

Proceeding International Conference on Tourism and Communication,Vol 1 No 1 (June, 2025)
E-ISSN xxxx-xxxx, Page 168-176
https://journal.poltekparmakassar.ac.id/index.php/icontc

DOI: https://doi.org/10.33649/icontc.v1i1

CULTURAL VIBES OF KEPRABON: INTERTWINING COMMUNICATION AND TOURISM IN A TRADITIONAL MARKET

Sri Wahyuni Samaratul Zanah[1], Cucut Annaningtyas[2]
Assalaam Polytechnic of Surakarta[1,2]
Email: samaratulzanah@gmail.com[1], vale20ronin@gmail.com[2]

Abstract

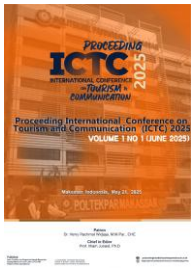
This research explores the dynamic relationship between cultural communication and tourism in the traditional market of Keprabon, Solo. As a cultural heritage site, Pasar Keprabon represents a living tradition that offers more than just a commercial space; it serves as a cultural bridge where local traditions meet modern tourism. The study investigates how communication patterns—such as interactions between traders, locals, and tourists—help preserve and promote cultural narratives, while also contributing to the market's appeal as a cultural tourism destination. Using qualitative methods, including field observation, interviews, and documentation, this research examines how traditional communication plays a pivotal role in both maintaining the market's cultural identity and enhancing its potential as a tourist attraction. The findings suggest that strengthening cultural communication strategies in the market can contribute to sustainable tourism development by showcasing the unique cultural heritage of Solo. This research also offers recommendations for local stakeholders to better promote the cultural values embedded in the market, thus fostering a deeper connection between the community, visitors, and the local economy.

Keywords: Cultural Tourism, Communication, Pasar Keprabon, Sustainable Tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional markets have long served as more than just centers of economic activity; they are also cultural touchstones that reflect the values, communication patterns, and social structures of the communities they serve. In Indonesia, where local traditions and modern influences continuously intersect, traditional markets remain vital spaces where cultural continuity and communal interaction are most visible. As part of its distribution function, the market acts as a bridge that reduces the gap between producers and consumers, facilitating direct transactions (Arifin, 2016). Indonesia's economy has seen notable growth, propelled by advancements in multiple sectors, including the retail industry, which encompasses both modern and traditional markets. Presently, the country's markets are broadly categorized into two types: modern markets and traditional markets. Modern markets consist of large-scale retail outlets such as malls, supermarkets, minimarkets, and shopping centers, whereas traditional markets include street vendors and small-scale enterprises. Despite the essential role both market types play in supporting the economy, modern markets are expanding at a faster pace than their traditional counterparts.

One such market is Keprabon, located in the heart of Surakarta (Solo), Central Java—a city known for its deep-rooted Javanese culture, royal heritage, and strong communal identity. The



Proceeding International Conference on Tourism and Communication,Vol 1 No 1 (June, 2025)
E-ISSN xxxx-xxxx, Page 168-176
https://journal.poltekparmakassar.ac.id/index.php/icontc

DOI: https://doi.org/10.33649/icontc.v1i1

Keprabon traditional market represents a unique microcosm of local life, where daily activities are infused with tradition, oral expressions, non-verbal communication, and strong community bonds. It is not merely a place for buying and selling goods; it is a vibrant stage where language, gesture, storytelling, and personal relationships all play a role in shaping the market experience. Here, communication serves both practical and symbolic purposes, facilitating not only transactions but also cultural expression and social cohesion.

In recent years, Keprabon has also begun to attract the attention of domestic and international tourists seeking authentic cultural experiences. Visitors are drawn not only to the goods being sold—such as traditional foods, crafts, and textiles—but also to the atmosphere of the market itself. The lively exchanges between sellers and buyers, the unique jargon used by vendors, the spatial layout of stalls, and the market's sounds and smells all contribute to an immersive cultural environment. This makes Keprabon a prime example of how communication within a traditional market can become a form of cultural tourism in its own right. This study, titled *"Cultural Vibes of Keprabon: Intertwining Communication and Tourism in a Traditional Market,"* seeks to explore the dynamic relationship between local communication practices and the market's growing appeal as a tourist destination. It investigates how verbal and non-verbal communication methods contribute to the preservation of cultural identity, enhance the visitor experience, and foster community resilience. By analyzing the market through both communicative and touristic lenses, this research aims to reveal how Keprabon functions as a living cultural site—where the lines between commerce, culture, and communication are intricately woven.

