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Reframing Cultural Identity-Based Tourism as a Driver of Socio-Economic Transformation in the Tanimbar Islands Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the structural limitations of tourism development in the Tanimbar Islands Regency, where a rich and distinctive cultural identity has not yet functioned as a transformative economic driver within regional development policy. Although the regency possesses significant cultural assets, these resources remain largely positioned as symbolic attractions rather than embedded within a comprehensive socio-economic transformation framework. The research aims to reframe cultural identity-based tourism as a paradigm shift from promotional representation toward structural socio-economic transformation at the regional level. It argues that cultural identity should be repositioned as strategic capital capable of shaping fiscal resilience, strengthening institutional governance, and fostering community empowerment instead of serving merely as a marketing instrument. The study applies Cultural Capital Theory, Community-Based Tourism, Sustainable Tourism Development, and Destination Branding within a transformative analytical framework to examine how identity can be converted into inclusive economic value. A qualitative-descriptive methodology is employed through literature review, fiscal structure analysis, policy examination, and contextual socio-cultural assessment of development dynamics in Tanimbar. The findings indicate that rituals, woven textiles, marine traditions, and diaspora heritage possess convertible economic potential when integrated into participatory governance mechanisms and coherent institutional design, particularly when supported by long-term policy alignment and cross-sectoral coordination. The study concludes that reframing identity-based tourism requires structural reorientation in planning systems, fiscal strategies, and governance architecture to ensure sustainable socio-economic transformation in archipelagic regions while safeguarding long-term cultural integrity and strengthening regional development resilience.

Keywords: *reframing tourism development, cultural identity-based tourism, socio-economic transformation, sustainable tourism governance*

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors in contemporary global development, influencing economic structures, social relations, and cultural continuity across regions [1]. Over the past decade, scholarly debates have shifted from growth-centric paradigms toward integrative frameworks emphasizing sustainability, resilience, and socio-cultural integrity [2], [15]. In this evolving discourse, cultural identity is increasingly positioned not merely as symbolic heritage but as a structural resource embedded within local governance systems [3]. Particularly in peripheral and island regions, identity-driven tourism is viewed as a strategic instrument capable of mediating socio-economic transformation while strengthening destination resilience [10]. This transformation challenges conventional economic interpretations of tourism and demands institutional innovation. Consequently, understanding how cultural identity may function as development capital becomes a central analytical concern.

Within Indonesia's archipelagic context, these questions gain heightened relevance. Outer island regions such as the Tanimbar Islands Regency possess rich symbolic heritage and emerging tourism-based revenue structures, yet structural transformation remains uneven. Sustainable development literature emphasizes that empowerment and inclusive governance are prerequisites for translating tourism growth into equitable socio-economic outcomes [7]. Without institutional integration, identity risks becoming commodified rather than transformative. Therefore, this study examines how cultural identity-based tourism can be reframed as a structural driver of socio-economic transformation in peripheral archipelagic settings. The following sections systematically explore the theoretical

foundations, contextual conditions, structural constraints, and research contributions that inform this reframing.

1.1 Cultural Identity-Based Tourism in Contemporary Development Discourse

The evolution of global development discourse demonstrates that tourism can no longer be narrowly interpreted as a mobility-based economic activity. Contemporary scholarship increasingly repositions tourism as an integrated governance system capable of shaping socio-economic restructuring and regional competitiveness [21], [17]. Sustainable tourism has evolved beyond environmental protection toward broader socio-cultural and institutional dimensions that define destination resilience [21]. This transformation implies that cultural identity is not merely decorative symbolism but constitutes a structural variable within development systems. In parallel, global policy frameworks emphasize that post-pandemic tourism recovery requires authenticity, inclusiveness, and adaptive governance [3], [6]. Consequently, identity-based tourism emerges as a multidimensional instrument of structural transformation rather than a marketing narrative.

From the perspective of Cultural Capital Theory, Bourdieu conceptualizes symbolic assets as convertible capital capable of generating economic and social value through institutional recognition [1]. Within tourism systems, this perspective suggests that cultural identity may function as endogenous development capital when embedded in legitimate governance frameworks. However, capital conversion is neither automatic nor neutral, as it requires regulatory mechanisms to prevent symbolic erosion and commodification. Contemporary debates emphasize that tourism governance must balance economic valorization with cultural continuity and social legitimacy [4]. Without participatory and accountable institutions, identity transformation risks becoming extractive rather than empowering. Therefore, identity-based tourism must be situated within adaptive governance systems that preserve meaning while enabling economic integration.

Global tourism markets increasingly reward destinations capable of articulating authentic cultural narratives. The United Nations World Tourism Organization highlights that cultural differentiation enhances competitiveness in increasingly homogenized tourism environments [10]. Richards further argues that culturally grounded destinations possess higher adaptive capacity in volatile global markets [2]. Empirical evidence also shows that culturally embedded tourism strengthens long-term sustainability when supported by community participation and institutional coherence. These findings indicate that authenticity functions not only as experiential value but also as strategic resilience capital. Thus, cultural identity becomes a key competitive differentiator in contemporary tourism ecosystems.

The post-COVID-19 recovery period has accelerated transformations in visitor behavior and governance expectations. OECD findings indicate that travelers increasingly prioritize sustainability, local engagement, and responsible tourism management [7]. Research by Cheer, Milano, and Novelli demonstrates that destinations dependent on overtourism exhibit structural fragility, whereas culturally embedded destinations display greater resilience [15]. Butler similarly emphasizes that island destinations require diversification strategies grounded in local identity assets to ensure long-term sustainability [13]. These patterns confirm that identity-based tourism aligns with emerging demand structures favoring meaningful and place-based experiences. Consequently, cultural identity evolves from a peripheral attraction into a strategic core asset within tourism governance. This shift represents not merely a trend, but a structural transformation in the conceptual foundation of tourism development. The transformation of tourism paradigms from conventional economic-driven models toward identity-based and adaptive governance systems can be illustrated as a dynamic evolutionary process. This evolution reflects the shift from mass tourism to sustainable, and ultimately to culturally embedded tourism systems. This paradigm shift can be further understood through a conceptual evolutionary framework, as illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Evolution of Tourism Development Paradigm (Modern Perspective)

Source : Adapted and synthesized from [1], [3], [4], [6], [12], [15], [18].

