

# Revitalization of Pasar Nilowati as a Community-Based Cultural Tourism Market

Chetrine Alya Rinaima<sup>1\*</sup>, Mohammad Wasil<sup>2</sup>, Dony Prasetya<sup>3</sup>, Alfin Maulana<sup>4</sup>  
<sup>1234</sup>Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

\* Corresponding Author:

Email: [chetrinerinaima@unesa.ac.id](mailto:chetrinerinaima@unesa.ac.id)

## ABSTRACT

The revitalization of traditional markets into tourism-oriented markets is an important strategy to maintain their existence amid the growth of modern retail. This community service program was carried out at Pasar Nilowati, located in the cultural heritage area of Sendang Kamal, Magetan Regency, using a participatory approach involving students from Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA), the local tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis), and the surrounding community. The program emphasized both physical improvements and the integration of cultural and environmental values to strengthen the identity of the market as a cultural tourism destination. The outcomes demonstrate that revitalization efforts not only improve visitor comfort and market order but also contribute to the empowerment of local communities, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the promotion of sustainable tourism. These findings highlight the importance of community participation in the sustainable management of traditional markets, ensuring their function as centers of economy, culture, and local identity.

**Keywords:** *Traditional Market Revitalization, Local Wisdom, Eco-Tourism, Community Participation, Tourism Market.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Traditional markets play a very important role in the lives of Indonesian society. According to data from the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia, in 2024 there were approximately 17,443 traditional markets spread across the archipelago, serving as centers of economic activity, particularly for the lower-middle class (Santika, 2024). This figure indicates that traditional markets remain one of the backbones of the national trade system, especially in the provision of daily basic necessities (Davies et al., 2022). In addition to functioning as distribution channels, traditional markets also hold a strategic

role in maintaining the stability of staple food prices. Their presence allows consumers to access goods at more affordable prices compared to modern markets. Thus, traditional markets are not merely spaces for economic transactions, but also social mechanisms that help maintain balance among producers, traders, and consumers at the local level.

Furthermore, traditional markets also hold irreplaceable social and cultural values. They serve as spaces for intergenerational interaction, meeting points for various social groups, and arenas where community solidarity is built (Davies et al., 2022). In many regions, markets are not merely places for buying and selling, but also part of the local identity that is intertwined with traditions, language, and patterns of community life (Zunaidi et al., 2022). These values distinguish traditional markets from modern markets, which tend to be more transactional. The existence of traditional markets also contributes to the preservation of local wisdom (Abas et al., 2022; Ernawati et al., 2024; Suardana et al., 2022). This can be seen in the products sold, such as regional culinary specialties, handicrafts, and the bargaining tradition, all of which are hallmarks of Indonesian culture. In other words, traditional markets play a dual role: as centers of a people's economy and as spaces for the preservation of culture passed down across generations.

Nevertheless, in their development, traditional markets in Indonesia face increasingly complex challenges. Competition with modern markets, minimarkets, and even online shopping platforms has shifted consumer preferences toward convenience, cleanliness, and ease of access (Ibad & Nugroho, 2025). The Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS, 2022) reported that the contribution of traditional markets to the distribution of basic necessities has declined significantly over the past decade, while modern markets and e-commerce have experienced rapid growth (Zahraturrahmi et al., 2021). In addition, limitations in infrastructure, issues of cleanliness, management, and

accessibility have made traditional markets less attractive, particularly to younger generations and tourists.

Amid these challenges, tourism markets have emerged as a form of revitalization that offers added value (Yang et al., 2021). A tourism market not only fulfills an economic function but also serves as an instrument for promoting local culture, preserving traditional cuisine, and strengthening regional tourism (Nadalipour et al., 2022). Such markets have proven effective in attracting visitors by combining shopping activities with elements of recreation, education, and appreciation of local wisdom. The development of tourism markets based on local potential can generate positive impacts, including increased community income, the creation of employment opportunities, and the enhancement of regional tourism attractiveness (Sa'diyah & Rasidi, 2025).

