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COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULINARY TOURISM DESTINATIONS IN SERANG CITY

Asih Kurnianingsih[1]*, Rina Fitriana[2], Nina Yuliana[3], Husnan Nurjuman[4], Muhammad Jaiz[5]
[1*]Universitas Banten Jaya, Indonesia
[2] Politeknik Sahid, Indonesia
[3,4,5]Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Indonesia

Correspondence: asihkurnianingsih@unbaja.ac.id

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Abstract

The development of culinary tourism in urban areas has become an important strategy for enhancing local economies while improving urban spatial organization and destination image. This study is situated in Serang City as the capital of Banten Province, which faces increasing demands to reorganize its urban environment to become more structured, attractive, and competitive. The revitalization and relocation of culinary tourism areas represent a strategic effort to achieve this transformation, making it a relevant focus of study. This research aims to analyze communication management strategies in the development of two culinary tourism destinations in Serang City, namely Pasar Lama and Kepandean, particularly in vendor relocation, stakeholder coordination, and destination promotion. A qualitative case study approach was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, and analyzed using an interactive analysis model. The findings show that communication strategies are implemented through policy communication to legitimize relocation, coordinative communication to strengthen stakeholder collaboration, and promotional communication via social media and events. However, these strategies are not yet optimal due to inconsistent messaging, weak destination branding, and limited integration among stakeholders. Differences in spatial and socio-cultural contexts also influence communication effectiveness. This study concludes that successful culinary tourism development requires integrated, participatory, and consistent communication management. It contributes to the advancement of communication studies by emphasizing context-based strategies in urban tourism development, particularly in destinations shaped by relocation and revitalization policies.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is increasingly viewed as a strategic sector for regional development due to its ability to generate broad economic impacts, from increasing local incomes to creating new job opportunities. Its development is also inextricably linked to changing tourist preferences, who now tend to seek authentic experiences, close to local life, and personal experiences. In this context, culinary tourism has emerged as a form of tourism experiencing significant growth. Culinary is no longer positioned as a travel accessory but rather as a central part of the tourist experience, shaping the impression of a destination (Masril et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2025).

Culinary tourism is attractive because local food can directly represent a region's cultural identity. Through its flavors, presentation, and dining atmosphere, tourists gain experiences that distinguish one city from another. These experiences contribute to the formation of a destination's image and influence tourists' decisions to revisit (Sari et al., 2025). At the same time, culinary tourism is also closely linked to strengthening the creative economy, as it involves MSMEs, traditional vendors, and local production and distribution networks. If managed in a planned manner, culinary areas can develop into both economic and social spaces that strengthen urban activity (Masril et al., 2025).

However, culinary tourism potential does not automatically develop simply because of the presence of vendors and a variety of foods. The competitiveness of culinary destinations is greatly influenced by how these areas are managed and communicated. Tourism communication plays a crucial role as it serves as a mechanism for building public perception, establishing a destination identity, and strengthening the desired image for tourists (Widowati, 2024). Communication also determines the extent to which a destination can deliver a consistent experience, both in terms of promotional messages and the quality of service experienced by visitors. When communication strategies are not integrated, destinations tend to struggle to build strong destination branding because the information received by the public is unclear or variable (Sembiring et al., 2025).

Serang City, as the capital of Banten Province, is strategically positioned to develop tourism based on local potential. However, Serang also faces complex urban issues, such as congestion, dense economic activity in the city center, and the distribution of poorly managed street vendors. This situation not only impacts the

orderliness of public spaces but also influences public perceptions of the quality of city governance. As the center of provincial government, Serang City faces higher demands for an orderly, comfortable, and attractive city. This situation makes the development of community economic zones a crucial part of the city's development agenda, especially as informal economic activity flourishes in spaces not designated for commerce (Sungkono et al., 2024).

The Serang City Government's efforts to address these issues are evident through its policy of developing culinary tourism areas. Two areas currently being focused on are the Old Market Culinary Tourism and the Kepandean Culinary Tourism. The Old Market area was developed as a new culinary tourism destination by relocating food vendors who previously operated on the roadside. This relocation is aimed at reducing congestion and creating a more orderly trading area. This policy also utilized previously neglected and poorly managed local government assets, ensuring that the revitalization of the Old Market area not only had economic value but also became part of the city's spatial planning.

