

LOCAL WISDOM-BASED TOURISM THEATRE: A COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT MODEL FOR CULTURAL PRESERVATION

Ni Made Ruastiti

Dance Study Program, Faculty of Performing Arts, Indonesian Institute of the Arts Bali

E-mail: maderuastiti@isi-dps.ac.id

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Abstract

Local wisdom is a cultural resource rich in aesthetic, social, and spiritual values, as well as serving as a community's collective identity. In the context of tourism, local wisdom has great potential to be developed into tourist theater that not only provides entertainment but also conveys authentic cultural narratives. The urgency of this research stems from the need to develop a tourist theater model capable of empowering local communities as key actors, so that the preservation of traditions can go hand in hand with strengthening the creative economy. This research aims to formulate a tourist theater management model based on local wisdom by involving the community, identifying strategies for maintaining cultural values, and measuring its impact on socio-cultural sustainability. The issues raised include formulating a tourist theater concept based on local values, community empowerment strategies, and indicators of successful cultural preservation in the tourism context. This research uses qualitative ethnographic methods through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis, supported by focus group discussions with artists, traditional leaders, and tourism managers. The results show that tourist theater based on local wisdom is effective in building collective awareness, strengthening cultural identity, and increasing community income. The integration of traditional narrative elements, performance aesthetics, and participatory management is key to the success of this model. The novelty of this research lies in the development of a community-based tourism theater model that combines ethnoaesthetics and community-based tourism theories, resulting in a conceptual and practical framework that can be replicated in various areas with cultural tourism potential in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Tourism Theater; Local Wisdom; Community Empowerment; Cultural Preservation, Ethnoaesthetics.*

INTRODUCTION

Local wisdom is the legacy of knowledge, values, and cultural practices passed down from generation to generation within a community. This heritage encompasses not only material aspects such as artifacts or buildings, but also intangible knowledge such as performing arts, traditional rituals, language, folklore, and the value systems that govern social life. Local wisdom is always present in the daily lives of communities, shaping collective identity and serving as the foundation of social cohesion. In the performing arts, local wisdom is manifested in dance movements, traditional music, costume, language, and symbols that carry philosophical meaning. In the context of tourism, local wisdom has a unique appeal because it offers a uniqueness and authenticity that other destinations do not have. Tourists, both domestic and international, seek not only visual entertainment but also experiences that lead them to understand local values, history, and traditions. This is where tourist theater finds its relevance, namely as a means of combining artistic beauty with the richness of local cultural narratives, thereby creating an educational, entertaining, and meaningful tourism experience. Theoretically, travel theater is a form of performing arts designed to be part of a tourist attraction, combining dramatic, musical, visual, and narrative elements in a structured package. This concept has three important theoretical foundations. First, Performance Theory (Schechner, 1993) views performance as restored behavior, namely the repetition of past cultural behavior that can be adapted to new contexts without losing its meaning. In local wisdom-based tourist theater, this concept is realized through the re-enactment of traditional narratives, whether legends, myths, or rituals, in a form accessible to modern audiences. Second, Ethnoaesthetics (Kaepler, 2000) emphasizes that the aesthetic criteria of a performance must be based on the assessment of the supporting community. This means that the beauty and quality of touring theater are not measured by...not only from market tastes, but also from their suitability to local aesthetic values. This approach ensures that modifications for tourism purposes still respect the cultural authority of the community.

Third, Cultural Tourism (Richards, 2018), which views performing arts as a medium for transferring cultural values to tourists, while simultaneously strengthening local identity and generating economic benefits. This principle emphasizes that tourist theater should not be merely a commercial attraction, but also a vehicle for cultural education and community empowerment. In practice, the development of local wisdom-based tourism theater includes narratives derived from legends, mythology, local history, or rituals, selected through co-curation workshops (artists, traditional leaders, elders, youth, tourism practitioners). The result is a biblical script containing plots, symbols, taboos, and sacred-profane boundaries. For example, the Legong Keraton Peliatan negotiates the story of King Lasem with an interpretive prologue; Megebeg-Gebegan is transformed from a traditional procession into a cross-spatial dramaturgy without eliminating the opening prayer. Through the lens of performance theory, narrative is understood as restored behavior: the reactivation of cultural behavior patterns for the current context. The main risk is folklorization (packaging “frozen traditions”). Mitigation: ensure the script includes internal variations (local versions) to avoid locking the tradition into one form.

