

# Environmental Graphic Design of Sam Poo Kong Temple: How Effective and Impact on Visitors?

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**ABSTRACT :** This study investigates how effectively environmental graphic in Sam Poo Kong affects visitors. Environmental graphics are an introduction to the layout, packaged in an attractive and easy-to-understand visual display. This research is an environmental graphic with the object of study at Sam Poo Kong Temple, a historical building built in 1724. Until now, the structure is still preserved and is still used for prayer places. Besides that, Sam Poo Kong is also one of the tourist destinations in Semarang, Indonesia. This study uses a qualitative method. The data collection using observation and in-depth interviews. Respondents of this study were selected randomly. The results show that the Sam Poo Kong temple has complete environmental graphics. Environmental graphics are beneficial for visitors in getting information on places in the Sam Poo Kong neighborhood. The design on environmental graphics, which is old and not very attractive, does not significantly affect the enthusiasm of visitors to Sam Poo Kong itself and remains one of the tourist attractions in Semarang, which is full of visitors.

**KEYWORDS** -sign system, environmental graphic, icon, way finding, Sam Poo Kong

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has a cultural heritage that is still preserved and has existence from generation to generation. Changes from time to time create historical flashbacks of nations that live in history. It is also due to the local history developed in the community into oral traditions that exist today (Sarmidi, 2015). Semarang is one of Indonesia's cities, rich in historical value as the center of a great civilization in Central Java (Yuliati, 2013). Various places in the corner of the city are part of a historical journey that is still beautiful and firmly established (Hendro, 2015) beyond tens or even hundreds of years. This existence can be realized with the conservation of reserve buildings. In the pattern of conservation development (Butar-Butar, 2015), the reserve building then begins to function as a tourist destination to preserve it (Tonapa et al., 2015). One of the historical buildings is the Sam Poo Kong.

From the 15th century to the 19th century, a wave of immigrant communities from South Fukien, China, entered the archipelago (before becoming Indonesia in the 20th century) to trade (Mentari, 2017). The Chinese who are skilled in cultural and artistic works expressed these ideas in establishing architectural buildings, such as temples, temples, gates, walls, houses, and so on (Marcella, 2014). One of the architectural works of the Chinese community in the archipelago is Sam Poo Kong. Admiral Cheng Ho has traveled to various countries to conduct trade and spread Islam. Cheng Ho also gave many testimonies and wrote about his testimony regarding his travels to various countries, including Indonesia and civilizations in the Java region (Tanggok, 2006).

The establishment of this temple is often associated with Admiral Cheng Ho, a Chinese Muslim who brought great influence to the archipelago in the 15th century. To commemorate his arrival, the Chinese community founded Sam Poo Kong in 1724 (Yuanzhi, 2000). Until now, Sam Poo Kong still exists. In principle, it was founded as a place of worship for the Confucian religion founded at several points in the archipelago. Sam Poo Kong Semarang is the largest Klenteng in Java Island (Tanggok, 2019). In addition to

being a place of prayer and asking, Sam Poo Kong also functions as a tourist destination in Semarang. Even though it is a place of worship, the manager of Sam Poo Kong provides easy public access so that tourist visitors do not have difficulty and confusion when visiting (Harsritanto&Dwiyanto, 2009). One of the easier public accesses for visitors is through environmental graphics.

Environmental graphics are an introduction to the layout, packaged in an attractive and easy-to-understand visual display (Calori& Vanden, 2015). In simple terms, environmental graphics can be in the form of a direction in the form of an information board graphic (sign system) to make it easier for visitors to access the environment (Yunanto, 2013). The environmental graphic design seeks to achieve its goals and objectives, especially in the tourism environment, to provide as much information as possible and facilitate visitor accessibility (Purwaningsih, 2015). Along with the development of urban and regional layouts, environmental graphic design is an essential element. Environmental graphics are included in the “Wastu-Citra” theory, which means that they have a use-value (“wastu”) as well as aesthetic or aesthetic value (image), which makes them important in the concept of spatial planning in a tourism environment (Mangunwijaya, 2009).