The management of traditional markets within the evolving retail industry is rooted in historically and culturally shifting institutional frameworks (Matjomane, M. D, 2013), which in turn bring new challenges specific to each era. Early socio-economic analyses reveal that traditional markets were initially overseen through informal, community-based systems. Over time, however, the responsibility for managing these markets transitioned to a more formal structure under the active involvement of government authorities at both national and local levels, focusing on improvements and significant capitalization. This injection of capital into traditional market management has enhanced connectivity among key stakeholders, including producers (such as farmers and manufacturers), distributors, and consumers (Sunanto, 2014)

Cultural tourism is a vibrant and enriching form of travel that allows individuals to immerse themselves in the heritage, traditions, and way of life of different communities around the world. Unlike conventional tourism, which often focuses on leisure and entertainment, cultural tourism centers on authentic experiences—exploring historic landmarks, participating in local festivals, savoring traditional cuisines, and engaging with the arts and customs of a destination. As globalization accelerates and the world becomes increasingly interconnected, cultural tourism plays a vital role in promoting cross-cultural understanding, preserving intangible cultural heritage, and supporting local economies. It is more than just sightseeing—it's a meaningful journey into the heart of human identity and diversity.

Furthermore, the study considers the implications of this interaction for cultural sustainability and tourism development in traditional spaces. As globalization and modernization



Proceeding International Conference on Tourism and Communication,Vol 1 No 1 (June, 2025)
E-ISSN xxxx-xxxx, Page 168-176
https://journal.poltekparmakassar.ac.id/index.php/icontc

DOI: https://doi.org/10.33649/icontc.v1i1

continue to challenge local traditions, understanding the communicative role of places like Keprabon is essential in preserving cultural heritage while adapting to new economic opportunities. Ultimately, this research aspires to contribute to broader discussions on community-based tourism, intercultural communication, and the revitalization of traditional markets in contemporary society. By examining Keprabon as a case study, the research highlights how cultural spaces serve not only as economic hubs but also as living arenas for social interaction, identity formation, and the transmission of cultural values. These spaces function as dynamic sites where tradition and innovation intersect, allowing communities to assert their cultural distinctiveness while engaging with a global audience. The findings underscore the importance of inclusive tourism strategies that respect local knowledge systems and empower communities to take an active role in shaping their cultural narratives. In doing so, the study underscores that sustainable cultural tourism is not merely about preserving the past, but about fostering a shared future where heritage and progress coexist harmoniously.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Cultural Tourism and the Role of Traditional Markets

Cultural tourism has emerged as a key area within the broader tourism sector, defined by tourists' desire to engage with the cultural, historical, and artistic heritage of a destination (Richards, 2018). Traditional markets, as part of this cultural fabric, offer more than just economic activity—they function as dynamic spaces of cultural encounter, where local traditions, daily life, and social rituals are made visible and accessible to visitors. Unlike manufactured cultural experiences, traditional markets provide an organic setting in which culture is lived and performed rather than staged, making them vital to authentic cultural tourism. Studies by (Timothy, 2003) emphasize that traditional markets represent tangible and intangible cultural heritage, enabling both preservation and interaction. In the Indonesian context, traditional markets serve as vital spaces for the maintenance of communal values, social cohesion, and the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge.

2.2 Communication as a Cultural Practice

Communication is a central mechanism in cultural tourism, serving as the bridge through which meanings are shared and negotiated between hosts and guests. According to (Reisinger, (2003)**,** intercultural communication is not only about language exchange but involves understanding the deeper codes of behavior, values, and symbolism embedded within local practices. In traditional markets, communication is often informal and multifaceted encompassing verbal exchanges, body language, gestures, and storytelling (Gudykunst, 2005) argue that effective intercultural communication fosters mutual understanding, reduces conflict, and deepens visitor engagement. Furthermore, cultural expressions such as traditional greetings, bargaining practices, or narratives about local products play a vital role in shaping tourists' perception of cultural authenticity and hospitality (Budeanu, 2016).

