

Pop-Up Festival as a Social Space for Strengthening Communities and Enhancing the Creative Capacity of Local Brands: A Qualitative Study in the Urban Area of Surabaya

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ABSTRACT

Pop-up festivals have increasingly emerged as temporary urban interventions that activate public spaces and support the growth of local creative industries. However, existing studies have paid limited attention to how these festivals function as social spaces that strengthen community relations and enhance the creative capacity of local brands. This study aims to examine how participation in pop-up festivals contributes to community empowerment, social learning, and creative capacity development among local brands in Surabaya, Indonesia. This research employed a qualitative-exploratory approach involving three local brands: Rayu Manis, Kaluna Living, and LoveZane. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and documentation analysis during several pop-up festivals throughout 2025. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006). The findings reveal that pop-up festivals function not only as commercial platforms but also as creative incubation spaces that facilitate collaboration, identity expression, adaptive learning, and community networking. Public spaces become socially produced environments where emotional connection and creative experimentation occur simultaneously. This study concludes that inclusive and participatory festivals can strengthen local creative ecosystems. Therefore, policymakers and festival organizers are encouraged to design more accessible, collaborative, and value-driven public festival spaces to support sustainable creative development.

Keywords: *Pop-up festival; Public space; Creative industry; Local brand community; Urban social space*

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INTRODUCTION

Public spaces have increasingly transformed into important arenas for cultural interaction, community engagement, and creative expression within contemporary urban environments (Evans, 2009; Lefebvre, 1991). In many cities, temporary cultural events such as pop-up festivals have emerged as participatory approaches for activating urban spaces while simultaneously supporting local creative industries. Festivals are no longer viewed merely as entertainment-oriented events, but also as socio-cultural platforms capable of strengthening local identity, fostering interaction, and generating creative economic activities (Cianga, 2020). Brownnett and Evans (2019) further explain that community-based festivals contribute to placemaking processes by creating social cohesion and a sense of belonging among urban communities.

The rise of pop-up festivals is closely related to broader transformations within urban creative economies and changing consumption cultures. In many contemporary cities, consumption is increasingly associated not only with purchasing products, but also with seeking experiences, emotional engagement, and social interaction. Richards (2011) argues that the growth of the experience economy has encouraged cultural and creative events to become spaces where audiences seek participation, authenticity, and immersion rather than passive consumption. Within this context, local brands are no longer competing solely through product quality, but also through their ability to create meaningful experiences and emotional narratives that resonate with audiences.

In Indonesia, the expansion of the creative economy has accelerated significantly over the past decade, particularly among youth-driven and independent creative industries. Local brands in sectors such as food and beverage, homeware, fashion, crafts, and lifestyle products increasingly rely on temporary events and community-based markets to build visibility and establish direct relationships with audiences. This phenomenon became even more apparent after the COVID-19 pandemic, when many small creative businesses sought flexible and collaborative ways to reconnect with consumers through offline interaction. Temporary festivals, creative markets, and community gatherings subsequently became important platforms for rebuilding social connection and economic activity.

The increasing popularity of pop-up festivals also reflects the emergence of temporary urbanism within contemporary cities. Temporary urbanism refers to the use of flexible, short-term, and adaptive interventions to activate underutilized urban spaces and encourage social

participation (Lindsay & Davis, 2020). Pop-up festivals transform parks, cafés, plazas, heritage sites, and other semi-public spaces into temporary creative environments where interaction, experimentation, and social exchange occur. Although temporary in duration, these interventions often generate lasting emotional impressions, social networks, and cultural meanings. In this sense, temporary festivals do not merely occupy space physically, but also reshape how urban communities experience and interpret public space.

Despite the growing scholarship surrounding festivals and creative placemaking, existing studies predominantly focus on tourism development, visitor satisfaction, economic revitalization, and urban branding (Wu & Ai, 2015; Cianga, 2020). Studies on creative cities also tend to emphasize macro-level discussions concerning cultural policy and urban competitiveness (Comunian, 2011; Scott, 2014), while paying limited attention to the everyday experiences of local creative actors participating in temporary urban events. Consequently, the role of pop-up festivals as socially produced spaces that facilitate collaboration, adaptive learning, emotional engagement, and community-building among local brands remains insufficiently explored.

