

Pawon Cerita: Designing a Special Event for a Traditional Culinary Photo Exhibition as a Medium of Cultural Communication at Pasar Papringan

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ABSTRACT

This practice-based research examines "Pawon Cerita: Saka Dapur, Tumukul Rasa," a visual communication project designed to reframe culinary offerings at Pasar Papringan as cultural narratives rather than mere tourism commodities. The study addresses the strategic challenge of connecting visitors with local kitchen traditions and the core values of "3L" Local (*Lokal*), Delicious (*Lezat*), and Sustainable (*Lestari*) within a community-based tourism context. Theoretically, the project integrates the MOVE framework, the Open-System Model of Event Management, and visual semiotics. Methodologically, it employs a descriptive qualitative approach supported by descriptive quantitative data, utilizing participant observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews with three purposive informant clusters: internal organizers, vendors, and visitors. The project was operationalized through a multi-layered special event consisting of a photography exhibition, walking narrative installations, interactive mirrors, a message corner, and interactive talk shows. Findings reveal that the exhibition reached approximately 4,211 visitors, successfully serving as a "narrative gateway" that guided public interpretation of local food as an expression of village identity and soil-to-table processes. Evaluation data indicated a high level of visitor comprehension regarding 3L values, while qualitative feedback highlighted increased vendor pride and economic benefits. Despite technical constraints in sound systems and digital evaluation reach, the research concludes that Pawon Cerita effectively functions as a medium for cultural communication and identity reinforcement. These results offer strategic insights for enhancing community engagement and narrative design in rural revitalization initiatives.



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INTRODUCTION

Rural development in Indonesia faces a significant paradox. Despite having over 84,000 villages that serve as the nation's cultural and food foundation, a welfare gap remains, with rural poverty reaching 11.03% compared to 6.73% in urban areas (BPS, 2025). Historically, development has prioritized top-down physical infrastructure, often neglecting the socio-cultural values and community participation essential for long-term sustainability (Fitria, 2024; Digdowiseiso & Afriyanto, 2023). In response, the Spedagi Movement, initiated by Singgih S. Kartono in Ngadiprono Village, Temanggung, promotes a "Finding a Future in the Past" philosophy through the revitalization of local ecological spaces. The most prominent implementation of this movement is Pasar Papringan, a community-based market held in a bamboo forest that operates according to the Javanese calendar (*Minggu Wage* and *Pon*).

At Pasar Papringan, traditional culinary offerings are more than products; they are media for cultural communication, representing village identity and a way of life that respects nature. However, a critical gap exists between community practice and visitor perception. While vendors view their food through the lens of 3L values—Local (*Lokal*), Delicious (*Lezat*), and Sustainable (*Lestari*)—visitors often perceive these offerings merely as tourism commodities. This gap is exacerbated by operational limits: household-based production often runs out of stock before the market closes, which can trigger visitor disappointment and negatively impact the market's image (Satria Bimantara & Kusuma Waradana, 2023). From a communication perspective, there is an urgent need for a strategy that reframes these limitations as intentional cultural choices rather than service failures.

Theoretically, the success of such cultural preservation hinges on active community involvement rather than passive reception (Wulandari, 2024). Traditional food functions as a form of intangible cultural heritage, carrying symbolic messages that connect humans, nature, and social relations (Sukerti & Marsiti, 2020; Wachidah et al., 2025). To manage these complex interactions, this study adopts the Open-System Model of Event Management, which views events as dynamic systems interacting with their social environments through a cycle of input, process, output, and feedback (Getz & Page, 2024). Furthermore, the project applies Intercultural Communication principles to bridge the gap between the collectivist traditions of rural Ngadiprono and the diverse backgrounds of urban visitors (Ahrndt, 2024).

To facilitate this meaning-making process, visual semiotics and storytelling are integrated into the event design. Following Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic model, the project utilizes Icons (photos of raw ingredients), Indexes (visual traces of labor like steam or handmade textures), and Symbols (the 3L values and bamboo motifs) to direct audience interpretation. Storytelling serves as the emotional bridge, building empathy by presenting the village kitchen (*pawon*) as a narrative space where taste is cultivated through labor and knowledge (Schugar et al., 2021).

