



Community Festivals as Instruments for Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation and Sustainable Development in Rural Tourism Destinations of East Lombok

Muh. Nuh Ilyas¹, Calieya Apsari Hanafi²

¹Tourism, Universitas Bima Internasional, Indonesia

²Social Science, Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Selong, Indonesia

Corresponding author: nuh-ilyas@unbim.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to explore and analyse the role of the *Dongdala* Festival in Pringgasela Selatan Village in (1) preserving local cultural practices, (2) strengthening community capacity and participation, (3) generating social, cultural, and economic benefits for local residents, and (4) identifying challenges and adaptive strategies undertaken by the community to maintain the festival's sustainability. An exploratory qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The findings indicate that the *Dongdala* Festival is not merely a cultural performance event but also a social space for value regeneration, the expression of local identity, and culture-based economic empowerment. High levels of community participation have reinforced social cohesion and generated social capital that supports bottom-up development processes. Despite structural challenges, including dependence on central figures and limited formal support, the community has demonstrated adaptive capacity through innovative cultural presentations, integration into local education, and the utilisation of digital media. This study reinforces the argument that cultural preservation can progress alongside development when communities are positioned as primary agents. These findings provide both conceptual and practical contributions for the development of inclusive and sustainable community-based tourism villages.

Keywords: intangible culture, festival, community participation, tourism village, cultural sustainability

Introduction

Over the past two decades, sustainable tourism has emerged as the dominant paradigm for addressing various global challenges arising from the industrialisation of conventional tourism (Agarwal et al., 2024; Mihalic, 2024). The concept developed in response to critiques of mass tourism models, which are seen as neglecting social, cultural, and environmental sustainability. Font et al. (2023) and Niewiadomski & Brouder (2024) assert that sustainable tourism development must meet three fundamental criteria: economic viability, ecological sustainability, and social equity. One of the central concerns of this approach is the integration of cultural heritage preservation, particularly intangible cultural heritage, into tourism policies and practices. Intangible cultural heritage encompasses a wide range of cultural expressions such as language, music, dance, local knowledge, and religious rituals that live and evolve within communities (Z. Zhang et al., 2024). This heritage is not only a symbol of group identity but also an essential source in shaping social values and ensuring socio-cultural continuity (Hu et al., 2024). In the context of globalisation, which often drives cultural homogenisation and large-scale migration, many local communities experience cultural erosion, threatening the survival of their traditions (Zhao et al., 2024).

This phenomenon becomes increasingly complex when cultural heritage is no longer viewed solely as part of a community's collective identity but is positioned as a commodity within the tourism industry (Tan et al., 2025). The transformation of cultural heritage from an authentic expression into a tourism attraction has created a significant ambivalence. On one hand, tourism attractions provide real economic opportunities for local communities (Jiang et al., 2024). Tourism activities can create employment, increase household income, and strengthen the appeal of previously marginalised regions. Cultural heritage, such as dance, traditional music, customary rituals, festivals, and handicrafts, is incorporated into destination portfolios that attract both domestic and international visitors (L. Zhang et al., 2025). On the other hand, excessive commercialisation brings serious consequences for the essence of the culture itself (W. Zhang & Ran, 2024). The risks of commodification and meaning distortion become inevitable when cultural elements are presented merely to meet market expectations. When traditions that were once sacred or held specific social functions in daily community life are repackaged for tourist consumption, their authentic values may be diminished. Repetitive performances, simplification of symbolic meanings, and modifications of ritual structures for visual appeal are tangible examples of such shifts. In the long term, these practices may weaken the emotional and spiritual bonds between communities and their own traditions.