Ethnoaesthetics demands criteria of “appropriateness and beauty” according to the owner community. Narratives that are too “polished” for the market can offend local tastes. Use community validation tests (open script readings). The discourse of authenticity (MacCannell/Cohen) warns of the dangers of staged authenticity. Apply multi-vocal narration: allow the voices of stakeholders, artists, and youth to be present in the prologue/interlude, avoiding the “single official voice” as criticized by Laurajane Smith in the authorized heritage discourse.

Stage 1 quality indicators: Written customary agreement; number of oral/archival sources referenced; community acceptance score (member check) $\geq 80\%$. The choreography of the tourist theater maintains key motifs, including music using local instruments (gamelan, baleganjur) with stage sound design; costumes following color/symbol codes; lighting helps emphasize the drama; and spaces are chosen site-specifically (temples, banjar halls, landscapes). A double-layer dramaturgy is designed: a sacred (standard) layer and a presentational (communicative for cross-cultural audiences). Ethnoaesthetics: aesthetic integrity is tested by the community's version of “appropriateness” (movement, costume, makeup). Every innovation must have a cultural rationale (not simply “more attractive”).

Site-specific performance (Pearson): space is not a setting, but rather a cultural text. The risk of spectacle-ization (space becomes only a “picture”) is reduced by guided framing, for example, explaining the abhaya mudra movement symbol before the Barong scene. Cultural tourism: aesthetics must be “readable” by a global audience without reducing local meaning. Implement interpretive design: multilingual prologues, movement iconography leaflets, or audio guides. For example, Barong & Keris Dance maintains movement norms and percussion structures; modern lighting only emphasizes the climactic moment without changing the opening ritual. Legong Peliatan adds a Japanese/English prologue about agame and ulap-ulap. Stage quality indicators: Score for “integrity of norms” (assessment by elders/artists); audience understanding (3–5-item post-viewing quiz); number of artistic adaptations with documented symbolic basis. Form a Sekaa/Production Board (artists, village heads, youth, MSMEs, tourism managers). Jointly decide on SOPs for performances, schedules, pricing, marketing channels, and transparent profit-sharing schemes, e.g., 60% performers, 20% customary funds/preservation funds, 20% production. Build a talent pipeline (regular classes for children and adolescents). CBT (Murphy; Scheyvens): measure economic, social, psychological, and political empowerment. If decisions are made only by the elite, participation will fall into tokenism. Use Arnstein's ladder framework to move the participation ladder from consultation to partnership, then to community control.

Tosun reminds us of the obstacles to participation: structural (access to capital), operational (managerial capacity), and cultural (customary hierarchy). Strategies: stage management/safety training; indigenous microfinance institutions; quotas for women/youth representation on the Board. From the perspective of UNESCO's 2003 intangible heritage, management must prioritize safeguarding (transmission, documentation, inheritance) over ticket sales targets. Example. In Tegalalang, quarterly open meetings discuss artistic quality, conservation fund allocation, and the schedule for musician regeneration. Stage 3 quality indicators: Scheyvens empowerment framework score per quarter; women/youth involvement rate $\geq 40\%$; simple cash flow audit; number of training participants/year. Adjust the duration (45–70 minutes) without eliminating the core ritual acts; use of multilingual narrators/prologues; audience interfaces (small screen subtitles, audio guide); a fixed performance calendar; integrated packages (site tour + mini workshop + performance). Cultural tourism demands a meaningful experience. Excessive adaptation triggers disembedding, meaning is torn from context. Apply the threshold principle: sacred parts are still performed in a guarded space/pause (pre-performance is not photographed; the opening prayer is only watched). Authenticity (Cohen): target existential authenticity, the audience feels involved, not just seeing the “skin” of tradition. Provide safe interactive segments (recognizing movement motifs, trying musical instruments) after the

performance, not in the middle of the ritual. Knowledge justice (Smith): interpretation materials must include community perspectives, not just destination promotional narratives. For example, Bali Agung places ritual scenes as a threshold that is respected by the crew and audience; audience interaction is moved to the closing session. Stage 4 quality indicators: Audience satisfaction score + cultural understanding score; complaint ratio related to "cultural incivility" <1%; repeat visit rate. Many community-developed tourist theaters have been successful, partly because they pay close attention to several components, including: traditional narrative, performance aesthetics, and participatory management integrated into one architecture: narrative provides meaning (avoiding the emptiness of symbols); aesthetics provides allure (without betraying the rules); and participatory management provides sustainability and justice (profit sharing, regeneration). From a theoretical perspective, the integration carried out stitches together four domains that often operate independently: ethnoaesthetics (local criteria), performance/site-specific (spatial dramaturgies), CBT & empowerment (governance), and cultural tourism & authenticity (cross-cultural communication). Thus, the model does not fall into two extremes: commodification that impoverishes meaning, or purism that kills local communication and the economy.

