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FROM RITUAL TO TOURISM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL MODEL FOR DEVELOPING LOCAL CULTURE-BASED TOURISM THROUGH KUDA LUMPING IN SUNDANESE LAND, INDONESIA

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Abstract: *Traditional performing arts constitute an important component of local cultural heritage and provide opportunities for developing sustainable cultural tourism. Kuda Lumping, a traditional Indonesian performing art involving woven horse figures, music, dance, and, in certain communities, ritual and spiritual practices, represents a cultural expression that carries historical meanings, collective identity, and inherited knowledge. Within the Sundanese cultural landscape of Indonesia, the development of Kuda Lumping as a tourism attraction raises important questions concerning cultural authenticity, ritual transformation, community participation, and the sustainability of intangible cultural heritage. This study aims to develop a phenomenological model for understanding the transformation of Kuda Lumping from traditional ritual practice into community-based cultural tourism. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the research focuses on the lived experiences and interpretations of performers, traditional leaders, cultural practitioners, community members, and tourism stakeholders. Data collection involves in-depth interviews, participant observation, and cultural documentation. The analytical framework examines five interconnected dimensions: ritual and cultural meanings, community lived experiences, cultural adaptation, participatory tourism development, and sustainable cultural preservation. These dimensions provide a conceptual foundation for understanding how traditional cultural practices can be transformed into meaningful tourism experiences without undermining their cultural significance. The proposed model positions community knowledge, cultural ownership, and local participation as fundamental elements of tourism development. It also emphasizes the importance of distinguishing customary ritual practices from tourism-oriented performances to maintain cultural integrity while creating economic opportunities. This study contributes to cultural tourism scholarship by integrating phenomenological inquiry with community-based tourism perspectives and proposing an experience-centered framework for developing local culture-based tourism through traditional performing arts.*

Keywords*: Kuda Lumping; Cultural Tourism; Phenomenology; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Community-Based Tourism; Cultural Transformation; Sundanese Culture.*

INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage represents an essential foundation of collective identity, historical continuity, and social relationships within local communities. Traditional cultural practices are not merely artistic products inherited from previous generations but also constitute systems of knowledge, values, beliefs, and social experiences that shape the ways communities understand themselves and their cultural environments. In contemporary tourism development, cultural heritage has increasingly become an important resource for creating distinctive visitor experiences, strengthening local identity, and generating economic

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opportunities. Nevertheless, the relationship between cultural preservation and tourism development requires careful consideration because cultural practices may experience changes in meaning, function, and representation when incorporated into commercial tourism activities (Smith, 2006; Richards, 2018).

Indonesia possesses considerable cultural diversity, reflected in traditional dances, musical performances, ceremonies, rituals, handicrafts, oral traditions, and other forms of intangible cultural heritage. These cultural resources provide opportunities for developing tourism based on local identity and community participation. Cultural tourism allows visitors to engage with the history, artistic expressions, and social practices of destination communities. However, the development of cultural tourism should not be limited to presenting traditional performances as entertainment products. It should also recognize the cultural meanings, community ownership, and historical experiences that sustain traditional practices (UNESCO, 2003; Timothy & Boyd, 2003).

One traditional performing art that illustrates this relationship is Kuda Lumping, also known in various Indonesian regions as Jaran Kepang or Jathilan. This performance is generally characterized by dancers using woven bamboo horse figures, traditional costumes, musical accompaniment, rhythmic movements, and symbolic performance elements. Depending on the cultural context, certain Kuda Lumping traditions may also incorporate ritual preparations, spiritual interpretations, and trance-related practices. These characteristics demonstrate that Kuda Lumping cannot be understood exclusively as a form of entertainment because its significance may also be connected to customary traditions, collective memory, and community identity.

The cultural significance of traditional performing arts is closely related to the social environments in which they are maintained. Performers, traditional leaders, and community members contribute to the transmission of artistic knowledge and cultural meanings across generations. Smith (2006) argues that heritage should be understood as a social process through which communities interpret and negotiate the significance of the past. From this perspective, Kuda Lumping represents a living cultural practice whose meaning is continuously reproduced through performance, participation, and community interpretation.

Within the Sundanese cultural landscape of Indonesia, traditional performing arts form part of a broader system of cultural identity and local knowledge. Sundanese communities maintain diverse artistic traditions, customary values, and cultural expressions that contribute to regional identity. The presence and development of Kuda Lumping within particular Sundanese communities should therefore be understood through the historical and social experiences of those communities. It is important to recognize that Kuda Lumping is not

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exclusively Sundanese in origin or distribution. Its cultural interpretation within Sundanese settings must be grounded in the specific practices and meanings recognized by the local communities concerned.

The potential of Kuda Lumping as a tourism attraction emerges from its distinctive artistic and cultural characteristics. Its visual presentation, musical accompaniment, costumes, choreography, and collective performance provide opportunities for developing cultural tourism experiences. Cultural performances may also encourage visitors to understand local histories, traditional knowledge, and community values. Richards (2018) explains that cultural tourism increasingly involves experiences that connect visitors with cultural resources and creative activities. Consequently, traditional performing arts can become important resources for tourism development when they are presented through meaningful cultural interpretation.