Nevertheless, identity-based tourism entails inherent risks related to commodification and symbolic dilution. While earlier studies emphasized authenticity loss, recent scholarship situates these risks within broader governance and equity concerns. Sustainable tourism must prioritize community empowerment and distributive justice rather than purely growth-oriented outcomes [12]. Community participation remains central to safeguarding cultural integrity and preventing extractive practices [2]. In addition, digital transformation introduces both opportunities and risks, as technological mediation can enhance accessibility while potentially simplifying cultural narratives. Therefore, adaptive governance must integrate cultural preservation, technological innovation, and inclusive development. In the Indonesian context, this approach requires aligning cultural assets with national development frameworks while respecting local characteristics and ecological limits.

1.2 Tanimbar Islands Regency within Indonesia's Archipelagic Tourism Development Framework

Indonesia's national tourism architecture increasingly recognizes the strategic importance of outer archipelagic regions in achieving balanced regional development. Policy instruments promote decentralization and place-based strategies; however, structural asymmetries between core destinations and peripheral island districts remain pronounced [11]. Hall notes that regional competitiveness is influenced not only by market demand but also by institutional capacity and infrastructural connectivity [5]. Within this framework, Maluku Province embodies a paradoxical condition: rich in maritime history and cultural pluralism, yet under-integrated into national tourism investment networks. The Tanimbar Islands Regency represents a critical case within this maritime frontier. Its peripheral status necessitates differentiated governance strategies responsive to island-specific development constraints.

From a cultural capital perspective, Tanimbar's identity assets extend beyond performative rituals and constitute embedded social structures regulating community cohesion and intergenerational transmission. Archaeological resources documented in the region reflect long-standing maritime interactions across Southeast Asia, reinforcing historical depth and symbolic continuity [14]. Cultural manifestations such as *tenun ikat*, ceremonial ornaments, marine rituals, and traditional marriage institutions represent institutionalized symbolic systems embedded in daily life. Richards emphasizes that destinations capable of articulating embedded identity assets achieve differentiation advantages in competitive markets [2]. However, differentiation without governance integration does not guarantee structural transformation. Institutional alignment and value-chain integration remain prerequisites for converting symbolic capital into sustainable economic outcomes.

Archipelagic governance literature underscores that island regions face compounded structural constraints including geographic fragmentation, high logistical costs, and limited economies of scale. These constraints directly affect tourism infrastructure development and market accessibility. In Tanimbar, limited transportation connectivity and digital infrastructure gaps restrict integration into broader tourism networks. Policy centralization further constrains local adaptive capacity to design culturally responsive tourism strategies [11]. Consequently, development challenges stem not from identity scarcity but from governance fragmentation. The structural issue therefore lies in transforming cultural abundance into integrated regional development capital.

Digital transformation offers both opportunity and complexity for peripheral island tourism. Smart tourism frameworks demonstrate that technological mediation can enhance destination visibility and resilience when combined with community participation and sustainable planning [6], [25]. Digital heritage initiatives can expand global reach while preserving narrative authenticity under ethical management systems. For Tanimbar, integrating cultural identity within digital governance platforms may create hybrid value chains linking tradition, technology, and market access. Such integration aligns with post-pandemic resilience frameworks emphasizing diversification and local empowerment [26], [19]. Therefore, positioning Tanimbar within Indonesia's archipelagic tourism development framework requires reframing cultural identity as structural development capital embedded in adaptive, participatory, and technologically informed governance systems.

1.3. Structural Constraints and Cultural Capital Conversion Challenges

Despite its abundant cultural capital, the transformation of identity-based tourism in peripheral regions often encounters structural limitations. In the Tanimbar Islands Regency, cultural assets are visible and vibrant, yet their institutional integration into sustainable economic systems remains uneven. Fiscal data further illuminate the evolving strategic orientation of tourism within regional governance. According to the 2025 Regional Budget (*Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Daerah* - APBD), the Regional Original Revenue (PAD) target was set at IDR 32.77 billion. The structure of regional revenue can be more clearly understood through the fiscal breakdown presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Structure of Regional Original Revenue (PAD), Tanimbar Islands Regency, Fiscal Year 2025

No.	PAD Component	Amount (Billion IDR)	Percentage (%)
1	Regional Retribution	8.74	26.67
2	Regional Tax	6.25	19.07
3	Other Legitimate Local Revenue	2.73	8.33
4	Returns from Separated Regional Assets	0.41	1.25
	Total PAD Target 2025	**32.77**	**100**

Source: Regional Budget (APBD) of Tanimbar Islands Regency 2025.

As presented in Table 1, the structure of Regional Original Revenue (PAD) in the Tanimbar Islands Regency is dominated by regional retribution (26.67%) and regional taxation (19.07%), which together contribute more than 45% of total PAD. These components are closely associated with service-sector activities, particularly tourism-related services such as accommodation, food and beverage, and recreational facilities. This fiscal composition indicates that tourism functions as a significant pillar of regional financial sustainability. Empirical findings further confirm that tourism-related taxes and retribution substantially contribute to regional revenue performance in Tanimbar [20]. However, high fiscal contribution does not necessarily translate into inclusive socio-economic transformation, as revenue generation may remain concentrated without strengthening community participation and cultural-based economic systems.

From a critical perspective, sustainable tourism literature emphasizes that revenue growth must be accompanied by empowerment mechanisms and

distributive justice to generate structural transformation [4], [5]. Community-Based Tourism frameworks further stress that local participation in planning, management, and benefit-sharing mechanisms is essential for long-term sustainability [9]. [10]. Without such institutional engagement, tourism revenue may concentrate among limited actors and fail to stimulate broader community welfare. In peripheral archipelagic regions, structural constraints—including limited infrastructure, restricted market access, and governance fragmentation—compound these challenges [17], [15]. Consequently, while tourism contributes measurably to PAD, its broader socio-economic impact remains constrained.