The development of the Kepandean Culinary Tourism area was carried out using a relatively similar approach, relocating street vendors previously scattered around several locations, such as Jalan Diponegoro, the Royal area, and Taman Sari. Concentrating vendors in one area aimed to create a more organized culinary space and reduce the impression of slums in the city center. This policy demonstrates that culinary tourism development in Serang City does not stand alone as a tourism program, but is directly linked to urban governance agendas and the city's image as a provincial capital.

However, the development of a culinary tourism destination cannot be judged solely by the success of vendor relocation or the construction of physical facilities. The success of a culinary area as a tourist destination is also determined by the communication management strategy implemented. In the relocation process, public communication is a key factor because it affects how the policy is understood by vendors, how resistance can be minimized, and how stakeholder agreement and participation are built. Communication that is not managed well has the potential to give rise to social conflict and distrust, which can ultimately hinder the sustainability of the arrangement program (Sungkono et al., 2024).

A communication strategy is also needed during the promotion and image-building phase of a destination. Culinary tourism requires a narrative that showcases the uniqueness of local cuisine, creates engaging experiences, and differentiates itself from other culinary destinations. In this regard, tourism communication is not only about disseminating information, but also about shaping the meaning and experience of tourism that remains embedded in visitors' perceptions (Widowati, 2024). A destination's identity will be more easily established if the message is consistent, both through government promotional media and communications developed from tourists' experiences.

Changes in the digital communications landscape have also influenced culinary tourism promotion strategies. Social media has become a primary channel for building destination appeal because it allows for the rapid dissemination of information through photos, videos, reviews, and experience-based content. Culinary tourism promotions utilizing social media can generate broad exposure at a relatively low cost, but their effectiveness still depends on message consistency, content quality, and structured communication management (Harnika & Sutama, 2025). Other studies have shown that digital-based destination branding will be stronger when managed with an integrated communication strategy between the government, community, and business actors (Sembiring et al., 2025).

Although culinary tourism has become a frequently discussed topic in tourism research, studies specifically focusing on communication management strategies in culinary tourism destination development based on urban planning policies are still limited. Many studies emphasize culinary appeal, tourist behavior, or economic contribution. However, cases such as those in Serang City demonstrate that culinary destination development simultaneously involves policy communication processes, stakeholder relationships, and city image formation. This complexity makes a communication management approach a crucial perspective for understanding the successes and challenges of culinary tourism destination development (Widowati, 2024; Sungkono et al., 2024).

Based on these conditions, this study focuses on analyzing communication management strategies in culinary tourism destination development in Serang City, specifically the Pasar Lama and Kepandean Culinary Tourism. This research aims to examine how communication is managed during the area planning process, how

stakeholder involvement is fostered, and how promotional strategies are designed to strengthen the identity of Serang City's culinary tourism destinations.

The research question is: What are the communication management strategies for developing the Pasar Lama and Kepandean culinary tourism destinations in Serang City? This study aims to analyze the communication management strategies implemented in the development of the two areas, both in terms of relocation policy communication, communication between stakeholders, and sustainable destination promotion communication.

METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to understand communication management strategies in the development of culinary tourism destinations in Serang City, specifically in the Pasar Lama Culinary Tourism and Kepandean Culinary Tourism areas. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study emphasizes an in-depth understanding of communication processes, stakeholder coordination dynamics, and destination promotion practices developing in the field, thus requiring a contextual analysis based on social reality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moleong, 2017). The research was conducted in Serang City, focusing on these two locations because they are new culinary tourism areas resulting from urban planning policies and vendor relocation.

Data collection was conducted through field observations, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations were used to assess the condition of the areas, the activity patterns of vendors and visitors, and the forms of communication evident in destination management. Interviews were conducted with local government officials, area managers, relocated vendors/MSMEs, and visitors as those directly experiencing the changes in the areas. The informant selection technique used purposive sampling, taking into account the informant's involvement and knowledge of destination development policies. Snowball sampling can be expanded if necessary to identify additional key informants (Sugiyono, 2019; Nurdin & Hartati, 2019). Documentation included the collection of policy documents, promotional publications, social media posts, and visual data from the area to corroborate the observations and interviews (Bowen, 2009).

