

Public Perception Of Teluk Betung Selatan In The Development Of Chinatown In Teluk Betung Selatan

Nicholas Effendi¹, Hanindyalaila Pienrasmi², M Denu Poyo³

^{1,2,3} Communication Studies Program, Faculty of Social and Political Science,
Bandar Lampung University, Indonesia

Corresponding Email : nicholaseffendi45@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores public perceptions of the Chinatown development in Teluk Betung Selatan, which has generated a range of responses, including both support and opposition. Perception in communication refers to the absorption of information through the senses, influenced by external stimuli, and can result in either positive or negative attitudes toward a given situation. In this context, community perceptions are shaped by the extent of their involvement, access to information, and experience of the development's impact either directly or indirectly. This research employs a qualitative approach, using data collection techniques such as in-depth interviews with informants from various backgrounds, direct field observation to capture the ongoing social dynamics, and documentation of relevant records and literature to strengthen the empirical data. Data validity is ensured through source triangulation, which aims to confirm the accuracy, consistency, and credibility of information obtained from multiple sources. The collected data is analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing to provide a comprehensive picture of community perceptions. The findings indicate that the Chinatown development is perceived by some community members as an opportunity to boost the local economy, promote tourism, and revitalize the Teluk Betung Selatan area, which was previously considered underdeveloped. However, the study also reveals concerns among parts of the community regarding the potential loss of local identity due to the dominance of external cultural symbols that lack inclusive narratives. Additionally, the public highlighted the limited community involvement in the planning and decision-making processes, creating the impression that the project was executed in a top-down manner. This has contributed to negative perceptions of the development. These findings emphasize the importance of transparent communication, active community participation, and efforts to balance the preservation of local identity with urban development.

Keywords: Chinatown, Community, Identity, Development, Perception

INTRODUCTION

Perception is an inseparable part of human life, often regarded as the core of communication. Perception depends on communication, and conversely, communication also relies on perception. Communication occurs when a person intends to convey information to others and can only be effective when the message is delivered appropriately and understood without distortion. Essentially, perception is a cognitive process experienced by every individual in understanding information about their environment through vision, hearing, feeling, experience, and smell (Musdhalifa & Syaifudin, 2023).

Perception arises due to external stimuli that influence an individual through their five senses. These stimuli are then selected, organized, and interpreted according to each person's unique perspective. Based on these definitions, perception can be understood as the result of sensory stimulation, which is processed and given meaning according to an individual's experience and knowledge (Nisa et al., 2023). As a result, perception may

lead to different views of reality, which subsequently shape attitudes and behaviors, either positively or negatively, depending on how individuals interpret the stimuli.

The formation of perception can significantly influence social interactions, decision-making, and potential conflicts within a community. This is evident in the case of the Chinatown development project in Teluk Betung Selatan, which has triggered both positive and negative responses from local residents. While some view the project favorably as a step toward economic growth, others express concerns about cultural implications and a perceived lack of community involvement. Public perceptions toward the project ultimately determine the level of acceptance or rejection among the community, highlighting the crucial role of perception in shaping social responses to development initiatives.

According to a Kompas.com report titled "*Pemkot Bandar Lampung Mulai Pembangunan Chinatown*", the project officially commenced on May 20, 2024, marked by a groundbreaking ceremony on Jalan Ikan Hiu, Teluk Betung Selatan. The development includes building four entrance gates and two exit gates, improving sidewalks and roads, and installing lamps with Chinese-style ornaments (Wadrianto, 2024). Furthermore, Saibumi.com reports that the Chinatown development is intended not only to serve as a culinary tourism hub but also as a destination for visitors from other regions (Kurniawan, 2024). These infrastructural upgrades aim to enhance the area's appeal while introducing elements of cultural heritage.