Moreover, many discussions surrounding creative festivals still focus heavily on economic outcomes and visitor attraction while overlooking the relational and affective dimensions of participation. Festivals are often approached as tools for urban branding or cultural tourism, rather than as social infrastructures that shape everyday creative practices and community relations. This creates a significant research gap, particularly within cities in the Global South where informal creative networks, collaborative economies, and temporary cultural events play an increasingly important role in sustaining local creative ecosystems.

This issue is increasingly relevant in Surabaya, where the growth of creative industries has been accompanied by the proliferation of pop-up festivals, creative markets, and community-based cultural events. According to Badan Pusat Statistik (2024), Surabaya has a population of 3,009,286 people distributed across an urban area of 350.56 square kilometers. Public parks, cafés, and heritage districts throughout the city are increasingly utilized as temporary festival spaces accommodating local communities and independent brands. These events create opportunities for local brands to increase visibility, establish direct engagement with audiences, and participate in collaborative creative environments.

Surabaya also presents an interesting urban context because it combines rapid modernization with strong community-based social practices. While commercial malls and formal retail spaces remain dominant, alternative cultural spaces such as local markets, independent cafés, and public parks have become increasingly important for younger creative

communities. Pop-up festivals often emerge within these spaces as hybrid environments where commerce, leisure, artistic expression, and community interaction intersect simultaneously. As a result, temporary festivals become more than economic events; they function as spaces where creative actors negotiate identity, belonging, and visibility within the urban landscape.

This study is grounded in Henri Lefebvre's concept of the production of space and the framework of creative placemaking. Lefebvre (1991) conceptualizes space as a socially produced phenomenon shaped through interaction and lived experience. Space is therefore not neutral, but continuously negotiated through social practices, emotions, symbols, and power relations. Meanwhile, creative placemaking emphasizes the role of arts, culture, and participation in activating urban environments and strengthening community engagement (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010). Both frameworks are used analytically to examine how local brands interpret public space, construct visual identities, and develop collaborative relationships within temporary festival environments.

This research focuses on three local brands in Surabaya, namely Rayu Manis, Kaluna Living, and LoveZane. These brands were selected purposively because they have consistently participated in various pop-up festivals in Surabaya over the past two years and represent different sectors within the local creative industry ecosystem, including culinary, lifestyle, and fashion products. Their differing visual identities, business approaches, and festival experiences provide opportunities to understand how temporary public spaces are interpreted and navigated across multiple creative sectors.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine: (1) how the participation of local brands in pop-up festivals shapes community strengthening and creative capacity development, (2) what forms of experience, social learning, and adaptive strategies are experienced by local brands during festival participation, and (3) how public spaces function as social spaces that enable new relationships within the local creative industry ecosystem. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to discussions on spatial production and creative placemaking, while also providing practical insights for policymakers and festival organizers regarding the importance of designing inclusive and participatory public cultural events.

In addition, this research contributes to discussions concerning the social and political dimensions of temporary urban spaces. While pop-up festivals are often celebrated as inclusive and creative urban interventions, they may also reproduce inequalities related to access, visibility, and participation. By examining the experiences of local brands directly involved in these events, this study seeks to understand not only the opportunities generated by festivals,

but also the tensions, negotiations, and power dynamics embedded within temporary public spaces.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design to examine how local brands experience and interpret participation in pop-up festivals within urban public spaces. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the research sought to understand subjective experiences, meanings, interactions, and adaptive practices that emerge through direct participation in temporary festival environments. Rather than measuring economic outcomes quantitatively, the study focused on exploring how public space is socially produced, experienced, and negotiated by local creative actors within the context of community-based festivals.

The research was conducted in Surabaya, Indonesia, from January to May 2025. Surabaya was selected as the research site due to the rapid growth of creative industries and the increasing number of pop-up festivals, creative markets, and community-based cultural events held across public and semi-public urban spaces. Various locations such as cafés, city parks, creative hubs, and heritage areas have increasingly been transformed into temporary festival venues that accommodate independent brands, local communities, and creative collaborations. These developments make Surabaya an appropriate context for examining the relationship between public space, creative participation, and local brand ecosystems.

