

Experiencing Tradition Anew: Brand Experience in Leisure Consumption at Keroncong Plesiran

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Keroncong Plesiran, an open-air keroncong festival first held in 2016 and now marking its tenth anniversary, is constructed and experienced as a contemporary leisure brand that reinterprets a heritage music genre. Analysis followed the steps of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to describe the sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral dimensions of the brand experience. Documentary evidence of Generation Z attendance shows the brand experienced primarily through aesthetic repackaging: youthful performers, contemporary arrangements, and an outdoor, informal staging that make a once "old-fashioned" genre feel relatable, corroborating prior findings that Keroncong Plesiran has renewed youth appreciation of keroncong. For small families, a repeat visitor described the festival as the most family-friendly concert she knows, an orderly, seated audience that makes bringing children feel safe and welcoming while still allowing her to enjoy a beautiful orchestral performance on a family holiday. The study contributes a phenomenological, practitioner- and visitor-grounded account of brand experience in a heritage-leisure context and offers implications for cultural event branding and heritage tourism management.

Keywords: Brand_Experience; Leisure_Consumption; Keroncong; Cultural Branding.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's leisure landscape is undergoing a quiet reinvention in which traditional art forms once associated with an older generation are being repackaged as contemporary experiences. Keroncong, a hybrid genre born from centuries of cultural exchange between Portuguese and Nusantara musical traditions, has historically carried connotations of nostalgia and formality. In recent years, however, community-driven initiatives have begun to stage keroncong not as a museum piece but as a leisure product: an open-air, festival-style event performed with an open, improvisational format that blends classical keroncong arrangement with jazz, pop, and orchestral influences without abandoning the genre's original soft, emotive character (Rilis.id, 2025).

Keroncong Plesiran exemplifies this shift. Initiated in 2016 by the community Symphony Kerontjong Moeda, the event explicitly frames itself around "plesiran", a Javanese term for a leisurely excursion, positioning keroncong appreciation alongside recreation, natural or heritage scenery, and social gathering. What began as an unticketed community gathering has, over a decade, grown into one of Yogyakarta's most iconic music festivals: its tenth edition in 2026 was staged for the first time at the UNESCO World Heritage site of Prambanan Temple under the theme "Wander with the Rhythm of Keroncong," complete with a commemorative book, a compilation album by ten young keroncong groups from across Indonesia, and a Lifetime Achievement Award for keroncong doyenne Waldjinah (Koranbernas.id, 2026).

This growth trajectory is echoed in prior academic research. Pramestika (2018), in a creative-management thesis on Keroncong Plesiran staged at the Mangunan Pine Forest, found that of 300 visitor questionnaires collected, 91% of respondents reported experiencing both recreational and educational value, supporting the event's dual mission of entertainment and heritage education. Evryano (2024), examining the management collaboration between Symphony Kerontjong Moeda and the Yogyakarta Tourism Office, similarly describes Keroncong Plesiran as a well-established, strategically managed event, and notes, citing Huda (2021), that the festival stands as evidence that keroncong can still attract appreciation from younger audiences despite the genre's traditionally older fan base.

Brand experience theory offers a complementary lens for understanding this phenomenon. Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) conceptualize brand experience as a multidimensional construct comprising sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli. While prior studies on Keroncong Plesiran have focused on event management strategy (Evryano, 2024) and audience satisfaction measured through questionnaires (Pramestika, 2018), less attention has been paid to how the brand is subjectively experienced and made meaningful by the practitioners who build it and the distinct audience segments it targets, particularly Generation Z, who increasingly discover the festival through digital content, and small families, for whom the event is deliberately designed as an intergenerational leisure space.

