is a central
148 university committed to socially inclusive and community-oriented education. It offers
149 undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs focusing on marginalised communities.
150 With modern facilities, the Amethi satellite campus, and initiatives in leadership, sustainable
151 development, and global collaboration, BBAU promotes academic excellence and social
152 responsibility.



153

154 **Fig 3: The Emblem design created for the visual identity of Babasaheb Bhimrao** 155 **Ambedkar University (Lucknow)**

156 Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University and Buddhist philosophy share common principles
157 of equality, knowledge, justice, and rational thinking. Symbolically, they represent social
158 transformation through education and moral living, which are deeply rooted in Dr.
159 Ambedkar's reformist vision and Buddha's teachings.

160 The emblem design of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (Fig. 3) embodies the
161 philosophy of Buddha through its design elements. The Peepal tree at the emblem's centre
162 symbolises Buddha's enlightenment, representing the pursuit of knowledge and self-
163 realisation. Surrounding it, the stupa railing signifies protection and sacred space, reinforcing
164 the seal of truth in learning. On both sides, the Dharma Chakra (Wheel of Dharma) embodies
165 the continuous cycle of life and knowledge, guiding seekers towards righteous action. At the
166 bottom, the umbrella (Chatra) on the right and left represents greatness, wisdom, and spiritual
167 elevation, signifying the enlightened mind's compassionate shelter. Together, these elements
168 form a visual representation of Prajñā (profound wisdom), Seal (universal truth), and Karuṇā

169 (compassionate service), the guiding principles that shape the university's philosophy and
170 mission, which is the tagline of the university that they use in the bottom of the emblem,

171 The typography used in the university's visual identity blends modernity with tradition. Its
172 sans-serif typeface reflects contemporary design aesthetics and the timeless values of
173 knowledge and truth.

174 The university uses blue overall branding, symbolising wisdom, intellect, trust, and stability.
175 This colour choice reflects the institution's commitment to academic excellence, deep
176 knowledge, and progressive thinking, creating a sense of calmness, clarity, and inspiration
177 among students and faculty. Blue is also associated with limitless potential, much like the
178 vast sky and deep ocean, representing the university's vision of expanding intellectual
179 horizons and fostering innovation.

180 **Key Features of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University Visual Identity**

181 The visual identity of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University is thoughtfully designed.
182 Each symbol is deeply connected to Buddhist philosophy, reflecting the core values of
183 wisdom (Prajñā), truth (Seal), and compassion (Karuṇā). The emblem is a self-contained and
184 balanced composition, representing wholeness, unity, and enlightenment.

185 From a technical perspective, the emblem is meticulously crafted in line art, ensuring a clean,
186 precise, and scalable design that maintains clarity across various applications, from digital
187 platforms to (Fig. 4) physical prints. However, there have been some suggestions for
188 redesigning the emblem to align with contemporary design trends, which emphasise
189 minimalism, simplification, and modern aesthetics while retaining the core symbolism and
190 identity of the university. The present emblem follows a traditional approach, incorporating a
191 multiplication of the same symbols across the design to create a balanced and harmonious
192 composition.



193

194 **Fig 4: Use of Emblem in Banner design for celebrating 8th International Day of Yoga at**
195 **BBAU.**

196 **Banaras Hindu University (Varanasi)**

197 Banaras Hindu University (BHU) is a prestigious central university in Varanasi, Uttar
198 Pradesh, India. Founded in 1916 by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, it is one of the largest
199 residential universities in Asia. The university is known for its academic excellence, cultural
200 heritage, and contributions to research and education. BHU offers various undergraduate,
201 postgraduate, and doctoral programs across disciplines such as arts, science, commerce, law,
202 medicine, technology, and management. The campus houses notable institutions like the
203 Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS) and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT-BHU). With
204 a vast and historic campus, BHU promotes interdisciplinary learning, innovation, and Indian
205 knowledge traditions, making it a hub for higher education in India.

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211 **Fig 5: The Logo design for the visual identity of Banaras Hindu University (BHU).**

212 In recent years, Banaras Hindu University has developed its visual identity to align with
213 modern design needs and trends. The old emblem, previously found in official BHU
214 documents, served as the foundation for the new visual identity, which includes a redesigned
215 logo, emblem, tagline, graphic elements, and a refined colour scheme.

216 The new BHU logo (Fig. 5) is meticulously designed as a bilingual logotype to enhance the
217 university's global reach. It incorporates the official BHU emblem, featuring Goddess
218 Saraswati, revered in Hindu mythology as the goddess of knowledge. This design choice
219 reflects the university's deep-rooted connection to Basant Panchami, the auspicious day on
220 which its foundation stone was laid.

