

Developing Tourism Attractions Through Ethnic Marketing: Case Study of the Semarang Old Town Festival

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Abstract

Semarang is renowned for its multiculturalism, with a diverse population of Javanese, Chinese, Arab, Indian, and other ethnic groups. This fosters the assimilation of the culture and indigenous knowledge of Semarang, which is abundant in cultural heterogeneity. The Semarang Old Town Festival was launched by the Oen Semarang Foundation (OSF) and subsequently expanded by the Semarang City Government as a recurring annual event. This festival encompasses a diverse range of artistic and cultural communities. This study aims to investigate the ethnic marketing strategies employed by the organizers of the Semarang Old Town Festival to develop tourism attractions. This study employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing a case study technique, to investigate the perspectives of managers and observe the execution of the 2023 Semarang Old Town Festival in enhancing tourism attractions through ethnic marketing, which is owned by the residents of Semarang City. The process of organizing the Semarang Old Town Festival revealed city branding, collaboration, and community empowerment as the primary themes.

Keywords

authentic marketing, community, ethnic marketing, Semarang Old Town Festival, tourism attraction

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INTRODUCTION

Semarang is renowned for its multiculturalism, with a diverse population consisting of individuals from numerous ethnic backgrounds, including Javanese, Chinese, Arab, Indian, and other ethnic groups. This fosters assimilation into the culture and indigenous knowledge of Semarang, which is abundant in cultural heterogeneity. The presence of many ethnic groups has played a significant role in the creation of historically significant structures, such as mosques, churches, temples, and monasteries, which serve as remnants of the past. In addition, the presence of Kampung Kauman, Kampung Chinatown, Kampung Holland, Kampung Melayu, and other cultural villages are regarded as established civilizations and have emerged as prominent destinations for historical and cultural tourism in Semarang City (Aliya & Febriyani, 2020).

Situated on the northern coast of Java, the city of Semarang holds a pivotal place in the Indonesian commercial routes. Throughout history, from the time of the Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms to the 19th century, Semarang has been bustling with diverse traders from Asia to Europe. The inhabitants of Semarang City have developed into a multicultural community, evident in the varied composition of villages or settlements along the Semarang River. To the east of the river lies Kampung China, while to the north of Kampung China are the European settlements, now referred to as the Kota Lama area. Kampung Melayu is situated on both the eastern and western banks of the Semarang River, whereas Kampung Java is located at the point where the Semarang River meets (Sonaesti & Purwanto, 2022). The city of Semarang possesses a diverse range of potential and intangible cultural heritage, which encompasses traditions, expressions (including language), performing arts, community customs, rites and celebrations, knowledge and habits, and traditional skills. These cultural elements have evolved and been transmitted from one generation to another (Njatrijani, 2018).

The Semarang Old Town Festival, themed “Ancient Now Later,” has been organi-

zed annually since 2012. The Semarang Old Town Festival is a non-profit platform that aims to enhance the Old Town of Semarang by collaborating with experts and investors, both local and international. The main objective is to protect the historical assets of the Old Town of Semarang, with a particular focus on maintaining and preserving its cultural heritage. The Semarang Old Town Festival is an annual event that showcases several themes aimed at promoting Semarang City’s objective of becoming an internationally recognized tourism destination (Old Town Festival, 2019). In addition, festivals serve as a method of promoting and establishing the reputation of a region, which can entice tourists who have an interest in experiencing the culture of specific local areas, with the active participation of the local community (Sakitri, 2018).

The ethnic diversity of Semarang is an alluring feature that entices tourists to explore and gain insights into its vibrant and culturally abundant heritage. To effectively engage in ethnic marketing, it is crucial to prioritize certain principles (Guion, Kent, & Diehl, 2010). Firstly, appreciate and respect the distinct cultural characteristics of your target audience. Secondly, foster collaboration and establish connections with community leaders and other organizations operating within the community. Thirdly, acknowledge and embrace the cultural beliefs, symbols, and practices of your target group. Fourthly, recognize and appreciate the diversity in languages, accents, practices, and social behavior. Lastly, place importance on word-of-mouth and interpersonal communication as effective means to disseminate your message. The Semarang Old Town Festival showcases the tourism potential of the region by highlighting the cultural diversity and local expertise of the local community, including both Semarang inhabitants and visitors from outside the city.