However, the project has also raised concerns that may lead to social tension if not addressed properly by the government. As reported by Kumparan in the article "*Progres Pembangunan Chinatown di Bandar Lampung, Anggaran Tahap 1 Capai Rp3 M*", differing perspectives and interests among residents have contributed to debate over the initiative. Some residents oppose the construction, arguing that the pagoda monument reflects Chinese cultural identity rather than local Lampung traditions (Nurdiah, 2024). They believe a monument representing local heritage would be more appropriate, illustrating how cultural values shape public responses to urban projects.

Despite its economic potential, the Chinatown development continues to face challenges rooted in differing community expectations. Some residents view the project as an opportunity to increase tourism and create new jobs, while others worry about potential threats to social stability, widening disparities, or the erosion of local identity. These conflicting perceptions underscore the importance of transparent communication, cultural sensitivity, and active participation from the community in the planning process. Without these considerations, the project risks being perceived as a top-down initiative lacking inclusivity and shared ownership.

Based on these dynamics, this research formulates two main questions: How do residents perceive the Chinatown development positively? and How do they perceive it negatively? Accordingly, the objectives of this study are twofold: (1) to identify the positive perceptions of the community regarding the Chinatown development in Teluk Betung Selatan, and (2) to identify the negative perceptions that arise from the same initiative. The findings are expected to provide insights into how public perceptions influence the acceptance, implementation, and sustainability of culturally significant urban development projects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Perception

The term perception originates from the English word *perception*, which refers to responses, impressions, or interpretations of an object. In the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), perception is defined as a direct response or acceptance of an object through the senses and plays a crucial role in shaping individual attitudes and behaviors (Nisa et al., 2023). Psychologically, perception is understood as the process of organizing sensory information into conscious awareness of the surrounding environment, including self-awareness (Nisa et al., 2023). Priansa in (Larasati, 2019) describes perception as the way individuals view the world, filtering and organizing stimuli into meaningful representations.

Nitisusastro in (Larasati, 2019) emphasizes that perception influences decision-making and is reflected in a person's emotions, thought patterns, and experiences. Desiderato in (Musdhalifa & Syaifudin, 2023) defines perception as an individual's experience of objects or events obtained through interpreting information. Robbins further adds that perception is the process of organizing and interpreting sensory impressions to understand the environment. Hence, perception is an active and subjective cognitive process shaped by past experiences, knowledge, and emotional states (Megawanti et al., 2020).

Lesmana in (Nisa et al., 2023) outlines three stages of perception: receiving stimuli, processing information through selection and organization, and forming cognitive responses influenced by experience and knowledge. Gitosudarmo and Sudita in (Nisa et al., 2023) also emphasize that perception involves attention, selection, organization, and interpretation of stimuli from the environment. External factors such as stimulus intensity, object size, contrast, repetition, and movement affect the selection process, while internal factors include motivation, values, personality, and prior experience (Musdhalifa & Syaifudin, 2023).

Nugroho J. Setiadi in (Larasati, 2019) argues that perception is influenced by vision, object characteristics, attitudes, interests, past experiences, and expectations. Similarly, Rahmawati in (Nisa et al., 2023) distinguishes between object perception and social perception. While the former involves physical observation, the latter involves interpreting human behavior through verbal and non-verbal cues and may be prone to bias. Ultimately, perception significantly determines how individuals interpret reality, influencing their attitudes, decisions, and actions (Akbar, 2015).

B. Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R)

According to Yasir in (Abidin Andi Rahmat & Mustika, 2020), the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) theory was introduced by Hovland in 1953. Originating from psychology, it was later applied in communication studies because both fields focus on human behavior, including attitudes, opinions, and perceptions. The core assumption of this theory is that behavioral change depends on the quality of stimuli delivered to the organism (the receiver of the message).

Efendy in (Abidin Andi Rahmat & Mustika, 2020) emphasizes that the S-O-R model highlights how a message can trigger a response from the receiver through a specific cognitive process. The main components include stimulus (the message), organism (the

receiver who processes the message), and response (the reaction after processing). Lasswell's model also complements this framework by identifying five key elements of effective communication: *Who, Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom, and With What Effect* (Kurniawan, 2018).