Nevertheless, transforming traditional performances into tourism attractions is a complex process. Traditional practices are embedded in specific social and cultural environments, and their meanings may be associated with customary procedures, spiritual beliefs, community relationships, and inherited knowledge. When these practices enter tourism markets, they may experience changes in performance duration, presentation formats, audience interaction, artistic arrangements, and organizational structures. Such changes may create opportunities for cultural revitalization, but they may also generate tensions between cultural authenticity and commercial expectations (Cohen, 1988; Cole, 2007).

The relationship between tourism and cultural authenticity has been widely discussed in tourism scholarship. Cohen (1988) explains that commodification does not necessarily eliminate the meaning of cultural products; rather, it may transform existing meanings or introduce new interpretations. Cole (2007), through research in eastern Indonesia, demonstrates that tourism can contribute to local pride and cultural identity, although its effects depend on how cultural meanings are interpreted by different stakeholders. These perspectives indicate that the relationship between cultural preservation and tourism commercialization cannot be understood through a simple opposition between authenticity and economic development.

In the context of Kuda Lumping, the central question is therefore not whether traditional performances should become tourism attractions, but how the transformation can occur without undermining the cultural meanings and community ownership that sustain the tradition. This requires an understanding of the experiences and interpretations of individuals who participate directly in the cultural practice. Performers, traditional leaders, cultural practitioners, community members, and tourism stakeholders may interpret transformation differently according to their experiences, responsibilities, and interests.

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A phenomenological approach provides an appropriate foundation for examining these experiences. Phenomenology focuses on how individuals experience and interpret particular phenomena in their everyday lives. Rather than concentrating exclusively on observable performance characteristics, phenomenological inquiry explores the meanings that individuals attribute to their participation, memories, relationships, and cultural experiences (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016). In this research, phenomenology enables an examination of how performers understand their involvement in Kuda Lumping, how traditional leaders interpret cultural continuity, and how communities experience the transition from customary performance to tourism-oriented presentation.

The development of cultural tourism also requires attention to the sustainability of intangible cultural heritage. The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage emphasizes the importance of recognizing and safeguarding cultural practices, knowledge, skills, and expressions maintained by communities (UNESCO, 2003). This perspective suggests that cultural preservation should not be understood merely as maintaining physical performance objects or recording artistic movements. It should also involve the continuity of knowledge, social practices, and community participation that enable cultural traditions to remain meaningful.

Community-based tourism provides another important framework for understanding the development of Kuda Lumping as a tourism resource. Murphy (1985) emphasizes the importance of community involvement in tourism planning and development. Goodwin and Santilli (2009) further explain that community-based tourism should provide meaningful local participation and contribute to community development. Scheyvens (1999) highlights the empowerment dimension of tourism, particularly the importance of ensuring that local communities benefit socially, economically, psychologically, and politically from tourism activities.

These perspectives are particularly relevant to Kuda Lumping because the development of cultural tourism should involve the people who maintain the tradition. Community participation should extend beyond providing performances for visitors. It should include decision-making concerning cultural representation, performance arrangements, visitor interpretation, organizational management, and the distribution of economic benefits. Tosun (2000) notes that community participation in tourism development may be constrained by institutional, structural, and operational factors. Therefore, effective cultural tourism development requires more than the formal involvement of local communities; it requires appropriate mechanisms that enable meaningful participation.

Previous research has examined the revitalization, development, and transformation of

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traditional horse-dance performances. Mutiarasari and Suwandi (2022) examined the revitalization of Jaran Kepang in Temanggung, particularly the changes in movement, accompaniment, costumes, and other performance elements. Kiswanto et al. (2024) developed a model for the musical accompaniment of Jaran Kepang, demonstrating how traditional performing arts can undergo artistic development while responding to contemporary aesthetic requirements.

More directly, Susilawati and Gitasiswhara (2026) examined the transformation of Kuda Lumping from traditional ritual practice into a sustainable tourism attraction in Mekarlaksana Tourism Village, Bandung Regency. Their research discusses the relationship between traditional cultural values, tourism commercialization, and sustainable tourism development.

This study provides an important foundation for further examining the transformation of Kuda Lumping within the context of cultural tourism. Despite these contributions, there remains an opportunity to deepen the analysis through phenomenological inquiry. The transformation of Kuda Lumping should not only be examined through changes in performance structures or tourism management strategies but also through the lived experiences of individuals who maintain, perform, interpret, and develop the tradition. Understanding these experiences can provide deeper insights into how cultural meanings are negotiated during tourism transformation.

This study addresses this issue by developing a phenomenological model for understanding and guiding the transformation of Kuda Lumping from traditional ritual practice into local culture-based tourism in the Sundanese cultural landscape of Indonesia. The model integrates five interconnected dimensions: ritual and cultural meanings, community lived experiences, cultural adaptation, participatory tourism development, and sustainable cultural preservation.

