

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

According to (Jaya, 2023, p. 6), music is something that can be heard but has no physically visible form. When music is represented through language or written description, it does not stand alone as a physical object but becomes part of a medium or other object that supports its representation. According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language), music is the science or art of arranging notes or sounds in sequence, combining them, and connecting them temporally to form a composition that possesses unity and continuity, as well as containing rhythm, melody, and harmony, using instruments that produce sound.

As human civilization has evolved, music has undergone significant changes. While music was once used as part of rituals and the spread of religion, it has now become an inseparable part of human life. Music is inseparable from culture, as it has evolved into an art form that provides pleasure and entertainment for its listeners (Siswantoro, 2021)

Music is one of the creative economy subsectors that continues to grow with significant potential and rapid expansion. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf)/Baparekraf of the Republic of Indonesia stated on Tuesday, April 4, 2023, on its official news portal that the music creative economy industry contributed Rp 5.98 trillion to the national GDP in 2021, with the number of workers in the music subsector reaching 62,479 people. Therefore, the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy encourages young Indonesian talent to continue innovating, adapting, and collaborating to capitalize on opportunities within the domestic music industry. Previously, on Thursday, March 9, 2023, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy/Baparekraf also stated that current advancements in technology and the internet have greatly facilitated local musicians in creating musical works. Musicians can now produce high-quality songs anywhere and share them with a wide audience simultaneously. Technology offers convenience in various aspects, including creating works, producing music independently, and distributing it widely without having to rely on others. This has also supported the emergence of many indie bands in Indonesia, as more opportunities and support for local musicians' creativity have opened up..

Indie music derives from the word ‘independent,’ meaning self-reliant, free, and unbound—not tied to a music label like most bands”(Putra, 2020). “Independence” in contemporary music emphasizes pure art and authenticity, rejecting mass production seen as rife with “power and deception.” Indie musicians adhere to the principle of “art for art’s sake” and pursue aesthetic value without seeking profit alone (Woodward & Bartmanski, 2020). As cited from Sakrie’s 2015 book, which states that, in fact, the indie music movement in Indonesia itself is not a new phenomenon; for example, the experimental music group Guruh Gipsy released an album independently in 1977, and the promotion of their work was carried out independently, such as door to door sales, placing copies in pharmacies, at music schools, and even setting up a large umbrella to sell their cassettes. It can be concluded that indie music is not merely about being created outside major labels, but also about preserving authenticity, integrity, and artistic aesthetic value without prioritizing financial gain. Furthermore, indie bands are often required to be self-reliant in every aspect from production to promotion to maintain full control over their work(Meier, 2017, p. 53).

“The music industry has faced major challenges due to the digital era, which has been the primary factor in the decline of major labels.” This is further emphasized by the statement that “The Indonesian music industry in the 2000s experienced a slump due to a drastic decline in physical music sales” (Sakrie, 2015, p. 163). In this digital era, it is easier to listen to music through online streaming apps that offer free or affordable paid services, such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Spotify, Joox, Apple Music, and Deezer (Fatima et al., 2023, p. 12). It can be concluded that the phenomena observed in previous eras make marketing strategies crucial for navigating the coming era. The digital era brings significant changes to marketing strategies, presenting new challenges that require innovation and creativity as crucial elements to compete in the face of intense competition. Possessing a unique competitive advantage and being able to continuously differentiate oneself from competitors are key factors in attracting consumer attention and maintaining market share. Additionally, rapid technological advancements and digital trends also pose significant challenges (Ananda et al., 2023).

In marketing communication, there is also a concept known as Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), which is a marketing communication planning approach that adds value by evaluating the strategic roles of various communication disciplines, such as advertising, direct response, and sales promotion. IMC combines these disciplines to create clear, consistent, and highly impactful communication (Kerr & Kelly, 2017). Simply put, IMC

is a structured method in marketing communication that integrates various message delivery channels. Today, IMC has become a primary tool for marketing professionals, particularly in the music industry, due to its impact in helping musicians introduce their work. IMC encompasses the planning, creation, integration, and implementation of various forms of marketing communication, such as advertising, sales promotions, and events (C. N. Wijayanti, 2020).