Behaviorist perspectives suggest that repeated pairing of stimulus and response can form predictable patterns of behavior (Mujab & Kamal, 2021). Stimuli may be physical or social and can trigger overt responses (observable opinions) or covert responses (internal attitudes) (Chasanah, 2020). Keller & Schoenfeld in (Chasanah, 2020) classify stimuli into three functions: arousal (directly triggers response), discrimination (signals potential response), and reinforcement (strengthens response through positive or negative consequences).

The success of applying the S-O-R model, as Fisher in (Abidin Andi Rahmat & Mustika, 2020) notes, depends on the communicator's credibility, the appropriateness of communication channels, and the receiver's psychological characteristics. Ultimately, communication is considered effective when the stimulus captures attention, is understood, and elicits a response that may lead to a change in attitude or behavior.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology employed to explore community perceptions regarding the Chinatown development project in Teluk Betung Selatan. The research adopts a qualitative approach, emphasizing a deep understanding of social phenomena rather than numerical measurement. Within this framework, the researcher functions as the primary instrument, engaging directly in data collection, observation, and interpretation. The interpretive paradigm underpins this approach, viewing social reality as subjective and shaped by individual experiences, knowledge, and cultural context.

The study was conducted in Teluk Betung Selatan, particularly focusing on Pesawahan and Teluk Betung villages, located within a 200-meter radius of the Chinatown construction site. This location was chosen due to its direct relevance to the affected community and its strategic role in Bandar Lampung's development plan. Data collection was carried out over two months, from June to July 2025, coinciding with ongoing construction activities to capture residents' immediate perceptions. The proximity to Universitas Bandar Lampung (about 9.5–10.2 km) facilitated frequent field visits and direct engagement with participants.

To provide a comprehensive context, the chapter describes the social and demographic characteristics of the local community. The population comprises various ethnic groups, including Lampungese, Javanese, and Chinese, reflecting a long history of multicultural interaction. Many residents rely on small-scale trading, services, and informal economic activities, highlighting their dependence on local infrastructure and tourism for livelihood. According to official records, the combined population of Pesawahan and Teluk Betung reaches 16,532, with Pesawahan hosting the larger share of inhabitants.

The research required diverse types of data to examine perceptions accurately. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and direct observation, while secondary data were gathered from documentation, such as photographs, government reports, and previous studies. Observational methods focused on non-verbal cues and

everyday community behavior, offering implicit insights into attitudes toward the development project. Documentation served to verify field findings and provide additional evidence to support the validity of interpretations.

Informants were categorized into key, main, and supporting groups based on their roles and relevance to the research objectives. The key informant was the Head of Teluk Betung Selatan Subdistrict, chosen for his authoritative knowledge of community dynamics and development policy. Main informants comprised 26 local residents, selected to represent variations in age, gender, educational background, and social roles. Supporting informants included community leaders and government representatives who contributed contextual perspectives and policy insights.

The demographic profile of informants reveals a diverse range of viewpoints shaped by age and education. A majority of respondents had completed high school, while others held college degrees or junior high school certificates, and a small number had minimal formal education. Age distribution ranged from individuals under 30 to those over 70, with most respondents falling between 50 and 69 years old. This diversity enriched the dataset, allowing the research to capture both progressive and conservative attitudes toward the Chinatown development.

Data collection techniques were carefully structured to ensure depth and reliability. Interviews provided detailed accounts of residents' opinions, expectations, and concerns, while observations captured subtle behavioral indicators of support or resistance. Documentation of project progress and official communications was used to triangulate findings, strengthening the credibility of the research. Triangulation was essential to confirm consistency between different sources and perspectives, ensuring that interpretations were grounded in verifiable evidence.

Data processing and analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which involves three key stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction entailed organizing, summarizing, and coding the raw data collected from interviews, observations, and documents. Data display involved arranging information systematically in tables and narrative formats to reveal emerging patterns and themes. Finally, conclusion drawing provided interpretative insights, linking the findings to the study's theoretical framework and research objectives.