Given this context, cultural preservation cannot be conducted in a static or purely conservative manner. Preservation efforts must be adaptive, dynamic, and participatory to respond to shifting social, economic, and cultural conditions without losing their traditional roots. In this regard, cultural festivals serve as strategic socio-cultural interventions. Festivals are not merely platforms for showcasing cultural wealth but also collaborative spaces for local communities, tourism actors, and other stakeholders. Through festivals, preservation and innovation can proceed simultaneously, allowing traditional values to be maintained while being creatively transformed in line with contemporary needs. Moreover, cultural festivals reinforce local communities' position as active subjects and primary narrators of tourism development grounded in local wisdom (Xu & Wu, 2025).

Indonesia, known as one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world (Pangalila et al., 2024; Parlindungan et al., 2018), hosts thousands of intangible cultural expressions that remain actively practised, especially in rural regions (Rahma et al., 2025). One compelling cultural expression to examine in depth is the *Dongdala* Festival¹ in South Pringgasela Village, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara. This festival is an annual event initiated and managed by the local community, not merely as a tourism product, but as a collective expression of the region's socio-cultural diversity. South Pringgasela Village, a newly established administrative area, is inhabited by three major community lineages Pringgasela, Rempung/Sumbawa, and Masbagik each with its own value systems, languages, and traditions. The *Dongdala* Festival has become a social space that facilitates integration and interaction among these lineages, strengthening social cohesion that had been fragmented by historical and identity-based differences. During the festival, various local art forms, such as

¹ **Dongdala** is community-based cultural celebration found in Sasak ethics aimed at preserving local cultural heritage through traditional performances, rituals, and the exhibition of indigenous crafts. The festival serves as a social space for community interaction and the expression of local identity. Beyond cultural celebration, the Dongdala Festival also functions as a platform for education, value transmission, and the strengthening of social cohesion within the village community.

*Kelenang*² (traditional music), *Ngurisang*³ (a cleansing ritual), and weaving and batik crafts like *Gedogan*⁴ and *Sasambo*⁵, are performed and transmitted to younger generations. The festival involves diverse local actors, including schools, youth groups, women's collectives, and MSME practitioners showcasing local products. The communal space created through the festival fosters a collaborative atmosphere that nurtures a sense of ownership toward traditions and strengthens local identity as a shared asset. Moreover, the presence of domestic and international tourists enhances community pride, as cultural practices originally private and domestic are expressed in more organised and open forms without losing their philosophical foundations. Knowledge about traditional weaving motifs, ritual origins, and folklore is retold through educational sessions, positioning the festival not only as a cultural performance but also as an intergenerational platform for knowledge transfer. A key added value of the festival lies in its community-based approach: all local actors participate in planning, implementation, and evaluation. With no dominance from external actors such as government bureaucracies or event organisers, cultural authority and meaning remain in the hands of the community. This experience demonstrates that tourism villages need not be developed through top-down approaches; instead, they can emerge from grassroots initiatives grounded in social relations and cultural values.

Festivals are no longer understood solely as promotional tools or economic instruments, but also as social arenas where identity negotiation, cultural resistance, and collective meaning-making occur. Skandalis et al. (2024) emphasise that festivals constitute symbolic spaces mediating complex relationships among local communities, the state, markets, and tourists. Festivals have the potential to revitalise marginalised local values but may also become sites of cultural commodification if not managed ethically and sustainably. Previous studies indicate that community-based festivals tend to maintain authentic values and contribute to local development when supported by meaningful participation and community capacity-building (Du et al., 2024; Shrestha et al., 2025; Widen et al., 2024). However, festivals often become sites of conflict, both among local actors and between communities and external parties, particularly when cultural narratives shift in response to market preferences or political agendas. In this context, it is essential to examine how cultural narratives and practices are negotiated within the festival, and how community participation can be understood not only as physical involvement but also as ownership and control over processes and outcomes. Such approaches remain limited in studies of cultural festivals in Indonesia, underscoring the need for empirical research to address this gap. This study contributes to current discourses on tourism village development, which has recently become a national

² **Kelenang** is a traditional performing art of the communities in Lombok, characterized by percussive musical instruments played with distinctive rhythms and usually performed during customary ceremonies and specific ritual events. Historically, Kelenang held spiritual and ceremonial functions such as welcoming distinguished guests or accompanying traditional processions before being presented more widely as a public performance. In the context of the Dongdala Festival, Kelenang has been recontextualized to be appreciated as a contemporary stage performance while simultaneously serving as a medium for transmitting cultural values to younger generations.