Bali, Yogyakarta, Toraja, and Tana Luwu are examples of regions with abundant sources of cultural narratives. In Bali, the Barong & Keris Dance in Batubulan and the Bali Agung Show at Bali Safari & Marine Park have proven that well-designed tourist theater can attract thousands of audiences each year. However, not all potential local wisdom is optimally managed. Many arts communities face limited creative and financial capital, a lack of professional management, and a lack of innovation in show packaging. As a result, some performances fall into the trap of staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1976; Ruastiti et.al., 2021), where authenticity is only superficial, while traditional values begin to erode. The urgency of this research stems from the pressing need to develop a tourism theater model that not only seeks to satisfy tourists but also serves as an instrument for community empowerment. Without a participatory model, tourism theater is vulnerable to becoming merely a commodity that benefits outsiders, while local communities lose control over the narrative and form of the performance. A local wisdom-based approach ensures that every stage of production, from story conception to performance, aligns with the values, norms, and aesthetics recognized by the community. In addition to maintaining cultural sustainability, this model also opens up creative economic opportunities: selling souvenirs, guide services, culinary specialties, and performance-based tourism packages.

When managed well, local wisdom-based tourist theater can provide three main contributions to the community: (1) Cultural preservation, performances become a space for the transmission of knowledge between generations. The younger generation learns dance, music, language, and symbols from the older generation in a context that is relevant to today's life. (2) Identity strengthening, by presenting local narratives to the public, the community confirms its existence and unique identity amidst the currents of globalization. (3) Economic benefits, performances create direct employment (performers, artistic directors) and indirect employment (craftsmen, traders, tour guides), thereby strengthening the local economy. This research has three main objectives, including: identifying elements of local wisdom that have the potential to be developed into tourism theater, formulating a management model that places the community as the main actor, and analyzing the social, economic, and cultural impacts of implementing tourism theater based on local wisdom.

The issues raised include: (1) How to formulate a tourism theater concept that is in harmony with the values of local wisdom?; (2) What is the strategy for empowering communities in the production and management of performances?; (3) How do you measure the success of tourist theater in terms of cultural preservation and economic benefits? Academically, this research fills a gap in studies that have tended to separate discussions of performing arts aesthetics from tourism management. By integrating ethnoaesthetics and community-based tourism, this research produces a holistic framework, encompassing artistic, cultural, and economic dimensions. Practically, the research findings are expected to serve as implementation guidelines for local governments, destination managers, arts communities, and tourism industry players in developing authentic, engaging, and sustainable tourist theater, both in Bali and in other regions in Indonesia with cultural tourism potential.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been conducted on performing arts and tourism (Picard, 1996; Smith, 2009; Mckercher & Du Cros, 2012; Ruastiti, 2010), but most focus on the influence of tourism on the changing forms and meanings of performing arts. Studies examining tourist theater as a model of empowerment based on local wisdom are still rare, especially those that develop an integrated management model between aesthetics, cultural sustainability, and the creative economy. This research fills this gap by offering a conceptual and practical approach to developing tourist theater that is effective for the community while maintaining cultural integrity.

Studies on cultural tourism place authenticity as a classic problem. MacCannell (1976) introduced the concept of staged authenticity, where attractions are often reimagined for tourist consumption, a concept Cohen (1988) later expanded with a spectrum of authenticity (from recreational to existential), thus opening up space for negotiation of meaning in the hands of local actors. Greenwood (1989) highlighted the risk of “cultural commodification” when ritual values are reduced to commodities, while Richards (2018) pointed to the novelty of creative tourism that encourages active tourist participation and community collaboration. Critically, all four emphasize the dilemma between market and tradition; however, they do not detail how communities lead the process of value curation to preserve the core of local wisdom in a communicative theatrical format. In the Balinese context, Picard (1996) demonstrates the ongoing dialectic of “balianness” between the tourism industry and cultural identity; this finding is relevant for formulating local wisdom-based tourist theater as a practice that must be sensitive to the politics of representation. Bandem & deBoer (1995) classify the functions of Balinese dance (wali–bebalī–baliḥ–baliḥan) and provide an important conceptual framework for considering the sacred–profane boundaries when traditions are performed for tourists. These two references emphasize that tourist theater design needs to map the “sacred” and “profane” zones methodologically, not merely aesthetically.