The theoretical contribution lies in integrating phenomenological inquiry with community-based cultural tourism. The conceptual contribution lies in proposing an experience-centered model that positions cultural meaning and community ownership as the foundations of tourism transformation. The practical contribution lies in identifying principles for maintaining cultural integrity while developing sustainable tourism opportunities.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences, interpretations, and cultural meanings associated with the transformation of Kuda Lumping from a traditional cultural and ritual practice into a local culture-based tourism

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attraction. A phenomenological approach is considered appropriate because the study seeks to understand how individuals experience cultural practices and interpret the changes occurring within their social and cultural environment. Phenomenology focuses on understanding the essential structures of lived experiences and interpreting the meanings individuals attribute to particular phenomena (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016). Through this approach, the research examines the relationship between traditional performances, community identity, cultural adaptation, and tourism development. The analysis focuses on five interconnected dimensions: ritual and cultural meanings, community lived experiences, cultural adaptation and transformation, participatory cultural tourism, and sustainable cultural preservation.

The research is situated within the Sundanese cultural landscape of Indonesia, focusing on communities that maintain, practice, and develop Kuda Lumping as part of their local cultural activities. The research setting encompasses traditional performance spaces, cultural organizations, community activities, and tourism-related events associated with Kuda Lumping. The selection of the research location considers the existence of active Kuda Lumping communities, the continuity of traditional performance practices, the involvement of local communities, and the relevance of tourism development initiatives. These considerations are important for understanding the relationship between cultural preservation and contemporary tourism activities. The geographical scope of the study is established by identifying a specific community or cultural organization as the research site because the historical background, customary practices, ritual elements, and tourism development experiences of Kuda Lumping may differ across locations.

Research participants are selected through purposive sampling based on their knowledge, experiences, and involvement in Kuda Lumping and local cultural tourism development. This technique enables the researcher to identify individuals who possess relevant experiences and can provide detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015). Participants include traditional performers and dancers who can explain their experiences of participating in Kuda Lumping performances, their understanding of traditional artistic elements, and their interpretations of changes in performance practices. Traditional leaders and cultural practitioners are also involved because they possess knowledge of historical narratives, customary procedures, symbolic meanings, and cultural values associated with the tradition. Community members and younger generations are included to explore cultural transmission, collective identity, community participation, and changing perceptions of traditional performing arts. Furthermore, cultural organization managers and tourism stakeholders are involved to examine the organizational and managerial

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dimensions of transforming Kuda Lumping into a tourism attraction. Representatives of local government institutions responsible for cultural preservation and tourism development may also participate to provide information concerning institutional support, cultural policies, and opportunities for integrating traditional performing arts into local tourism strategies. The number of participants is determined according to the depth and relevance of the information obtained, with participant selection emphasizing direct involvement, cultural knowledge, and the ability to describe personal experiences.

Data collection is conducted through three complementary techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The combination of these techniques enables the researcher to examine individual experiences, observable cultural practices, and supporting documentary evidence. In-depth interviews are conducted using a semi-structured interview guide to explore participants' experiences, interpretations, and perceptions concerning Kuda Lumping and its transformation into a tourism attraction. The interviews address ritual and cultural meanings, including historical narratives, spiritual interpretations, customary procedures, and symbolic elements; community experiences, including participation, cultural identity, collective memory, and intergenerational knowledge transmission; cultural transformation, including changes in performance structures, artistic presentation, audience interaction, and commercialization; tourism development, including community participation, cultural promotion, organizational management, and economic opportunities; and cultural sustainability, including authenticity, cultural ownership, youth involvement, and institutional support. The interviews encourage participants to describe their experiences in their own words, allowing meanings to emerge from their accounts rather than restricting responses to predetermined theoretical categories.

Participant observation is conducted to examine actual practices and social interactions associated with Kuda Lumping. Observation focuses on performance preparation, customary activities, artistic rehearsals, interactions between performers and audiences, and the organization of cultural events. Particular attention is given to differences between performances conducted in customary or ritual settings and those organized specifically for tourism purposes. This distinction is important because the two contexts may involve different cultural meanings, organizational requirements, and performance arrangements. Observation also examines the participation of traditional leaders, performers, younger generations, community organizations, and tourism stakeholders in maintaining and developing the tradition. Documentation is undertaken by examining relevant cultural and organizational materials, including photographs, performance recordings, historical records, cultural organization profiles, event programs, tourism publications, community archives, and local

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government documents. These materials provide additional information concerning the historical development of Kuda Lumping, changes in performance structures, cultural representation, and the relationship between traditional arts and tourism development. Documentation is also used to identify cultural elements that remain relatively consistent and those that have undergone adaptation in response to contemporary social and tourism environments.