³ **Ngurisang** is a customary ritual practiced by communities in Lombok that traditionally relates to purification, blessing, and the marking of significant life-cycle transitions, such as the passage from childhood to adulthood. The ritual typically involves prayers, symbolic procedures, and other cultural elements including offerings, traditional music, and ceremonial acts intended to invoke protection and blessings.

⁴ **Gedongan** is a traditional art form and ceremonial performance in East Lombok that typically incorporates percussive musical instruments and vocal expression, staged during customary events and village celebrations. In several cultural contexts, Gedongan functions as part of ceremonial welcoming rites, traditional rituals, or communal life-cycle ceremonies.

⁵ **Sasambo** is an acronym derived from the names of three major ethnic groups in West Nusa Tenggara: Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo.

priority agenda. Tourism village programs are often designed through top-down approaches that overlook community socio-cultural capacities, potentially creating new inequalities and leading to unsustainable development outcomes. This study offers a grassroots-oriented alternative that places communities as principal actors in destination development. The principles of inclusivity, participation, and local value strengthening demonstrated in South Pringgasela Village illustrate that culture-based development is not only possible but also more sustainable in the long term.

The purpose of this study is to explore and analyse the role of the *Dongdala* Festival as a medium for preserving intangible cultural heritage and building community capacity within the framework of sustainable tourism. The research questions posed include: (1) how cultural preservation practices are enacted through the *Dongdala* Festival; (2) the extent and depth of community participation in the planning and implementation of the festival; (3) the social, cultural, and economic impacts generated by the festival on local communities; and (4) the challenges encountered and the adaptive strategies adopted by the community to ensure the festival's sustainability. By addressing these questions, this article is expected to contribute to academic discourse on culture-based tourism and to provide practical insights for policymakers, destination managers, and local communities in designing tourism development models that are just, inclusive, and rooted in local values.

Literature Review

1. Intangible Cultural Heritage and Cultural Festival Preservation

Intangible cultural heritage encompasses a wide range of cultural expressions, including rituals, performing arts, customs, traditional knowledge, and local craft skills (Z. Zhang et al., 2024). Within the tourism context, intangible cultural heritage represents a critical resource that not only enhances destination attractiveness but also reinforces community identity and social cohesion (Hu et al., 2024). However, integrating intangible cultural heritage into the tourism industry often raises ambiguities: when managed without cultural sensitivity, such heritage becomes vulnerable to commodification and the erosion of its socio-cultural meanings (Tan et al., 2025). Several studies highlight that the preservation of intangible cultural heritage through tourism requires an approach that prioritises cultural authenticity, respects the rights of indigenous communities, and avoids exploitation for short-term economic gain (Tan et al., 2025; Widen et al., 2024; Z. Zhang et al., 2024). Collaborative and participatory engagement among local communities, tourism actors, and government institutions is therefore an essential prerequisite for ensuring the sustainability of intangible heritage-based tourism development (Hajar et al., 2024).

Cultural festivals represent one of the most dynamic manifestations of intangible cultural heritage, offering an open and collaborative space for cultural representation and value regeneration (Skandalis et al., 2024). Widen et al. (2024) describe festivals as effective platforms for strengthening social solidarity, expanding community networks, shaping destination image, and generating local economic opportunities. Festivals further serve as arenas in which “tradition” and “modernity,” as well as preservation and innovation, are continuously negotiated (Solunoglu & Orgun, 2024). For example, incorporating digital technology into documenting or promoting festivals can broaden audience reach without compromising authenticity, provided it remains grounded in local cultural principles. Festivals can function as “cultural performances” (Costa & Opare, 2025), where cultural meanings are negotiated, reaffirmed, or even critically examined by the community itself. At the same time, festivals carry the potential to shift away from their social function—particularly when commercial pressures intensify or when the events become dominated by local elites (Solunoglu & Orgun, 2024).