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), encompassing the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and ongoing conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity was maintained through source and technical triangulation, comparing observations, interviews, and documentation to ensure consistency of findings. Member checking was conducted to ensure the researcher's interpretations aligned with the informants' intentions (Denzin, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Communication Planning in the Development of Culinary Tourism Areas in Serang City

Based on the analysis and in-depth interviews with the Serang City development acceleration coordinator, it is clear that the development of culinary tourism areas in Serang City is not only about relocating vendors, but also part of an effort to improve the city's image and organize public spaces. In the Old Market, for example, the government is utilizing previously abandoned assets. The concept is to revitalize the area, which has a history as a trading center, while also making it a comfortable and safe place to operate. In this process, communication is a crucial tool for building understanding between vendors and the community. Socialization is carried out through face-to-face meetings, dialogue with vendor groups, and visualization of kiosk layouts, so that they can see the tangible benefits of the relocation.

Kepandean presents a different challenge. This area is inhabited by vendors from several previous locations, such as Jalan Diponegoro, Royal, and Taman Sari. Each vendor group has different habits and customer networks. Therefore, communication planning emphasizes equality and transparency: the government invites vendors to participate in determining stall locations, operating hours, and culinary zoning. This participatory approach gives vendors a sense of ownership over the new area, rather than simply being unilaterally relocated. Some vendors even stated that their involvement in the planning process made them more prepared to adapt, as relocation is no longer seen as a burden but rather as an opportunity to expand their market.

In addition to face-to-face communication, the government is also utilizing digital media to reach traders and the wider public. WhatsApp groups are used for internal coordination, while social media platforms display visualizations of the area and culinary activities. This strategy helps the public understand the changes in public

spaces while simultaneously building a positive perception that the two areas are not just shopping centers but well-planned tourist destinations. With this approach, communication connects urban planning goals, vendor well-being, and the public experience, ensuring that every policy feels relevant and easily accepted.

Coordination and Collaboration (Area Management Dynamics)

The success of developing a culinary tourism area depends heavily on effective coordination between stakeholders. In Pasar Lama, area management is relatively simple because all vendors are located in one clear location and use a uniform layout. The local government acts as a facilitator, establishing basic rules regarding operating hours, cleanliness, and stall layout. The area manager plays a daily supervisory role, ensuring vendors comply with the rules and helping resolve any issues that arise. Vendors respond positively, especially when they see tangible benefits from a well-organized area: increased visitor flow, easier access, and smoother interactions with visitors.

Kepandean, on the other hand, faces more complex coordination challenges. This area is home to vendors from various previous locations, each bringing different habits and work patterns. Some vendors initially expressed skepticism about the new regulatory system, as they were accustomed to organizing their stalls and operating hours according to the old pattern. In this context, intensive communication is key. The government holds regular meetings, includes vendors in decision-making, and provides examples of ideal stall practices. This participatory approach not only allays vendors' concerns but also fosters a sense of ownership in the new area. Field observations show that vendors who feel actively involved are more compliant with regulations and more creative in promoting their businesses, for example, by presenting more attractive menus or decorating stalls to attract customers.

Furthermore, coordination also includes interaction with the community and visitors. Both areas strive to establish clear public information systems, such as signage, information boards, and official social media platforms. This information helps visitors familiarize themselves with the area, while vendors benefit from a more regular flow of visitors. In Pasar Lama, because the area already has a well-established name, communication coordination is easier; the community and visitors quickly adapt.

Meanwhile, in Kepandean, coordination takes longer because the area is still building its image as a culinary destination. This challenge underscores the importance of ongoing and adaptive communication, so that coordination between stakeholders is not merely a formality, but a process that truly shapes the area's identity and visitor comfort.

Promotion and Destination Image Building

Based on observations and interviews, researchers found that after the planning and coordination phase, the focus shifted to how the Pasar Lama and Kepandean areas were introduced to the public as culinary tourism destinations. Promotion was carried out not only through official government media but also through daily interactions between vendors and visitors. In Pasar Lama, the narrative of the revitalization of the old area being revived was easily accepted by the public because the location was already well-known. Visitors often described the nighttime atmosphere at Pasar Lama as "alive again" and a comfortable place to relax while enjoying local cuisine. This phenomenon demonstrates that visitors' real experiences are part of effective informal communication, with their positive impressions being spread through word of mouth and social media.

In Kepandean, promotion faced a different challenge. The area was still new to many people, so public perception was still divided between seeing it as a relocation site for vendors or as a potential culinary destination. To build a consistent image, the government and area managers utilized social media, posters, and small culinary events to highlight the uniqueness of each vendor and the area's signature dishes. Some vendors began actively posting content on social media, showcasing visuals of their menus and stalls, which helped create a collective narrative about Kepandean as an attractive culinary destination. This approach demonstrates that promotional communications are effective when combining top-down (government) and bottom-up (vendor and visitor) strategies, allowing regional identity to be formed through lived experiences and the participation of all parties.