This gap motivates the present study. Rather than measuring satisfaction through structured questionnaires, this study uses a qualitative phenomenological approach to describe how Keroncong Plesiran's brand experience is constructed by the practitioners most directly responsible for shaping it and understood by the audiences it serves, triangulated with documentary evidence of how visitors, including Generation Z attendees, have publicly described their own experience of the event. The study aims to explore how tradition is reinterpreted as a leisure brand at Keroncong Plesiran across the sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral dimensions of brand experience, with particular attention to Generation Z and small-family audiences.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design using an interpretative phenomenological approach, selected because the research question concerns how individuals subjectively experience and make meaning of a brand, an inquiry better addressed through rich, first-person accounts than through predetermined, quantifiable indicators (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Primary data were collected through in-depth, semi structured interviews with three key informants selected purposively to represent both sides of the brand relationship: Erie Setiawan, curator and co-founder of Symphony Kerontjong Moeda, and Ari Kancil, founder and creative architect of Keroncong Plesiran, who together provided the practitioner perspective on how the brand was built and managed; and Cita, a visitor domiciled in Surabaya who has attended Keroncong Plesiran four times, who provided a consumer perspective representing the small-family segment of the audience. Interviews with Erie Setiawan and Ari Kancil were conducted by phone, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim; the interview with Cita was conducted directly and recorded in field notes.

These primary interviews were triangulated with documentary and secondary data on the audience-facing side of the brand, particularly regarding Generation Z attendance: published visitor testimonies from Keroncong Plesiran Vol. 7 reported by Froyonion.com (2023); official festival information on family-oriented programming reported by Koranbernas.id (2026) and Jogjaprov.go.id (2026); and prior academic findings on visitor perception from Pramestika (2018) and Evryano (2024, citing Huda, 2021). This combination of practitioner interviews, a visitor interview, and documentary audience data allowed the

study to examine both how the brand experience is intentionally constructed and how it is received, without conflating the different data sources.

Data analysis followed the steps of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009): repeated reading of transcripts and documents for familiarization; open coding to identify significant statements; clustering codes into emergent themes; and cross-source analysis to identify convergent and divergent themes across the practitioner, visitor, and documentary data, culminating in a description of the essence of the brand experience across its sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral dimensions. Trustworthiness was addressed through source triangulation across three informants and four independent documentary sources, and through thick description to support transferability.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 summarizes the five key informants whose interviews form the primary data of this study, alongside their role in the keroncong leisure-branding ecosystem.

Table 1. Profile of Key Informants

Informant	Role / Affiliation	Contribution to This Study
Erie Setiawan	Curator/co-founder, Symphony Kerontjong Moeda; ecosystem-building & UNESCO nomination advocate	Origins, curation logic, and ecosystem-management strategy of Keroncong Plesiran
Ari Kancil (Ari Kantjil)	Founder and creative architect, Keroncong Plesiran / Symphony Kerontjong Moeda	Brand evolution from free grassroots event to a ticketed, nationally scaled festival; digital marketing strategy
Cita	Repeat visitor domiciled in Surabaya; four-time attendee, representing the small-family consumption segment	First-hand account of the festival's family-friendly atmosphere and audience conduct

Source: Primary interview data (2026)

Analysis of the interview and documentary data produced four interrelated themes corresponding to the dimensions of brand experience.

3.1 From a Grassroots Excursion Idea to a Ticketed Leisure Brand

Erie Setiawan recounted that the idea to “bundle” keroncong with tourism (plesiran, meaning an outing or picnic) was seen from the outset as a marketable and previously untried format in Indonesia; the first edition in 2016 ran without ticketing, financed collectively through sponsors and donors while the organizers explored various tourism sites around Yogyakarta. Ari Kancil described a similar trajectory: early editions at sites such as Bukit Lintang Sewu drew a few thousand visitors, but a video of the event uploaded to YouTube drew several million views, prompting the local tourism office to commit to a continuing contract. Subsequent editions held at Tebing Breksi drew crowds so large, by his account around 25,000 people, that the organizers introduced ticketing from the third edition onward specifically to manage crowd capacity, a decision Evryano (2024) also documents as a deliberate visitor-control strategy. This sensory and behavioral genesis, an outdoor, nature-set event whose scale grew organically before being formalized, culminated in the festival's

tenth-anniversary staging at Prambanan Temple in 2026, a UNESCO World Heritage site chosen specifically for its cultural weight (Koranbernas.id, 2026).