2. Community-Based Tourism and Its Participatory Dimensions

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) refers to tourism initiatives developed, owned, and managed by local communities, with the primary objectives of enhancing economic well-being and preserving cultural and natural resources (Ruiz-Ballesteros & González-Portillo, 2024). CBT is not merely an income-generating mechanism but also a community empowerment approach that promotes autonomy, social equity, and recognition of local values. Research on CBT shows that its success is strongly influenced by community institutional capacity, supportive policies, and transparent, inclusive leadership structures (Wani et al., 2024). From a cultural perspective, CBT may serve as a platform for intercultural learning that benefits both hosts and visitors, provided it is practised ethically and reflectively (Abreu et al., 2024).

Nonetheless, CBT also faces several challenges, including limited managerial capacity among community members, internal conflicts, and vulnerability to fluctuating tourism market expectations (Prihadi et al., 2024). Within this context, cultural festivals serve as a strategic instrument of CBT because of their temporary nature, emphasis on local expression, and flexibility in participation.

Community participation is a foundational pillar of any culture-based development initiative. Reid and Research Online (2003) classify participation into seven levels, ranging from manipulative involvement to higher forms such as interactive participation and self-mobilisation. From the standpoint of cultural preservation, the depth of participation determines whether a tradition is merely displayed for external purposes or is genuinely owned and meaningfully interpreted by the community itself (Agustian et al., 2024). Meaningful participation encompasses not only involvement in technical aspects of festival organisation—such as performances or logistics—but also participation in decision-making processes, cultural narrative design, and the management of economic benefits generated (Sugiarti et al., 2024).

In the case of South Pringgasela, participatory approaches are crucial given the village's socio-cultural complexity, comprising multiple lineages and ethnic groups with diverse values and historical backgrounds. Meanwhile, cultural sustainability requires that cultural heritage remain capable of evolving, adapting, and maintaining relevance within changing socio-historical contexts (Tong et al., 2024). Therefore, cultural practices such as the *Dongdala* Festival should not be viewed merely as efforts to preserve traditions in their original forms, but as dynamic spaces for innovation and value renewal while safeguarding the core essence of cultural identity.

Methods

This study employs an exploratory qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of cultural practices within the context of the *Dongdala* Festival in Pringgasela Selatan Village. This approach was chosen because it is well-suited to exploring meanings, social dynamics, and complex, context-specific cultural processes. The *Dongdala* Festival is examined as a cultural phenomenon that not only showcases artistic expression but also contains narratives of identity, community participation, and sustainability strategies. The researcher approached this case with sensitivity to power relations, inter-lineage dynamics, and the role of local institutions in culture-based village development. Consequently, this approach is not only descriptive but also interpretive, seeking to reveal the social practices and symbolic meanings embedded beneath cultural events.

The research site is Pringgasela Selatan Village, Pringgasela Subdistrict, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara. This site was purposively selected for its cultural complexity and active preservation practices, as evidenced by the *Dongdala* Festival. Pringgasela Selatan is home to communities from diverse lineages and ethnic backgrounds, making it a rich social

space for examining the dynamics of multiculturalism and social cohesion. Key informants include various strategic actors within the community, including traditional and cultural leaders, festival committee representatives, batik and weaving artisans, students, youth groups, village officials, tourism awareness groups, and active community members. Informants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques based on their involvement in the planning, implementation, or evaluation of the festival. Besides serving as sources of information, informants were positioned as cultural authorities; therefore, data collection was conducted through participatory procedures while respecting local ethical values. The diversity of informants' perspectives enabled social triangulation, enriching the interpretation of cultural practices and ongoing social processes. This is essential to understanding not only the festival's formal structure but also the cultural narratives that animate everyday community life.