In addition to utilizing digital platforms to promote a band's work, the implementation of various forms of marketing communication can be an option to help musicians promote their work. According to (Firdaus et al., 2024) to build a strong and sustainable brand, an appropriate and consistent approach not only maintains the loyalty of existing fans but also attracts new fans. This is also supported by the theory of relationship marketing, according to (Saputra & Ariningsih, 2014), which is a marketing strategy focused on efforts to foster closer relationships with customers, managing a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship between the company and its customers. Based on this theory, it can be concluded that the better the relationship marketing is built and maintained, the higher the level of loyalty demonstrated by customers (Sefesiyani et al., 2015). In this context, marketing strategies play a crucial role in preparing for the future, particularly in addressing potential fluctuations in popularity. One of the issues that may arise is the underutilization of promotional media. Selecting the right and engaging promotional media can easily reach the desired target market, thereby fostering brand awareness in the minds of the target audience (M. H. Pratama et al., 2022).

Promotional media are tools used to attract attention and promote products or services, such as brochures, banners, advertisements, billboards, websites, social media, and merchandise, including everyday items like shirts, jackets, tote bags, and socks (A. D. Pratama & Nisa, 2023). Merchandise itself plays a crucial role in building relationships and loyalty between a brand and its customers (Prihandarini & Romadhona, 2024). It serves as a highly effective tool for expressing art, design, and brand identity, embracing innovative visual creativity, and functioning as a communication tool (Delivia et al., 2023, p. 160). Therefore, it can be concluded that physical music release promotional media that can be applied to merchandise play a vital role in helping musicians—and especially indie bands—introduce their work, build a strong brand, and enhance fan loyalty. A proper and consistent marketing approach, supported by relationship marketing, can retain existing fans while attracting new ones.

In understanding today's music industry, it is important to consider the role played by music merchandise. This helps artists or bands remain relevant and generate a stable income amid rapid changes in the music industry. Thus, music merchandise has become an integral element in understanding the dynamics of today's music industry (Pinandita, 2024). Arsita Pinandita, in the titled "Art, Design, and Music" also emphasized that merchandise is now ubiquitous, yet many people view it merely as a product, whereas today's merchandise plays a crucial role as the identity for a band—one that encompasses the band's own ecosystem, including illustrators or designers, as well as significant economic value. This economic value can also become a primary source of income for a band if earnings from performing at events cannot sustain the band's income, since not all bands receive sufficiently high fees when performing at events. This is further supported by a podcast on the YouTube channel titled "No Gigs, But Merch Sells—So We're Safe!?" This podcast discusses the development and business opportunities in the music merchandise industry in Indonesia from 2017 to the present. Ekriq (Co-Founder of Pure Evil Merch) and Arie Haryanto (Head of Musica Merch) share how they began producing merchandise to support music releases, as well as how the pandemic turned merchandise into the primary source of income for many bands. They also delve into challenges such as piracy and maintaining product quality, as well as the importance of collaborating with designers and vendors to create attractive and high-quality merchandise. Additionally, they highlight the importance of supporting the local music industry by purchasing authentic products, such as t-shirts, vinyl, and other unique items. The podcast concludes with a call to support Indonesian musicians and the music industry through the purchase of local merchandise.