This research presents "Pawon Cerita: Saka Dapur, Tumukul Rasa" as a design-led intervention to address the aforementioned communication gap. Developed using the MOVE (Means of Visualization for Empowerment) framework, the project is structured as a special event—a photography exhibition and interactive experience designed as a "narrative gateway". The objectives are twofold: first, to design a visual-narrative medium that communicates the 3L values aesthetically and informatively; and second, to build a sustainable communication asset that strengthens community pride. By reframing the kitchen story, Pawon Cerita aims to shift the visitor experience from simple consumption to reflective cultural engagement, ensuring that Pasar Papringan remains a sustainable space for intercultural dialogue.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a practice-based research design within a descriptive qualitative framework, supported by descriptive quantitative data to evaluate the design intervention. The methodology is primarily structured around the MOVE (Means of Visualization for Empowerment) framework, which consists of four phases: Moderation, Visualization, Participation, and Evaluation. This approach is integrated with the Open-System Model of Event Management to ensure that the "Pawon Cerita" project functions as a dynamic system interacting with the social and cultural ecosystem of Pasar Papringan. Data collection involved three informant clusters selected through purposive and snowball sampling: the internal project team (Spedagi movement and market coordinators), vendors (*pelapak*), and visitors. Qualitative data were gathered through participant observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews to map spatial flows and cultural narratives. These findings were triangulated with quantitative metrics, including visitor statistics and results from Quizizz-based interactive sessions, to measure audience comprehension of the "3L" values—Local (*Lokal*), Delicious (*Lezat*), and Sustainable (*Lestari*). The design process was further informed by Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic semiotics, which analyzes the relationship between the representamen (visual signs), the object (cultural values), and the interpretant (visitor understanding). By categorizing elements into icons, indexes, and symbols, the research translates abstract community values into a tangible visual narrative. Finally, the data are analyzed through a descriptive-narrative approach, comparing internal organizational perspectives with external visitor feedback to assess the project's effectiveness as a medium for cultural communication and identity reinforcement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of "Pawon Cerita: Saka Dapur, Tumukul Rasa" was strategically designed to address the gap between the community's culinary practices and visitor perceptions by functioning as a dynamic communication system within Pasar Papringan. Grounded in the Open-System Model of Event Management, the project transformed the traditional market visit into a curated journey of cultural discovery. The results indicate that the strategic positioning of the event as a "narrative gateway" successfully bridged the physical and conceptual distance between the private village kitchen (*pawon*) and the public market stalls. By placing visual and narrative interventions along the primary circulation path from the parking area to the market entrance, the project ensured that nearly all 4,211 visitors were

exposed to the core messages of Lokal, Lezat, and Lestari (3L) before engaging in commercial transactions. This sequence was structured dramaturgically, moving from awareness-building signage at the parking lot to a deep-dive photo exhibition, and concluding with reflective installations at the exit path.

The visual communication strategy effectively translated the abstract 3L values into tangible experiences through the application of Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic semiotics. Icons were established through high-detail photography of raw ingredients and traditional cooking methods, allowing visitors to recognize the authentic labor behind each dish. Indexes, such as visuals of rising steam and hand-processed textures, pointed toward the labor-intensive, non-instant nature of rural production. Ultimately, these elements converged into a Symbolic understanding of the 3L values, where visitors began to perceive culinary limitations not as service failures but as conscious choices for sustainability. The use of local materials for the installations, including bamboo structures and canvas posters, served as a non-verbal reinforcement of the Lestari value, ensuring the media itself felt like a natural extension of the forest environment.