2.3 Market Spaces as Cultural and Symbolic Landscapes



Proceeding International Conference on Tourism and Communication,Vol 1 No 1 (June, 2025)
E-ISSN xxxx-xxxx, Page 168-176
https://journal.poltekparmakassar.ac.id/index.php/icontc

DOI: https://doi.org/10.33649/icontc.v1i1

Place-making is a complex and demanding process that requires significant time, resources, and careful consideration to support sustainable urban development. The collaborative planning approach emphasizes the value of involving communities in the planning process to promote inclusivity, sustainable societies, and responsive governance. Governments are increasingly supportive of public participation, recognizing the valuable resources and knowledge individuals contribute. Recently, planning literature has highlighted emerging participatory strategies—such as co-production, co-creation, and co-financing—as key components of modern place-making efforts (Puerari, 2018)

The spatial organization of a traditional market, the aesthetics of stalls, the sensory elements (sounds, smells, colors), and the flow of human interaction all contribute to a semiotic landscape that communicates cultural meaning. These elements can act as both attractors for tourists and preservers of cultural identity. Keprabon, as a traditional market, fits into this framework by offering a lived cultural experience where spatial and social structures intertwine to tell stories of heritage and local identity. This spatial semiotics also reinforces the idea of the market as a communicative environment where cultural values are embedded in everyday life.

2.4 Challenges and Opportunities in Modern Contexts

Despite their cultural richness, traditional markets face increasing challenges due to urbanization, globalization, and the rise of modern retail formats. Modern markets, with their convenience and standardization, have grown rapidly and often overshadow traditional spaces (Lubis et al., 2020). However, there is a renewed interest in traditional markets **as** cultural alternatives to impersonal shopping experiences, especially among cultural tourists seeking authenticity.

Efforts to modernize traditional markets must therefore strike a balance between physical improvement and cultural preservation. Scholars argue that integrating traditional markets into urban cultural tourism strategies can enhance their visibility, economic viability, and resilience. The literature suggests that traditional markets like Keprabon are fertile ground for exploring the intersection of culture, communication, and tourism. They are not only economic centers but also vital communicative and cultural spaces where local identity is performed and negotiated. By situating Keprabon within the broader frameworks of cultural tourism, intercultural communication, spatial theory, and community-based development, this study seeks to deepen our understanding of how traditional markets can contribute to both cultural sustainability and enriched tourism experiences.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the interplay between communication and cultural tourism within the traditional market space of Keprabon. The qualitative method is particularly suited to capturing the nuanced, context-dependent nature of human interactions and cultural expressions, allowing for a deeper understanding of how traditional markets function as communicative and touristic spaces in Keprabon, Solo, Central Java, where the research took place (N, 2021).

3.1 Research Design



Proceeding International Conference on Tourism and Communication,Vol 1 No 1 (June, 2025)
E-ISSN xxxx-xxxx, Page 168-176
https://journal.poltekparmakassar.ac.id/index.php/icontc

DOI: https://doi.org/10.33649/icontc.v1i1

A case study design was employed to focus intensively on Keprabon, a traditional market in Indonesia known for its rich cultural atmosphere and increasing role in local tourism. The case study approach enables a comprehensive exploration of the socio-cultural dynamics, communication patterns, and tourist experiences within a specific locale.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

a. Participant Observation:

The researcher engaged in direct, on-site observation of daily market activities, focusing on communicative exchanges between vendors, local patrons, and tourists. This method provided insights into non-verbal communication, spatial use, and cultural rituals embedded in everyday interactions.

b. Semi-Structured Interviews:
In-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including local vendors, community leaders, market visitors (both domestic and international), and tourism officials. A total of 10 participants were interviewed to gather diverse perspectives on the role of communication in shaping the cultural and touristic appeal of Keprabon.

c. Document Analysis:
Secondary data, such as government tourism policies, promotional materials in social media and market archives, were reviewed to contextualize the site's historical and cultural significance.

d. Data Analysis

The Keprabon traditional market is not just a place to buy and sell goods, but also a space where local culture and communication come together. From the interviews and observations, it was found that vendors often use local language and share stories with visitors, helping to keep traditions alive. These everyday conversations allow tourists to learn about the culture in a natural and friendly way. The market atmosphere feels lively and welcoming, which makes it attractive to visitors looking for an authentic experience.

Tourists are also interested in the cultural performances and traditional food available at the market. Events like music shows or cooking demos help them feel more connected to the local culture. Many visitors hear about Keprabon from friends or social media, showing that word-of-mouth and community-based promotion are important for attracting tourists.