The dynamics of the music industry in Indonesia, according to a YouTube video by Pophariini titled "Local Bands with the Best-Selling Merchandise," explain the current situation: listening to music on physical players is becoming increasingly rare as many people switch to streaming services. However, fans remain enthusiastic about collecting merchandise from their favorite bands or musicians. Popular merchandise typically includes cassettes, CDs, vinyl records, as well as items like jackets, hoodies, shoes, bags, jerseys, and more. For musicians, merchandise sales have become an important source of income, especially when revenue from concerts declines, such as during the pandemic. Several merchandise stores that typically collaborate with bands to produce and market their merchandise—such as Rocknation, Demajors, Omuniium, and Xtreamerch—have revealed lists of best-selling items, particularly

T-shirts from bands like The Upstairs, Seringai, Navicula, The Sigit, and White Shoes and The Couples Company. This indicates that many indie musicians or bands have come to understand and utilize music merchandise as a promotional tool, and it has become increasingly popular recently—a clear example being the Music Merch Fest (MMF) , created in response to the dynamics between merchandise and the music industry. The event, which was first held in Sleman, Yogyakarta, in May 2023, not only showcased physical releases from legendary bands but also served as a platform for collaboration among all current players in the music industry to keep that ecosystem running.

Based on observations of several official merchandise Instagram pages for well-known indie bands in Indonesia, such as Burgerkill, Teenage Death Star, Kelompok Penerbang Roket, The Upstairs, and Morfem. Physical music releases, which are mostly applied in the form of these bands' merchandise, tend to focus on the band's visuals and identity. The bands' merchandise also typically features illustrations representing a tour and their album covers. Arsita, in an article on cherypop.id, also noted that it is now rare to find band T-shirts featuring only simple visuals like album covers or photos of band members, as such designs are no longer considered appealing to the market. Instead, band T-shirts now prioritize visuals that represent a specific story or value associated with the band. The article also explains that merchandise is no longer merely viewed as an additional product but has become a strategic promotional tool with designs that emphasize storytelling, values, or the band's identity. This trend opens opportunities for bands to collaborate with illustrators or designers, producing products that are innovative, creative, and relevant to market needs, while also creating products that have an impact on relationships with fans and listeners. Therefore, it can be concluded that amidst the dynamic and ever-evolving music industry and the growing popularity of band merchandise, this trend drives the creation of innovative, creative, and distinctive band merchandise to maintain its unique appeal. According to (Ningrum et al., 2020), to create a competitive advantage, companies need to introduce innovations by developing unique new products, thereby becoming the only company to offer such products or a pioneer in the market. Additionally, companies can also improve existing products.

According to Mellisa Florentina in (I. Wijayanti & Utami, 2023), every songwriter has a message they want to convey to their listeners. This message can be understood through shared experiences, thereby creating an emotional connection. This is also consistent with the marketing strategies of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and relationship

marketing. When listeners feel connected, the song's message can have a greater emotional impact. Listeners will realize that the lyrics reflect their own feelings, desires, or thoughts, thereby resonating with them. Arsita Pinandita also mentioned during a personal interview that while marketing strategies and visuals have different focuses, these marketing strategies are essential and can serve as the vanguard in building connections with fans—especially when supported by products that can convey the message a band wishes to communicate to its listeners and fans.

In the context of the music industry (Pinandita, 2024:155) the book also notes that the use of physical releases or merchandise from bands/musicians has become an increasingly common phenomenon in the Indonesian fashion world today. The book also notes that some people argue that using physical releases or merchandise from bands or musicians without possessing knowledge about the band or musician featured on the medium in question constitutes a lack of respect toward the band or musician and their fans; this is also often viewed as superficial commercialization. However, during an interview with Arsita to gather data for this design project, Arsita mentioned that this could also serve as an entry point for the general public to discover the music of a particular musician because they are drawn to the design, illustrations, or media used in their merchandise. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is important for the owners of a band's physical releases or merchandise to ensure their offerings align with the band's marketing strategy. The various phenomena underlying this background, as previously mentioned, are also supported by the results of the questionnaire below.