The subjects of this study consisted of three local brands in Surabaya, namely Rayu Manis, Kaluna Living, and LoveZane. The object of the research focused on the experiences, interactions, adaptive strategies, and interpretations of public space developed by these brands during participation in pop-up festivals. The brands were selected through purposive sampling based on several criteria: (1) consistent participation in pop-up festivals for at least the last two years, (2) representation of different sectors within the local creative industry, including culinary, lifestyle and homeware, and fashion accessories, and (3) active interaction with visitors during festival activities. These criteria were intended to ensure that the selected participants possessed sufficient experience and engagement relevant to the research objectives.

Rayu Manis represents the culinary sector through its specialization in gluten-free bakery products and healthy lifestyle branding. Kaluna Living represents the lifestyle and homeware sector with products emphasizing cheerful and emotionally driven home aesthetics. Meanwhile, LoveZane represents the fashion and accessory sector through handcrafted statement accessories with strong artistic and sustainability-oriented visual identities. The

diversity of these sectors enabled the study to capture varied interpretations and practices related to public space and festival participation.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and documentation analysis. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow flexibility in exploring participants' experiences while maintaining consistency with the research focus. Interviews were conducted with brand owners and booth attendants who were directly involved in festival operations and visitor interactions. The interviews explored participants' perceptions of public space, motivations for participating in festivals, strategies for audience engagement, experiences of collaboration, creative adaptation, and challenges encountered during festival participation. Interviews were conducted both on-site during festivals and outside festival schedules to allow deeper reflection from participants.

Participatory observation was conducted during several pop-up festivals attended by the selected brands throughout the research period. The researcher observed booth arrangements, visitor interactions, spatial dynamics, collaborative practices among vendors, and the overall atmosphere of the festival environment. Observation focused particularly on how brands utilized visual identity, spatial arrangement, and communication strategies to engage audiences within temporary public settings. During the observation process, the researcher also documented visitor behavior, crowd flow, social interaction patterns, and forms of spontaneous collaboration occurring within the festival spaces.

Documentation analysis complemented the interviews and observations through the examination of visual and textual materials related to festival participation. These materials included booth photographs, promotional posters, festival documentation, social media content, Instagram postings, brochures, branding visuals, and field notes. Documentation analysis helped strengthen contextual understanding regarding how brands visually construct their identities and communicate values within public festival environments.

In qualitative research, the researcher functions as the primary research instrument (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, reflexivity played an important role throughout the research process. The researcher maintained reflexive field notes to record observations, impressions, interpretations, and potential biases emerging during data collection and analysis. This process was conducted to maintain analytical awareness and strengthen interpretive rigor throughout the study.

The collected data were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis was selected because it allows flexibility in identifying recurring meanings, experiences, and patterns across qualitative data. The analysis process

involved several stages: (1) data familiarization through repeated reading of interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation materials; (2) initial coding to identify meaningful segments related to public space, interaction, learning, collaboration, visual identity, and creative adaptation; (3) categorization of codes into broader thematic patterns; (4) reviewing and refining themes to ensure coherence and relevance; and (5) interpreting the themes in relation to the theoretical frameworks employed in the study.

To strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were employed. First, data triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. Second, peer debriefing was carried out during the coding and interpretation process to minimize subjective bias and strengthen analytical consistency. Third, reflexive journaling was continuously maintained throughout the research process to critically examine the researcher's positionality and interpretations.

The findings were interpreted using Henri Lefebvre's (1991) theory of the production of space and the framework of creative placemaking proposed by Markusen and Gadwa (2010). Lefebvre's framework was used to understand how public space is socially produced through interactions, practices, and lived experiences occurring within festival environments. Meanwhile, creative placemaking provided an analytical lens for examining how temporary cultural events activate public spaces and foster community engagement, collaboration, and creative participation. Through these frameworks, pop-up festivals were analyzed not merely as commercial events, but as socio-spatial processes that shape relationships, identity expression, and community formation within the local creative ecosystem.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings derived from in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation analysis of three local brands participating in pop-up festivals in Surabaya. The findings are discussed thematically in relation to the theoretical frameworks of space production (Lefebvre, 1991) and creative placemaking (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010). The discussion highlights how temporary festivals shape creative experiences, social relations, and adaptive strategies among local brand actors within the urban public sphere. Through the integration of empirical findings and theoretical interpretation, public space emerges not merely as a physical setting, but as a site of learning, expression, negotiation, and community strengthening for local creative industries.