Field observations also revealed striking differences in promotional strategies between the two areas. Pasar Lama tends to be more stable in building its image because the area's identity is already embedded in public memory. Kepandean, on the other hand, is still in the image consolidation stage; visitor perceptions are often

influenced by individual experiences and the quality of interactions with vendors. This situation emphasizes the importance of continuous and adaptive communications, which not only convey information but also build meaning and experience. Therefore, implementing promotional communications is not simply about disseminating information, but also about creating experiences that can be passed on through social interactions, digital reviews, and word-of-mouth recommendations, thereby establishing a strong reputation for the culinary area in the public eye.

Communication Monitoring and Evaluation

Based on the analysis of interview data with the Serang City Development Acceleration Team, it is clear that monitoring and evaluation are crucial steps in ensuring that communication strategies and area management are aligned with their objectives. In the Old Market, supervision is relatively easy because the area is centralized and has clear physical boundaries. Management routinely monitors cleanliness, stall order, and visitor flow, while also promptly taking action against any non-compliance with regulations. Vendors in the Old Market tend to have begun to adapt to the new system; they understand that maintaining the tidiness and comfort of the area directly impacts visitor numbers and revenue. This demonstrates that evaluation is not merely administrative but also serves as a learning tool for vendors, allowing area management practices to develop organically.

Kepandean presents different challenges. Because vendors come from several previous locations, adaptation to area regulations and standards is slower. Some vendors still arrange stalls flexibly or pay less attention to cleanliness, requiring a more persuasive approach. The government and management try to combine supervision with regular communication, such as providing direct guidance, short workshops on service standards, and group discussions. This approach aims to build collective awareness and a sense of responsibility for the new area, rather than simply mechanically enforcing regulations. Observations show that vendors who feel involved in the evaluation process are more proactive in maintaining their stalls and creating a comfortable atmosphere for visitors.

In addition to physical aspects, the communication evaluation also encompasses visitor perceptions and the area's image. At Pasar Lama, visitors tended to respond positively to comfort, accessibility, and culinary variety. Kepandean,

although starting to become more popular, still requires more effort to establish a consistent image as a culinary tourism destination. These results emphasize that monitoring and evaluation must go hand in hand with ongoing persuasive communication, including attention to how visitor experiences and vendor interactions shape the area's reputation. In this way, culinary destination development will be successful not only in terms of physical management but also in terms of image and public appeal, which are key factors in the sustainability of culinary tourism.

Discussion

The development of the Pasar Lama and Kepandean culinary tourism areas confirms that the success of a tourism destination depends heavily on the quality of communication management and stakeholder dynamics. The differences in vendor responses in the two areas indicate that the historical context and structure of the area influence the level of adaptation. Pasar Lama, with its clear historical identity and centralized layout, more quickly established a mutual understanding between vendors, management, and visitors. This aligns with communication management theory, which emphasizes the importance of planning and shared understanding in reducing resistance to change (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Kepandean, which brings together vendors from various locations, requires a more participatory communication approach to foster a sense of shared ownership and consistent rules. These findings support the literature on stakeholder coordination, which emphasizes that active stakeholder involvement increases commitment to policy and enhances implementation effectiveness (Argenti, 2015; Freeman, 2010).

Promotional strategies and destination image building also play a crucial role in shaping public perception. Pasar Lama was able to build a positive image more quickly because visitors were already familiar with the area, allowing promotional communications to reinforce existing experiences. In contrast, Kepandean is still in the process of building a collective narrative; Visitor perceptions of this area depend heavily on direct interactions and consistent digital promotional content. These results align with experience-based tourism theory, which emphasizes that destination perceptions are shaped through visitors' lived experiences, as well as ongoing communication through social media and stakeholder interactions (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011; Buhalis & Law, 2008). A combined top-down (government) and bottom-

up (vendor and community) approach has proven more effective in establishing a strong destination identity, especially in newly developing areas.

Monitoring and evaluation aspects indicate that successful management depends not only on vendors' compliance with physical regulations, but also on the management's ability to build a collective culture and utilize feedback loops. In Pasar Lama, a centralized structure facilitates supervision, resulting in more effective control over order and cleanliness. The concept of "Kepandean" (the "pandean") demands an adaptive approach, where evaluation is conducted through coaching, dialogue, and persuasive communication to encourage vendors to voluntarily internalize the rules. These findings reinforce the concepts of organizational communication theory and continuous improvement, which emphasize that effective evaluation requires continuous feedback to adjust strategies and improve organizational performance (Grunig, 2009; Shannon & Weaver, 1949).