Data analysis follows a phenomenological orientation supported by the thematic analysis framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis provides a systematic procedure for identifying patterns of meaning across qualitative data, while the phenomenological perspective guides the interpretation of participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attribute to cultural transformation. The analytical process begins with familiarization with the data through repeated reading of interview transcripts, observation notes, and relevant documentation to understand the overall context of participants' experiences. The next stage involves generating initial codes by identifying statements and descriptions concerning ritual meanings, cultural identity, spiritual experiences, artistic adaptation, community participation, and tourism development. Related codes are then organized into broader themes representing recurring patterns across participants' accounts. These themes are subsequently reviewed to examine their relevance, consistency, and relationship with the research questions. The researcher then defines and names each theme by identifying its essential meaning and explaining the relationship between individual experiences and broader cultural transformation. The final stage involves producing an analytical report that interprets the themes and integrates them into a phenomenological model for developing local culture-based tourism through Kuda Lumping.

The analysis is organized into five principal dimensions. The first dimension, ritual and cultural meanings, examines spiritual interpretations, symbolism, historical narratives, and customary values associated with Kuda Lumping. The second dimension, community lived experiences, explores collective memory, cultural identity, community participation, and intergenerational transmission. The third dimension, cultural adaptation, focuses on performance innovation, artistic changes, tourism presentation, and the negotiation of cultural authenticity. The fourth dimension, participatory cultural tourism, examines community management, tourism promotion, collaboration among stakeholders, and the distribution of economic benefits. The fifth dimension, sustainable cultural preservation, addresses cultural continuity, youth involvement, local ownership, and community welfare. These five dimensions are interpreted through a phenomenological perspective to identify the essential meanings of the transformation process. Their interrelationships provide the conceptual

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foundation for constructing a model that connects cultural meaning, community experience, responsible adaptation, participatory tourism development, and sustainable cultural preservation.

The trustworthiness of the research is strengthened through methodological triangulation, source triangulation, member checking, and the maintenance of an audit trail. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as important criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research. Methodological triangulation involves comparing information obtained through interviews, observation, and documentation, while source triangulation examines the consistency of perspectives among performers, traditional leaders, community members, and tourism stakeholders. Member checking is conducted by presenting selected interpretations to relevant participants to verify whether the descriptions accurately represent their experiences. An audit trail is maintained to document the research process, analytical decisions, and development of interpretative themes. Ethical considerations include obtaining informed consent, maintaining participant confidentiality, respecting local cultural protocols, and ensuring that information is used for academic research. Particular attention is given to protecting sensitive cultural and ritual knowledge. The documentation and publication of culturally restricted practices are undertaken only with the consent of the relevant cultural practitioners and communities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The analytical framework of this study is organized around five interconnected dimensions that explain the relationship between the cultural meanings of Kuda Lumping, community experiences, cultural transformation, tourism development, and cultural sustainability. The dimensions provide a foundation for understanding how traditional performing arts can be developed as tourism resources while maintaining their cultural significance. The presentation of the following themes constitutes the proposed analytical structure. Their status as empirical findings must be established through the actual interview, observation, and documentary data collected from the selected research location.

Ritual and Cultural Meanings of Kuda Lumping

Kuda Lumping represents a traditional performing art in which artistic expression is connected to historical narratives, symbolic representations, and community cultural practices. Its cultural significance extends beyond the visual presentation of dancers using woven horse figures.

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Depending on local traditions, performances may incorporate ritual preparations, customary procedures, spiritual interpretations, musical elements, and symbolic interactions between performers and community members. These elements create a cultural context through which traditional practitioners interpret the significance of the performance.

The woven horse properties, costumes, musical accompaniment, and choreography can function as cultural symbols representing inherited artistic knowledge and collective identity. Their meanings are sustained through repeated community practices and intergenerational transmission. From a phenomenological perspective, the significance of Kuda Lumping is not limited to its observable performance structure. Its deeper meanings emerge through the experiences of individuals who participate in and maintain the tradition. Performers may interpret their involvement as an expression of artistic identity, while traditional practitioners may emphasize customary or spiritual dimensions. Community members may understand the performance as an expression of collective heritage and social belonging.

This diversity of interpretations demonstrates that the cultural meaning of Kuda Lumping should be examined as a multidimensional phenomenon rather than a single standardized tradition. The interpretation is consistent with Smith's (2006) understanding of heritage as a social process through which communities construct and negotiate cultural meanings.

Community Lived Experiences and Cultural Identity

The continuity of Kuda Lumping is closely associated with the experiences of individuals and communities who maintain the tradition. Cultural knowledge is transmitted through participation in rehearsals, performances, customary activities, and everyday interactions within cultural organizations. Performers develop relationships with the tradition through repeated participation, artistic learning, and collective experiences. Their involvement may contribute to a sense of cultural belonging and responsibility for maintaining traditional practices.

Traditional leaders and senior cultural practitioners play an important role in transmitting knowledge concerning performance procedures, symbolic meanings, customary values, and historical narratives. Their knowledge provides a reference for evaluating which cultural elements can be adapted and which require particular protection. Community participation also contributes to the social function of Kuda Lumping. Cultural activities may

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create opportunities for interaction among families, performers, community organizations, and younger generations. Such relationships strengthen the social environment in which traditional practices can continue.