Table 1 Profile of Local Brands Participating in Pop-Up Festivals

Brand	Main Product	Year Established	Latest Pop-Up Location	Visual Style	Estimated Annual Participation
Rayu Manis @rayumanis	Gluten-Free Cake	2015	Pekan Seraya Vol. 1	Sweet, healthy, homey	Approximately 30 times
Kaluna Living @kalunaliving	Household Ceramic Products	2016	Kurasi Kalyan	Vibrant, cheerful, aesthetic	5–7 times
Zané @lovezane	Handmade Accessories	2021	Kurasi Kalyan	Contrast, artsy, expressive	More than 7 times

Resource: Research result 2025

For local brand owners, public space in pop-up festivals is no longer understood solely as a transactional arena, but rather as a social field where ideas, values, and identities converge and are articulated in living ways. Space is interpreted not as a passive container for products, but as a lived social environment where relationships, emotions, and brand performances unfold simultaneously. This finding strongly resonates with Lefebvre's (1991) concept of lived space, which emphasizes subjective spatial experiences shaped through everyday interactions, symbolic meanings, and social practices.

Table 2 Brand Orientations and Key Festival Activities

Brand	Brand Orientation	Meaning of Public Space	Key Activities at Festivals
Rayu Manis	Healthy & Aesthetic	A space to promote a healthy lifestyle that is beautiful and joyful	Thematic booth, testers, gluten-free product education
Kaluna Living	Cheerful & Homey	A visual medium to convey the brand's philosophy in a personal and reflective manner	Joyful product display, B2B networking
LoveZane	Statement & Artistic	A stage for brand visual expression; accessories as a narrative of style and identity	Strong visual showcase, limited pre-order customization

Source: Research result 2025

The three participating brands demonstrate different interpretations of public space according to their respective brand orientations. Rayu Manis, a healthy and aesthetic-oriented bakery brand, understands public space as a platform for introducing healthy lifestyles in ways that remain visually attractive and enjoyable. Through pastel-colored booths, gluten-free product testers, and educational brochures, the brand attempts to challenge the perception that healthy food is restrictive or unappealing. As expressed by the owner, "We want visitors to feel that healthy eating can be beautiful and enjoyable." This strategy illustrates how conceived space becomes narrative in nature, communicating values not merely through verbal explanations but through atmosphere, multisensory experiences, and emotional engagement.

Such practices also reflect Hesmondhalgh's (2013) notion of affective labour, where products are embedded with emotion, trust, and lifestyle aspirations.

Kaluna Living approaches public space through a philosophy of cheerful and home-centered living. Their booths are carefully designed using warm lighting, layered color palettes, floral arrangements, and tactile textures to evoke comfort and joy. Rather than emphasizing minimalist aesthetics, Kaluna seeks to recreate the emotional atmosphere of home within public settings. The founder explained, "We want people to feel happy when they see or touch Kaluna products. It's not just about function—it's about joy." In this context, the booth becomes what Lefebvre (1991) describes as representational space, where emotions and lived experiences are spatially performed. Kaluna's approach also aligns with creative placemaking principles (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010), as public space is transformed into an expressive environment that reflects the emotional intention and identity of the brand.

Meanwhile, LoveZane positions public space as a visual stage for bold and artistic self-expression. Through the use of dominant red hues, carefully curated layouts, and statement-based accessory displays, the brand emphasizes that accessories are not simply decorative products but extensions of identity and character. As stated by the owner, "We want people to walk past our booth and immediately feel that these are not just ordinary accessories. It's about character." Rather than relying heavily on direct interaction, LoveZane constructs a strong visual narrative as the primary mechanism of communication. This reflects Zukin's (1995) notion of the cultural performance of identity, where public space functions as a medium for projecting uniqueness and differentiation within increasingly homogenized urban environments.