From an analytical standpoint, this divergence between cultural abundance and institutional limitation defines the central problem addressed in this study. Global discourse recognizes authenticity and identity differentiation as resilience factors in tourism competitiveness [23], yet local operationalization in peripheral contexts remains uneven. The absence of integrative frameworks linking cultural capital conversion, fiscal sustainability, and participatory governance inhibits long-term transformation. Thus, the Tanimbar case illustrates a broader theoretical gap between symbolic recognition and structural implementation. Addressing this gap requires reframing identity-based tourism as a systemic governance model rather than an episodic revenue generation strategy. This problem framing provides the foundation for articulating the research positioning and contribution in the subsequent section.

1.4. Research Gap, Objectives, and Theoretical Contribution

Although global scholarship increasingly acknowledges the importance of cultural identity in sustainable tourism development, integrative analyses linking cultural capital conversion, fiscal governance, and archipelagic development remain limited. Existing studies tend to examine heritage preservation, destination competitiveness, or community participation as separate domains rather than interconnected structural systems. In peripheral island contexts, research often emphasizes vulnerability and resilience without articulating how symbolic capital may be institutionally transformed into inclusive socio-economic drivers [17], [15]. Consequently, the literature reveals a fragmentation gap between cultural theory, tourism economics, and regional governance frameworks. This fragmentation becomes particularly evident in outer archipelagic regions such as Tanimbar, where symbolic richness coexists with institutional constraints. Therefore, a comprehensive reframing approach is required to bridge theoretical silos and operational fragmentation.

At the national level, Indonesian tourism policy prioritizes equitable development and diversification beyond traditional growth centers [24]. However, policy discourse often remains growth-oriented, emphasizing visitor numbers and fiscal revenue without sufficiently integrating cultural capital transformation into governance design. While fiscal contributions from tourism demonstrate increasing relevance in regional revenue structures, the linkage between revenue generation and community empowerment remains under-theorized [20]. Furthermore, the interaction between digital transformation, cultural identity management, and island governance is still emerging within academic discourse [6]. These theoretical and policy-level limitations highlight the need for a contextualized model capable of addressing peripheral archipelagic conditions. Thus, the Tanimbar Islands Regency presents a critical empirical setting to advance integrative tourism scholarship.

This study therefore aims to reframe cultural identity-based tourism as a structural driver of socio-economic transformation in peripheral island regions. Drawing upon Cultural Capital Theory [1], sustainable tourism governance frameworks [4], and empowerment-based development perspectives [9], this research proposes an Identity-Driven Transformative Tourism Model tailored for archipelagic contexts. The model integrates symbolic capital conversion, participatory governance, fiscal reinvestment mechanisms, and digital mediation strategies. By conceptualizing identity as structural development capital rather than performative attraction, the study advances a systemic understanding of tourism transformation. This objective moves beyond descriptive documentation toward analytical model construction.

Academically, this research contributes to contemporary tourism discourse by synthesizing cultural capital theory with archipelagic governance and fiscal sustainability perspectives. It extends resilience theory in island destinations by positioning identity not only as cultural heritage but as convertible economic and institutional capital. Practically, the study offers a policy-oriented framework for aligning cultural preservation, community empowerment, and regional fiscal architecture within Indonesia's sustainable development agenda. In doing so, it addresses the structural gap between symbolic abundance and institutional integration in peripheral regions. Ultimately, this study positions cultural diversity in Tanimbar not merely as heritage preservation, but as a strategic foundation for sustainable tourism governance in archipelagic contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review provides the theoretical foundation for understanding tourism as a multidimensional system that integrates cultural, economic, social, and technological dimensions. In contemporary tourism studies, no single theoretical framework is sufficient to explain the complexity of tourism development, particularly in peripheral and culturally rich regions. Therefore, this study adopts an integrative approach by combining several key perspectives, including Cultural Capital Theory, sustainable tourism, Community-Based Tourism (CBT), archipelagic development theory, and digital transformation. These frameworks are selected because

they collectively explain how cultural identity can be transformed into socio-economic value through institutional, participatory, and technological processes [21] - [23].

Furthermore, this section aims to critically examine the relationships among these theoretical perspectives and identify their relevance within the context of the Tanimbar Islands Regency. Rather than treating each theory as an isolated domain, this study positions them as interconnected components within a broader analytical framework. Cultural capital provides the foundation for value creation, sustainability ensures long-term balance, CBT emphasizes local participation, while archipelagic and digital perspectives address structural and technological constraints. The synthesis of these perspectives leads to the formulation of an identity-based transformative tourism model, which serves as the conceptual basis for this research. The following subsections elaborate each theoretical component in a systematic and integrative manner.

2.1 Cultural Capital Theory in Tourism Development

Cultural Capital Theory, as introduced by Bourdieu, provides a foundational framework for understanding how symbolic assets can be transformed into economic and social value through institutional processes [2]. In the context of tourism development, cultural capital extends beyond tangible heritage to include intangible elements such as traditions, rituals, knowledge systems, and identity embedded within local communities. These forms of capital are not inherently economic but acquire value when they are recognized, legitimized, and integrated into broader socio-economic systems. Contemporary tourism scholarship increasingly adopts this perspective to explain how destinations leverage cultural distinctiveness to enhance competitiveness and sustainability [21]. Accordingly, cultural capital offers a critical analytical lens for examining tourism as a process of value transformation rather than merely an economic activity.