Nevertheless, cultural transmission may face challenges associated with modernization, changing interests among younger generations, limited organizational resources, and competition with contemporary entertainment. These challenges indicate that cultural preservation requires more than maintaining performance equipment or organizing occasional events. This perspective is consistent with the UNESCO (2003) convention, which recognizes the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage through community participation and the continued transmission of cultural knowledge.

Transformation from Ritual Practice to Tourism Attraction

The transformation of Kuda Lumping into a tourism attraction involves changes in the context, organization, and presentation of traditional performances. In customary settings, performances may be connected to community ceremonies, traditional celebrations, or other culturally significant activities. In tourism settings, performances may be presented through cultural festivals, organized visitor experiences, tourism programs, and public cultural events. These different contexts create opportunities for the development of traditional performing arts. Tourism activities can provide additional performance opportunities, increase public recognition, encourage cultural documentation, and create potential economic benefits for performers and cultural organizations.

However, tourism-oriented performances may require adjustments to performance duration, schedules, choreography, artistic presentation, and audience interaction. Such adjustments may be necessary to accommodate visitor expectations and tourism management requirements. The central challenge concerns the relationship between cultural adaptation and cultural authenticity. Adaptation may help traditional performances remain relevant and accessible to contemporary audiences. Nevertheless, uncontrolled adaptation may reduce the visibility of important cultural meanings or transform ritual elements into entertainment products without sufficient cultural interpretation.

Cohen (1988) argues that commercialization does not necessarily destroy cultural meaning, but it may change existing meanings and introduce new interpretations. Cole (2007) similarly demonstrates that tourism can create opportunities for cultural pride and identity, depending on how communities negotiate the relationship between cultural representation and tourism interests.

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Therefore, the transformation of Kuda Lumping should distinguish between cultural elements that can be adapted for tourism presentation and those that require protection because of their customary, spiritual, or community-specific significance.

Community Participation in Kuda Lumping-Based Cultural Tourism

Community participation represents an essential factor in transforming Kuda Lumping into a sustainable tourism resource. Cultural tourism development requires the involvement of individuals and organizations that possess knowledge of the tradition and maintain its continuity. Performers contribute by maintaining artistic skills and presenting the performances. Traditional leaders provide cultural guidance, while community organizations coordinate cultural activities and support intergenerational transmission.

Local tourism stakeholders can contribute through destination promotion, visitor management, event organization, and the development of supporting facilities. Local government institutions may provide policy support, training, cultural programs, and access to resources. However, community participation should not be limited to providing performances for visitors. It should also involve decision-making concerning tourism activities, performance arrangements, cultural interpretation, financial management, and the distribution of economic benefits.

Murphy (1985) emphasizes that tourism development should consider the interests and involvement of host communities. Goodwin and Santilli (2009) also highlight the importance of local participation in ensuring that community-based tourism contributes to local development. This approach is particularly relevant to Kuda Lumping because cultural heritage remains connected to the social and cultural life of the communities that maintain it. Tourism initiatives should therefore be developed through consultation and collaboration with cultural practitioners and local stakeholders.

Sustainable Cultural Preservation and Community Welfare

The sustainability of Kuda Lumping-based tourism depends on the ability to maintain cultural continuity while creating opportunities for community development. Cultural preservation involves maintaining traditional knowledge, performance skills, symbolic elements, customary practices, and historical narratives. It also requires opportunities for younger generations to participate in learning activities and cultural organizations.

Tourism development may contribute to preservation by creating economic incentives for maintaining traditional performances. Revenue from cultural events and tourism activities

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may support training, equipment maintenance, performance preparation, and organizational development. Nevertheless, economic benefits alone do not guarantee cultural sustainability. Tourism development may create pressure to modify performances according to visitor preferences, prioritize commercially attractive elements, or reduce the time allocated to cultural education. For this reason, cultural sustainability requires a balance between economic opportunities, community ownership, cultural integrity, and intergenerational transmission.

Digital documentation and promotional media may also support preservation by recording performances, documenting cultural histories, and introducing Kuda Lumping to wider audiences. However, digital promotion should be conducted with respect for cultural protocols and the consent of relevant cultural practitioners. Sustainable cultural tourism should ultimately strengthen the capacity of local communities to maintain their traditions, determine how cultural resources are used, and benefit from tourism activities without losing control over their cultural identity.

Discussion

Understanding Kuda Lumping through a Phenomenological Perspective

The phenomenological perspective provides an important foundation for understanding the transformation of Kuda Lumping because it emphasizes the meanings that individuals attach to their cultural experiences. Traditional performing arts cannot be fully understood through their physical characteristics alone. Their meanings are constructed through participation, memory, social interaction, customary knowledge, and personal interpretation. In this context, Kuda Lumping represents an experiential cultural phenomenon in which artistic expression, community identity, and traditional knowledge interact.