Although each brand employs different strategies, all participants agreed that public spaces provide greater flexibility for contextual, affective, and reflective engagement compared to enclosed commercial spaces. Semi-public venues such as parks, cafés, and plazas are interpreted not simply as locations but as social ecosystems where brands can organically connect with existing communities. Within the framework of lived space, public space not only hosts activities but also shapes how brands understand audiences, interpret spatial conditions, and narrate their values. Consequently, pop-up festivals become collaborative and experimental arenas that allow local brands not merely to appear within the city but to coexist and interact with it.

The findings further demonstrate that public spaces in pop-up festivals function as social ecosystems where relationships, audience understanding, and strategic positioning are continuously negotiated. Local brands recognize that every festival space possesses its own

social image and ecosystem. Kaluna Living observed that visitor spending behavior often reflects broader lifestyle orientations. According to them, “If they can spend 50–100k just on coffee, we can predict they are also open to other lifestyle products. In contrast, public spaces like Balai Pemuda, which are free, tend to attract a more diverse audience with lower price expectations.” This highlights how space is interpreted socially rather than merely physically.

Interestingly, larger commercial festivals do not necessarily guarantee better outcomes. Brands often find that smaller and more thematic community-based festivals generate stronger engagement and higher conversion rates because visitors tend to possess specific interests and stronger emotional alignment with the brand’s narrative. Rayu Manis emphasized that “what’s important is not just the aesthetics, but the social context—who’s coming, what they’re there for, and how engaged they are.” Such findings indicate that local brands are not passive occupants of space but active interpreters of social dynamics. Public space becomes a social map through which brands learn visitor behaviors, identify market patterns, and formulate future strategies. Theoretically, this reflects Lefebvre’s (1991) concept of representational space, where space is continuously interpreted symbolically by its users.

In addition to functioning as social ecosystems, pop-up festivals also serve as practices of spatial activation. Public spaces are transformed through temporary yet meaningful interventions that generate experiences, relationships, and collective meaning. Drawing from Lefebvre’s (1991) spatial triad, these activations illustrate the intersection between conceived space, perceived space, and lived space. Rayu Manis activates space through sensory experiences involving pastel visuals, the aroma of gluten-free pastries, and educational interactions surrounding healthy lifestyles. Their booth functions not only as a site of consumption but also as a site of informal learning, reflecting Low’s (2000) pedagogical understanding of space.

Kaluna Living approaches spatial activation through contemplative and emotionally resonant atmospheres. Natural materials, warm lighting, and spatial responsiveness transform their booth into a vessel for communicating mindful living philosophies. Their selective participation in events based on value alignment demonstrates how space becomes a cultural signifier rather than merely a commercial opportunity. LoveZane, on the other hand, emphasizes sustainability and reflective engagement. Through recycled materials, consultation-based interactions, and value-driven conversations, the brand transforms its booth into a platform for emotional connection and environmental awareness. Across these cases, public space becomes expressive, participatory, and layered with meaning. Pop-up festivals therefore

function as practices of creative placemaking, where temporary spatial configurations become meaningful through collaborative social production.

The relational dimension of pop-up festivals also reveals their role in fostering social connections and community formation. Participation in festivals is not purely transactional but relational, creating opportunities for collaboration, mutual learning, and shared value formation. For Kaluna Living, festivals are essential because they provide opportunities for direct engagement unavailable within their primarily online business model. Through these spaces, they build relationships with local brands, event organizers, and government stakeholders. Informal conversations frequently evolve into collaborations, including bundled products and larger strategic projects. These interactions contribute to what Talmage et al. (2024) describe as creative social capital.

Similarly, Rayu Manis utilizes festivals as spaces for education and value communication. Product testers, brochures, and open conversations become tools for reshaping public perceptions regarding healthy eating. The booth also facilitates B2B relationships with collaborators who share similar values. In this context, the booth becomes both pedagogical and diplomatic, enabling the negotiation of meaning not only with consumers but also within the broader creative ecosystem. LoveZane, meanwhile, uses festivals as opportunities for consultation and audience reflection. Visitor feedback and conversations are documented and later integrated into product development strategies. Offline interactions also help the brand recognize geographical differences in audience preferences and sustainability awareness.