Thus, the revitalization of traditional markets into tourism-oriented markets has become an important strategy to maintain their existence, enhance competitiveness, and strengthen local cultural identity (Danuarata et al., 2025). A tourism market not only functions economically as a space for trade and transactions but also offers cultural, culinary, and tourism experiences rooted in local wisdom that are capable of attracting a wider range of visitors (Trisoko et al., 2024). One concrete implementation of this effort can be found in Pasar Nilowati, located in the Sendang Kamal Cultural Heritage area, Magetan Regency. Held regularly every Sunday morning, this market serves not only as a venue for community economic activities but also as a medium for preserving local traditions through distinctive culinary products, unique transaction practices, and environmentally friendly approaches (Febmawatin, 2024). The presence of Pasar Nilowati illustrates how the development of tourism-based markets can generate added value, both economically and socio-culturally, thereby holding great potential to become a sustainable local tourism icon.

The uniqueness of Pasar Nilowati can be observed through its diverse selection of traditional culinary products that are rarely found elsewhere, such as soto obor, es dawet, nasi kuning manten, and krupuk gapit. Furthermore, the market employs a distinctive transaction system in which visitors exchange cash for special coins as the medium of payment, providing them with a unique shopping experience. Equally important, Pasar Nilowati applies environmentally friendly principles by prohibiting the use of single-use plastics as food containers, thereby contributing to the broader movement of reducing plastic waste. Despite these distinctive features, Pasar Nilowati still faces several challenges. Limited physical space hinders the expansion of market areas, while the lack of adequate information facilities makes it difficult for visitors to navigate and access relevant directions. Moreover, the insufficient organization of entry-exit routes and parking areas often reduces visitor comfort. These issues ultimately affect the market's attractiveness as a cultural tourism destination, highlighting the urgent need for revitalization efforts.

The Community Service Program of Universitas Negeri Surabaya has been implemented to support the revitalization of Pasar Nilowati. Through this program, students and local communities collaborate to create a marketplace environment that is more organized, comfortable, environmentally friendly, and capable of strengthening the local economy. The revitalization efforts are expected not only to enhance the market's economic functions but also to transform Pasar Nilowati into a sustainable cultural and culinary tourism icon.

## **METHODS**

This community service activity was carried out at Pasar Nilowati, a tourism market located within the Sendang Kamal cultural heritage site in Dusun Sumber, Keraton Village, Maospati District, Magetan Regency, East Java. The program employed a participatory approach, which emphasizes the active involvement of the community in every stage of the activity to ensure that the

implemented program is relevant to real needs and sustainable (Sulestiani et al., 2025). In this case, students from the Community Service Program of Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA), the local tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis), and the surrounding community were actively engaged in all stages of the activities. This approach was chosen to ensure that the program was not merely top-down in nature but rather oriented toward the real needs of the community, thereby enhancing the sustainability of its outcomes (Kiss et al., 2022). The stages of the community service activities consisted of the following steps:

1. Initial Observation and Problem Mapping

KKN team conducted a field survey to identify the existing conditions of the market, including issues related to access in and out, limited parking space, lack of information facilities, and the use of single-use plastics. In addition to mapping challenges, the observation was also directed toward identifying local potentials that could be further developed to support the function of a tourism market.

2. Program Planning

Based on the results of the observation, the students, together with Pokdarwis and the community, formulated a work plan. The planned program included the installation of information boards, construction of entrance and exit gates, arrangement of parking areas with bamboo fences, and the creation of eco-friendly signboards. This planning was carried out collaboratively to ensure alignment with the real needs of the community and local potentials.

3. Program Implementation

The implementation stage focused on the development of simple facilities and infrastructure, including entrance and exit gates, information boards, direction signs, prohibition signs against single-use plastics, and no-parking signs. In addition, bamboo fences were built to organize the market area. All activities were conducted through *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), involving students and Pokdarwis members by utilizing available local materials, thereby reducing costs and ensuring program sustainability.

#### 4. Monitoring dan Evaluation

The evaluation was carried out through direct observation of the market conditions after the facilities had been installed, along with short interviews with vendors and visitors regarding comfort, orderliness, and the attractiveness of the market. Program documentation was also prepared as part of accountability reporting as well as media for disseminating the outcomes to the wider community.