The questionnaire titled “Knowledge of Owners of Physical Band Releases/Band Merchandise Regarding the Meaning of the Visuals Contained Within” was designed to understand the extent to which owners of band merchandise understand the visual messages conveyed through physical music releases or merchandise. Band merchandise, such as T-shirts, posters, or other products, serves not only as a promotional tool but also as a medium for conveying the identity, philosophy, and messages of the band or musician. In this context, this questionnaire aims to determine the respondents' level of understanding of these visual elements.

This questionnaire was completed by 105 respondents with diverse backgrounds in terms of age, gender, and employment status. A total of 90.5% of the respondents (95 people) were aged 18–25, while 7.6% were aged 26–35, and only 1.9% were under 18. In terms of gender, the majority of respondents were male (69.5% or 73 people), while 30.5% were female.

In terms of employment status, 59% of respondents (62 people) were students, while the remaining 41% (43 people) were employed. When asked about ownership of physical music releases or band merchandise, 82.9% of respondents (87 people) reported owning merchandise, and 17.1% (18 people) did not.

Respondents were also asked to indicate how many physical releases or merchandise items they owned. A total of 61.9% (65 people) owned 1–3 items, 13.33% (14 people) owned 4–6 items, and 17.14% (18 people) owned more than 6 items, while 7.62% (8 people) did not own any at all. The types of merchandise owned by respondents varied, with the majority (82 people) owning shirts or T-shirts, 33 people owning cassettes, vinyl, or album box sets, and 39 people owning other physical releases or merchandise.

Respondents were asked about their main motivation for purchasing band merchandise. A total of 58.1% of them (61 people) were motivated to support their favorite band. Meanwhile, 75.2% (79 people) cited the attractive design or visuals of the T-shirts as their main reason for purchasing merchandise. Other motivations mentioned included being part of a music community (9 people), for personal collection (46 people), to support art (1 person), and to support a friend (1 person). The majority of respondents paid attention to visual elements such as designs, logos, and images found on the band merchandise they owned. A total of 92.4% of respondents (97 people) stated they agreed, with 72.4% strongly agreeing and 20% agreeing. Conversely, only 7.7% (8 people) disagreed or strongly disagreed regarding the importance of visual elements. Respondents were also asked whether the visuals on band merchandise only depict the band's identity or the album. The results showed that 86.7% (91 people) agreed, with 36.2% strongly agreeing and 50.5% agreeing, while 13.3% (14 people) disagreed.

A total of 98% of respondents (103 people) agreed that the visual design on band T-shirts can convey a specific message to the owner or fans. Conversely, only 7 respondents (6.7%) stated they disagreed or strongly disagreed. Additionally, 91.4% (96 people) agreed that they want to understand the message or meaning the band intends to convey through the visuals on merchandise, with only 8.6% feeling otherwise. Respondents also stated that they prefer visuals inspired by song lyrics, where 82.7% (87 people) agreed that illustrations based on lyrics are more meaningful compared to visuals that merely reflect the band's general identity. A total of 80% (84 people) also felt that merchandise would be more meaningful if the illustrations were inspired by the lyrics of their favorite songs.

Overall, this questionnaire indicates that visual elements in band merchandise are very important to the majority of respondents. More than 92% of respondents agree that visuals serve not only as a promotional medium but also convey a profound message from the band or musician. Illustrations inspired by song lyrics are also considered more meaningful and can strengthen the emotional bond between fans and the band. Understanding the visuals and the messages conveyed through band merchandise adds significant value for fans.