These interactions illustrate how public space acts as a network mediator. Shared booths, decoration exchanges, and spontaneous collaborations become forms of spatial practice that shape collaborative environments. The resulting communities are not solely economically driven but are grounded in shared values, empathy, and affective relationships. Networks developed during festivals often continue beyond the events themselves through online collaborations, creative partnerships, and ongoing communication. Public space, even when temporary, therefore functions as a nodal point within the urban creative ecosystem (Pratt, 2008), supporting collective identity formation and trust-building.

Table 3 Social Relations and Brand Impact at Festivals

Brand	Type of Social Relation	Impact or Output
Rayu Manis	Educational interaction with audiences on healthy food values; collaboration opportunities with aligned brands.	Increased public trust; expanded B2B network with shared-value collaborators
Kaluna Living	Relationship-building with local brands (bundling) and external stakeholders (event organizers, government).	Strategic network expansion; major project opportunities; enhanced brand positioning

LoveZane	Consultation-based interaction with visitors; collecting audience insights for product development	Audience loyalty; refined design strategy; value validation in diverse market contexts
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Resource: Fieldwork, 2025

Another important finding concerns the role of visual identity as a form of creative expression and spatial production. In pop-up festivals, visual identity functions not merely as branding but as a symbolic strategy for communicating values, shaping emotions, and claiming public space. Booths operate as spatial agents that project meaning into shared urban environments. Rayu Manis constructs a soft and feminine bakery atmosphere through pastel palettes, fresh pastry aromas, and clean displays that simultaneously educate and entice visitors. Kaluna Living combines bright fabrics, wooden elements, flowers, and layered textures to create cheerful and domestic atmospheres that evoke emotional hospitality. LoveZane employs a strong, red-centered palette and minimalist visual precision to maximize symbolic intensity and instant recognition.

Table 4 Visual Language and Adaptation Strategy of Local Brands

Brand	Core Visual Language	Visual Adaptation Strategy
Rayu Manis	Pastel, feminine, bakery-inspired	Flexible booth layout based on product; emphasis on aroma and display visibility
Kaluna Living	Vibrant, contrast-heavy, earthy garden/home vibes	Visuals adjusted to crowd flow and lighting; combining texture and emotion
LoveZane	Red-pink palette, clean, bold	Strict color consistency; minimal decor to maximize statement impact

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 5 Spatial Element Focus and Adaptive Strategies of Local Brands

Brand	Spatial Element of Focus	Adaptive Strategy	Creative Capacity Developed
Kaluna Living	Lighting	Adjusted lighting to enhance product color and texture	Recognized lighting as a visual language; curated spatial ambiance
Rayu Manis	Temperature & Humidity	Used closed display cases, portable chillers, and freshness-based tasting	Adapted to weather; ensured product quality through spatial design
LoveZane	Visitor flow & booth positioning	Chose strategic booth locations; analyzed festival themes and brand proximity	Designed visibility strategies; read spatial and thematic contexts effectively

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Importantly, these visual identities remain adaptable according to varying festival contexts. Rayu Manis modifies booth layouts depending on products and spatial conditions. Kaluna Living adjusts lighting and textures according to visitor flow and venue ambiance, while LoveZane maintains strict color consistency and strategic booth positioning to maximize visibility. These practices demonstrate that visual identity is not static but a form of spatial

responsiveness and adaptation. Furthermore, festivals involve the coexistence of two visual layers: (1) the collective visual identity curated by event organizers and (2) the individual visual identity projected by brands. This simultaneity reflects the interaction between conceived space and lived space, producing a multi-layered visual experience that enriches the festival environment.

The findings also reveal that pop-up festivals contribute significantly to the development of creative capacity and social learning. Festivals become socio-spatial laboratories where local brands learn through direct experience, experimentation, and adaptation. Kaluna Living discovered the importance of lighting in shaping emotional ambiance and product perception. Rayu Manis learned to adapt to environmental conditions such as heat and humidity through the use of enclosed displays and freshness-based tasting strategies. LoveZane recognized the significance of visitor flow, booth positioning, and thematic alignment in determining visibility and engagement.