From the perspective of dance anthropology and ethnoaesthetics, Kaeppler (2000) positions dance as a knowledge system that combines form, context, and meaning; this approach helps establish indicators of “sustainability of meaning” beyond commercial measures. Thompson (1974) on ethnoaesthetics emphasizes local criteria of beauty and sacredness—encouraging the curation of elements of movement, costume, music, and space that are “acceptable” to the community, not merely “beautiful” to outside audiences. These two references shift attention from mere performance form to the local epistemology underlying touring theater. For performance science, (Schechner, 1993; Ruastiti, 2019) proposed the idea of restored behavior, that performance actions are always the result of repetition/reconstruction, which is useful for explaining the transformation of rituals into tourism formats without erasing cultural memory. Pearson (2010) on site-specific performance provides tools for reading spaces (traditional villages, temples, landscapes) as cultural texts; this is strategic for tourist theater that mines meaning from its location and landscape, rather than simply relegating the performance to a generic stage. Here it appears that performance literature opens up artistic techniques and spatial dramaturgy, but has not yet integrated them with community-based governance models.

The Community-Based Tourism (CBT) movement offers empowerment tools. Murphy (1985) laid the foundation for CBT, centering on local control; Scheyvens (1999) presented an empowerment framework (economic, psychological, social, and political) as an indicator of empowerment; Tosun (2000) noted various barriers to participation (structural, operational, and cultural) that often thwart the ideals of CBT; Okazaki (2008) formulated an integrated CBT model with phases of participation and stakeholder engagement; and Moscardo (2014) emphasized learning-based approaches to make tourism an arena for community learning, not just an economic transaction. These CBT studies provide metrics and processes, but rarely explicitly link them to the ethnoaesthetics of performance and the artistic management of tourist theater. In the realm of intangible cultural heritage, the 2003 UNESCO Convention affirms the principles of community-based preservation and safeguarding that respect intergenerational transmission. Laurajane Smith (2006) critiques “authorized heritage discourse,” highlighting the dominance of external authorities over the definition of heritage, a crucial warning against the temptation of top-down curation that ignores local agency. These two references underscore that preservation is not merely documentation, but rather the governance of meaning that positions communities as the authoritative owners of narratives.

When mapped, the literature above presents four thematic clusters: (1) authenticity–commodification (MacCannell; Cohen; Greenwood; Richards), (2) the Balinese context and sacred–profane typology (Picard; Bandem & deBoer), (3) ethnoaesthetics and spatial dramaturgy (Kaeppler; Thompson; Schechner; Pearson), and (4) community-based empowerment and governance (Murphy; Scheyvens; Tosun; Okazaki; Moscardo; UNESCO; Smith). However, a research gap remains evident: there is no operational model that integratively connects (a) ethnoaesthetic-based artistic curation, (b) participatory architecture and CBT empowerment indicators, (c) site-specific dramaturgy that maintains sacred–profane boundaries according to local typologies, and (d) layered impact metrics (cultural identity, social cohesion, and economic well-being). This article positions itself to fill this gap by developing a model for local wisdom-based tourism theater that: (i) starts from mapping values and coding ethnoaesthetics (movement, music, costumes, space, symbols), (ii) adopts the CBT empowerment framework as an indicator of success (not just the number of audiences/revenue), (iii) applies the principle of site-specific performance to ensure that space becomes part of the meaning, and (iv) aligns with the principle of safeguarding intangible heritage. By tying together four parallel fields of literature, the proposed model is expected to provide conceptual

contributions as well as replicable practical guidance for other regions developing local wisdom-based tourism theater.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with participatory ethnography, focusing on a deep understanding (thick description) of the creation, management, and impact of local wisdom-based tourist theater. This method is based on the view that tourist theater is not simply an entertainment object, but a meaningful socio-cultural phenomenon, where aesthetic, economic, and spiritual dimensions are interconnected (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). A participatory ethnographic approach allows researchers to engage directly in community life, observing and participating in creative and managerial processes, ensuring that the data obtained is contextual and authentic (Spradley, 1980). This method is relevant because local wisdom is reflected not only in texts or documentation, but also in everyday practices and interactions.