One band in Indonesia that has leveraged the sale of physical releases and merchandise is The Sigit, a hard rock band from Bandung. The band has received recognition from media outlets such as Rolling Stone Indonesia and has brought a fresh perspective to Indonesian rock music, making it one of the key icons in the development of the indie music scene in the country (Maajid, 2021). The news site Superlive.id, which frequently covers the Indonesian music scene, explains the background of The Sigit, formed in 2002 with the original lineup of Rektivianto “Rekti” Yoewono (vocals, guitar), Farri Icksan Wibisana (guitar), Aditya “Adit” Bagja Mulyana (bass), and Donar “Acil” Armando Ekana (drums). They began their musical journey with strong influences from classic world rock bands such as Led Zeppelin and The Stone Roses. In 2004, they released a mini-album that opened doors to perform at various music events, expanding their recognition among fans. This momentum led The Sigit to release their first studio album titled “Visible Idea of Perfection” in 2006, which even caught the attention of the Australian label, Caveman! Records, to distribute it in that country. This success continued with a tour in Australia in June 2007. Despite facing various challenges as a band, they eventually returned with their second album titled “Detourn” in March 2013, nearly six years after their debut album. The album received positive reviews, including a 4 out of 5 rating from Rolling Stone Indonesia, which also named it the best album of the year.

On The Sigit’s official Instagram page, they have leveraged marketing through physical releases with a focus on merchandise, known for its eye-catching visuals. The Sigit’s merchandise is highly sought after due to collaborations with renowned illustrators like Riandy Kurniawan, and many others, which further enrich its aesthetic value and appeal to both The Sigit’s music fans and those who simply appreciate the illustrations featured on the merchandise. However, based on The Sigit’s official merchandise Instagram account, although their merchandise is widely recognized and possesses strong visual appeal, The Sigit’s physical releases still align with most other bands, which primarily sell products that merely feature the band’s identity—emphasizing elements like logos, band visual identity, or album themes.

According to the KBBI, semiotics is, in linguistic terms, the science or theory of symbols and signs, encompassing the study of how signs are used in various contexts, such as language, traffic signs, Morse code, and other communication systems. Simply put, semiotics is a branch of science that studies signs, their functions, and the process of meaning formation. In this context, a sign refers to something that holds meaning for an individual or group and typically represents or refers to something else. For example, images, words, or symbols can convey specific meanings interpreted by individuals or society (Tinarbuko, 2017a). Semiotics serves as an analytical method for identifying, interpreting, and categorizing signs, codes, and meanings in various forms of communication, including visual communication design. Through this approach, semiotics facilitates the understanding of the implicit messages in design works, enabling information to be conveyed more efficiently and persuasively, while also allowing for a comprehensive analysis of text and context to achieve optimal meaning (Tinarbuko, 2017b, p. 193). Modern semiotic analysis is influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, both of whom emphasized the importance of signs, albeit through different approaches. Peirce's theory is often used because it is easier to understand, encompassing three main elements: sign, object, and interpretant. This approach is typically applied to uncover meaning in works of art such as paintings and other artistic works (Putri & Dawami, 2024).

It can be concluded that in the context of physical releases in the form of music merchandise, utilizing semiotic theory in the design or illustration creation process can foster a more personal connection between musicians and listeners because, according to the theory above, semiotics facilitates the understanding of implied messages, so that the message the musician intends to convey is also easily understood and felt by fans, and if that message can be understood through the fan's personal experience. This, according to (I. Wijayanti & Utami, 2023) create a deeper emotional connection.

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Innovation in the context of music merchandise is also crucial amid the ever-evolving dynamics of the current music industry; something repetitive or monotonous will inevitably reach a point of saturation. Therefore, innovation and novelty in the context of physical releases are key to ensuring that band merchandise or the band's releases continue to play a vital role in building relationships and loyalty between the brand and fans, as per the theory mentioned earlier. With the support of a more integrated marketing strategy, The Sigit's physical releases and merchandise are expected to become a more effective promotional tool. If merchandise owners can easily understand and explain the visual messages within these physical releases, this can serve as a powerful tool to attract the attention of others who want to learn more about the intent behind the visual work. The messages conveyed through merchandise not only reinforce the band's identity but also foster a deeper connection with fans, making them part of a larger community.