Data collection was conducted through three primary methods: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with informants, focusing on the festival's history, their perceptions of sociocultural impacts, and community strategies for preservation and adaptation. Participant observation was conducted during the preparation and implementation of the 2024 *Dongdala* Festival, documenting interactions among actors, performance symbolism, and visitors' responses to cultural experiences. Observations were recorded in field notes and in visual documentation (photographs and videos) for symbolic interpretation. Documentation study included analysis of festival archives, village records, local news articles, and cultural artefacts such as woven textiles, batik, musical instruments, and ritual manuscripts. The collected data were analysed using a thematic analysis approach, consisting of coding, thematic categorisation, and conceptual narrative construction based on theoretical frameworks of intangible cultural heritage, community participation, and cultural sustainability. Triangulation across methods and data sources was conducted to ensure the validity and credibility of findings, while reflecting the complexity of social relations and cultural meanings embedded in the festival as a living social practice.

Findings

1. Revitalising Intangible Cultural Heritage through the *Dongdala* Festival

The *Dongdala* Festival in Pringgasela Selatan Village, East Lombok, serves as a concrete example of how intangible cultural heritage can be revitalised through community-based and participatory approaches. The festival is not merely a venue for cultural performance but also a space for social interaction, education, and the expression of local identities deeply rooted in traditional values. It incorporates various local cultural elements such as kelenang performing arts, the *ngurisang* ritual, and fashion shows featuring *Sasambo* batik—each functioning as living narratives that embody cultural continuity amid changing times



Figure 1: Kelenang Nunggal.



Figure 2: Ngurisang

The incorporation of these diverse elements into a festival format not only sustains their aesthetic appeal but also positions local culture as an effective instrument for intergenerational learning. The success of the *Dongdala* Festival lies in its capacity to create a participatory space where cultural values can be transmitted directly to younger generations. Rather than functioning as a verbal or ceremonial transfer of knowledge, the festival constitutes an experiential process that enables the internalisation of cultural values. As one traditional leader asserts, the festival has become a medium to “reintroduce our culture to the younger generation who have long been distant from ancestral values.” This statement reflects the urgency of cultural regeneration while highlighting the festival’s strategic role in bridging the past and the present.

In simple terms, the festival acts as a dialogic platform where tradition and modernity interact. The transformation of *kelenang* performing arts from a closed ritual to a public performance exemplifies cultural recontextualization. While *kelenang* retains its narrative and musical structures, the mode of presentation has been adapted to contemporary performance aesthetics. This does not imply the elimination of spiritual meanings but rather an adjustment of presentation so that these meanings remain relevant and accessible to broader audiences. Such strategies illustrate that cultural revitalisation does not necessarily require returning to original forms; instead, it allows culture to evolve without losing its essence.

Another equally important aspect is the development of *Sasambo* batik as a creative economic product. Representing the symbolic diversity of the three main ethnic groups in West Nusa Tenggara—Sasak⁶, Samawa⁷, and Mbojo⁸—its traditional motifs have been adapted into a range of contemporary fashion products with considerable commercial value. Despite innovations in form, *Sasambo* batik retains the philosophy and ethnic identity that constitute its inherent strength. This approach demonstrates an adaptive preservation model in which innovation is not seen as a threat but as a necessary pathway to sustain culture amid global market dynamics and tourism.

By integrating cultural preservation and economic empowerment, the *Dongdala* Festival serves as a strategic catalyst for sustainable local development. It functions not merely as a cultural conservation mechanism but also as an instrument for heritage-based economic growth, strengthening local identity while offering communities opportunities to engage actively in the cultural economy. In essence, the revitalisation of intangible cultural heritage through the *Dongdala* Festival exemplifies how culture—when managed contextually and inclusively—can become a strategic resource that enriches identity while enhancing community welfare.

⁶ **Sasak** is the largest ethnic group inhabiting Lombok Island in West Nusa Tenggara Province, characterized by distinctive language and cultural traditions. The Sasak community practices Islam while retaining local customary elements such as the Wetu Telu tradition, agrarian rituals, and traditional weaving and musical arts. Their cultural identity is reflected in community structures, traditional architecture, and customary values that remain embedded in everyday life.