The practice of organizing cultural festivals as a means of attracting tourists has also been implemented in other regions of Indonesia. Banyuwangi, a region in East Java, consistently organizes cultural events as part of its annual program, which is pub-

licly publicized by the government (Anoe-grajekti, Iskandar, Attas, & Macaryus, 2023). The Reog Ponorogo Festival takes place in Ponorogo, East Java (Ramli, Rinanto, Ariyanto, Mafruhah, & Praseptianga, 2016), the Sentani Lake Festival is held in Sentani, Papua (Muttaqin & Wambrauw, 2023), and the Dieng Culture Festival is celebrated in Dieng, Central Java (Haryanto, Shandy, & Setyawan, 2023). This study aims to investigate the Semarang Old Town Festival organizers' experience in utilizing ethnic marketing strategies to enhance tourism attractions in Semarang City.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative methodology, namely a case study technique, to examine the perspectives of Semarang Old Town Festival management and observe the execution of the Semarang Old Town Festival in enhancing tourist attractions through ethnic marketing for the residents of Semarang City. A case study is employed to acquire tangible, contextual, and comprehensive understanding of a particular real-life topic, in order to examine the fundamental attributes, significance, and consequences of the case in the Semarang Old Town Festival (Yin, 2009). Data collection methods employed in case study research involved conducting in-depth interviews with informants to uncover the progression of consciousness, as well as posing verbal and direct inquiries (face to face) to key informants, specifically the secretary of the Semarang Old Town Festival who has overseen the execution of the festival for the past 12 years. In addition to conducting interviews with the secretary of the Semarang Old Town Festival, researchers also interviewed 3 members of the event committee, who were involved in the event session to gather their perspectives on the execution of the Semarang Old Town Festival in 2023. Data analysis that conducts as the following steps: (1) Data organization: researcher creates and organizes files for the data; (2) Memoing reading: researcher reads the entire text, makes marginal notes and forms

initial codes; (3) Describe data into codes and themes: researcher describes the case and its context; (4) Classify data into codes and themes: researcher uses categorical aggregation to form themes and patterns; (5) Interpret data: researcher makes a direct interpretation and then develops a naturalistic generalization about the lessons that can be taken; (6) Presenting, visualizing data: researcher presents an in-depth description of the case using narrative and pictures. Data triangulation was conducted by employing source triangulation, specifically by conducting in-depth interviews, making observations, and studying documents. Additionally, observations were made during the 2023 Semarang Old Town Festival, and documentation was utilized.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Semarang Old Town Festival serves as a demonstration of ethnic marketing strategies implemented by the community and the Semarang City Government to enhance tourist attractions and generate a multiplier impact for the citizens of Semarang. These three primary elements, including city branding, teamwork, and community empowerment, are evident in this research.

City branding

The Semarang Old Town Festival serves as a method for implementing city branding. City branding is essentially synonymous with branding and encompasses six key elements that deliver value to stakeholders. These elements include presence, potential, place, people, spirit, and prerequisite. City branding refers to the strategic management of a destination's image using innovative approaches that encompass economic, commercial, social, cultural, and governmental cooperation (Harianto & Sukendro, 2021). The commencement of the Semarang Old Town Festival was prompted by the prevailing issues surrounding the Old Town district in Semarang, characterized by its dilapidated living conditions, significant homeless population, and high crime rates.

"It initially arose from a sense of apprehension. We are apprehensive by the fact that the old city did not resemble its current state 12 years ago. The condition is really concerning."