The conversion of cultural capital into tourism value, however, is neither automatic nor neutral. It requires institutional mediation through governance structures, regulatory frameworks, and market mechanisms that enable symbolic assets to be translated into economic outputs. Richards argues that cultural tourism has shifted toward experience-based consumption, where authenticity and meaning constitute central drivers of tourist motivation [21]. This transformation reinforces the role of cultural capital as a key source of differentiation in increasingly competitive and homogenized tourism markets. Nevertheless, without appropriate governance, the process of capital conversion risks reducing cultural expressions into commodified products detached from their original meanings. Therefore, the effectiveness of cultural capital in tourism development depends on achieving a balance between economic utilization and cultural preservation.

Recent debates in sustainable tourism further emphasize the importance of embedding cultural capital within inclusive and participatory development frameworks. Higgins-Desbiolles argues that tourism should not be evaluated solely based on economic growth, but also on its capacity to sustain communities, cultures, and ecosystems [22]. From this perspective, cultural capital must be integrated into community-based governance systems that ensure equitable benefit distribution and local empowerment. Scheyvens similarly highlights that tourism development should prioritize local agency to prevent exploitative dynamics that marginalize host communities [26]. These perspectives indicate that cultural capital can only function as a transformative resource when supported by institutional arrangements grounded in social justice and cultural integrity. Consequently, tourism strategies must move beyond extractive models toward empowerment-oriented development approaches.

In the context of peripheral and archipelagic regions such as the Tanimbar Islands Regency, Cultural Capital Theory offers a particularly relevant analytical framework. Island communities often possess strong cultural continuity and deeply embedded symbolic systems, yet face structural constraints in converting these assets into sustainable economic value. Baldacchino notes that island economies are typically characterized by limited scale, high dependency, and structural vulnerability, which complicate development processes. In such contexts, cultural capital represents a strategic endogenous resource that can reduce dependency on external economic drivers when effectively mobilized. However, the absence of integrated governance mechanisms often limits the capacity of cultural assets to generate inclusive development outcomes. Therefore, applying Cultural Capital Theory in tourism requires contextual adaptation that accounts for the socio-spatial characteristics of peripheral island regions.

2.2 Sustainable Tourism and Socio-Cultural Integrity

Sustainable tourism has evolved as a dominant paradigm in contemporary tourism development, shifting the focus from growth-oriented models toward balanced and integrative approaches. Early conceptualizations of sustainability primarily emphasized environmental protection; however, recent scholarship expands this framework to include socio-cultural and institutional dimensions [4], [12]. In this expanded perspective, sustainability is not limited to ecological preservation but also encompasses the safeguarding of cultural identity and social cohesion within destination communities. Gössling argues that tourism sustainability must be understood as a systemic interaction between environmental, economic, and socio-cultural elements [12]. This multidimensional understanding positions culture as a central pillar rather than a peripheral consideration. Consequently, sustainable tourism requires an integrated approach that aligns economic development with cultural preservation and social well-being.

The integration of socio-cultural integrity within sustainable tourism highlights the importance of maintaining authenticity and local identity in tourism

practices. Cultural sustainability refers to the capacity of communities to preserve their cultural expressions, values, and heritage while engaging with tourism markets. Richards emphasizes that contemporary tourists increasingly seek authentic and meaningful experiences, thereby reinforcing the role of culture as a key driver of destination attractiveness [2]. However, the pursuit of authenticity also introduces tensions between preservation and commercialization. When cultural elements are excessively commodified to meet market demand, their symbolic meaning may be diluted or transformed. Therefore, sustainable tourism must carefully manage the balance between cultural representation and economic utilization to avoid the erosion of local identity.

Recent critical perspectives challenge the assumption that sustainable tourism inherently leads to positive outcomes. Higgins-Desbiolles argues that sustainability discourse often remains embedded within neoliberal growth paradigms, where economic expansion continues to dominate policy priorities [4]. In such contexts, sustainability risks becoming a rhetorical construct rather than a transformative practice. Milano, Cheer, and Novelli further demonstrate that destinations experiencing overtourism often face socio-cultural degradation despite adopting sustainability frameworks [13]. These critiques highlight that sustainability must be operationalized through concrete governance mechanisms rather than abstract policy narratives. Without strong institutional frameworks, sustainable tourism may fail to protect cultural integrity and instead reproduce existing inequalities.

In response to these challenges, contemporary tourism discourse increasingly emphasizes the need for adaptive governance and community-centered approaches. Sustainable tourism must incorporate participatory decision-making processes that empower local communities as active stakeholders rather than passive beneficiaries [10]. This approach ensures that cultural values are not only preserved but also actively negotiated within development processes. Furthermore, the integration of socio-cultural integrity into sustainability frameworks is particularly relevant for peripheral regions such as the Tanimbar Islands Regency, where cultural identity constitutes a primary development asset. By aligning sustainability principles with cultural capital and community empowerment, tourism can function as a mechanism for inclusive socio-economic transformation. Therefore, sustainable tourism should be understood not merely as a regulatory framework, but as a dynamic system that integrates culture, governance, and development outcomes.

2.3 Community-Based Tourism (CBT) and Inclusive Development

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has emerged as a prominent approach in tourism development that emphasizes local participation, empowerment, and equitable benefit distribution. Unlike conventional tourism models that are often driven by external investors and centralized governance, CBT positions local communities as key actors in planning, managing, and benefiting from tourism activities [10]. This approach aligns with broader development paradigms that prioritize inclusivity and social justice in economic processes. CBT is grounded in the principle that tourism should enhance community well-being while preserving local culture and environmental resources. Consequently, it shifts the focus from tourism as an extractive industry toward a participatory and community-centered development model. In this context, local knowledge and cultural practices are recognized as valuable assets rather than passive attractions.

The operationalization of CBT involves multiple dimensions, including institutional participation, capacity building, and local ownership of tourism enterprises. Effective CBT initiatives require communities to have decision-making authority and access to resources that enable them to actively shape tourism development trajectories. Scheyvens emphasizes that empowerment in tourism must be understood in economic, social, psychological, and political terms, ensuring that communities gain both material and non-material benefits [9]. This multidimensional empowerment strengthens the capacity of communities to negotiate with external actors and maintain control over their cultural resources. Furthermore, CBT contributes to the diversification of local economies by creating opportunities in small-scale enterprises such as handicrafts, cultural performances, and homestays. As a result, tourism becomes a catalyst for localized economic development rather than external dependency.