⁷ **Samawa** are an ethnic group inhabiting Sumbawa Island in West Nusa Tenggara Province, and they speak a regional language known as the Samawa or Sumbawa language. The Samawa community is characterized by strong maritime and agrarian traditions, as well as customary practices shaped by Islam while retaining distinctive local elements. Their cultural identity is reflected in kinship systems, performing arts, oral traditions, and various rituals associated with social and spiritual life.

⁸ **Mbojo** are an ethnic group residing in the Bima and Dompu regions in the eastern part of Sumbawa Island, characterized by a strong heritage of Islamic culture, court traditions, and oral literary practices. The Mbojo community speaks a regional language known as the Mbojo or Bima language, with dialectical variations across areas.

2. Community Participation and Social Capital in the Festival

Community participation in the *Dongdala* Festival occupies a central position, reflecting active and extensive involvement at all stages. Rather than remaining passive spectators, residents of Pringgasela Selatan assume crucial roles in the collective design and implementation of the festival. This participation encompasses conceptual planning, event scheduling, resource organisation, technical execution, and post-event evaluation. The fact that the festival is organised through community collaboration demonstrates a high level of collective awareness of the value of reviving local culture.

The organising committee consists of representatives from various strategic community groups, including traditional leaders with cultural authority, youth groups serving as program initiators, teachers bringing educational perspectives, housewives involved in logistics and food provision, and micro-enterprise actors providing local products during the festival. Each group is organised into task forces such as performance, logistics, MSME exhibition, documentation, and fundraising. This indicates substantive rather than symbolic participation. Referring to participation classifications by Tong et al. (2024), such engagement corresponds to the interactive involvement leading to self-mobilisation, emerging from community initiative and awareness without external coercion.

Beyond ensuring technical success, community participation contributes to the formation of social capital at the local level. This social capital includes mutual trust, heightened social solidarity, and the emergence of intergenerational and cross-professional networks that strengthen social cohesion. In this context, the festival functions as a “social laboratory,” enabling collective learning and capacity-building, especially for younger generations. As stated by a youth group member, participation in festival activities does not merely teach event management but also internalises cultural responsibility.

Therefore, the *Dongdala* Festival not only serves as a medium of cultural expression but also as an instrument of community character-building. The accumulated social capital forms a vital foundation for inclusive and sustainable community-based tourism. This participatory model can enhance village resilience to external change—social, cultural, or economic. The festival thus demonstrates that meaningful social transformation may take place bottom-up, provided that communities are given adequate space and trust to become principal actors.

3. Social, Cultural, and Economic Impacts

Socially, the *Dongdala* Festival creates an inclusive space for interaction across groups, particularly across generations and professions. The festival activities integrate school students, artisan groups, women’s associations, religious figures, and traditional leaders into a collaborative ecosystem. This strengthens social cohesion and collective belonging, forming an essential foundation for culture-based rural development. Nevertheless, potential social exclusion remains evident among groups with limited access to information or resources, particularly those living in peripheral hamlets. Some cultural practitioners expressed concerns regarding limited involvement, suggesting a need for more inclusive participatory design.

Culturally, the festival successfully revives near-extinct traditions such as the *ngurisang* ritual and *kelenang* performing arts. These traditions are not merely displayed but are re-taught to younger generations through training and workshops, constituting essential processes of cultural regeneration. However, concerns persist regarding the risk of excessive aestheticisation that may simplify sacred meanings, potentially leading to symbolic loss. This highlights the dilemma between maintaining cultural authenticity and adapting to tourist expectations.