This chapter establishes a methodological foundation for the study, ensuring that subsequent findings are supported by systematic and credible research practices. By integrating qualitative inquiry, demographic profiling, and triangulated data collection, the study is positioned to deliver a nuanced understanding of community perceptions. The methodological rigor presented here also highlights the researcher's commitment to capturing both the supportive and critical perspectives surrounding the Chinatown project.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Positive Community Perceptions toward the Development

The research reveals that many residents perceive the Chinatown project as a beneficial initiative that can revitalize Teluk Betung Selatan. These positive perceptions are largely driven by the expectation of economic growth, improved infrastructure, and

increased tourism potential. Participants believe that the development will bring modern facilities, aesthetic enhancements, and new business opportunities that may improve the standard of living. The optimism surrounding the project is also tied to hopes of transforming the district into a vibrant culinary and cultural destination capable of attracting visitors from within and outside Bandar Lampung.

Economic expectations play a central role in shaping these positive views. Residents anticipate that the Chinatown area will generate new sources of income through culinary tourism, small-scale trade, and other supporting businesses. The local economy, which relies heavily on informal sectors, is expected to benefit significantly from the influx of visitors and the subsequent rise in demand for food, souvenirs, and cultural products. Many respondents indicated that such growth could encourage broader modernization efforts and help close the developmental gap between Teluk Betung Selatan and other districts.

In addition to economic prospects, positive perceptions also reflect acceptance of urban development initiatives led by the local government. Residents supportive of the project believe that improvements in roads, pedestrian access, lighting, and other public amenities will elevate the overall image of the area. Furthermore, the inclusion of Chinese-inspired architecture and cultural elements is seen by some as a symbol of diversity and progress rather than a threat to local identity. These residents consider the Chinatown project as a step toward positioning Teluk Betung Selatan as a hub of multicultural harmony and inclusive urban growth.

Hopes for long-term sustainability further strengthen positive sentiments. Several participants expressed confidence that the development will not only benefit the present generation but also serve as a lasting asset for future ones. The project is perceived as a potential landmark that blends cultural preservation with modernization, thereby ensuring that the area maintains its relevance and appeal over time. Such expectations highlight a forward-looking perspective that values economic advancement, social vitality, and cultural inclusivity.

B. Negative Community Perceptions toward the Development

Despite the optimism shared by some residents, a substantial portion of the community expresses concerns and skepticism toward the Chinatown project. These negative perceptions stem primarily from issues of cultural identity, inclusivity in planning, and the perceived top-down nature of government decision-making. Many participants fear that the heavy use of Chinese cultural symbols such as the pagoda may overshadow the heritage of the indigenous Lampung community. For these respondents, the project risks imposing an external cultural narrative that fails to represent the region's historical and social diversity.

Cultural concerns are further amplified by the belief that the development disregards the values and traditions of local residents. Several participants suggested that alternative designs incorporating indigenous elements would have been more appropriate to reflect the identity of Teluk Betung Selatan. They argued that adopting predominantly Chinese symbols without a balanced representation of other local cultural features might contribute to a sense of alienation and undermine social cohesion. Such sentiments

underscore the importance of cultural sensitivity in urban branding and development initiatives.

Another source of negative perception is the rejection of Chinatown as a defining identity for the district. Some residents worry that this branding may misrepresent the broader community, many of whom do not share direct historical or cultural ties to the Chinese heritage being showcased. This concern is compounded by a lack of public dialogue during the early stages of planning, leaving residents feeling excluded from decisions that directly affect their environment and cultural landscape. This absence of participatory processes has fostered suspicions regarding the motives behind the project, with some viewing it as serving political or commercial interests rather than community welfare.