However, the implementation of CBT is not without challenges and limitations. In many cases, community participation remains symbolic rather than substantive, with decision-making power still concentrated among external stakeholders or local elites. Goodwin argues that responsible tourism requires genuine accountability mechanisms to ensure that benefits are fairly distributed and that communities are not marginalized within development processes [11]. Additionally, limited human resource capacity, inadequate infrastructure, and restricted market access often constrain the effectiveness of CBT in peripheral regions. These structural barriers may prevent communities from fully capturing the economic value generated by tourism activities. Therefore, the success of CBT depends on the presence of enabling institutional environments that support long-term community engagement and capacity development.

In peripheral and archipelagic contexts such as the Tanimbar Islands Regency, CBT represents a particularly relevant framework for aligning tourism development with cultural preservation and community welfare. Local communities in Tanimbar possess strong cultural identity and social cohesion, which provide a solid foundation for community-driven tourism initiatives. However, these strengths must be supported by governance systems that facilitate participation, capacity building, and access to broader tourism networks. Integrating CBT with Cultural Capital Theory further strengthens the potential for

transforming symbolic assets into inclusive economic outcomes. By positioning communities as both custodians and beneficiaries of cultural heritage, tourism can function as a mechanism for sustainable and equitable development. Thus, CBT serves as a critical bridge between cultural identity and socio-economic transformation in peripheral tourism contexts.

2.4 Archipelagic and Peripheral Tourism Development

Tourism development in archipelagic and peripheral regions presents distinct characteristics that differentiate it from mainland and core destination contexts. Archipelagic regions are typically defined by geographic fragmentation, spatial isolation, and limited connectivity, which significantly influence economic and institutional development processes. Baldacchino argues that island territories operate within constrained systems characterized by small-scale economies, high dependency on external markets, and structural vulnerability [15]. These conditions shape the trajectory of tourism development, often limiting the capacity of local regions to compete within global tourism markets. Consequently, tourism strategies in such contexts must account for spatial and structural limitations rather than relying on conventional growth-oriented models. This perspective highlights the importance of context-sensitive approaches in understanding tourism development in island regions.

Peripheral tourism regions are also characterized by asymmetrical relationships with core economic centers, which often results in unequal distribution of resources and opportunities. Hall emphasizes that regional competitiveness is influenced not only by market demand but also by infrastructural capacity, governance effectiveness, and policy alignment [14]. In many cases, peripheral regions remain dependent on external investment and centralized decision-making processes, which may not align with local cultural and socio-economic conditions. This dependency can constrain local agency and reduce the ability of communities to shape tourism development according to their needs and values. Furthermore, limited accessibility and high transportation costs often restrict tourist flows, thereby affecting revenue generation and investment attractiveness. As a result, peripheral regions require alternative development strategies that emphasize endogenous resources and local strengths.

The concept of peripherality also introduces critical challenges related to sustainability and resilience in tourism systems. McElroy highlights that small island tourism economies often face environmental pressures, economic volatility, and limited diversification opportunities [17]. These challenges are further exacerbated by global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed the vulnerability of tourism-dependent regions. In this context, resilience becomes a central consideration in tourism development, requiring adaptive strategies that reduce dependency and enhance local capacity. Diversification of tourism products, particularly those based on cultural and experiential value, is increasingly recognized as a viable pathway for strengthening resilience. Therefore, peripheral tourism development must integrate sustainability and resilience within its strategic framework.

In relation to the Tanimbar Islands Regency, these theoretical perspectives provide a critical foundation for understanding the region's development context. Tanimbar exemplifies many characteristics of peripheral archipelagic regions, including geographic isolation, limited infrastructure, and strong cultural identity. While these conditions present structural challenges, they also offer opportunities for developing distinctive tourism models based on cultural capital and local identity. By leveraging endogenous cultural resources, Tanimbar can reduce dependency on external tourism models and create more sustainable and contextually relevant development pathways. However, achieving this requires integrated governance systems that address infrastructural constraints while empowering local communities. Thus, tourism development in Tanimbar must be reframed within an archipelagic perspective that prioritizes resilience, local identity, and adaptive governance.

2.5 Digital Transformation and Cultural Tourism

The rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly transformed the landscape of tourism development, particularly in the context of cultural tourism. Digital transformation enables destinations to enhance visibility, accessibility, and engagement through various platforms such as social media, virtual tours, and digital storytelling. Gretzel et al. highlight that smart tourism ecosystems integrate technology, data, and stakeholder networks to create more efficient and interactive tourism experiences [6]. In cultural tourism, digitalization plays a crucial role in documenting, preserving, and disseminating cultural heritage to global audiences. This transformation allows peripheral destinations to overcome geographical limitations and reach broader markets. Consequently, digital technology becomes a strategic enabler in strengthening the competitiveness of culturally rich but geographically isolated regions.

Beyond its promotional function, digital transformation also reshapes how cultural experiences are produced and consumed. Sigala argues that the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital technologies in tourism, leading to new hybrid models that combine physical and virtual experiences [8]. Virtual exhibitions, augmented reality, and immersive storytelling enable tourists to engage with cultural heritage beyond spatial and temporal boundaries. This shift enhances the experiential value of tourism by offering deeper interpretation and interaction with cultural narratives. However, it also redefines the role of authenticity, as digital mediation introduces new layers of representation. Therefore, the integration of digital technology must be carefully designed to maintain the integrity and meaning of cultural expressions.