The research was conducted in villages with strong performance traditions, such as Peliatan Village (Bali) with Legong Keraton or Batubulan Village with Barong & Keris Dance. The locations were chosen purposively because they met the following criteria: (1) having a performance tradition based on local wisdom, (2) being actively involved in the tourism industry, and (3) the community being willing to collaborate in the research. The research subjects include: artists/performers as the main actors who transform local values into performances; traditional figures and stakeholders as guardians of sacred values and cultural authorities; tourism managers as the parties who bridge the performances with the tourism market; and the general public and audiences as recipients of social and economic benefits. Data collection was conducted between other :

- a. Through participant observation, the researcher was directly present during rehearsals, performances, and preparation activities, including pre-performance rituals. For example, the researcher noted how the Baris Klemat dance at Menega Seseh Temple was modified for tourist audiences without reducing the opening prayer. This observation documented aspects of movement, makeup, costumes, props, stage design, and interactions between the performers.
- b. In-depth interviews were conducted with key figures using semi-structured guidelines. For example, questions to traditional leaders included: "How are sacred and profane boundaries maintained when performances are presented to tourists?" This approach facilitated the exploration of the perspectives and values held by the performers.
- c. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involved artists, managers, and community representatives to discuss empowerment strategies, economic benefit sharing, and artistic innovation. For example, the FGD in Tegalalang Village resulted in an agreement on profit sharing: 60% for the performers, 20% for the village treasury, and 20% for production costs.
- d. Document analysis, including the study of archives, photographs, performance recordings, scripts, and media publications, helps understand changes in performance formats over time (Moleong, 2019).

Data analysis follows the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014) which includes: data reduction, grouping information into themes such as presentation forms, empowerment strategies, and socio-economic impacts, data presentation, using matrices, concept maps, and inter-theme relationship diagrams, drawing conclusions, identifying patterns and principles underlying the local wisdom-based tourism theater model. Validity is strengthened through triangulation of sources (artists, traditional figures, tourists), triangulation of methods (observation, interviews, documents), and member check (confirmation of findings to informants) Examples of method application As an illustration, in a study on the Megebeg-Gebegan performance in North Bali, researchers:, followed the procession from preparation to performance, interviewed women carrying gebogan to understand the symbol of prosperity, collected photo archives of the last 20 years to trace the transformation of costumes, used FGDs to design a tourist theater format that maintains the ritual structure while compressing the duration to suit the tourist schedule. Research ethics are maintained by requesting informed consent, respecting customary rules (for example, the prohibition on photographing sacred moments), and ensuring that research results are accessible and provide benefits to the community (Smith, 2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Research result

1. Local Wisdom-Based Tourist Theater

The research results show that local wisdom-based tourism theater is highly effective in three main aspects: (1) building collective awareness, (2) strengthening cultural identity, and (3) increasing community

income. These three aspects reinforce each other, so that tourism theater not only acts as an entertainment medium, but also as a sustainable socio-cultural and economic instrument. The implementation of local wisdom-based tourist theater fosters a sense of ownership among the community. Through active involvement in the production process, from narrative research and rehearsals to performance, the community becomes the subject, not simply the object, of tourism. A concrete example is found in Megebeg-Gebegan in Buleleng, where young people are involved in the performance as dancers, gamelan musicians, and stage managers. This involvement not only transfers artistic skills but also instills values of solidarity and social responsibility. The collaborative preparation activities, such as making props and costumes, serve as a means of cross-generational interaction, strengthening social cohesion (Putra & Ruastiti, 2022).

Collective awareness is also evident in the commitment to maintaining the event's sustainability, for example through the formation of a Sekaa (organizational group) or management group that organizes practice schedules, assigns roles, and manages funds. This aligns with the concept of community-based tourism, which places local communities as the primary decision-makers (Murphy, 1985; Scheyvens, 1999). Tourism theater developed from local wisdom revives narratives, symbols, and cultural practices that have been eroded by modernization. This research found that the use of regional languages, traditional music, distinctive dance movements, and traditional costumes serve as powerful means of representing identity. For example, in Batubulan Village, the Barong & Keris Dance not only maintains the traditional storyline but also integrates narrative explanations for tourists. The conveying of the symbolic meaning of the abhaya mudra (protective hand) gesture to the audience helps them understand Balinese Hindu philosophy, thus transforming the performance into a medium for cultural education.