Moustakas (1994) explains that phenomenological research seeks to identify the essential structures of lived experience. This perspective enables researchers to examine how performers experience participation, how traditional leaders interpret cultural continuity, and how community members understand changes in the functions of traditional performances. Van Manen (2016) further emphasizes that lived experiences should be interpreted within their everyday and cultural contexts. This is particularly relevant because the meaning of Kuda Lumping may differ depending on whether a performance occurs within a customary ceremony, a community celebration, or a tourism event. The phenomenological approach therefore makes it possible to distinguish between the external transformation of performance

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structures and the deeper meanings that remain important to cultural practitioners.

The central implication is that tourism development should begin with an understanding of the cultural experiences and values that sustain the tradition. Without this understanding, tourism initiatives may focus primarily on visual attraction and commercial presentation while neglecting the cultural significance of the performance.

From Ritual to Tourism: Cultural Transformation and Negotiation

The transformation of Kuda Lumping from ritual practice into a tourism attraction can be understood as a process of cultural negotiation between continuity and change. Traditional cultural practices are not necessarily static. Communities may modify performance arrangements, introduce new artistic elements, or develop alternative presentation formats in response to changing social conditions. Such adaptation can contribute to the continued relevance of cultural traditions.

However, cultural transformation should not be interpreted as the complete replacement of ritual meaning by entertainment functions. Different performance contexts may coexist, allowing communities to maintain customary practices while developing tourism-oriented presentations. The distinction between customary performances and tourism performances is therefore important. Customary performances should remain governed by community values and applicable cultural protocols. Tourism-oriented presentations may incorporate adaptations to improve accessibility and visitor understanding, provided that these changes are developed through consultation with cultural practitioners.

Research on Kuda Lumping has documented the diversity of performance elements, symbolic meanings, and cultural functions. Hardiarini and Firdhani (2022) examine the tradition through multiple perspectives, while Mutiarasari and Suwandi (2022) demonstrate the importance of revitalization in maintaining traditional artistic characteristics. Kiswanto et al. (2024) further illustrate the potential for developing traditional musical accompaniment through artistic innovation. More directly, Susilawati and Gitasiswhara (2026) examine the transformation of Kuda Lumping into a sustainable tourism attraction in Mekarlaksana Tourism Village. Their research highlights the relationship between cultural authenticity, commercialization, and tourism development.

The present study extends this discussion by emphasizing the lived experiences and interpretations of cultural practitioners as the basis for developing a phenomenological tourism model.

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The transformation process should consequently be understood not simply as a movement from ritual to entertainment but as a negotiation between cultural continuity, artistic innovation, tourism demands, and community aspirations.

Cultural Authenticity and the Protection of Local Heritage

Cultural authenticity is an important consideration in developing traditional performing arts as tourism attractions. Authenticity should not be understood exclusively as the preservation of an unchanged historical performance. Rather, it involves maintaining the cultural meanings, community ownership, and customary principles that give the tradition its significance. Smith (2006) explains that heritage is continuously interpreted and reconstructed through social practices. This perspective suggests that the authenticity of Kuda Lumping is connected to how communities understand, maintain, and transmit the tradition.

Cohen (1988) challenges the assumption that commodification automatically destroys authenticity. He argues that cultural products may acquire new meanings through tourism interactions. Cole (2007) also demonstrates that tourism can strengthen local cultural pride under particular circumstances, although the outcomes depend on the relationships between communities and external stakeholders. These perspectives indicate that cultural authenticity should be understood through the interpretations and interests of the communities that maintain the tradition. Tourism development can support cultural preservation when it provides opportunities for cultural practitioners to present their traditions according to their own interpretations. Conversely, it can undermine cultural authenticity when external commercial interests determine the meaning and presentation of cultural practices without meaningful community involvement.

The distinction between adaptation and cultural distortion is therefore essential. Adaptation may involve improving stage arrangements, visitor information, accessibility, and performance scheduling. Cultural distortion may occur when ritual elements are removed or modified without consultation, cultural symbols are presented inaccurately, or customary knowledge is used commercially without appropriate consent. A sustainable approach should establish community-based guidelines for cultural representation. These guidelines may identify which performance elements can be adapted, which require contextual explanation, and which should remain protected within customary settings.

Community-Based Tourism as a Framework for Cultural Development

Community-based tourism provides a practical framework for translating cultural

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heritage into sustainable local development. Murphy (1985) emphasizes the importance of community involvement in tourism planning, while Goodwin and Santilli (2009) discuss community-based tourism in relation to local participation and development outcomes. Scheyvens (1999) further explains that tourism empowerment involves economic, social, psychological, and political dimensions. Within the context of Kuda Lumping, community-based tourism requires local cultural practitioners to become active decision-makers rather than merely providers of entertainment services.

Community participation should cover several areas.

First, communities should participate in determining how Kuda Lumping is represented and introduced to visitors. This ensures that tourism narratives reflect the cultural meanings recognized by the community. Second, cultural organizations should participate in determining performance schedules, artistic arrangements, and the use of customary elements. Third, tourism management should involve local performers, small businesses, community organizations, and relevant government institutions. Fourth, economic benefits should be distributed transparently and fairly among those who contribute to tourism activities. Fifth, local communities should have the authority to evaluate tourism activities and determine whether particular forms of commercialization are compatible with their cultural values.

