

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Cultural attractions are a driving factor for tourists and the local community to uphold a culture (Ginting et al., 2018: 1). These attractions are usually packaged in the form of cultural tourism, arts, or artifacts, which can be crucial for the sustainability of a culture (Purba et al., 2024: 181). Historical records show that the Karo people possess numerous cultural legacies, one of which is art (Butar-butur, 1990: 1). Art is a part of culture that functions not only as entertainment but also as a medium for expressing social, symbolic, and spiritual values. In traditional societies, art is often closely linked to customs, rituals, and belief systems.

Various forms of art exist in the Karo people, such as music, dance, sculpture, and literature. Through previous research, the art most often performed by the Karo people in various life activities is dance (Ginting et al., 2018: 1). One of the mask dances in the Karo people is the Tembut-tembut of Seberaya village which is believed to be a symbol of the wisdom of the creator. As with other mask traditions, the Tembut-tembut of Seberaya village has a distinctive mask that is worn (Saleh, 1980: 3). The mask is made of selected wood and carved to resemble a human face (Butar-butur, 1990: 2). The use of masks in Karo religious dance ceremonies is an important element, both the mask as a subject and an object for the community. In other words, masks can be used as a medium in traditional ceremonies (Butar-butur, 1990: 2).

There is a diversity of linguistic variations in the form of Karo tribal masks, which are based on the region or village where the mask was made. Usually, these differences reflect the inherent local identity of the region. Tembut-tembut Seberaya is a mask art style originating from Seberaya village, Karo district, North Sumatra. A form of Karo mask dance that has a history of its earliest emergence among other villages, and is now the most famous art in the community as evidenced by direct observation at folk festivals (Saleh, 1980: 2). This performance consists of five masked dancers who each represent a legendary character played without dialogue. The roles of the masked characters depict Puanglima, Kikir Labang, Nimiasa br Sembiring Milala, Piherta Sembiring Depari, Perik si Gurda-gurdi (name of a bird). According to Pa Terupung in his book on Batak and Nias masks, said that the masks have facial expressions and characters that look different from one another (Butar-butur, 1990: 2). However, there are threats to the arts and ancestral heritage. Changes in lifestyle values, which are no longer oriented towards

tradition, and the influence of foreign cultures, are also slowly eroding cultural existence (Muham et al., 2024: 4).



Figure 1. 1 Tembut-tembut Seberaya village mask, 2026
(Source: Personal document)

This design finds that there is a cultural change in the Tembut-tembut dance art of Seberaya village. In today's modern cultural representation, Tembut-tembut Seberaya village has become a dance art that carries a symbol of gratitude to God for the gift of fertile land and abundant harvests, as well as being a means of cultural preservation and development of the regional economy and tourism. However, in the course of cultural history, the mask dance art found in the Karo region was previously a spiritual medium in the form of the "Ndilo Wari Udan" ritual in ancient Karo society. This is in line with the concept of transforming tradition by Adhi Nugraha, where the idea of a culture is knowledge, methods, practices, beliefs, customs, habits, or stories that are inherited or transmitted from one generation to another, especially through oral communication, through practice. (Nugraha, 2012: 40). This is also raised in the book *Topeng* by Dra. Tiominar Butar-butur, who said that most masks are used as a medium of worship or used as a means in traditional community ceremonies. However, currently the function of masks has changed only to a performance tool for entertainment (Butar-butur, 1990: 1). In this modern era, the art of the Tembut-tembut mask of Seberaya village often experiences challenges and setbacks in history, as mentioned by Michael Sembiring as a Tembut-tembut Seberaya artist, where customs are starting to erode along with the development of information technology. Therefore, cultural revitalization is needed, through creative media for the younger generation.

With these problems, a solution is needed to rekindle the enthusiasm of the younger generation for the richness of their nation's culture (Permana, 2019: 187). By Jhon W. Santrock, the younger generation is classified as an early adult group which is a period of development,

the process of building identity, and cognitive development such as a wide open discussion space (Santrock, 2019: 339). Meanwhile, according to psychology by Schneider & Bullock in the book *Human Development from Early Childhood to Early Adulthood*, in the age range of 18-25 years, cognitive abilities, critical thinking, working memory, and problem solving are relatively more stable and mature (Schneider, 2009: 7).