Economically, the festival yields significant benefits for residents. Sales of batik products, traditional foods, and homestay services increase markedly during the festival

period. A batik artisan reported substantial sales within one week, a condition previously uncommon. Though seasonal, this indicates considerable potential for economic development. Strengthening production, marketing, and business competencies is crucial to support sustainable MSME development. If well-managed, the *Dongdala* Festival may serve as a cultural-economic catalyst enabling broader community empowerment.

4. Cultural Preservation Strategies and Local Adaptation

The preservation strategies implemented at the *Dongdala* Festival demonstrate a holistic, long-term orientation. Preservation is not limited to physical appearances but engages deeper processes of value transmission and narrative renewal. Culture is understood not as a static entity but as a continuously evolving process shaped by community dynamics. Youth involvement is central, encompassing traditional performing arts training such as *kelenang* and *gendang beleq*⁹, as well as participation in *Sasambo* batik production. These activities provide not only technical skills but also cultural meanings.

Moreover, youth groups have been actively documenting festival activities through digital media, including social media, documentary videos, and online platforms, enabling wider cultural dissemination. Consequently, the festival functions not only as an annual event but also as a digital learning resource accessible at any time. Digital documentation forms a cultural archive serving preservation and education purposes, reaching wider generations in a globally connected context.

Furthermore, local cultural content has begun to be integrated into primary school curricula in the Pringgasela area. Children are introduced to cultural history, philosophy, and artistic expression through contextual learning, reinforcing cultural identity and pride. Collaborations with national artists and cultural practitioners further enrich cultural narratives without diminishing local uniqueness. Such collaboration opens dialogue between local and national cultures, enabling reciprocal knowledge exchange.

The preservation strategy aligns with the concept of living heritage, as proposed by Tan et al. (2025), which refers to heritage actively recreated by communities in accordance with social and environmental realities. Innovation in presentation, storytelling, and event formats is seen as an adaptive measure to keep culture relevant. By balancing authenticity and innovation, the *Dongdala* Festival illustrates that intangible heritage preservation can be participatory, progressive, and future-oriented. It does not merely prevent cultural extinction but revitalises tradition with a contextual and inclusive spirit.

5. Structural Challenges and Sustainability Opportunities

Despite notable achievements in cultural preservation and revitalisation, the *Dongdala* Festival faces substantial institutional and structural challenges. A significant concern is the heavy dependence on specific community figures—such as traditional leaders—in planning and implementation. When these figures become inactive due to age or health issues, the festival's continuity becomes vulnerable. This condition reflects weak institutionalisation and the absence of collective organising systems independent of individual actors.

In addition, the lack of long-term funding mechanisms renders the festival highly dependent on fluctuating financial support and inconsistent sponsorship. Without a clear financing scheme, implementation remains unstable and heavily reliant on community enthusiasm or ad hoc external assistance. Limited formal government support exacerbates

⁹ **Gendang Beleq** is a traditional performing art of the Sasak people in Lombok that features two large drums played dynamically during ceremonial and customary processions. The performance is typically accompanied by dance, supporting musical instruments, and other cultural expressions, functioning as a symbol of collective pride and an embodiment of Sasak cultural identity.

this vulnerability. Policy recognition and budget allocation from the local government are essential to safeguard long-term continuation.

Another challenge concerns tourism-driven cultural commodification. Efforts to attract tourists may lead to excessive modifications of artistic elements, risking the loss of sacred and historical meanings. To counter this risk, a cultural curation mechanism led by community stakeholders is required, ensuring that any transformation remains under community control. Conversely, significant opportunities are emerging. Formal recognition of the *Dongdala* Festival as a local cultural heritage initiative could expand access to institutional support. Strategic partnerships with educational institutions may strengthen youth capacity in managing cultural heritage, whereas digital platforms enable broader promotion and cultural education. With appropriate participatory strategies, the *Dongdala* Festival holds significant potential to become a model of best practice for community-based festivals in West Nusa Tenggara.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the revitalisation of intangible cultural heritage through the *Dongdala* Festival in Pringgasela Selatan Village constitutes a concrete example of the application of a community-based approach to cultural preservation. The festival functions not only as a performance medium but also as a vehicle for intergenerational education, the strengthening of local identity, and the facilitation of cross-group social interaction. The *kelenang* performing arts, the *ngurisang* ritual, and *Sasambo* batik showcased at the festival have undergone recontextualization to align with contemporary aesthetics without losing their philosophical values. This phenomenon is consistent with the concept of living heritage (Chen & Wang, 2024), in which traditional culture is sustained through adaptive processes of re-creation in response to social and environmental change. Such packaging strategies illustrate that innovation can serve as an ally of cultural preservation, reinforcing the argument that rigid, unadaptive preservation efforts may instead marginalise culture from public spaces.