However, participation should not be assumed to occur automatically. Tosun (2000) identifies structural, operational, and cultural limitations that may prevent communities from participating effectively in tourism planning. Therefore, Kuda Lumping-based tourism requires institutional arrangements that ensure genuine representation and decision-making authority. This approach places community ownership at the center of cultural tourism development. Tourism becomes a means of strengthening local cultural capacity rather than an external activity that extracts cultural resources for commercial purposes.

Developing Cultural Tourism through Intergenerational Transmission

Intergenerational transmission is essential for maintaining the sustainability of Kuda Lumping. Cultural traditions can only continue when knowledge, artistic skills, performance practices, and cultural values are transferred to younger generations. The development of tourism may create additional motivation for young people to become involved in traditional arts. Performance opportunities, cultural festivals, digital promotion, and creative tourism activities can increase public recognition and create new spaces for cultural learning.

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However, youth participation should not be limited to performing for visitors. It should also involve learning about the history, symbolism, cultural values, and social responsibilities associated with the tradition.Cultural organizations can develop structured learning activities involving senior performers, traditional practitioners, and younger participants. Such activities may include practical training, cultural discussions, documentation projects, and collaborative performances.

Digital media can complement these activities by providing access to performance archives, cultural narratives, and educational materials. Nevertheless, digitalization should support rather than replace direct cultural transmission within the community. The UNESCO (2003) convention emphasizes the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage through education, transmission, and community involvement. These principles indicate that the sustainability of Kuda Lumping requires the integration of cultural education with contemporary tourism development.

By connecting traditional knowledge with contemporary learning opportunities, Kuda Lumping can remain meaningful to younger generations while adapting to changing cultural environments.

Sustainable Tourism and the Economic Empowerment of Local Communities

The economic dimension of cultural tourism is important because cultural preservation requires organizational resources, performance facilities, training opportunities, and financial support. Kuda Lumping-based tourism may generate economic opportunities through cultural performances, festival participation, visitor experiences, local food services, handicraft production, transportation, and other community-based tourism activities.

However, economic development should be positioned as a supporting mechanism for cultural sustainability rather than the primary determinant of cultural value.

A tourism model that prioritizes commercial performance without considering cultural ownership may create unequal relationships between cultural practitioners and tourism organizers. Performers may provide the cultural attraction while receiving limited economic benefits or having little influence over tourism decisions. Therefore, sustainable cultural tourism requires transparent management, appropriate compensation, financial accountability, and opportunities for local entrepreneurship. Tourism development should also consider the carrying capacity of cultural spaces and the potential effects of visitor activities on customary practices and community life.

The UNWTO (2018) emphasizes the potential of cultural resources to strengthen

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tourism development while supporting cultural understanding and local benefits. Similarly, UNESCO (2003) highlights the importance of ensuring that safeguarding intangible cultural heritage respects the interests and rights of the communities concerned. These principles provide an important foundation for developing Kuda Lumping-based tourism in a manner that supports both cultural preservation and local welfare.

Developing a Phenomenological Model for Kuda Lumping-Based Cultural Tourism

The integration of phenomenological understanding, cultural transformation, and community-based tourism provides the foundation for developing the proposed model.
The model positions lived cultural experience as the starting point of tourism development. It recognizes that traditional performances should be understood through the meanings and experiences of the communities that maintain them.

The model consists of five interconnected dimensions.

1. Ritual and Cultural Meaning Foundation

   The first dimension focuses on identifying and understanding the cultural values, customary practices, symbolic meanings, historical narratives, and spiritual dimensions associated with Kuda Lumping. This dimension establishes the cultural foundation for tourism development. It requires the involvement of performers, traditional leaders, and cultural practitioners to identify the elements that represent the essential identity of the tradition. The identification of these cultural elements is important for preventing tourism development from becoming disconnected from the social and historical context of the performance.
2. Community Lived Experience and Cultural Ownership

   The second dimension emphasizes the experiences and participation of local communities. It recognizes that cultural heritage remains sustainable when community members maintain a sense of ownership and responsibilityThis dimension involves cultural knowledge transmission, community participation, intergenerational learning, and the strengthening of local cultural organizations. The involvement of community members also helps ensure that tourism development reflects local aspirations rather than relying exclusively on external tourism interests.
3. Cultural Adaptation and Responsible Transformation

   The third dimension involves adapting traditional performances to contemporary tourism contexts.

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Adaptation may include the development of educational performance formats, visitor interpretation, cultural festivals, digital documentation, and improvements in performance management. However, adaptation must be guided by cultural practitioners and community agreements to ensure that customary meanings and protected ritual elements are not compromised. This dimension reflects the understanding that cultural sustainability does not require every performance element to remain unchanged. Rather, it requires adaptation to occur within culturally acceptable boundaries.