There is a method of fostering the development of the potential of the younger generation in national defense education, namely through communication through media (Kristiono N., 2017: 58). Meanwhile (Effendy in Permana, 2019: 186) said that mass communication in the form of film has a persuasive educational function that is useful for fostering the younger generation within the framework of character building and the young nation (Permana et al., 2019: 187). Efforts to integrate aspects of Indonesian culture in the form of film are a strategic step that needs to be preserved (Sintowoko et al., 2023: 63-64). From a cultural perspective, film will function as a product of a culture. In other words, film that promotes a culture is one system that can be seen as a form of dynamic, sustainable mass communication circulation, mediated by an image in the form of video in film format (Dissanayake et al., 1992). Based on a pie chart by the documentary film forum in 2024, the distribution of data based on age was obtained, where the age of 18-25 years held the first position with data of 64% of the total festival visitors.

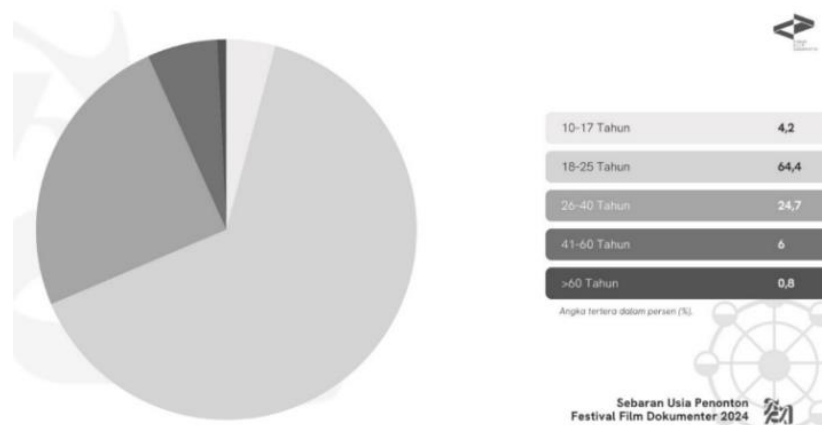


Figure 1. 2 Pie chart of documentary film festival age distribution, 2024
(Source: documentary film festival website)

Therefore, cultural education for the younger generation is the invisible power, which means that the younger generation holds full power in the sustainability of culture through the process of learning and inheritance (Normina et al., 2017: 18).

One film genre that can process factual data in a spontaneous manner is the documentary (Ayawaila et al., 2008). Documentary films represent the processing of factual data that is built intellectually, with the addition of visual narratives (Ayawaila et al., 2008). John Grierson's statement, in the book *Introduction to documentary* by (Nichols B, 2001: 4), says that the key to defining a documentary film is as a creative processing of reality. One of the important roles of documentaries in the cultural industry is how the delivery of local cultural values to the community can have an impact as a historical archive medium, as well as becoming a space for ongoing discussion. As an easily accessible medium, documentary films can increase the effectiveness in explaining cultural traditions that can only be raised through video media, and awareness in strengthening cultural preservation efforts (Putra et al., 2025).

The design of this documentary film also adopts the method used in the documentary film "Portrait of Rhythm of Saman" by (Pungkiawan, 2022) as a form of protection of the Saman dance culture, namely through the use of data collection methods, such as research, interviews, and literature studies. In order to add to the visual concept, the documentary film "Pasar Terapung Muara", by (Ciptadi et al., 2013), is effective in raising the narrative of visual culture, and rituals, in cultural traditions in the film production process. A similar approach is used in the process of making a documentary film about the art of Tembut-tembut village, where visual documentation of the legend of Tembut-tembut village Seberaya is revived through technical aspects such as efforts to visually reinterpret actors as the cultural meaning of the Karo tribe. Thus, the design will begin with data collection, and will be analyzed and become the main thing in designing a documentary film, followed by a film production method, namely 3 stages of film production (pre-production, production, and post-production), as well as adapting the fishbone model method with a three-act structure flow style which is useful for providing depth of feel in a documentary film.