Overall, the experiences of both regions demonstrate that developing culinary tourism destinations in urban areas is not simply a matter of relocating vendors or restructuring the physical landscape, but also about building sustainable narratives, experiences, and social interactions. Areas with a clear identity tend to more easily develop a positive image, while new areas require intensive, participatory, and adaptive communication strategies. This lesson is relevant for other destination managers: communication management must be designed contextually, considering vendor characteristics, visitor experiences, and the city's social dynamics. Thus, communication strategies are not only a means of conveying information, but also an instrument for shaping the identity, image, and sustainability of urban tourism destinations.

CONCLUSION

The development of the Pasar Lama and Kepandean culinary tourism areas in Serang City demonstrates that an effective communication strategy is a key determinant of successful destination management. Pasar Lama, with its strong historical identity and centralized spatial arrangement, enables smoother coordination among vendors, fosters a positive destination image, and simplifies monitoring processes. The familiarity of the environment allows both vendors and visitors to adapt quickly, contributing to the relatively seamless implementation of revitalization

programs. In contrast, Kepandean presents more complex dynamics, as vendors originate from diverse locations with varying cultural practices and working patterns. Consequently, this area requires more intensive, dialogic, and participatory communication strategies to build a shared sense of ownership and to establish a coherent and recognizable destination identity.

From a promotional standpoint, visitor experience plays a crucial role in shaping destination image and reputation. In Pasar Lama, the sense of comfort, orderliness, and cultural authenticity encourages organic promotion through word-of-mouth and social media sharing, allowing the destination image to evolve naturally. Meanwhile, Kepandean still faces fluctuating public perceptions, indicating the need for more consistent and creative promotional strategies that highlight the uniqueness and diversity of its culinary offerings. This finding underscores that communication is not limited to formal interactions between management and vendors but also extends to informal social interactions among visitors, which significantly contribute to reinforcing the destination's image.

This study contributes to the development of communication science, particularly in the context of tourism and urban studies, by emphasizing the role of contextual and participatory communication strategies in managing culinary tourism destinations. It enriches the theoretical discourse by integrating perspectives from tourism communication, destination branding, and stakeholder engagement, showing that communication effectiveness is highly dependent on spatial characteristics, socio-cultural diversity, and governance approaches. Furthermore, this research provides empirical evidence that communication is not merely a supporting instrument but a central mechanism in shaping destination identity, stakeholder collaboration, and visitor experience.

Based on the findings, several practical recommendations can be proposed. First, Kepandean needs to actively involve vendors in decision-making processes related to spatial arrangement, operating hours, and culinary zoning to foster a stronger sense of ownership and regulatory compliance. Second, promotional strategies should be designed in a more consistent and integrated manner, utilizing digital platforms, visual storytelling, and thematic events to strengthen destination identity. Third, supervision mechanisms should move beyond physical control toward a more persuasive and adaptive approach that incorporates continuous feedback and

capacity building among vendors. Lastly, considering that each culinary tourism area has distinct characteristics, communication and management strategies must be flexible and tailored to local contexts rather than applying a uniform model.

For future research, several avenues can be explored. Subsequent studies are encouraged to examine the role of digital transformation, particularly the use of social media analytics and smart tourism technologies, in strengthening destination communication strategies. In addition, comparative studies across different cities or regions would provide broader insights into how varying socio-cultural and economic contexts influence communication effectiveness. Future researchers may also consider employing mixed-method approaches or longitudinal designs to capture changes in stakeholder behavior and destination image over time. Furthermore, exploring the perspectives of visitors more deeply, including their emotional and experiential responses, could enrich the understanding of how communication strategies translate into destination loyalty and advocacy.

With the implementation of appropriate communication approaches, the development of culinary tourism destinations can go beyond improving urban spatial organization and enhancing vendors' economic conditions. It can also contribute to constructing a strong and distinctive city identity. In this context, Serang City has the potential to position itself as a well-organized, modern, and attractive culinary destination. The lessons learned from Pasar Lama and Kepandean can serve as a valuable reference for policymakers and destination managers in other cities seeking to integrate economic development, urban planning, and meaningful tourist experiences in a sustainable manner.

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