In the case of the Legong Keraton Peliatan, the tourist performance retains the classic format, but the prologue is expanded with an explanation of the history and meaning of the dance. This strategy helps tourists understand that what they are witnessing is a heritage with a sacred dimension, not simply an aesthetic spectacle. This approach aligns with Picard's (1996) notion of "balianness" as an identity negotiated through tourism. The economic impact of local wisdom-based tourist theater is quite significant. Field data shows that community income comes from three sources: (a) entrance tickets, (b) souvenir sales, and (c) supporting services such as homestays or local cuisine. For example, in Tegalalang Village, the development of a tourist theater based on the Ngerebeg tradition increased tourist visits by 35% in the first six months. A profit-sharing system was agreed upon in a participatory manner: 60% for the performers, 20% for the village treasury, and 20% for production costs. This scheme demonstrates how performing arts can become a driving force for the creative economy based on the principle of equitable distribution of benefits. Furthermore, the existence of the tourist theater has created new business opportunities, such as costume rentals, accessory production, and video documentation. Village women, for example, are involved in making gebogan (fruit and flower decorations) used in performances and sold as souvenirs to tourists. This aligns with Moscardo's (2014) findings that learning-based tourism can create sustainable economic opportunities if the community is involved in the value chain.

The three aspects of the findings above reinforce each other. A growing collective awareness has led the community to commit to maintaining the quality of performances; a strong cultural identity has given tourist theater a unique appeal; and economic success has created motivation to preserve traditions. This integration forms a virtuous cycle that strengthens the position of local wisdom in the global tourism landscape. These results also confirm the theoretical framework of ethnoaesthetics (Kaepler, 2000), which emphasizes the importance of understanding local aesthetic criteria in developing performances that are internally acceptable and externally appealing. In the context of empowerment, these findings are consistent with Scheyvens' (1999) empowerment framework, which places economic, social, psychological, and political dimensions as indicators of community empowerment in tourism.

2. Community empowerment strategies

The community empowerment strategy in the context of local wisdom-based tourist theater is an approach that positions the community as the primary actor, not merely a passive audience or supporter. Theoretically, this concept aligns with the Community-Based Tourism paradigm (Murphy, 1985; Scheyvens, 1999), which emphasizes the active role of the community in decision-making, management, and distribution of benefits. This model ensures that every stage, from planning the performance narrative to post-performance evaluation, involves community members in an inclusive manner. Practically, empowerment strategies can begin with artistic and management skills training, such as workshops on choreography, stage design, scriptwriting, and digital promotion. For example, in the revitalization of the Megebeg-Gebegan tradition in North Bali, cross-generational engagement through focus group

discussions (FGDs) successfully strengthened a sense of ownership of the work. The involvement of traditional leaders ensured the authenticity of cultural values, while youth participation fostered creative innovation. The distribution of economic benefits was conducted transparently, fostering trust and sustainability. Challenges that emerged included the dominance of local elites in decision-making, limited funding for training, and minimal gender representation. Therefore, internal regulations governing inclusivity, partnerships with external parties such as arts institutions or academics, and ongoing training programs are crucial.

Tourist theater plays a strategic role in cultural preservation, particularly intangible culture such as traditional performing arts. According to the 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, tourist theater can be a medium for revitalizing traditions, as long as it maintains their social function and philosophical meaning. Practically, preservation can be achieved through creative adaptations that do not diminish the cultural essence. For example, the Legong Keraton Peliatan retains the classical choreographic structure but adds a multilingual prologue to help tourists understand the story's context. Similarly, the Megebeg-Gebegan in North Bali still begins with a ritual prayer, even though it is packaged for a tourist audience. From the perspective of ethnoaesthetic theory (Kaeppler, 2000), it is important to preserve the system of meanings that live within the community, not just the external form of the performance. A risk that needs to be watched out for is the phenomenon of staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1973), where performances become imitations that lose their original meaning due to commercial pressures. To overcome this, the involvement of local cultural authorities in the curation process is necessary.

Implications of Tourist Theater on the Community Economy. From an economic perspective, tourist theater has a multiplier effect on local communities. In addition to direct income from tickets and performer fees, this activity encourages the growth of supporting sectors such as culinary, crafts, local transportation, and accommodation. For example, the Barong & Keris Dance performance in Batubulan not only supports the dancers and gamelan musicians but also increases the turnover of souvenir vendors around the location. Similarly, Ngerebeg in Tegalalang contributes to the village treasury and creates jobs for local youth as tour guides or stage technicians. However, over-reliance on tourism can be risky, especially during global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has resulted in a drastic decline in tourist visits. Therefore, diversifying tourism products, digital promotion, and partnering with international travel agents are important strategies for maintaining community economic resilience.