Figure 1. Poster for the 2023 Semarang Old Town Festival

Source: Department of Youth, Sports and Tourism (Disporapar) Central Java Province (2023)

The state of the Old Town of Semarang in 2013, characterized by the presence of unauthorized makeshift structures constructed by street vendors (PKL), was dilapidated and inadequately maintained (Prabowo, 2013).

"If we neglect to revitalize its essence, how long will the old city continue to deteriorate, causing people to refrain from venturing into it after dark due to its state."

A destination must possess the genuine essence and atmosphere of a place, as well as contribute to the preservation of its cultural legacy (Hermawan, 2022). The concept of spirit of place can be defined as the direct connection between the cultural significance of historic locations, the community's understanding of it, and the goals of heritage protection and development of that place (Hermawan, et al., 2023). The concepts of 'sacrality', 'community', 'historicity', and 'serenity' hold significant value in the lives of the city's residents (Silva, 2015).

The key to achieving sustainable development lies in fostering a sense of belonging within a compassionate community group, where the establishment of trust is crucial for steering a city towards improvement (Jiang & Zhen, 2022). The committee aims to transform the image of the Old City

of Semarang into a more compassionate and positive one, eradicating its previous association with slums, crime, and negative connotations. This objective drives their efforts to rejuvenate the Semarang Old City Festival annually.

According to the research conducted by Puspitasari & Ramli (2018), the conserved buildings in Semarang's Old Town are partially vacant, poorly maintained, dilapidated, and some have even collapsed. The Semarang's Old Town region has played a significant role in the city's growth. The government at the provincial level communicates with the government at the central level to revitalize buildings that were previously neglected. Apart from that, the government is working together to beautify the atmosphere around the Old City of Semarang with attractive decorations, information and designs.

"Our branding has a direct impact on the economy as its execution also promotes conservation, particularly of cultural heritage such as the old Semarang culture found in Kampung Melayu, Chinatown village, Javanese village, Kauman village, Jogja, and other areas. We advocate for both cultural preservation and education. What are your thoughts on education? Many tourists and even local residents of Semarang are increasingly unfamiliar with the native culture."

The city brand concept encompasses crucial elements such as the "place's identity" and its role in shaping the city brand, the positioning of the city brand in people's minds, and the utilization of psychological and sociological theories to understand how residents and tourists perceive the city and how it impacts their attitude towards the city brand. In addition, we will examine the progression towards the notion of place brand equity, which comprises the characteristics and advantages that individuals associate with cities and deem desirable (Oliva, Sánchez-Torres, & Niño, 2022). The destination branding approach, which highlights the significance of tourism in attracting tourists, strengthens the connection between local authorities and external parties, therefore enhancing the reputation

of the area. Conversely, an identity-based approach focuses on the interplay between internal and external audiences and how they attach significance to the qualities of a brand in relation to a given area (Chan, Suryadipura, & Novel, 2022).

"We achieved a position in the top 10 dues to the curation of 400 Nusantara events by the Ministry, representing 38 provinces across Indonesia. These events were selected and included in the top 100. One of the prominent events is the Old Town Festival, spanning 11 days from November 7th to November 17th. Prior to the current event, there was a pre-event that took place on the road leading to the old city. During this pre-event, a wayang performance was organized for the public, including multiple parties. Additionally, we offer seminars on Peranakan kebaya and a multitude of activities."



Figure 2. Khoja Semarang Arts and Culture Community

Source: Author Documentation (2023)

Festivals imbue art and culture into the tangible metamorphosis of public areas to bolster economic growth, social cohesion, and urban liveliness. While these effects are consistent with urban planning, these initiatives often involve stakeholders from various sectors, including community organizations, businesses, and artists. This reflects the cultural and creative economies, where diverse values, motivations, and practices are constantly negotiated through co-creation processes (Foster, 2022).

Crucial factors in establishing a sustainable tourism destination include the

engagement or active participation of local communities, enhancing the caliber of tourism offerings, and nurturing local business associations (Hadiwijoyo, 2018). The presence of authenticity in tourism products will confer competitive advantages. The key components of authenticity in tourism products include genuine quality, distinctiveness, exclusivity, local characteristics, and regional pride. These are reflected in the lifestyle and overall well-being of the local population, particularly in terms of their conduct, honesty, amiability, and genuineness as members of the community.