221 Using a modern geometric bilingual typeface, combining Devanagari and Roman scripts,
222 enhances the logo's versatility and effectiveness across various applications. This thoughtful
223 typographic choice ensures readability and aesthetic appeal and reinforces the university's
224 commitment to inclusivity and global engagement. The seamless integration of both scripts
225 reflects BHU's rich cultural heritage while embracing contemporary design trends, making
226 the logo more adaptable for diverse communication platforms, including digital and print
227 media.

228 Blue and saffron serve as the primary brand colours of BHU, each carrying deep symbolic
229 significance.

230 BHU Saffron draws inspiration from the Indian National Flag and the sacred color 'Kesaria'
231 or saffron, with slight modifications to create a distinctive identity. A blend of red and yellow,
232 saffron embodies the dynamic energy of red and the uplifting warmth of yellow. It is
233 associated with joy, enthusiasm, creativity, success, encouragement, transformation,

234 determination, and spiritual significance. Additionally, it represents balance, freedom,
235 expression, fascination, and a deep sense of holiness, making it a colour of joy and creativity.

236 BHU Blue takes inspiration from the elements of Earth, Sky, and Sea, symbolising vastness,
237 stability, and depth. It is associated with open spaces, freedom, intuition, imagination,
238 expansiveness, inspiration, and sensitivity. Blue also conveys trust, loyalty, sincerity, wisdom,
239 confidence, faith, and intelligence, while its calming influence fosters mental clarity and
240 emotional stability. Its key strength lies in its positive impact on the body and mind,
241 reinforcing a sense of wisdom and serenity.

242 Key Features of Banaras Hindu University Visual Identity

243 The visual identity of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has been thoughtfully developed to
244 align with modern design needs while preserving its rich heritage. This updated identity
245 includes a redesigned logo, emblem, tagline, graphic elements, and standardised colour
246 scheme, enhancing the university's distinct presence.



247

248 **Fig 6: The logo is applied to the banner design for the Faculty of Performing Arts**
249 **cultural event of BHU.**

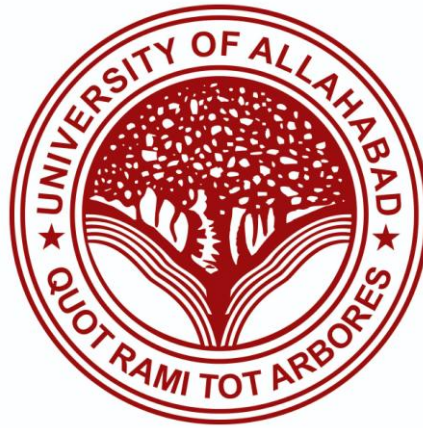
250 The logo is meticulously crafted as a bilingual logotype, integrating Devanagari and Roman
251 scripts to ensure global accessibility and recognition. A key feature of the logo is
252 incorporating the official BHU emblem, maintaining the university's traditional essence.

253 From a technical perspective, the university's visual identity is up-to-date and adheres to
254 contemporary design trends while preserving its historical significance. The logo is designed
255 for seamless adaptability across various media, ensuring clarity and effectiveness in digital,
256 print (Fig. 6), and promotional applications. Its illustrative craftsmanship enhances its
257 versatility, making it suitable for diverse platforms while maintaining consistency and
258 aesthetic appeal.

259

260 **University of Allahabad (Prayagraj)**

261 The University of Allahabad, also known as Allahabad University, is a central university in
262 Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India. Established in 1887, it is one of the oldest universities in
263 India and was once known as the "Oxford of the East" due to its academic excellence. It
264 became a central university in 2005. The university offers undergraduate, postgraduate, and
265 doctoral programs across various disciplines, including arts, science, commerce, law, and
266 management. It has a rich academic heritage has produced many notable alumni in politics,
267 literature, and education.



268

269 **Fig 7: The Emblem design for the visual identity University of Allahabad (AU).**

270 The newly developed emblem of the University of Allahabad (Fig 7) significantly represents
271 its academic and cultural heritage. It features a Banyan tree in the upper part of the design,
272 inspired by India's national tree, symbolising the vast expanse of knowledge and wisdom
273 through its wide-spreading branches. Below the tree, an open book signifies the pursuit of
274 learning and intellectual growth. Additionally, considering Prayagraj's global recognition for
275 the Triveni Sangam, the confluence of three sacred rivers, the emblem embodies the fusion of
276 knowledge and Indian historical roots.