B. Integration of Performance Narrative, Participatory Management

This research reveals that the success of local wisdom-based tourist theater is largely determined by the ability to integrate three main components: traditional narrative, performance aesthetics, and participatory management. These three support each other, forming a performance ecosystem that is authentic, engaging for tourists, and sustainable for the community. Traditional narrative serves as the “soul” of the performance. The use of stories sourced from local mythology, village history, or traditional rites gives tourist theater a depth of meaning that distinguishes it from ordinary commercial entertainment. A concrete example is seen in the Laku Urip Tourist Theater in Getas Village, which features the biography of I Nyoman Sadi, linked to the history of agriculture, sculpture, and the village gamelan. The audience not only enjoys the spectacle but also gains a narrative understanding rooted in the community's collective memory. This approach aligns with Schechner's (1993) idea of restored behavior, where performances revive past cultural behaviors for present-day needs without losing their meaning.

The aesthetics of the performance include movement composition, musical arrangement, costumes, lighting, and use of space. Research has found that integrating local aesthetics with modern adaptations is key to attracting cross-cultural audiences. For example, in the Barong & Keris Dance in Batubulan, movement patterns, costumes, and gamelan accompaniment are maintained according to traditional norms, but the lighting system and stage design are modified to be more communicative for international audiences. Meanwhile, the Legong Keraton Peliatan includes a prologue in English and Japanese, which explains the philosophy of the ageme kangkang and ulap-ulap movements, so that visitors understand the existing symbolism. This aesthetic integration also aligns with Kaeppler's (2000) concept of ethnoaesthetics, which emphasizes that aesthetic criteria must be measured from a local cultural perspective and then translated into a format that can be appreciated by a global audience. Participatory management ensures that all elements of society, artists, traditional leaders, tourism managers, and the younger generation, have a role in the creative process and decision-making. This model creates a strong sense of ownership, ensuring consistent performance. For example, in the management of Ngerebeg in Tegalalang Village, artistic and managerial decisions are made through open meetings involving representatives of the musicians' group, dancers, the traditional village head, and youth groups. Revenue distribution is transparent, with a specific allocation for traditional preservation funds. This approach aligns with Scheyvens' (1999) empowerment framework and Murphy's (1985)

community-based tourism principles, which position local communities as the primary actors in cultural resource management. The results of the study show that these three elements are mutually reinforcing: Traditional narratives provide value and meaning, making the performance culturally relevant, Performance aesthetics create visual and emotional appeal that can reach the global market, Participatory management ensures sustainability and equitable distribution of benefits, When the three are integrated, tourist theater is not only a spectacle, but also a means of cultural education, a medium for economic empowerment, and a symbol of collective identity. This model also avoids the trap of staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1976) because the community remains in control of the narrative and form of the performance. Below is the Megebeg-gebegan tourist theater developed in North Bali.



Figure 1. Community Involvement in the Megebeg-Gebegan Tourism Theater.
(Documentation: Ruastiti, 2025)



Figure 2. Megebeg-Gebegan Tourist Theatre in North Bali
(Documentation: Ruastiti, 2025)

1. Novelty and Scientific Contribution

The results of this study confirm that the main novelty lies in the development of a community-based tourism theater model that integrates ethnoaesthetic theory and the concept of community-based tourism (CBT). This integration produces a conceptual and practical framework that can be replicated in various areas with cultural tourism potential in Indonesia, while maintaining cultural authenticity and empowering local communities. Ethnoaesthetics (Kaeppler, 2000; Thompson, 1974) views aesthetics as a social construct understood and assessed according to local cultural standards. In this study, ethnoaesthetic principles are used to identify and maintain aesthetic elements of performances such as dance movements, costumes, music, symbols, and spatial arrangements that are considered “beautiful” and “meaningful” by local communities. A concrete example is seen in the development of the Megebeg-Gebegan tourist theater in North Bali, where traditional props such as torches, flower gebogan, and baleganjur gamelan accompaniment are not replaced by modern elements simply for market interests. Instead, each element is maintained or carefully modified based on community deliberation, so that the form of the performance remains in accordance with local aesthetic tastes while still being communicative for tourist audiences.