Collaboration

Collaboration is also believed to be one of the key factors in the successful organization of the Semarang Old Town Festival. Collaboration serves as a means to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the Semarang Old Town Festival since 2012.

"Engagement with the community. The community that engages with us enhances both the community itself and the government, which acts as its advocate. Indeed, we are a collective engaged in playing. It is fortunate that our government provides a stimulus to enhance and strengthen these regulations, so benefiting the general population."

Communities facilitate sustainable development through fostering community engagement, harnessing physical resources, preserving local cultural knowledge, and promoting social entrepreneurship (Jaya, Izudin, & Rahadiyand, 2022). Moreover, it is imperative to enhance the community's ability as a means of bolstering sustainable development. The government's assistance in coordinating the Semarang Old City Festival strengthens the involvement of the community and artists in the development of Semarang's city branding as a diverse and cosmopolitan city.

"Particularly, we leverage the popularity of platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, which are widely used by the younger generation, aligning with our target audience. Request the presence of endorsers. The crux of the matter is that it is unattainable

for us to engage in solitary play.”



Figure 3. Diajeng Community in Semarang
Source: Author Documentation (2023)

Social media plays a crucial role in advertising the Semarang Old City Festival. Additionally, user-generated content from endorsers helps popularize the event, which is centered around cultural themes, among many groups, including local, domestic, and global audiences. Networks emerge from the collaboration of peers with divergent interests. There are three distinct forms of network connectivity: 1) bonding; 2) bridging; 3) linking. The initial kind of connection pertains to the associations of individuals who share common interests and objectives and is seen in many forms of reciprocal support organizations and societies at the local level (Handoyo, Ekaningsih, & Saadah, 2023). The second category pertains to the capacity of groups to establish connections with other groups that possess divergent goals. The third aspect pertains to the capacity of communities to effectively collaborate with other organizations in order to exert influence over their policies (Pretty & Smith, 2004).

“The pandemic is still ongoing, regardless of the various names it is given online. Cooperation between Indonesia and the Netherlands. Here, we engage in musical performances, while Dutch musicians collaborate in another location. It is currently the year 2019, and this collaboration is of an international nature. Specifically, it is a community comprised of friends associated with the Dutch embassy, consisting of Dutch artists and the musicians present in our current setting.”

Partnerships that exist between exter-

nal parties and other countries provide their own color to the Semarang Old City Festival during the pandemic. The policy of limiting large-scale activities during the pandemic has not dampened the community's enthusiasm to continue working and contributing to the implementation of online events. Communities are drawn to chances for collaboration due to the benefits linked to accessing markets and gaining new business knowledge. Community governance can be improved by creating a conducive legal framework at both local and national levels. This involves establishing an institutional structure that encourages collaboration and mutual support among states, markets, and communities to promote sustainable development (Rocca & Zielinski, 2022).

The unity and variety that exist foster a sense of solidarity capable of surmounting financial constraints and geographical distances within the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the management has adopted collaborative measures to ensure the continuation of the Semarang Old City Festival, aligning the vision and mission. The many elements of social capital play a vital role in the advancement of tourism and the establishment of community and multilevel governance (Rahman, Simmons, Shone, & Ratna, 2022). The ability to cooperate, reach agreements, engage in dialogue, establish networks, and engage in collective learning among various stakeholders, both within communities and in their interactions with external parties, is derived from the resources developed through training exercises and past collective endeavors (Harrisa, Kristanto, Sendra, & Ridho, 2023).

“We remain optimistic about expanding globally and plan to engage multiple stakeholders. In addition to Semarang, tomorrow there will also be Jambi and Pekanbaru, as well as participants from North Sulawesi. I would like to have representatives from the major islands present here in order to perform. This is our next aspiration. Furthermore, there will be a fusion of wayang orang performances and puppet shows. This is the statement made by the minister, emphasizing the importance of fostering cre-

ativity, collaboration, and value.”