4. Participatory Cultural Tourism Development

The fourth dimension focuses on organizing Kuda Lumping as a community-based tourism attraction. This involves collaboration between performers, cultural organizations, local entrepreneurs, tourism managers, and government institutions. The development process includes tourism promotion, visitor engagement, event management, local product development, transparent benefit distribution, and the creation of culturally meaningful tourism experiences. The model emphasizes that local communities should participate in both the planning and management of tourism activities.

5. Sustainable Cultural Preservation and Community Welfare.

The fifth dimension focuses on ensuring that tourism development contributes to long-term cultural sustainability and community well-being. The main objectives include maintaining cultural authenticity, strengthening intergenerational transmission, increasing community participation, supporting local economic opportunities, and maintaining community authority over cultural heritage. The five dimensions are interconnected rather than strictly linear. Feedback from tourism activities and community experiences should inform continuous evaluation and adaptive management.

1. Ritual and Cultural Meaning Foundation

2. Community Lived Experience and Cultural Ownership

3. Cultural Adaptation and Responsible Transformation

4. Participatory Cultural Tourism Development

5. Sustainable Cultural Preservation and Community Welfare

Continuous community feedback, cultural evaluation, and adaptive management connect all

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five dimensions. The proposed model differs from conventional tourism development approaches because it places cultural meaning and lived experience before the creation of tourism products. This sequence emphasizes that tourism development should emerge from the cultural identity of the community rather than impose external commercial expectations on traditional practices.The model also recognizes that the transformation of Kuda Lumping is not simply a movement from ritual to entertainment. Instead, it is a process through which cultural communities negotiate continuity, adaptation, identity, and economic opportunities.

Theoretical Contribution and Research Novelty

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in integrating phenomenology with community-based cultural tourism to explain the transformation of traditional performing arts. Previous approaches to cultural tourism have often emphasized destination development, visitor experiences, heritage interpretation, or economic contributions. Although these dimensions are important, they do not always adequately explain how the lived experiences of cultural practitioners shape the direction of tourism transformation. This study introduces a phenomenological perspective that positions community experience and cultural meaning as the foundation of tourism development.

The proposed model contributes through three interconnected conceptual arguments.

First, cultural meaning constitutes the foundation of tourism transformation. Traditional practices should be understood through their social, historical, symbolic, and customary contexts before being developed as tourism attractions. Second, community ownership mediates cultural adaptation. Tourism innovation becomes more sustainable when cultural practitioners and community members participate in determining how traditional practices are presented and managed. Third, tourism sustainability depends on the integration of cultural preservation and community welfare. Economic benefits should support cultural continuity, intergenerational transmission, and local empowerment rather than replace the cultural values underlying the tradition.

These arguments establish a conceptual relationship between phenomenological understanding, cultural adaptation, and community-based tourism development. The model can therefore be used as an analytical framework for understanding other traditional performing arts that experience similar transformations from customary or ritual practices into contemporary cultural tourism attractions.

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CONCLUSION

This study develops a phenomenological model for understanding and guiding the transformation of Kuda Lumping from traditional ritual practice into a sustainable local culture-based tourism attraction within the Sundanese cultural landscape of Indonesia. The central argument is that cultural tourism development should begin with an understanding of the lived experiences, cultural meanings, and collective identities of the communities that maintain traditional practices.

Kuda Lumping represents more than a traditional performing art. Its cultural significance is associated with historical narratives, symbolic expressions, customary practices, artistic knowledge, and community relationships. These dimensions provide the foundation for understanding its potential as a cultural tourism resource. The proposed phenomenological model consists of five interconnected dimensions: ritual and cultural meaning foundation, community lived experience and cultural ownership, cultural adaptation and responsible transformation, participatory cultural tourism development, and sustainable cultural preservation and community welfare.

The first dimension emphasizes the importance of identifying the historical, symbolic, spiritual, and customary meanings of Kuda Lumping. The second recognizes the role of community experiences, cultural identity, and intergenerational knowledge transmission in maintaining the tradition. The third focuses on responsible cultural adaptation that accommodates contemporary tourism needs without compromising essential cultural values. The fourth emphasizes community participation in tourism planning, management, promotion, and benefit distribution. The fifth highlights the importance of integrating cultural preservation with local economic opportunities and community welfare.

The proposed model contributes to the understanding of cultural tourism by positioning phenomenological experience as the foundation of tourism transformation. Rather than treating traditional performances simply as commercial attractions, the model recognizes cultural heritage as a living social practice that requires community ownership, cultural interpretation, and continuous preservation. The transformation from ritual to tourism should not be understood as the disappearance of ritual functions or the replacement of cultural values by commercial activities. Instead, it should be approached as a process of cultural negotiation in which traditional practices may develop new forms of presentation while retaining their essential meanings and community significance.

Overall, sustainable Kuda Lumping-based tourism requires collaboration among

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cultural practitioners, traditional leaders, performers, younger generations, community organizations, tourism stakeholders, and government institutions. Through this collaborative approach, cultural tourism can become a mechanism for strengthening local identity, supporting cultural regeneration, creating economic opportunities, and maintaining the continuity of traditional performing arts.

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