This community service program was carried out during the KKN period, which lasted for approximately six weeks, with the expectation that the impacts generated would not only be temporary but also sustainable through the active role of the local community in managing the market. This method is expected to provide direct impacts in the form of improved visitor comfort, as well as long-term impacts such as increased income for local MSMEs, preservation of local culture, and the strengthening of Pasar Nilowati's branding as a tourism destination based on local wisdom.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The revitalization of traditional markets is not merely limited to physical development, but rather serves as an important strategy in maintaining their existence amidst the intense competition with modern markets. Traditional

markets have long played a vital role for society, not only as centers of people's economy but also as arenas of social interaction, cultural preservation, and the formation of local identity (Chen & Barcus, 2024). However, with the rise of modern markets, minimarkets, and online shopping platforms, traditional markets have experienced a decline in attractiveness. The challenges they face include limited infrastructure, lack of comfort and cleanliness, as well as shifting consumer behavior that tends to favor more practical shopping spaces. These conditions require strategic efforts to sustain the function and relevance of traditional markets.

Revitalization must be understood in a more comprehensive manner, not only in terms of beautifying the physical environment, but also in reviving the market's appeal and identity as a cultural and social space (Juwita, 2024). This effort includes providing more visitor-friendly facilities, implementing environmentally friendly principles, and strengthening the cultural narratives embedded within traditional markets. Through such strategies, markets can function not only as sites of economic transactions but also as tourist destinations rooted in local wisdom with strong competitiveness (Utami, 2025). An integrated revitalization approach that encompasses social, cultural, and environmental aspects is expected to address the challenges of modernization while simultaneously positioning traditional markets as relevant, sustainable icons with added value for both local communities and tourists.

One of the concrete forms of revitalization carried out at Pasar Nilowati is the installation of information boards and public advisories. These boards play an essential role in improving order and structure within the market area. Directional signs help visitors navigate the location more easily, ensuring that they can find stalls and facilities without confusion. Meanwhile, prohibitory signs, such as "no littering," "no parking in unauthorized areas," and "no single-use plastic," reflect both spatial management awareness and environmental consciousness. The presence of these boards has significantly

enhanced the market's atmosphere, making it more orderly, visitor-friendly, and aligned with modern tourism service standards, which emphasize comfort, safety, and sustainability. In this sense, the signs do not merely serve a functional role but also convey the values of environmental stewardship and responsible tourism.

In addition to signage, the construction of entrance and exit gates (gapura) represents another crucial element in strengthening the identity of Pasar Nilowati. Functioning not only as physical gateways, these structures hold symbolic value as markers of cultural identity. The gates provide a strong first impression for visitors, reinforcing the perception of Pasar Nilowati as a cultural tourism destination rooted in local wisdom. A well-designed gapura also creates a sense of pride and ownership among local communities, while distinguishing Pasar Nilowati from other traditional markets. From a tourism development perspective, the gate acts as a visual icon that can enhance branding and recognition. In the long term, the gapura has the potential to become a memorable landmark closely associated with Sendang Kamal's cultural heritage.



**Fig. 1.** The process of constructing the entrance gate at Pasar Nilowati

Thus, the development of physical facilities such as information boards, advisories, and symbolic gates does not merely address infrastructure needs, but also constructs a new narrative about traditional markets: a narrative of order, eco-friendliness, and competitiveness. This integrated approach demonstrates that revitalization is not only about repairing physical structures, but also about transforming the cultural and social functions of the market. By combining economic, cultural, environmental, and tourism aspects, Pasar Nilowati is positioned as a model for how traditional markets can evolve into sustainable cultural tourism destinations that remain relevant in the era of modernization.

Another important element in the revitalization of Pasar Nilowati is the construction of bamboo fencing around the market area. This fence serves a dual purpose: on the one hand, it organizes the parking area to be more orderly and structured, while on the other, it enhances the natural and environmentally friendly atmosphere that aligns with the concept of a sustainable traditional market. The choice of bamboo as the primary material is not only due to its abundance in the local environment, but also because it represents cultural identity and traditional Javanese aesthetics. Thus, the bamboo fence is not merely functional, but also symbolic—demonstrating harmony between modernization efforts and the preservation of local wisdom. It creates a market environment that feels authentic, rooted in tradition, yet responsive to contemporary needs.



**Fig. 2.** The installation of bamboo fences for market area arrangement

The environmentally friendly principles applied in managing Pasar Nilowati further strengthen its positioning as a tourism market grounded in eco-tourism values. The policies prohibiting the use of single-use plastic packaging and discouraging visitors from bringing food or drinks from outside are concrete steps in promoting sustainability. These regulations not only support waste reduction, but also ensure that economic transactions benefit local micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Such eco-tourism integration provides Pasar Nilowati with a distinctive character, setting it apart from conventional traditional markets. Moreover, this approach resonates with the growing global and national trend of sustainable tourism development in Indonesia, where visitors increasingly seek destinations that combine cultural authenticity with environmental responsibility.