The approach to developing ethnic marketing involves implementing cultural acculturation and assimilation with diverse ethnic groups in Indonesia, utilizing art, local wisdom, dance, songs, and various ethnic ornaments. This aims to enhance Semarang's reputation as a multi-ethnic city, making it more prominent and impactful both within Indonesia and globally. An effective collaborative governance design encompasses clear objectives, goals, agreements, commitments, norms, transparent practices, institutional arrangements, and platforms for dialogue, collaboration, and cooperation among community stakeholders and across various government levels, which foster the creation of social capital (Siregar, 2023). The architecture facilitates communal action and collaboration, fostering trust and confidence, and enabling the expansion of networks as the governing infrastructure is utilized.

Community empowerment

Community empowerment is a crucial factor in ensuring the long-term viability of the Semarang Old Town Festival. The Semarang Old Town Festival attracts a significant number of participants who eagerly register and undergo a curating process in order to be featured in the many activities of the festival.

“Indeed, it is possible that we have now reached a state of excess. We decline participation from various communities that do not meet our curation criteria, such as those that lack popularity. Typically, these bands are indie or short-lived unless they possess a folkloric essence.”

In addition, the Kota Lama Festival serves as a platform for ethnic marketing, providing an opportunity for marginalized communities to showcase their activities. Ethnic marketing encompasses a range of marketing strategies targeting ethnic minorities, which can vary from minimally adapted cross-cultural approaches to the development of customized programs designed to cultivate loyalty and long-term relationships with a particular ethnic group

(Hermawan, 2022).

“Perhaps the accessibility will be more straightforward. Subsequently, we shall construct a thoroughfare leading to the Old Town Festival, potentially on the inaugural Sunday. The second week will focus on Chinese art, while the third week will explore Javanese art. The artwork they create, because to their race and other factors, will continue to be destroyed for an extended period. However, the series will endure in the future. We aspire for its sustainability to endure. Sustain refers to the ongoing inclusion of Semarang City's branding.”

The Semarang Old City Festival's management also intends to undertake a mission to safeguard ethnic culture by organizing weekly arts fairs. This initiative aims to revive cultural traditions and preserve endangered indigenous knowledge. Simultaneously, this underscores Semarang's endeavors to establish itself as a cosmopolitan city. The Semarang Old Town Festival series also enhances community revenue through community empowerment. The Sentiling Market Nostalgic Culinary Festival aims to boost commercial activity in the Semarang Old Town region during the event.

“In order to effectively boost the local economy, particularly during the 11-day culinary market event, it is important to consider the quantity of various food items such as vegetables and rice. For instance, if there are 2000 customers per day and each customer consumes around 50 kilograms of food, the total quantity of these items can be calculated.”

In addition, community empowerment is seen by the active participation of local communities in diverse cultural festival events held in different areas. The artistic community in Semarang takes great pleasure in their extensive participation in both domestic and international events. The Semarang Old City Festival derives its uniqueness, distinctiveness, and specialness from the amalgamation of various cultural aspects. In addition, the Sentiling Culinary Market serves as a platform for cultural diplomacy through the promotion of Indonesian culinary arts. It showcases and sells

traditional Indonesian culinary delights, while also providing a space for the people of Semarang to celebrate their local culture and uniqueness during the Semarang Old Town Festival.

“The residents of Semarang take great pride in their cultural heritage, which is showcased through an orchestra, led by Surya Vocalista, and a captivating dance performance that combines elements of Javanese, Chinese, Arabic, and other traditions. Additionally, there is a Sentiling market exhibition that offers a variety of goods for sale. This is the market. We only accept Indonesian culinary delicacies that are more than 15-20 years old and have achieved legendary status. We pick these dishes to accurately represent the city and evoke a sense of nostalgia.”