One of the benefits of environmental graphics can make the visitor easier to get information and increase visitor arrivals. Visitors can provide information easily when they are in an environment. It can succeed in creating images and thoughts of the visitors who attended.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Sam Poo Kong**

The Sam Poo Kong Temple, founded in 1724 in Semarang, was built to honor Admiral Zheng He. At first, this temple only contained a simple cave with an altar for the Zheng He statue; then, it was renovated into a simple building supported by traditional wood and then renovated back into a large concrete building. The Sam Poo Kong Temple is managed by the Sam Poo Kong Foundation, founded in 1937. The Sam Poo Kong Temple building is a combination of Chinese and Javanese cultural characteristics in the architectural design of the temple building. The part that is characteristic of Chinese culture is on the roof of the Sam Poo Kong Temple. Chinese people still believe that the shape of the roof is by feng shui or the form that the gods protect. According to (Too, 1995), feng shui is the art of living in harmony with nature. The Chinese people believe it makes one get a lot of benefit, serenity, and prosperity from perfect balance with nature. We can see the characteristics of Javanese culture in the offerings and the burning ritual of incense and flowers at Kyai JuruMudiDampo Awang, the graves of Kyai and Nyai Tumpeng, and the prayer room of Kyai Jangkar. It has become the character of Javanese culture that carries out ritual activities (both individually and in groups) which are often carried out in this temple complex. Nowadays, Sam Poo Kong Temple, apart from functioning as a place of worship, also functions as a place of education and tourism.

### **2.2. Environmental Graphic Design (EGD)**

Environmental Graphic Design (EGD) is a graphic form in an environment in the form of a notice board (information design), signage, and ornaments on two-dimensional or three-dimensional objects in a building (Concept, 2008: 12). Environmental graphics are made to provide clarity and effectiveness in presenting information with a multi-disciplinary approach to communicating, combining design, engineering, psychology, communication science, and culture (Jen, 2008: 11). Another application to environmental graphics is the sign system. According to Saussure in the semiotic book of visual communication, a sign is a unity of two inseparable things. A sign (in the form of a word or image) has two aspects captured by the human senses called a signifier and a signified is a concept or meaning that is represented by the first aspect, namely a marker (Tinarbuko, 2009: 12). The sign system or sign system is a set of information media systems consisting of information signs, directions, and appeals. Providing image / visual elements can facilitate and provide convenience to visitors in finding information about the whereabouts of Sam Poo Kong's location and existing facilities.

### III. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method. This research aims at the Sam Poo Kong temple in Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. The reason for choosing Sam Poo Kong temple is because of a historical building used as a place of prayer until now. The data collection technique was done through visual observation of the Sam Poo Kong temple environment and interviewing visitors to the Sam Poo Kong temple. The respondents' selection was visitors who were in the area within the Sam Poo Kong temple and had already toured all areas of Sam Poo Kong. This is intended so that respondents really know the environmental graphics in Sam Poo Kong. In the interview with respondents, the researcher provided an environmental graphics and a wayfinding to make it easier and to remember reading these instructions at the Sam Poo Kong temple. There are two data analyzes conducted in this study, namely data analysis of environmental graphic design studies and data analysis of respondents' interviews.

### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1. Environmental Graphic Design of Sam Poo Kong Temple

As previously stated, environmental graphics are all forms of graphics in an environment, including signs, notice boards, and building nameplates that function to identify locations written in two or three-dimensional objects.



Information:

1. Men's toilet
2. Motorcycle parking
3. Large snake
4. Women's toilet
5. Bus parking
6. Do not disturb the snake
7. Archery rides
8. Drones can fly a maximum of 30 m
9. Counters
10. Information center
11. Photo of costume
12. Musholla
13. The entrance
14. Children's playground
15. Health posts

Figure 1. Environmental Graphic Design of Sam Poo Kong Temple

**Fig. 1** shows some environmental graphics that are located in the Sam Poo Kong Temple. The graphic contains some information, such as; entrance signs, parking areas, ticketing counters, places of worship, toilets, and appeals. The existence of these environmental graphics is expected to provide convenience for visitors to the location and existing facilities. The environmental graphics of the Sam Poo Kong Temple are complete, even though some of the graphics look outdated (old). The dominant color of the environmental graphic is red; it is because it follows the dominant red color of the Sam Poo Kong Temple.

Besides that, what is part of the neighborhood graphic of Sam Poo Kong Temple is wayfinding. This two-dimensional graphic can show the whole part of the Sam Poo Kong Temple to make it easier for tourists to find existing facilities (buildings) in the tourist attraction area.



**Figure 2.** Map of the Location of Sam Poo Kong Attractions

**Fig. 2** shows an environmental graphic in the form of a wayfinding at Sam Poo Kong Temple. The two-dimensional graphic provides an image that can make it easier for visitors to see the Sam Poo Kong



building from a different angle. So that visitors can find out each position of the building. It's just that the graphic looks very simple.