However, the research also showed that communication between local sellers, market organizers, and tourism officials is still limited. While there are some efforts to promote the market as a tourist destination, these are not yet fully organized or regular. With better teamwork and planning, the market could become even more successful in sharing its culture with a wider audience. In short, communication in Keprabon market happens through everyday interactions and simple cultural activities. These helps promote tourism in a natural and meaningful way, showing how culture and communication are closely linked in this traditional space.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings and Discussion



Proceeding International Conference on Tourism and Communication,Vol 1 No 1 (June, 2025)
E-ISSN xxxx-xxxx, Page 168-176
https://journal.poltekparmakassar.ac.id/index.php/icontc

DOI: https://doi.org/10.33649/icontc.v1i1

The field research at Keprabon Market revealed a complex, vibrant interplay between local cultural practices, communicative behaviors, and emerging tourism dynamics. Several key themes emerged from the data, each shedding light on how Keprabon operates as both a cultural and communicative space in the context of tourism development.

4.2 The Market as a Living Cultural Space

Keprabon functions not merely as a site of economic transaction but as a living cultural space, where traditional values and practices are performed and preserved. Daily routines—such as the preparation of local delicacies, use of traditional weighing scales, and the display of heritage crafts—serve as informal cultural exhibitions for tourists. These practices reinforce local identity and provide an immersive cultural experience for visitors. Interviews with vendors indicated a strong sense of pride in maintaining traditional methods. Many expressed a desire to share their cultural knowledge with outsiders, viewing tourism not as a threat, but as an opportunity to showcase their heritage. This aligns with theories of cultural revitalization through tourism, where external interest encourages the continued relevance of local customs.

4.3 Communicative Practices as Cultural Transmission

Communication in Keprabon occurs on multiple levels: verbal interaction, body language, storytelling, and symbolic exchange. Vendors and visitors often engage in light negotiation, casual conversations, and explanations about local products and customs. These interactions serve as acts of cultural transmission, allowing tourists to learn about Javanese culture in an organic, informal setting. Notably, vendors use storytelling as a communicative strategy to convey the cultural significance of goods or food. For example, one seller of traditional herbal drinks (jamu) would explain the historical and health-related aspects of each ingredient, transforming a commercial act into a cultural lesson. Such narratives reinforce the authenticity of the experience and deepen visitor engagement.

4.4 Tourism as a Catalyst for Cultural Adaptation

The presence of tourists has prompted certain adaptive strategies among local vendors. While traditional values are retained, some elements—such as the use of bilingual signage, cleaner and more attractive product displays, or simplified explanations—have been introduced to better cater to non-local visitors. These adjustments demonstrate how tourism can coexist with cultural preservation, provided that local agency remains central. However, the tension between authenticity and commodification was also evident. A few long-time residents voiced concern over the market becoming "too commercial," suggesting that cultural expressions risk being diluted when tailored primarily for tourists. This reflects broader academic debates about the commodification of culture in tourism contexts.

4.5 Community Involvement and Sense of Ownership

The success of Keprabon as a cultural tourism site is largely attributed to the strong sense of community ownership. The market is not run by external developers but managed collectively by local stakeholders, including vendor associations and neighbourhood leaders. This participatory model fosters trust, promotes inclusive decision-making, and ensures that cultural values are not undermined by economic motives. Tourism initiatives,



Proceeding International Conference on Tourism and Communication,Vol 1 No 1 (June, 2025)
E-ISSN xxxx-xxxx, Page 168-176
https://journal.poltekparmakassar.ac.id/index.php/icontc

DOI: https://doi.org/10.33649/icontc.v1i1

such as cultural walking tours and heritage festivals, have been developed collaboratively. These activities help position Keprabon not only as a marketplace but as a broader cultural destination. The participatory nature of these initiatives aligns with community-based tourism frameworks, emphasizing empowerment and sustainability.