1.2 Problem Identification

The underlying issues behind the phenomenon described in the background are as follows:

1. The underutilization of physical media in the form of music merchandise as a promotional medium with strong visual representation. From a survey involving 105 respondents, it is evident that many consumers pay attention to the visuals on band merchandise, yet their understanding of the intent behind those visuals is not particularly deep. A total of 72.4% (76 people) stated they "strongly agree" that they notice the visual elements on the merchandise they own, but this does not necessarily mean they understand the message behind them.
2. From direct observations at the offline store "Dominion," which sells band merchandise, and the Band T-shirt Day Surabaya 2024 event, which sells merchandise from both local and international bands, it can be concluded that there is minimal use of song lyrics in merchandise. One opportunity that remains underutilized by most bands is the use of song lyrics as a source of visual inspiration for merchandise. This is also supported by the questionnaire respondents' background: 96 people (91.43%) out of 105 want merchandise that represents one of their favorite songs. This indicates consumers' desire for more meaningful and personal merchandise that reflects a direct connection to the band's music.

3. Semiotic theory holds great potential for creating designs rich in meaning and capable of interpreting complex messages. Based on observations of several official Instagram accounts for merchandise from well-known indie bands in Indonesia, such as Burgerkill, Teenage Death Star, Kelompok Penerbang Roket, The Upstairs, and Morfem, the application of semiotic theory in indie band merchandise design remains relatively rare.
4. (Pinandita, 2024, p. 176) explains the importance of the relationship between music and fashion in shaping brand identity, enhancing the fan experience, and driving product innovation within the industry. This opens up the potential for developing innovative products such as interactive merchandise with access to exclusive content. Such innovations can enhance fans' emotional engagement while expanding the influence of the band's brand.

1.3 Research Problem

Based on the problem identification above, the research question for this design project is: How can we design a box set release based on song lyric illustrations as a promotional medium for the band The Sigit, using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach, targeting the 18–25 age group and supported by innovative features to enhance the emotional connection with fans?.

1.4 Scope of the Problem

This design is limited to several key areas that serve as the primary focus of the development process.

1. The design is limited to illustrations based on The Sigit's 5 most popular songs.
2. The illustrations will be applied to physical releases similar to a box set, as well as merchandise such as T-shirts, posters, and other products.
3. The approach used in translating song lyrics into visual form is Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics.
4. The target market for this design is rock music fans aged 18–25 years.
5. The design will prioritize strengthening the emotional connection between the band and fans through the visualization of song lyric.

1.5 Design Objectives

The objectives of this design are as follows:

1. **Creating innovative promotional media:** Designing illustrations that combine visual aesthetics with the meaning of song lyrics to produce unique and meaningful promotional media.
2. **Enhancing appreciation of music:** Exploring the deeper meanings of The Sigit's songs through visualization, so that fans can better understand and appreciate their musical works.
3. **Building emotional connections:** Using illustrations to build a stronger emotional bond between the band and their fans, creating a more personal experience.
4. **Utilizing merchandise as an educational and communication medium:** Using merchandise not only as a promotional tool, but also as a medium to convey the messages and stories behind the songs.
5. **Applying Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics theory:** Applying semiotics theory to create illustrations that are not only visually appealing but also capable of interpreting complex and profound messages.
6. **Serving as a reference for other indie bands:** This design is intended to serve as an example for other indie bands in developing creative marketing strategies that strengthen their identity and fan loyalty.

1.6 Benefits of the Design

The results of this design are expected to provide the following benefits:

1. For the band, these physical merchandise releases will serve as an effective and innovative promotional tool to expand The Sigit's market reach.
2. For fans, these physical merchandise releases will serve as a symbol of identity and an emotional connection to the music they love.
3. For the music industry, this project can serve as inspiration for other bands to utilize merchandise in more creative and meaningful ways.
4. More broadly, this design is expected to contribute to the development of marketing strategies for indie bands in Indonesia, as well as provide added value for the growth of the creative industry.