Despite its transformative potential, digitalization in cultural tourism also introduces significant challenges

and risks. One of the primary concerns is the simplification and commodification of cultural narratives driven by algorithmic logic and market preferences. Digital platforms often prioritize visually appealing and easily consumable content, which may lead to the reduction of complex cultural meanings into superficial representations. Furthermore, unequal access to digital infrastructure and technological capabilities can create disparities between destinations, particularly in peripheral regions. This digital divide limits the ability of local communities to fully participate in and benefit from digital tourism ecosystems. Consequently, digital transformation must be accompanied by capacity-building initiatives and inclusive governance frameworks to ensure equitable participation.

In the context of the Tanimbar Islands Regency, digital transformation presents both opportunities and strategic challenges. As a peripheral archipelagic region, Tanimbar faces limitations in physical accessibility, making digital platforms an essential tool for expanding tourism reach and visibility. At the same time, the region's rich cultural identity provides a strong foundation for developing digital cultural tourism products that emphasize authenticity and storytelling. However, the successful integration of digital technology requires not only infrastructure development but also cultural literacy and community engagement. Aligning digital innovation with cultural preservation principles is essential to avoid the erosion of symbolic meaning. Therefore, digital transformation in Tanimbar must be approached as an integrated strategy that connects technology, cultural capital, and community empowerment within a sustainable tourism framework.

2.6 Synthesis : Toward Identity-Based Transformative Tourism

The preceding discussions demonstrate that tourism development can no longer be understood through a single theoretical lens. Cultural Capital Theory highlights the role of symbolic assets as convertible resources, while sustainable tourism emphasizes the necessity of balancing economic, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) further introduces the importance of participation, empowerment, and equitable benefit distribution, particularly in local contexts. Meanwhile, archipelagic and peripheral development perspectives underline structural constraints related to geography, accessibility, and institutional capacity. In parallel, digital transformation reshapes how cultural experiences are produced, distributed, and consumed in contemporary tourism systems. Taken together, these perspectives reveal that tourism operates as a complex, multi-dimensional system requiring integrative analytical approaches.

Despite these theoretical advancements, existing literature often treats these frameworks as separate domains rather than interconnected components of a unified development model. Cultural capital is frequently discussed in terms of heritage preservation, while sustainability frameworks focus on environmental and governance dimensions. Similarly, CBT emphasizes participation without always integrating structural and technological considerations, and digital tourism studies often prioritize innovation over cultural integrity. This fragmentation results in a conceptual gap in understanding how tourism can function as a comprehensive mechanism for socio-economic transformation. As a result, there remains limited theoretical integration that connects symbolic value, governance systems, community participation, and technological mediation within a single framework. Addressing this gap requires a synthesis that transcends disciplinary boundaries and analytical silos.

This study proposes that identity-based tourism can serve as a unifying framework capable of integrating these diverse theoretical perspectives. Within this approach, cultural identity is positioned as the core resource that generates symbolic value, which can be transformed into tourism attractiveness through institutional mediation. This process is strengthened by participatory governance mechanisms derived from CBT, ensuring that local communities actively contribute to and benefit from tourism development. At the same time, sustainability principles provide a normative foundation that ensures long-term balance between economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental protection. Digital transformation further enhances this framework by expanding market access, improving visibility, and enabling innovative forms of cultural engagement. Thus, identity-based tourism emerges as a multidimensional system that connects cultural capital, governance, technology, and development outcomes. The integration of these theoretical perspectives can be conceptually illustrated through a unified framework, as presented in Figure 2.

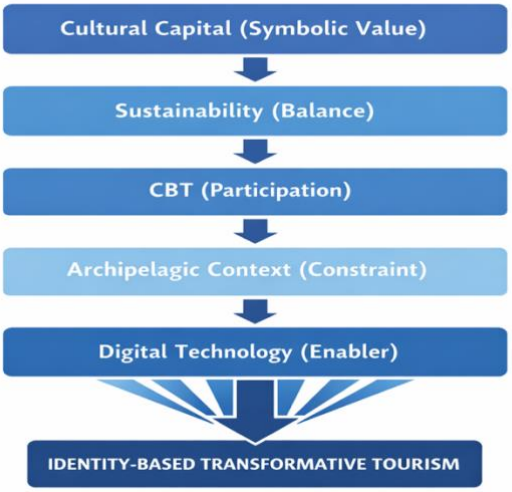


Figure 2. Theoretical Integration Framework of Identity-Based Transformative Tourism

Source : Synthesized from [2], [21], [22], [26..

In the context of the Tanimbar Islands Regency, this integrative framework provides a strategic foundation for reframing tourism development. The region's strong cultural identity, combined with its peripheral and archipelagic characteristics, necessitates a model that leverages endogenous resources while

addressing structural limitations. By positioning cultural identity as the central axis of development, tourism can move beyond revenue generation toward inclusive socio-economic transformation. This approach enables the alignment of fiscal structures, community empowerment, and cultural preservation within a coherent development strategy. Furthermore, it supports the transition from fragmented and sectoral policies toward integrated governance systems. Therefore, identity-based transformative tourism offers a conceptual pathway for bridging the gap between symbolic richness and structural development in peripheral regions.

3. METHOD

This section outlines the methodological framework employed to examine the role of cultural identity in tourism development within the Tanimbar Islands Regency. Given the complexity of cultural phenomena and their socio-economic implications, this study adopts a qualitative approach that enables in-depth exploration of meanings, practices, and institutional dynamics embedded in local cultural systems. The qualitative approach is particularly relevant in cultural tourism studies because it allows researchers to understand symbolic values, identity construction, and community-based practices that cannot be quantified directly [9], [10]. The methodological design is structured to capture not only the descriptive characteristics of cultural expressions but also the processes through which these cultural assets are transformed into tourism value and socio-economic outcomes.

Furthermore, this study integrates interpretative and analytical strategies to ensure that cultural elements such as traditional dance, weaving, and customary attire are examined within broader social, economic, and developmental contexts. Cultural tourism is increasingly understood as a dynamic interaction between cultural capital, governance systems, and market forces, rather than merely a form of attraction [2], [3]. By combining descriptive analysis with explanatory interpretation, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how cultural capital operates within tourism systems and contributes to regional development. The following subsections present the research design, data sources, data collection techniques, and analytical procedures applied in this study.