Criticism is also directed toward government policy and its communication strategy. Many residents stated that they had limited access to clear information regarding the objectives, benefits, and potential consequences of the project. The perceived lack of transparency and consultation has resulted in mistrust, with some participants voicing concerns that the development may prioritize symbolic display over practical benefits for local residents. These views highlight the role of inclusive governance and effective communication in shaping public opinion toward development projects.

C. Analysis of Community Perceptions

Analysis of the findings indicates that community perceptions toward the Chinatown project are shaped by a complex interplay of economic interests, cultural identity, and governance practices. Positive perceptions are largely driven by expectations of financial gains and urban modernization, whereas negative perceptions stem from fears of cultural marginalization and lack of public engagement. The divergent responses reflect differing priorities within the community, illustrating how development projects can generate both hope and resistance depending on how they align with local values and needs.

Applying the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model, the Chinatown project acts as the external stimulus, while residents serve as the organism interpreting its meaning through the lens of personal experience, knowledge, and cultural orientation. The resulting perceptions whether optimistic or critical represent the community's response to this stimulus. The findings emphasize that inclusive planning, transparent communication, and cultural sensitivity are essential to ensuring that large-scale urban projects receive broad-based support and minimize potential conflicts.

D. Perceptions by Education and Age Groups

Further analysis reveals that education and age significantly influence how residents perceive the development. Participants with higher levels of education generally provided more balanced assessments, acknowledging both the potential benefits and the risks associated with the project. Younger respondents tended to express greater openness to modernization and the integration of multicultural elements, viewing the Chinatown project as a symbol of progress. In contrast, older residents were more likely to emphasize the importance of preserving local identity and questioned the need for adopting external cultural symbols so prominently.

This demographic variation suggests that perceptions are not uniform but rather shaped by broader life experiences, cultural exposure, and social expectations. Educational attainment contributes to a more analytical evaluation of the project, while generational differences influence whether the development is interpreted as a sign of advancement or a potential cultural intrusion. These findings reinforce the need for nuanced engagement strategies that address the diverse perspectives within the community.

CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to answer two main research objectives: identifying positive perceptions and negative perceptions of the community toward the Chinatown development project in Teluk Betung Selatan. Findings reveal that positive perceptions are primarily related to economic expectations, improved infrastructure, and increased tourism potential. Residents who support the project believe it will generate new business opportunities, modernize the district, and strengthen its position as a cultural and culinary destination. These insights address the first research objective by demonstrating how optimism toward development is shaped by prospects for tangible improvements in community welfare.

The second objective examining negative perceptions is addressed through the identification of key concerns among residents who oppose or question the project. Their apprehensions center on potential cultural displacement, the dominance of Chinese architectural symbols, and limited public involvement in the decision-making process. These respondents fear that the project may marginalize indigenous identity and erode local traditions, particularly given the lack of inclusive dialogue during planning. As a result, negative perceptions are tied not only to cultural sensitivity but also to issues of governance and trust in local authorities.

Overall, the research highlights that community perceptions toward the Chinatown project are shaped by a balance of hopes for progress and fears of cultural loss. Positive sentiments reflect aspirations for economic development and urban revitalization, while critical views emphasize the importance of cultural preservation and participatory planning. The findings illustrate that urban projects cannot be viewed solely as physical transformations but must also be understood as socio-cultural interventions requiring inclusive and transparent approaches.

Demographic analysis shows that education and age significantly influence public attitudes. Respondents with higher education levels tend to offer more balanced perspectives, recognizing both potential benefits and possible drawbacks of the project. Younger residents are generally more open to modernization and multicultural branding, while older individuals place stronger emphasis on safeguarding local traditions. These variations underline the importance of tailoring development communication to diverse community segments.

In conclusion, the Chinatown development is perceived as both an opportunity and a challenge, reflecting the complexity of urban transformation in culturally diverse settings. To foster broader public acceptance, the study recommends strengthening transparent communication, ensuring community participation in future planning, and balancing cultural representation to reflect the identity of Teluk Betung Selatan. By doing

so, urban growth can proceed in a manner that promotes economic prosperity, social cohesion, and cultural integrity.

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