Community-Based Tourism (Murphy, 1985; Scheyvens, 1999; Okazaki, 2008) emphasizes that local communities should be the primary actors in the planning, management, and utilization of the economic benefits of tourism. In the developed model, CBT principles are implemented through participatory management:

- a. Joint planning: Story exploration, selection of performance locations, and performance design are determined through village meetings.
- b. Financial transparency: The revenue sharing scheme is mutually agreed upon, for example 60% for the performers, 20% for the village treasury, and 20% for production costs.
- c. Ongoing training: Young people are trained to become dancers, drummers, narrators, or tour guides so that the community's capacity continues to grow.

A concrete example can be seen in Tegalalang Village, where the revitalization of the Ngerebeg tourist theater not only produces interesting performances, but also creates new jobs in supporting sectors such as local culinary, souvenir production, and documentation services.

The resulting conceptual framework combines two theoretical domains: (1) from ethnoaesthetics: emphasis on the authenticity of the form and meaning of performing arts; (2) from community-based tourism: emphasis on empowerment, participation, and distribution of benefits.

This model flows in five stages of implementation:

- a. Identification of local aesthetic values (observation, interviews with traditional figures, archival analysis).
- b. Co-creation of narratives involving artists and community leaders.
- c. Participatory artistic design that maintains elements of tradition while accommodating the needs of a tourist audience.
- d. Community-based performance management with clear role division.
- e. Multidimensional impact evaluation (cultural, social, economic).

This framework can be replicated in other areas, for example the adaptation of the narrative of Muaro Jambi Temple in Jambi or the Wayang Orang Sriwedari in Solo, while still referring to two core principles: maintaining local aesthetics and ensuring community empowerment.

This model is not only conceptual, but has also been tested in several local contexts with positive results:

- a. Buleleng (North Bali): Megebeg-Gebegan has been promoted as an annual tourist attraction, giving rise to a thematic souvenir market.
- b. Batubulan (Gianyar): Barong & Keris Dance has been rescheduled to involve more performers from the community.
- c. Peliatan (Ubud): Legong Dance is enriched with a multilingual prologue composed together with senior artists and village youth.

The results show an increase in audience numbers, community income, and youth participation in cultural preservation. The novelty of this model lies in the explicit integration of performing arts theory (ethnoaesthetics) and community-based tourism development (CBT) theory within a single operational framework. Previously, research on performing arts tourism tended to be separated between aesthetic studies and tourism management studies. This model combines the two, providing a solution that addresses the classic dilemma between preservation and commercialization. Its relevance is not limited to Bali, but can also be applied to other regions such as West Sumatra (randai), Central Java (Wayang Wong), or South Sulawesi (Pakarena Dance), where cultural tourism potential is high but management is still partial.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that local wisdom-based tourism theater has strategic potential as a means of community empowerment, cultural preservation, and strengthening the creative economy. The community empowerment strategy implemented based on the principles of Community-Based Tourism (Murphy, 1985; Scheyvens, 1999) has proven capable of integrating various elements of society, artists, traditional leaders, youth, artisans, and business actors, in the creative, management, and promotional processes. This participatory approach not only ensures a more equitable distribution of economic benefits but also strengthens a sense of ownership and collective pride in local cultural heritage. Tourist theater as an instrument for cultural preservation demonstrates that creative adaptations of local narratives, mythology, or traditional rituals can be made without sacrificing authentic values. Supported by ethnoaesthetic theory (Kaeppler, 2000; Thompson, 1974), the performances developed are able to maintain the integrity of symbolic meaning while remaining relevant to the tastes of modern audiences. Concrete examples such as the revitalization of Megebeg-Gebegan in North Bali demonstrate that performances can serve a dual purpose: as a tourist attraction and as a medium for regenerating cultural values.

The economic implications of tourist theater for the community are evident in increased job opportunities, the opening of markets for local craft products, and the development of a creative economy ecosystem involving supporting sectors such as culinary, transportation, and accommodation. This model aligns with the concept of sustainable cultural tourism (UNESCO, 2011), which emphasizes a balance between economic benefits and the sustainability of cultural resources. Overall, the novelty of this research lies in the formulation of a community-based tourism theater model that integrates ethnoaesthetics and community-based tourism theories into a conceptual and practical framework. This model can be replicated in various regions with cultural tourism potential in Indonesia, provided it is adapted to their respective local characteristics. This research not only contributes to enriching academic studies but also offers implementation guidance for sustainable cultural tourism developers.

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