3.2 The Digital Ecosystem as the Engine of Brand Discovery

Ari Kancil described digital promotion as the backbone of the brand's growth: YouTube content, social media, and paid influencer endorsement (KOL) were, in his account, the most effective and least costly channels, supplemented by conventional media such as printed banners. He noted that reaching audiences beyond an existing follower base increasingly requires paid advertising, reflecting a shift from purely organic virality toward a more deliberate, budgeted digital strategy as the festival scaled up. Erie Setiawan's account of the festival's early video going viral on YouTube, drawing several million views and prompting the tourism office to commit to a continuing contract, illustrates how this digital visibility preceded and enabled the brand's later physical growth. This is consistent with Rilis.id's (2025) observation that Symphony Kerontjong Moeda's improvisational, cross-genre format is itself designed for broad digital reach, extending keroncong's audience beyond its traditional base.

3.3 Reframing Tradition for Generation Z

Neither Erie Setiawan nor Ari Kancil is a member of the festival's core Generation Z audience, but both described a deliberate strategy of staffing performances with young musicians and adopting a symphonic, genre-blending format rather than a purist one, precisely so that the brand would feel current rather than nostalgic for its own sake. This strategic intent is corroborated by documentary evidence from Keroncong Plesiran Vol. 7. Froyonion's (2023) coverage reported that the audience was dominated by young attendees, several of whom traveled from outside Yogyakarta specifically for the event; one visitor, a musician himself, described being unable to resist dancing once a veteran performer took the stage and observed that keroncong arrangements were increasingly requested at weddings in place of conventional bands. Another attendee described the festival as an innovation that made keroncong approachable, contrasting its outdoor, bean-bag seating and youth-led promotion with the indoor, formally seated concerts of the past.

These documentary accounts align with Huda's (2021, as cited in Evryano, 2024) conclusion that Keroncong Plesiran demonstrates keroncong's renewed capacity to attract youth appreciation, and extend it by showing that the appeal operates primarily through aesthetic reinvention, youthful performers, an outdoor and informal setting, and a genre-blending format, rather than a revival of the genre's traditional form.

3.4 Family as a Deliberate Design Target

Beyond its appeal to individual young visitors, Keroncong Plesiran has increasingly been designed as a family-oriented leisure space, and this design is directly reflected in how it is experienced by family visitors. Cita, a visitor domiciled in Surabaya who has attended the festival four times, described it as the most family-friendly concert she knows: the audience sits in an orderly manner, and bringing children along feels safe and welcoming, while she is still able to enjoy a beautiful orchestral performance as part of a family holiday. Her account, built across four repeat visits, echoes the festival's tenth-anniversary infrastructure, a dedicated Kids Area (Among Bocah) with children's activities, free entry for visitors under seven, a Lounge Plesiran, and a Panggung Lirih curating nostalgic footage from earlier festival volumes for cross-generational enjoyment (Koranbernas.id, 2026; Jogjaprovo.go.id, 2026). It also resonates with Pramestika's (2018) finding that 91% of surveyed visitors experienced the event as offering both recreation and education, a dual value proposition especially relevant

to parents seeking a leisure outing with cultural benefits for their children. Cita's repeated attendance itself illustrates the behavioral dimension of brand experience: a family leisure ritual returned to across multiple years rather than a one-off outing.

3.5 Convergent Insight: A Brand Bridging Two Consumption Logics

Taken together, the practitioner, visitor, and documentary data suggest that Keroncong Plesiran succeeds in “experiencing tradition anew” because its brand experience is flexible enough to accommodate divergent audience motivations without diluting its cultural core. Figure 1 summarizes how the sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral dimensions identified across the interviews converge into two distinct, audience-specific meanings: for Generation Z, the brand offers relevance through aesthetic reinvention and an approachable, informal staging; for small families such as Cita's, it offers continuity through a safe, orderly, intergenerational leisure ritual worth returning to. The festival's tenth-anniversary decision to simultaneously honor a keroncong maestro through a Lifetime Achievement Award while releasing a compilation album from ten young keroncong groups (Koranbernas.id, 2026) can itself be read as an institutional embodiment of this bridging logic, deliberately holding legacy and reinvention within a single brand moment.