1.7 Design Framework

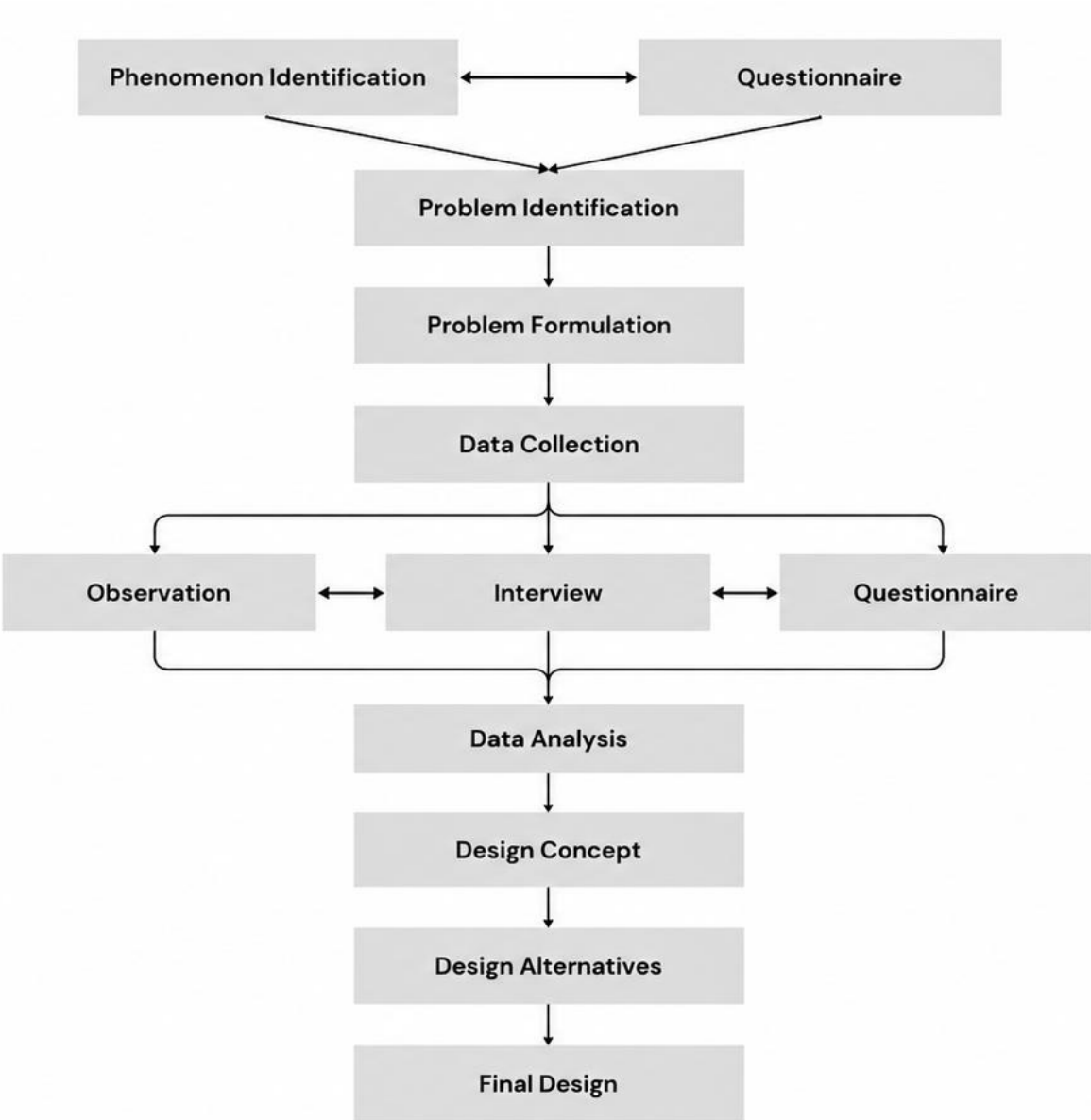


Figure 1.1 Design Framework
(Source: Personal Document)