It is obtained that the scope that limits the documentary film production process, namely research, research and design will be carried out in the village of Seberaya, North Sumatra as the Seberaya Tembut-tembut mask was created. The main focus of the design is to raise the art of the Tembut-tembut mask dance which originated from Seberaya village, a form of Karo mask dance art that is most exclusive to the community (Saleh, 1980: 3). Followed by interviews using the snowballing method with several speakers who are considered competent as historians, and art actors. The documentary film production process will focus on the art of the Tembut-tembut dance of Seberaya village which includes aspects related to the history, and

cultural identity of the Tembut-tembut art of Seberaya village in the Karo tribal community which will be explained directly by the speakers.

Through a documentary film approach, it is hoped that this will foster and create a discussion space for the younger generation, reinvigorating the historical value and spiritual significance of the Tembut-tembut art of Seberaya village. This design also aims to showcase the Tembut-tembut of Seberaya village as a cultural heritage that can be explored in the creation of works that attempt to examine cultural change.

1.2 Identification of Problems

Based on the background and phenomena that have been explained above, the following are the problems that are the reason for designing a documentary on the Tembut-tembut mask dance of Seberaya village:

1. Based on the analysis of literature study data and observations, the Tembut-tembut mask dance art of Seberaya village is a cultural heritage of the Karo tribe, which has experienced decline so that there has been a change in culture into a dance art (Butarbutar, 1990: 1).
2. Through the results of interviews and literature studies, the rituals and legends in this art are no longer the orientation of the Karo tribe's cultural customs (Nugraha, 2012: 40).
3. Through visual observation, there is no longer any media that discusses the Tembut-tembut dance art of Seberaya village, so creative media is needed as a digital attraction and historical archiving effort.

1.3 Formulation of the Problem

From the problem identification above, the formulation of the design problem is as follows:

1. How to design a documentary film that can highlight the cultural changes in the Karo Tembut-tembut tribal masks of Seberaya village?

1.4 Focus and Scope

The following are the limitations of the research problem to clarify the scope of the research and the design output media:

1. Scope :

The main focus of the Karo tribe's mask dance art will be narrowed down to the area of Seberaya village, Tiga Panah, Karo, North Sumatra.

2. Design object :

This documentary will review the journey of the Seberaya village Tembut-tembut mask art through interviews with sources who are considered competent with professions as historians, and art practitioners. Interview data collection was carried out using the snowballing method, which is a method of collecting information data from one source who recommends another source. The initial interview was conducted with the source, namely Mrs. Dra. Junita Setiana Ginting M.Si as an academic and practitioner of history at the University of North Sumatra. Continued with interviews with the fourth generation of Seberaya Tembut-tembut art, namely Dwikora Sembiring Depari, and Michael Sembiring Depari, as the fifth generation.

The content of the documentary film attempts to review the activities of art practitioners, efforts to identify cultural changes, and raises one of the festival documentations that showcases the Tembut-tembut dance of Seberaya village as a form and art of Tembut-tembut Seberaya village in community life. The design of this documentary film is rated D (Adult, 17+) namely 18-25 years old which is classified based on the age classification of the audience by the Film Censorship Institute (LSF) in Indonesia. The main focus of the target segmentation in this documentary film is all cultural lovers, and the rest of the documentary lovers are the right for everyone outside Indonesia to participate in appreciating documentary films as a form of valid information.

1.5 Design Objectives

Based on the problem formulation explained above, the objectives to be achieved from the design are:

1. Describe the traditions of the Karo tribe through documentary films.
2. Documenting the value and aesthetics of the process of performing the Tembut-tembut dance in Seberaya village.
3. Increase public appreciation of art and design regarding the importance of preserving local culture through a documentary film media approach.
4. Building sustainable relationships between cultural actors and the Karo people in introducing and preserving the Tembut-tembut masks of Seberaya village through documentary film media.

1.6 Benefits of Design

The benefits of designing a documentary film in promoting the Tembut-tembut dance culture of Seberaya village are as follows:

A. Benefits for the general public

1. The design of the documentary film is expected to be an information medium and an archive of the Tembut-tembut mask dance art of Seberaya village.
2. Building sustainable relationships between cultural actors and arts practitioners.