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a descriptive–explanatory design to analyze the cultural diversity of the Tanimbar Islands Regency as a strategic foundation for cultural tourism development. The qualitative approach is selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of cultural phenomena that are inherently complex, symbolic, and socially constructed. Cultural expressions such as traditional dances, woven textiles, and customary attire cannot be fully understood through quantitative measurement alone, as they embody layers of meaning, identity, and historical continuity. In this context, culture is conceptualized as an integrated system of knowledge, beliefs, values, and practices that shape the collective identity of a community [1]. Therefore, qualitative inquiry provides the flexibility to interpret cultural meanings while capturing the dynamic interaction between tradition and contemporary transformation.

The research adopts a descriptive–explanatory strategy that combines systematic documentation of cultural elements with analytical interpretation of their roles in tourism development. The descriptive dimension focuses on identifying and categorizing forms of cultural expression in Tanimbar, including performing arts, weaving traditions, and traditional dress as tangible and intangible heritage. Meanwhile, the explanatory dimension aims to analyze the functional relationships between cultural assets and tourism development outcomes, particularly in terms of attractiveness, competitiveness, and sustainability. This dual approach allows the study to bridge the gap between cultural preservation and economic utilization, which is a central issue in contemporary tourism discourse [21], [22]. Consequently, the research does not merely describe cultural diversity but also evaluates its strategic contribution to regional development. The overall research design and the interrelationship between cultural resources, tourism systems, and socio-economic outcomes are conceptually illustrated in Figure 3.

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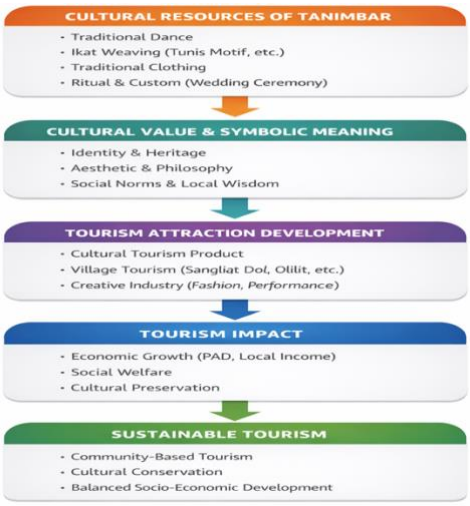


Figure 3. Conceptual Framework of Cultural Tourism Development in Tanimbar Islands Regency
Source: Developed by the author based on [2], [21], [22], [26])

As shown in Figure 3, cultural resources serve as the primary foundation that generates symbolic, aesthetic, and identity-based values, which are subsequently transformed through institutional mechanisms, governance structures, and community participation into tourism development outcomes. This transformation process is not linear but involves complex and dynamic interactions between cultural preservation efforts, market demands, and policy interventions. Cultural assets must be continuously negotiated between

maintaining authenticity and adapting to tourism consumption patterns. As a result, tourism development based on cultural resources has the potential to generate sustainable socio-economic benefits, including increased local income, employment opportunities, and cultural revitalization [11], [12]. However, it also presents critical challenges such as commodification, loss of authenticity, and unequal distribution of benefits [13]. Therefore, understanding this transformation process is essential for designing culturally sensitive and sustainable tourism strategies.

This study is grounded in a constructivist paradigm, which assumes that social reality is constructed through human interaction and interpretative processes. Within this paradigm, cultural meanings are not fixed entities but are continuously produced, reproduced, and negotiated within specific social contexts. This perspective is particularly relevant for analyzing Tanimbar culture, where symbolic elements such as weaving motifs, ritual performances, and traditional attire reflect deeply embedded social values and cosmological beliefs. Cultural capital theory explains that such symbolic assets function not only as cultural expressions but also as forms of social and economic capital [1]. Through interpretative analysis, this study seeks to uncover the underlying meanings of these cultural practices and their relevance in contemporary tourism contexts. Moreover, the constructivist approach enables the exploration of how local communities reinterpret their cultural identity in response to tourism development.

In addition, the research design integrates perspectives from cultural tourism and sustainable tourism frameworks to provide a comprehensive analytical foundation. Cultural tourism emphasizes the importance of heritage, identity, and authenticity as key drivers of tourist motivation [2], [3], while sustainable tourism highlights the need to balance economic growth with cultural preservation and social equity [4], [12]. This integration of frameworks allows the study to critically examine how cultural resources in Tanimbar can be developed as tourism assets without compromising their intrinsic values. Therefore, the research design aligns with contemporary paradigms of tourism development that prioritize sustainability, resilience, and cultural integrity.

3.2 Research Location and Object

This research was conducted in the Tanimbar Islands Regency, Maluku Province, Indonesia, which represents a peripheral archipelagic region characterized by strong cultural identity and limited infrastructural connectivity. The selection of this location is based on its rich cultural diversity, including traditional dances, woven textiles, and customary attire that are still actively practiced within local communities. In addition, Tanimbar holds strategic significance as part of Indonesia's eastern tourism development agenda, particularly in promoting culture-based tourism destinations. The region's socio-cultural landscape reflects a combination of traditional governance systems, ritual practices, and community-based cultural transmission. These characteristics make Tanimbar an appropriate case study for examining the transformation of cultural identity into tourism value. Furthermore, the geographic and structural constraints of the region provide a relevant context for analyzing tourism development in peripheral island settings. Therefore, the selection of this research location is both theoretically and empirically justified.

From a spatial perspective, the Tanimbar Islands Regency is located in the southern part of Maluku Province and consists of a cluster of islands with strong maritime characteristics and dispersed settlement patterns. This archipelagic configuration results in geographic fragmentation, which directly influences accessibility, infrastructure development, and the distribution of cultural resources across the region. The dominance of maritime space and the distance from major economic centers contribute to the region's peripheral status within Indonesia's tourism system. These spatial conditions not only shape tourism development patterns but also affect how cultural assets are preserved, transmitted, and utilized within local communities. Therefore, understanding the geographical context is essential for analyzing the relationship between cultural resources and tourism development. The geographical setting of the study area can be more clearly understood through a spatial representation, as illustrated in Figure 4.