Figure 1. Documentation of the Pawon Cerita exhibition

To measure the cognitive impact of these interventions, interactive sessions including a talk show and a Quizizz-based evaluation were conducted. Among the participants who engaged with the talk show, the average accuracy rate for the 3L values quiz reached 70.2%, with 75% of participants scoring 70% or higher. These results suggest that the combination of visual narratives and direct dialogue significantly enhanced message retention and conceptual understanding. However, the evaluation also revealed challenges inherent in a fast-paced market environment; while the visual exhibition had a nearly universal reach, deep participatory activities like the talk show reached a smaller, more self-selected audience of 33 participants. This disparity was attributed to the rapid rhythm of the market and the limited range of the sound system, which at times created an unintended sense of exclusivity for the talk show area.



Figure 2. Cultural storytelling presented in the Pawon Cerita exhibition

Beyond cognitive metrics, Pawon Cerita produced significant socio-economic outcomes for the Ngadiprono community. Qualitative interviews with vendors (*pelapak*) demonstrated an increased sense of pride and ownership over their cultural heritage. For instance, Pak Mustafa, a vendor of *Soto Lesah*, noted a distinct change in the atmosphere and reported an increase in revenue to 1,325 pring, compared to his usual 1,000 pring. Market coordinators similarly observed that the exhibition made the market feel "more alive" and provided visitors with a reason to linger and learn, rather than simply consume and leave. The mirror installations and the message corner (*pojok kesan-pesan*) further facilitated this shift, generating qualitative feedback that revealed a new visitor appreciation for the handmade processes and the stories behind the food.

In the broader context of communication studies, these findings align with and expand upon the work of Wulandari (2024), who emphasizes that community involvement is vital for cultural preservation. Pawon Cerita advances this by showing that small-scale, design-led interventions can manage complex visitor expectations in ways that large-scale promotion cannot. The study confirms that an Open-System approach allows for a more adaptive and reflective form of rural tourism development, where feedback from visitors and vendors informs future iterations of the event. While technical constraints like sound coverage and digital instrument accessibility were noted, they provide essential data for refining future participatory communication designs in dynamic rural spaces. Ultimately, the project demonstrates that culinary offerings can serve as a powerful medium for intercultural dialogue when supported by a clear visual and narrative strategy.

CONCLUSION

The research and design of "Pawon Cerita: Saka Dapur, Tumukul Rasa" successfully addressed the critical need to bridge the gap between how the Ngadiprono community perceives its culinary traditions and how visitors often consume them as mere tourism commodities. By establishing culinary practices as a medium of cultural communication, the project effectively presented the 3L values—Local, Delicious, and Sustainable—as a tangible experience that visitors could see, read, and hear. This transition from consumption-based tourism to reflective cultural engagement was made possible by the integration of the MOVE framework and the Open-System Model of Event Management, which allowed the intervention to function as a dynamic part of the existing market ecosystem rather than a separate, disruptive event.

The results indicate that the project's multi-layered communication strategy functioned effectively within the fast-paced environment of Pasar Papringan. The visual components, particularly the main photo exhibition and the walking narrative, served as a highly inclusive "narrative gateway," reaching approximately 4,211 visitors and building early awareness of the labor and philosophy behind the food. While the visual elements provided broad exposure, the interactive talk show proved to be a vital channel for deeper conceptual understanding, enabling participants to articulate the specific socio-ecological reasons behind local production choices. Beyond individual understanding, the project generated meaningful community outcomes, including a reinforced sense of pride among vendors and a distinct differentiation of the market experience that contributed to positive social and perceived economic impacts.

Despite these achievements, the implementation revealed technical and spatial constraints that provide essential learning for future initiatives. The limited range of the sound system and the difficulty of conducting digital evaluations in a crowded, moving environment suggest that future designs should prioritize more "embedded" and flexible engagement formats, such as micro-talks or analog reflection tools. Furthermore, to improve accessibility, future iterations should focus on more visible scheduling and spatial arrangements that encourage spontaneous participation from the general public. In conclusion, "Pawon Cerita" demonstrates that visual communication and special event design can be powerful catalysts for rural revitalization when grounded in community narratives and semiotic clarity. The project offers a replicable model for using micro-narratives to build empathy between local producers and urban consumers. Ultimately, this study affirms that culinary heritage can serve as a sustainable bridge for intercultural dialogue, transforming the act of eating into a profound journey of cultural understanding and mutual respect.

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