Community participation emerges as a key determinant of the festival's success. Forms of engagement that encompass planning, organising, implementation, and evaluation reflect a high level of collective awareness regarding the importance of cultural preservation. The involvement of traditional leaders, youth groups, teachers, housewives, and MSME actors exemplifies a model of interactive participation in which initiatives originate from internal community awareness. This participation contributes to the formation of social capital through intergenerational networks, mutual trust, and community solidarity. These findings align with Tong et al. (2024), who argue that substantive participation enhances community capacity to manage resources sustainably. At the same time, the potential social exclusion of groups with limited access to information indicates the need for more inclusive participatory mechanisms to ensure equitable access to benefits and opportunities for involvement. The festival's impacts span social, cultural, and economic dimensions. Socially, the festival strengthens community cohesion through interaction across professions and generations. Culturally, it revitalises near-extinct traditions through training and workshops, thereby accelerating processes of cultural knowledge regeneration. Economically, the festival positively influences sales of batik products, traditional foods, and homestay services, although these effects remain seasonal. This supports the argument of Skandalis et al. (2024) regarding the potential of culture-based creative economies as drivers of local development, provided that strategies are in place to extend the economic cycle by strengthening production and marketing capacities.

Despite notable achievements, structural challenges such as dependence on central figures, the absence of long-term funding schemes, and tourism market pressures on cultural authenticity must be addressed promptly. Without institutional strengthening, the festival's sustainability is at risk when key actors are no longer actively involved. The literature suggests that the sustainability of community-based festivals requires formal policy support, structured financing mechanisms, and integration into regional development strategies (Widen et al., 2024). At the same time, there are considerable opportunities for sustainability through formal recognition of the festival as local cultural heritage, collaboration with educational institutions to facilitate knowledge transfer, and the use of digital technologies for documentation and promotion. By maintaining a balance between authenticity and innovation, and positioning the community as the curator of cultural narratives, the *Dongdala* Festival holds significant potential to become a best-practice model for community-based festival development in other regions, while simultaneously strengthening the position of local culture within sustainable tourism frameworks.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the *Dongdala* Festival in Pringgasela Selatan is not merely an annual cultural celebration, but also functions as a model of intangible cultural heritage preservation that is contextual, inclusive, and sustainable. Through a participatory, community-based approach, the festival facilitates cultural negotiation processes that enable intergenerational value transmission, strengthen local identity, and foster culture-based economic empowerment. The integration of traditional practices such as *kelenang* performing arts, the *ngurisang* ritual, and *Sasambo* batik production within the festival framework represents a form of heritage recontextualization that remains adaptive to contemporary developments. The findings further reinforce academic arguments that cultural preservation can coexist with the advancement of the creative economy, provided that innovation is seen as a complement rather than a threat to authenticity.

Although the festival has achieved significant success, this study also identifies structural challenges that may impede its long-term sustainability. Dependence on central figures, the absence of structured long-term funding mechanisms, and tourism market pressures that risk commodification all present serious threats to the preservation of cultural meanings. Addressing these issues requires strengthening local institutional capacities, regenerating leadership, and implementing community-based cultural curation systems as integral components of festival governance. Such efforts will safeguard authenticity while ensuring that the community remains the primary custodian of cultural narratives, in line with the principles of grassroots, bottom-up tourism development.

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