**Fig. 3.** Signboard indicating the prohibition of bringing outside food and drinks

The success of this revitalization effort cannot be separated from the practice of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) among Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA) students participating in the community service program (KKN), the local tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis), and the surrounding community. This collaboration illustrates the active participation of multiple stakeholders in supporting the sustainability of Pasar Nilowati. The students contributed ideas, energy, and the execution of work programs; the Pokdarwis played the role of initiator and manager of tourism-related activities; while the local community acted as the main actor responsible for maintaining the continuity of the market. Such a collaborative spirit not only facilitated the successful implementation of the revitalization program but also fostered a strong sense of belonging among the community. As a result, local residents feel more responsible and committed to preserving and further developing Pasar Nilowati in the long term.

The direct impacts of this revitalization are already evident in the improved comfort and orderliness experienced by visitors. The arrangement of entry and exit points, the organization of parking areas, and the installation of information boards have created a more structured and enjoyable visiting

experience. These improvements contribute positively to increasing the potential number of visitors attending the market every Sunday. In turn, more people are becoming familiar with and interested in visiting Pasar Nilowati. For visitors, the market is no longer merely a space for buying and selling goods, but has transformed into a cultural tourism destination that offers a unique experience rooted in local wisdom. This transformation highlights the broader significance of revitalization efforts, where traditional markets are reimagined not only as economic spaces but also as cultural assets that enrich the identity of a region.



**Fig. 3.** Signboard indicating the prohibition of unauthorized parking around the market

In the long term, the revitalization of Pasar Nilowati is expected to significantly contribute to the increase of income for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the Sendang Kamal area. Furthermore, the establishment of a more organized and environmentally friendly market has the potential to serve as a medium for cultural preservation, ensuring that traditional culinary practices, local arts, and indigenous wisdom continue to be sustained through the market's activities. The strengthened branding of Pasar Nilowati as a unique

cultural tourism market within the Sendang Kamal heritage site also reinforces its position as a model for sustainable traditional market management in Indonesia.

These findings are consistent with existing literature emphasizing that community-based market revitalization plays an essential role in strengthening local economies and promoting cultural identity. For example, Salihin (2020) highlights that active community participation in managing tourism-oriented markets contributes to the increased income of MSME actors while simultaneously reinforcing local cultural identity (Salihin, 2025). Similarly, Siahaan dan Bila (2024) underscore the importance of integrating sustainability values into the development of traditional markets to ensure their competitiveness against modern retail and e-commerce (Siahaan & Bila, 2024). Mahrinasari (2017) further point out that social networks, informal contracts, and trust among traders are crucial components in sustaining market revitalization, thereby enhancing traders' welfare and market attractiveness (Mahrinasari, 2017). In addition, Prastyawan et al (2020) emphasize that merchant involvement is a strategic factor in fostering ownership and innovation within traditional market revitalization (Prastyawan et al., 2020). Thus, the revitalization of Pasar Nilowati not only produces short-term benefits but also represents a long-term social, economic, and cultural investment for the community.

## **CONCLUSION**

The revitalization program of Pasar Nilowati at the Sendang Kamal Heritage Site, implemented through the Community Service Program (KKN) of Universitas Negeri Surabaya, demonstrates that developing traditional markets into tourism-oriented markets can generate tangible positive impacts. The revitalization efforts were not limited to physical improvements such as the construction of gateways, information boards, bamboo fences, and environmental signage, but also extended to social, cultural, and

environmental dimensions. The application of eco-friendly principles, the spirit of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) among students, the local tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis), and the community, as well as the strengthening of the market's visual identity, have successfully enhanced visitor comfort, orderliness, and attractiveness.

In the short term, these initiatives have created a more organized and visitor-friendly market environment. In the long term, the revitalization is expected to increase the income of local MSMEs, preserve traditional culinary practices and cultural heritage, and strengthen the branding of Pasar Nilowati as a tourism destination rooted in local wisdom. These findings highlight the importance of active community participation in developing traditional markets to remain competitive with modern retail while preserving cultural identity and environmental sustainability. Therefore, Pasar Nilowati can serve as a best practice model for sustainable traditional market management in Indonesia.

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