These adaptive practices illustrate Lefebvre's (1991) theory of space production, where perceived, conceived, and lived spaces intersect dynamically. Brands simultaneously observe, adapt, and emotionally experience how space functions around them. This process also aligns with situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which argues that knowledge is constructed through contextual participation and lived practice. In this sense, creative capacity emerges not from formal instruction but from continuous interaction with dynamic and changing spatial environments.

Despite the positive potential of pop-up festivals, the findings also reveal tensions within the dynamics of public space. Participants emphasized that public space is not neutral but contested by economic, cultural, and political interests. Kaluna Living expressed concern regarding the underutilization of culturally significant public venues in Surabaya and compared local conditions unfavorably to more culturally vibrant cities such as Yogyakarta or Bali. Rayu Manis criticized the lack of professionalism among some event organizers, particularly regarding promotion and infrastructure support. LoveZane provided a more critical perspective by highlighting the dominance of commercial logic within festival organization, where quantity often takes precedence over quality and meaningful engagement.

These tensions reflect Lefebvre's (1991) concept of produced space, where space is continuously negotiated among actors with unequal power relations. Public space risks losing its regenerative and dialogical potential when commercial interests become dominant. Consequently, local brands develop adaptive strategies such as selectively participating in festivals, forming alliances with value-aligned brands, and seeking alternative venues. Public

space within pop-up festivals therefore reflects broader struggles surrounding authenticity, power, and community formation within local creative ecosystems.

Finally, participants collectively reimagined the ideal public space as one that supports emotional, participatory, and meaningful experiences rather than merely aesthetic or commercial functions. Their visions emerged directly from practical limitations encountered during festivals, including inadequate infrastructure, accessibility issues, and limited support for creative experimentation. Healthy food brands imagined multisensory parks that encourage educational engagement, home goods brands envisioned contemplative open-air environments, while expressive accessory brands desired flexible and modular spaces suitable for performances and installations.

These imagined spaces reflect Lefebvre's (1991) understanding of representational space as environments shaped by memory, identity, and lived experience. From a creative placemaking perspective, such visions demonstrate the potential for collaborative co-creation between communities, artists, and urban planners. However, the findings also expose inequalities regarding who can claim and shape public space. Brands with stronger networks, greater visibility, and higher production capacities often gain strategic booth placements and greater exposure, while newer or resource-limited creatives remain marginalized. As a result, festivals risk reproducing social and economic hierarchies despite their seemingly open and inclusive nature.

These findings suggest broader implications for urban public space development. Pop-up festivals should not only facilitate economic exchange but also intentionally democratize access, participation, and representation. Organizers and policymakers can support this by implementing open calls, subsidized spaces for emerging creatives, inclusive curatorial practices, and participatory decision-making processes. Without such efforts, the transformative potential of public space may become monopolized by dominant actors. Ultimately, pop-up festivals hold not only economic and aesthetic value but also political and ethical significance, requiring a rethinking of how access, voice, and authorship are distributed within temporary urban spaces.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that pop-up festivals function not only as temporary commercial events, but also as socially produced public spaces that support interaction, collaboration, and creative learning among local brands in Surabaya. The findings show that participation in pop-up festivals strengthens community relationships and contributes to creative capacity

development through direct interaction, collaborative engagement, and audience participation. In addition, local brands experience various forms of adaptive learning during festival participation, particularly in communication strategies, booth arrangement, visitor engagement, and spatial adaptation within temporary urban environments.

The research also reveals that public spaces within festival environments function as relational spaces that enable the formation of new networks, collaborative opportunities, and socio-cultural connections among local creative actors. The emergence of the “dual visual layer” further indicates that participation in festivals involves not only visual attraction, but also emotional and experiential interaction that shapes visitor perception and brand identity.

Theoretically, this study contributes to discussions on Lefebvre’s production of space and creative placemaking by emphasizing that temporary festivals should be understood as relational and socially negotiated environments rather than merely commercial spaces. Practically, the findings suggest that urban event organizers and policy makers should support more inclusive and collaborative festival environments that strengthen sustainable local creative ecosystems.

This research is limited to three local brands and specific festival contexts in Surabaya. Future studies may involve broader creative sectors or comparative urban settings to further explore the relationship between temporary festivals, public space, and community-based creative development.

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