#### 4.2. Demographics of Research Respondents

In this study, Respondents were visitors who were in the area within the Sam Poo Kong temple and had already surrounded all areas of Sam Poo Kong. It is intended so that respondents know the environmental graphics in Sam Poo Kong.

**Table 1. Respondents' Demography**

| Name        | Gender | Age | Occupation   | Education          | Address  |
|-------------|--------|-----|--------------|--------------------|----------|
| Andre       | M      | 30  | Employee     | Bachelor Degree    | Semarang |
| Desta       | M      | 31  | Entrepreneur | Bachelor Degree    | Semarang |
| Indriastuti | F      | 40  | Housewife    | Senior High School | Semarang |
| Izza        | F      | 20  | Student      | Senior High School | Semarang |
| Sutikno     | M      | 50  | Employee     | Senior High School | Semarang |

There were five respondents selected with details of three men and two women where they were respondents who met the criteria of this study. Background two respondents have a Bachelor's degree, two respondents have a high school education, and one respondent has junior high school education. Two respondents work as private employees, one respondent works as an entrepreneur, one respondent is a housewife, and one respondent is a student.

**Table 2. Analysis of interest in the Sam Poo Kong Temple**

| Respondents | Interest in the Sam Poo Kong Temple   |
|-------------|---|
| Andre       | I visited Sam Poo Kong because I wanted entertainment and it was close to my house. My house is about 10 minutes from Sam Poo Kong.                                   |
| Desta       | I went to Sam Poo Kong because I wanted to have a vacation with my family, so I haven't been on vacation for a long time. Stay at home because of the Covid pandemic. |
| Indriastuti | I wanted to take a vacation with my family and happened to pass by Sam Poo Kong. So, I stopped by. The place is big and flashy.                                       |
| Izza        | I go to Sam Poo Kong want photos. And curious about this place. Because on Instagram, the photos of Sam Poo Kong are good.  |
| Sutikno     | I want to take a vacation with my family and stop by Sam Poo Kong for a photo because the place is so striking (color)  |

The interviews with respondents revealed that their reasons for visiting the Sam Poo Kong temple were different. After further analysis, three factors become the reasons for someone's interest in visiting the Sam Poo Kong temple. First, the Sam Poo Kong temple building attracts attention with its distinctive red color that is striking, making someone who sees it want to capture the moment in the form of a photo while at the Sam Poo Kong temple. Second, the Sam Poo Kong temple is considered a suitable place for a vacation. Finally, the Sam Poo Kong temple, close to the visitor's house, makes visitors interested in visiting the temple.

Thus, the results of the interview regarding the reasons for the visitor's interest in the Sam Poo Kong temple are 1) The unique and Instagramable Sam Poo Kong temple building; 2) Sam Poo Kong Temple is one of the tourist destinations for a vacation, and 3) The visitor's proximity to the Sam Poo Kong temple allows visitors to come to this temple many times.

**Table 3. Analysis of the importance of environmental graphics**

| <b>Respondents</b> | <b>The importance of environmental graphics</b>  |
|--------------------|--|
| Andre              | Road signs/directions are significant if you can't go back and forth.  |
| Desta              | Very important, especially if you don't know the direction of the toilet and the direction for parking.                      |
| Indriastuti        | Very important, this is to save time, you can not ask here and there   |
| Izza               | It is very important, and signs must be in the right location  |
| Sutikno            | It is essential, in particular, parking signs, the direction of toilets, places that are public or prohibited for the public |

Next were respondents who discussed the importance of the environment, which revealed that the environment is very important. Environmental graphics are important road directions owned by a place so that visitors are not confused when visiting certain places. According to respondents, environmental graphics serve as road directions and directions for toilets and parking lots. Furthermore, respondents revealed that the environmental graphics must be in the right location not to be visitors. Besides, respondents indicated that an environmental graphic would provide time because visitors do not have to ask around to see the place they want to visit.

**Table1. Analysis of Effectiveness and Benefits of Environmental Graphic**

| Respondents | The effectiveness and benefits of environmental graphics at the Sam Poo Kong Temple |
|-------------|---|
| Andre       | I saw the signs but didn't pay much attention.                                      |
| Desta       | I only pay attention to the parking sign.   |
| Indriastuti | The presence of signs or clues greatly helps it.                                    |
| Izza        | It helps; it's just that the signs or clues are dull and unattractive               |
| Sutikno     | I saw the sign, helping me to go around Sam Poo Kong                                |

Based on these data, environmental graphics are still considered beneficial for respondents or visitors to the Sam Poo Kong Temple. However, its effectiveness remains questionable due to several factors, including a dull mark and placement in a less strategic area. It has resulted in some respondents not paying too much attention to the existing environmental graphics.