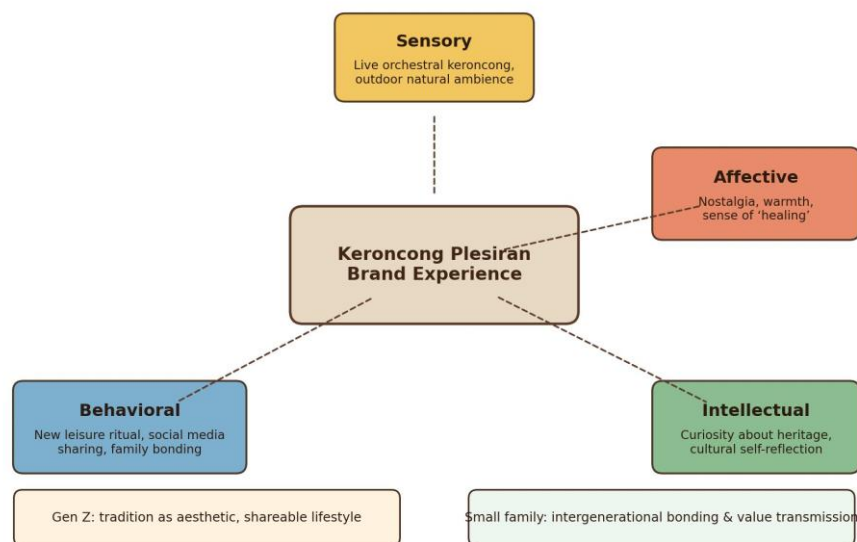


Figure 1. The Four Dimensions of Keroncong Plesiran's Brand Experience

Source: Authors' analysis of informant interviews and documentary data (2026)

This dual capacity aligns with the experience economy perspective (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), which holds that memorable experiences, rather than the product itself, sustain consumer engagement over time, while extending brand experience theory (Brakus et al., 2009) into a heritage-leisure context in which the brand's cultural weight adds a layer of meaning beyond typical commercial experiences.

4. CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore how Keroncong Plesiran's brand experience reinterprets tradition within leisure consumption, drawing on interviews with the festival's curator and founder, a repeat small-family visitor, and documentary evidence of Generation Z audience response. The findings show that the brand was deliberately built from a grassroots excursion

idea into a ticketed national festival, propelled by an organic and paid digital ecosystem, and is now experienced differently across audience segments: documentary evidence suggests Generation Z engages with it as an aesthetic, approachable lifestyle experience, while a repeat family visitor described it as a deliberately designed, orderly, and safe intergenerational leisure ritual worth returning to across multiple years.

These findings imply that cultural and heritage brands seeking to remain relevant need not choose between preservation and reinvention; a well-designed leisure experience, reinforced by digital content strategy and physical family-friendly infrastructure, can hold both meanings simultaneously for different audience segments. For event organizers and cultural tourism managers, this suggests the value of deliberately pairing youth-oriented staging and content with family-oriented physical design within a single brand.

This study is limited by its reliance on two practitioner interviews, a single family-visitor interview, and documentary audience data rather than a larger set of original in-depth interviews with visiting Generation Z individuals and multiple family units; consumer-side interpretations, particularly regarding Generation Z, are therefore triangulated through documentary sources rather than directly elicited from a broader sample. Future research could extend this work through primary phenomenological fieldwork with a larger number of visitors on-site at Keroncong Plesiran, or through comparative case studies across other traditional-music leisure brands undergoing similar digital and generational reinvention.

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