The Semarang Old Town Festival serves as a means of ethnic marketing, aiming to reintroduce cultural elements that may have been eroded by the influence of popular culture. Additionally, it provides valuable education to the community, particularly to marginalized arts groups, in order to empower them in the digital age. Ethnic marketing is a form of targeted marketing that concentrates on ethnicity, particularly unique ethnic groups or communities separate from the mainstream or other groups (Baek, Lee, & Oh, 2023). Ethnic marketing communications possess a significant socio-cultural significance that extends beyond persuasive advertising and has the ability to influence and strengthen societal norms (Licsandru & Cui, 2019). Ethnicity is comprised of three dimensions: ethnic identity, ethnic origin, and ethnic intensity (Pires & Stanton, 2014). It encompasses common descent, language, customs, traditions, and institutions, adding diversity and richness to a group’s cultural makeup. The behavioral pattern of an ethnic group reflects the collective values and beliefs held by its members, resulting in distinct behavioral patterns (Peñaloza, 2018).

“Additionally, we curate a SMEs exhibition that showcases traditional Indonesian fabrics and Indonesian literature, providing insights into Indonesian culture. Additionally, there are other types of kebaya, including

distinct kebaya designs and contemporary millennial kebaya. The Peranakan culture is unique and exclusive to its specific geographical location. In addition, there is also a coconut palm festival, which offers a multitude of events, totaling three. In the future, till the conclusion of this period, there will be a continuation of the Nusantara legend.”

Authentic marketing refers to a marketing strategy implemented by communities, organizations, and business sectors with the aim of establishing a culture, objectives, and values that are rooted in the pre-existing local wisdom (Dwivedi & McDonald, 2018). Authentic marketing is the dissemination of tales, stories, and experiences that are intriguing and pique the curiosity of the local community, as seen from the perspective of its members (Weber, 2019). In addition, authentic marketing enhances the human element, increases likability, and fosters genuineness.

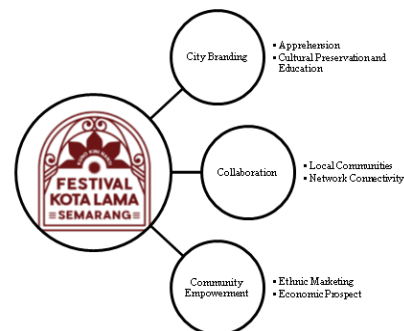


Figure 4. Research Model
Source: Processed by Author (2023)

This study develops a thematic mapping that highlights the significance of city branding in the understanding, conservation, and education of culture. Collaboration is crucial in strengthening local communities and establishing network connectedness. Community empowerment is achieved by implementing ethnic marketing strategies and enhancing economic opportunities. The Semarang Old City Festival plays a pivotal role in revitalizing an area that was previously stigmatized, transforming it into a vibrant cultural hub and a symbol of multiculturalism in Central Java.

CONCLUSION

The Semarang Old Town Festival serves as a demonstration of ethnic marketing, which both the community and the Semarang City Government are striving to cultivate in order to enhance the city's tourism attractions. The yearly event, held consistently in Old Town, serves as a tool to foster a sense of community and rejuvenate a previously neglected area. Through this event, Semarang, noted for its multiculturalism, regains its vibrancy and vitality. Ethnic marketing is crucial for establishing a sense of uniqueness, distinction, and originality, which in turn generates an authentic appeal for both local residents and tourists. This appeal cannot be replicated or found elsewhere, making it very desirable. In addition, the ethnic marketing strategy employed during the Semarang Old City Festival demonstrates the process of assimilating and integrating immigrant culture with the indigenous culture, so enhancing the unique appeal of Semarang's tourism industry.

The execution of the Semarang Old Town Festival is closely tied to the circumstances and difficulties faced in ensuring the event's continuity amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, financial backing from sponsors, community engagement and active participation, and the steadfastness of residents in supporting the sustainable implementation of the Semarang Old Town Festival. In addition, the establishment and strengthening of communities, particularly artistic collectives, are crucial elements to preserve in order to cultivate meaningful and genuine marketing in Semarang.

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