277 The emblem also includes the university's motto in Sanskrit, "Quot Rami Tot Arbores,"
278 which translates to "As many branches, so many trees," emphasising the expansion of
279 knowledge. In a recent redesign of its visual identity, the emblem and its colours were
280 updated to align with contemporary design principles while preserving traditional symbols.

281 The colour Indian Red has been chosen as the new brand colour of the university; it is deeply
282 associated with the earth, resilience, and a profound depth of knowledge. This earthy hue not
283 only represents the rich intellectual traditions of the university but also reflects the cultural
284 and historical legacy of Prayagraj, a city known for its deep-rooted connection to Indian
285 heritage. The use of Indian Red embodies a sense of stability, wisdom, and timeless learning,
286 reinforcing the university's role as a centre of academic excellence and cultural
287 enlightenment. It also establishes a visual connection to Indian aesthetics and traditions,
288 creating a strong and distinctive identity that resonates with historical values and
289 contemporary aspirations.

290 The minimal typography and modern yet traditional sans-serif typeface used in the upper part
291 of the emblem reflects a harmonious balance between contemporary design sensibilities and
292 the university's rich heritage. The clean, elegant letterforms enhance legibility and
293 sophistication, ensuring a timeless visual appeal that aligns with global design standards
294 while staying rooted in Indian traditions.

295 Additionally, the tagline is thoughtfully incorporated at the bottom of the emblem, reinforcing
296 the institution's values, vision, and academic mission. This strategic placement creates a
297 sense of completeness and structure, ensuring that the university's identity is effectively
298 communicated. Combining modern typography and traditional elements results in an
299 aesthetic and versatile emblem that embodies the institution's commitment to knowledge,
300 culture, and progress.

301 **Key Features of the University of Allahabad Visual Identity**

302 The University of Allahabad's visual identity has been meticulously crafted, ensuring its
303 design elements align with contemporary design trends while maintaining a strong
304 connection to its rich heritage. The emblem has been developed with a modern illustrative
305 line-based approach, creating a refined and elegant aesthetic that enhances clarity,
306 adaptability, and versatility across various applications.



307

308 **Fig 8: Application of the emblem at the top of the inaugural stone panel.**

309 One of the standout features of the redesigned emblem is its single-colour application, which
310 ensures consistency and compatibility across different media (Fig. 8), from digital platforms
311 to print materials, signage, and merchandise. A monochromatic Indian Red palette reinforces
312 visual harmony and brand recognition, making the emblem adaptable and preserving its
313 distinct identity.

314 The minimal yet intricately detailed linework embodies a fusion of tradition and modernity,
315 reflecting the university's progressive vision while honouring its historical roots. The
316 precision of the design elements ensures that the emblem remains legible and impactful even
317 at more minor scales, making it highly effective for both formal and promotional uses.

318 The University of Allahabad's new visual identity seamlessly balances heritage and
319 innovation by incorporating contemporary design principles. It presents a timeless, versatile,
320 significant emblem representing academic excellence, intellectual depth, and cultural
321 significance.

322 **Conclusion**

323 This study on the visual identities of central universities in Uttar Pradesh provides a
324 comprehensive perspective on amalgamating modern and traditional design elements. In the
325 digital age, visual identity plays a crucial role in reaching a vast audience, making it essential
326 for institutions to align their branding with contemporary communication mediums.

327 This paper has examined the fundamental elements of visual identity design across central
328 universities in Uttar Pradesh, including logos, emblems, typography, and colour palettes. It
329 explored best practices, current trends, and the implementation of visual identities in these
330 institutions.

331 The findings reveal that most central universities have historical identities, which they
332 periodically redesign to suit modern requirements. For instance, Aligarh Muslim University
333 has evolved its emblem, tagline, and colour palette, blending contemporary and traditional
334 elements. Banaras Hindu University is a strong example of effective rebranding through
335 visual identity design, having developed a distinctive brand colour, custom typefaces, and a
336 universally adaptable logo. Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University also possesses a visual
337 identity; however, it requires redesigning to align with contemporary design trends and
338 usability. The University of Allahabad has undergone visual identity transformations over
339 time, creating an emblem in an illustrative style and adopting a single-colour scheme (Indian
340 red) while incorporating a relief-like seal across various mediums.

341 This study reveals that most universities modify their visual identities to meet modern
342 communication needs and effectively engage with their audiences. Higher educational
343 institutions must adopt well-structured communication strategies when designing their visual
344 identities. Universities should prioritise design aesthetics and technical parameters to ensure
345 their visual branding remains relevant, consistent, and adaptable to contemporary
346 communication platforms.

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