Besides, environmental graphics that are already dull are factors for respondents or visitors who have decreased interest in paying attention to them, even though these environmental graphics are very useful.

**Table 5. Respondents' opinions about environmental graphics**

| Respondents | Availability of Environmental Graphics  |
|-------------|---|
| Andre       | The design is unattractive. But the instructions are complete. Everything has its mark.                                 |
| Desta       | The important thing is there are instructions, but if possible, please update it because it's old (something is broken) |
| Indriastuti | The instructions are sufficient for me, but if possible, make a new, more interesting one                               |
| Izza        | The design is unattractive  |
| Sutikno     | I think the instructions are complete.  |

Furthermore, it is the respondent's opinion regarding environmental graphic design. We cannot deny that an attractive design is also a good factor for environmental graphics. Four out of five respondents stated that the interest in environmental graphics at Sam Poo Kong Temple was due to interesting factors.

The environmental graphics at the Sam Poo Kong Temple are considered old and unattractive even though respondents think they are pretty complete and helpful. The absence of special attention due to design updates made the respondents' interest (visitors to the Sam Poo Kong temple), decreased, even though it was considered complete.

**Table2. Respondents' Satisfaction on the Environmental Graphic Design of the Sam Poo Kong Temple**

| Respondents | Environmental Graphic Design Satisfaction of the Sam Poo Kong Temple  |
|-------------|---|
| Andre       | Even though the signs or design directions are less attractive, I am satisfied to go here.  |
| Desta       | The environmental graphics are not attractive, but it's okay; the important thing is the place is interesting.                        |
| Indriastuti | The place is beautiful and suitable for vacation spots, even though the environmental graphics are not attractive.                    |
| Izza        | The place is cool, but it would be cool if the environmental graphics were made extraordinary too.                                    |
| Sutikno     | I am satisfied because this historical place is still well maintained if possible, improving the environmental graphics to be better. |

The analysis results based on the respondents' answers can be concluded that all respondents were satisfied to choose Sam Poo Kong Temple as a tourist place and spend their vacation time. The Sam Poo Kong

Temple is considered attractive with its distinctive buildings and is still well preserved in some parts, although for its environmental graphics, it is outdated and unattractive.

These are the results of environmental graphic analysis at Sam Poo Kong Temple from the interest in Sam Poo Kong Temple, the importance of environmental graphics, effectiveness, and visitor response and satisfaction to environmental graphics. We can understand that the existence of environmental graphics at Sam Poo Kong Temple has benefits for visitors, as according to (Parker, 1981: 25) that environmental graphics not only provide clues about "what" but can also be used to show "where, and how".

Even though it has benefits, the results of the analysis are based on respondents' answers, environmental graphics still have shortcomings such as unattractive and old-looking graphic designs, this can be seen from Figure 1 such as motorbike parking icon and drone icon with a maximum flight of 30 m which looks no longer attractive. However, it is also concluded that it does not reduce visitors' interest in Sam Poo Kong Temple because Sam Poo Kong Temple has become an attractive tourist choice based on its distinctive buildings. According to (Kim et al. 2011), the ability to read graphics can be viewed from the shape or marker system itself, while we can only interpret the diversity and use after the marker system can be used for the activities and activities of various groups of society.

## V. CONCLUSION

Sam Poo Kong Temple is one of the historical buildings in Indonesia, which was built in 1724 and is one of the tourist destinations in Semarang, Indonesia. In 2020 and 2021, the number of visitors has dramatically decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sam Poo Kong Temple has complete environmental graphics and is useful for visitors who want to spend their vacation time there. This benefit is felt by visitors in recognizing the area and layout of the Sam Poo Kong Temple. Although this complete environmental graphic still lacks an unattractive and old design, it still does not reduce visitors' interest in the Sam Poo Kong Temple's beauty. It is one of the famous tourist objects with distinctive buildings in Semarang. The limitations of this study only focus on the environmental graphics study of the Sam Poo Kong Temple and the limited number of research respondents due to government regulations regarding avoiding crowds and physical distancing.

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