Figure 1. Night market in Ngarsopuro, Keprabon.
Source: Media Social Instagram of Ngarsopuronightmarket



Figure 2. one of the shops that sell art items.
Source: Media Social Instagram of Ngarsopuronightmarket

4.6 Discussion



Proceeding International Conference on Tourism and Communication,Vol 1 No 1 (June, 2025)
E-ISSN xxxx-xxxx, Page 168-176
https://journal.poltekparmakassar.ac.id/index.php/icontc

DOI: https://doi.org/10.33649/icontc.v1i1

The case of Keprabon demonstrates that traditional markets can serve as important nodes of cultural communication and tourism development. The communicative interactions within the market go beyond transactional exchanges—they function as meaningful cultural performances that foster intercultural understanding and enrich the tourism experience. Moreover, Keprabon offers a model of culturally sustainable tourism, where tradition is not preserved in isolation but evolves through ongoing dialogue with visitors. The market's resilience lies in its ability to adapt without losing its core identity, supported by strong community participation and a shared commitment to heritage. This study contributes to ongoing discussions about how traditional spaces can remain relevant and vibrant in the face of globalization. It highlights the importance of viewing communication not only as a tool but as a cultural act that shapes and sustains tourism practices in everyday life.

5. CONCLUSION

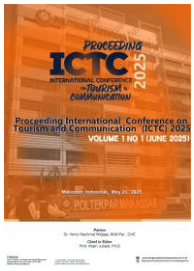
This study has explored Keprabon not merely as a traditional market but as a culturally charged communicative space that embodies the tensions and synergies between heritage preservation and tourism development. Through a qualitative, ethnographic lens, it became clear that Keprabon operates as a multivocal site—a space where diverse narratives, identities, and intentions intersect. The communicative practices embedded in market interactions—ranging from casual conversation to performative storytelling—function as mechanisms of cultural transmission, identity negotiation, and meaning-making.

The findings affirm that communication is not peripheral to cultural tourism but is, in fact, central to its construction. The dialogic exchanges between locals and tourists foster intercultural understanding and help construct the very notions of "authenticity" that shape the touristic gaze. Keprabon's communicative landscape thus represents a living archive where culture is neither static nor commodified in a reductive sense, but dynamically co-created through relational encounters.

Moreover, Keprabon exemplifies a community-embedded model of cultural tourism, where local agency plays a pivotal role in shaping how heritage is curated, represented, and sustained. The market's ability to adapt—linguistically, spatially, and socially—while maintaining its cultural integrity highlights the potential of community-based tourism to serve as a counter-narrative to homogenized global tourism models. At the same time, the challenges of commodification, authenticity negotiation, and cultural dilution remain salient, underscoring the need for continuous critical engagement and policy responsiveness.

Ultimately, this research contributes to broader theoretical and practical discussions on cultural sustainability, intercultural communication, and place-based tourism. It calls for a reframing of traditional markets not as vestiges of the past, but as evolving communicative ecosystems that play an active role in shaping the cultural futures of their communities. As such, Keprabon stands as a compelling model of how traditional cultural spaces can resist marginalization and thrive in a globalized tourism economy through communication, negotiation, and community resilience.

REFERENCE



Proceeding International Conference on Tourism and Communication,Vol 1 No 1 (June, 2025)
E-ISSN xxxx-xxxx, Page 168-176
https://journal.poltekparmakassar.ac.id/index.php/icontc

DOI: https://doi.org/10.33649/icontc.v1i1

Arifin, A. R. (2016). Jenayah Malaysia Malaysia: Wacana Kedaulatan Bangsa, Kenegaraan dan Kemerdekaan. Pulau Pinang: Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Budeanu, A. M. (2016). Sustainable tourism, progress, challenges and opportunities. In Journal of Cleaner Production, (Vol.111, pp. 285–294). Elsevier Ltd. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2015.10.027.

Gudykunst, W. (2005). Theorizing about intercultural communication. Sage.

Matjomane, M. D. (2013). Strategies used by street trader's organisations to influence trading policy and management in the city of Johannesburg. Doctoral Disertation.

N, O. (2021). Stories of Stradbroke: emotional geographies of an island in transition. Queensland: Griffith University.

Puerari, E. (2018). Co-Creation Dynamics in Urban Living Labs.

Reisinger, Y. &. ((2003). Cross-cultural behaviour in tourism: Concepts and analysis. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Richards, G. W. (2018). Creating Creative Tourism Toolkit. Bangkok: DASTA.

Sunanto, S. (2014). The Effects of Modern Food-Retail Development on Consumers, Producers, Wholesalers, and Traditional Retailers: The Case of West Java. Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies, 50(2), 290-291.

Timothy, D. J. (2003). Heritage Tourism. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.