B. Contribution to academics/institutions

1. The results of this design are expected to be able to contribute to the development of the fields of arts and culture and visual communication design.

1.7 Design Framework

The design stage maps several flow stages, namely:

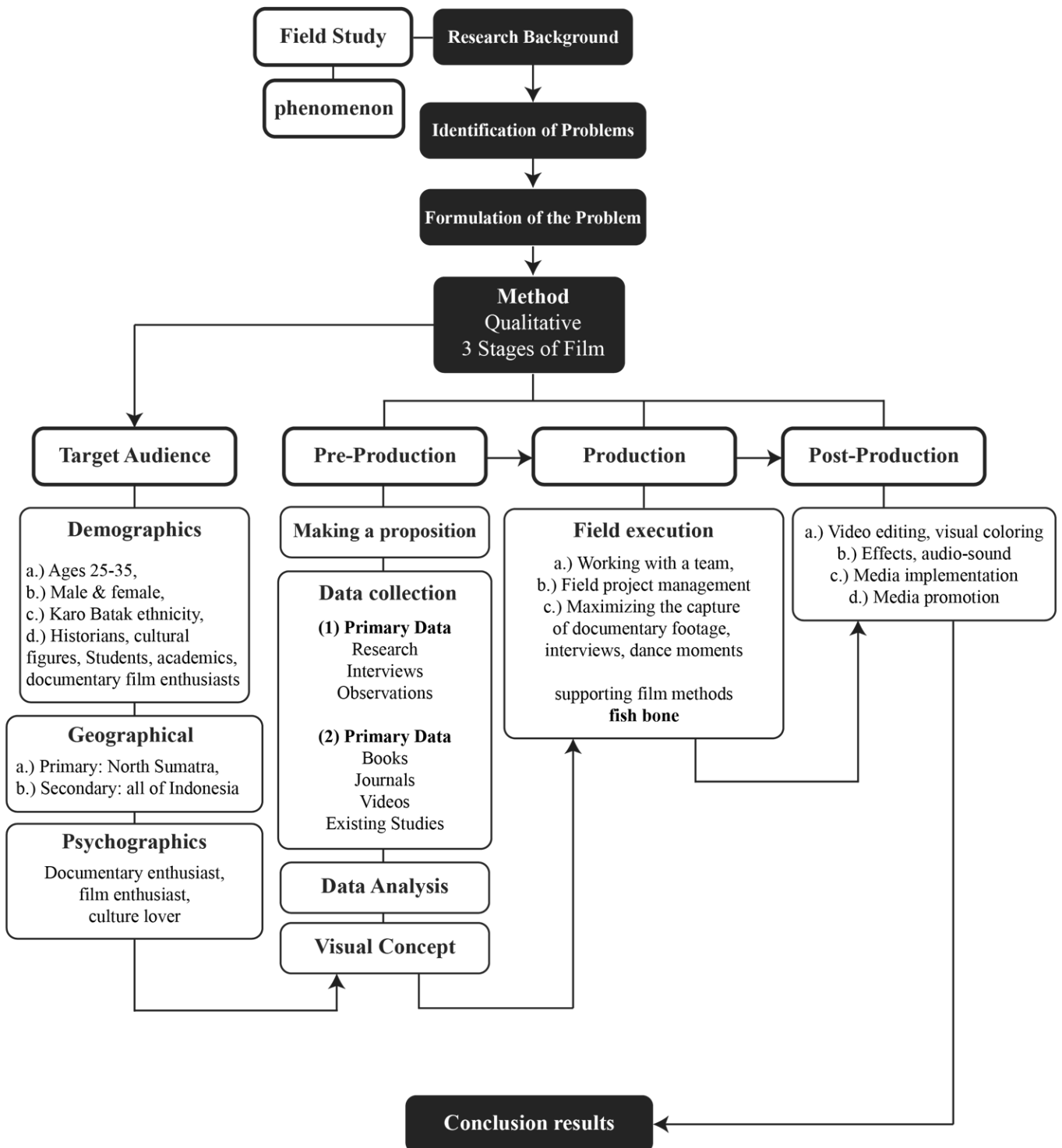


Figure 1. 3 Design Framework, 2026
(Source: Personal document)