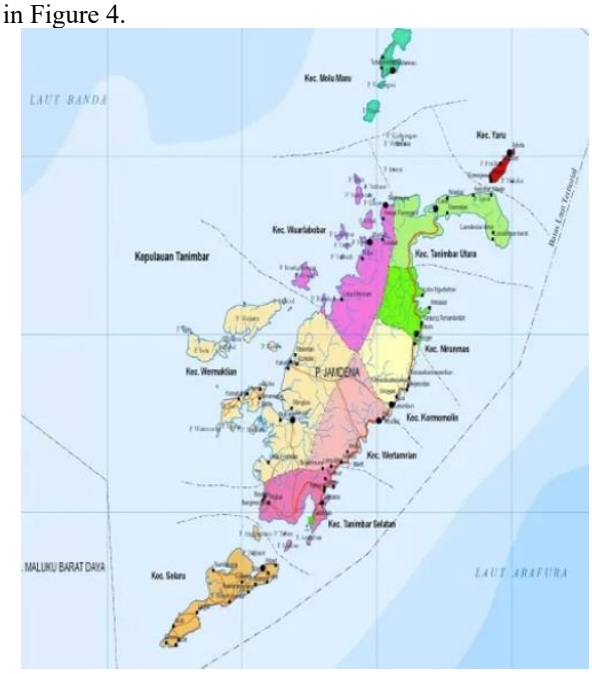


Figure 4. Geographic Location of Tanimbar Islands Regency, Maluku Province, Indonesia

Source: Adapted from Indonesian Geospatial Information Agency (BIG) and regional administrative maps.

The objects of this study focus on three primary components of cultural expression that are closely associated with tourism development in Tanimbar. First, traditional dances are examined as performative cultural expressions that embody social values, identity, and

collective memory within the community. These dances are not only artistic performances but also function as ritual and ceremonial practices that reflect local cosmology and social structures. Second, woven textiles (tenun ikat) are analyzed as material cultural heritage that carries symbolic meanings and aesthetic values, particularly in the context of traditional motifs and their socio-cultural significance. The production process, usage, and transformation of woven textiles into tourism commodities are also considered within this study. Third, traditional clothing is explored as a representation of identity and social status, often used in ceremonial events and cultural performances. Together, these three elements represent the core cultural assets that form the foundation of culture-based tourism in Tanimbar.

In addition to cultural objects, this study also considers the broader socio-economic and institutional context in which these cultural expressions are embedded. Tourism development in Tanimbar is closely linked to local governance structures, community participation, and economic activities related to cultural production. Cultural practices are not isolated phenomena but are integrated into community life, influencing local livelihoods and social organization. Previous studies indicate that tourism-related activities, including cultural performances and handicraft production, contribute to local income and regional revenue structures [20]. However, the extent to which these contributions lead to inclusive socio-economic transformation remains a critical issue. Therefore, this study examines not only the cultural objects themselves but also the systems that support their transformation into tourism assets. This broader perspective allows for a more comprehensive analysis of tourism development processes.

3.3 Data Types and Sources

This study utilizes qualitative data as the primary source of analysis to explore the role of cultural identity in tourism development within the Tanimbar Islands Regency. Qualitative data are considered appropriate because they enable an in-depth understanding of cultural meanings, practices, and social interactions that cannot be quantified. The data used in this research consist of both primary and secondary sources to ensure a comprehensive and triangulated analysis. Primary data focus on direct cultural expressions observed in the field, including traditional dances, woven textiles, and customary attire as key elements of cultural tourism. These data reflect not only observable practices but also embedded symbolic meanings and social values within the community. Secondary data are obtained from academic literature, government reports, and previous research studies relevant to cultural tourism and regional development [21], [22]. The combination of these data types allows for a more robust and contextualized understanding of tourism development processes.

Primary data in this study are derived from field observations and documentation of cultural activities within the Tanimbar Islands Regency. Observations are conducted to capture real-life cultural practices, including performances of traditional dances, production processes of woven textiles, and the use of traditional clothing in ceremonial contexts. These observations are complemented by visual documentation such as photographs and field notes, which provide empirical evidence of cultural expressions. In addition, informal interactions with local communities are used to understand the meanings and functions of cultural practices within their social context. Such interactions help reveal how cultural identity is maintained, transmitted, and adapted in response to tourism development. This approach ensures that the data reflect both observable phenomena and interpretative insights. Consequently, primary data serve as the foundation for understanding the lived experience of cultural tourism in Tanimbar.

Secondary data are collected from various credible sources, including academic journals, books, government publications, and institutional reports related to tourism and cultural development. These sources provide theoretical and contextual support for analyzing the transformation of cultural assets into tourism value. In particular, policy documents and regional development reports are used to understand the role of tourism within local economic structures and governance systems. Previous studies on cultural tourism, community-based tourism, and sustainable development also contribute to strengthening the analytical framework of this research [22], [26]. The use of secondary data allows the study to position local findings within broader academic and policy debates. Furthermore, it supports the validation of primary data through triangulation. Therefore, secondary data play a critical role in enhancing the credibility and reliability of the research.

To ensure data validity and reliability, this study applies a triangulation approach by comparing multiple data sources and methods. Triangulation involves cross-checking information obtained from observations, documentation, and literature to identify consistencies and discrepancies. This process helps reduce bias and improve the accuracy of research findings. In qualitative research, validity is not measured through statistical indicators but through the depth, consistency, and credibility of interpretation. Therefore, the integration of primary and secondary data is essential in producing a comprehensive and trustworthy analysis. The data collected are subsequently analyzed using interpretative techniques to uncover patterns, relationships, and meanings related to cultural tourism development. This methodological rigor ensures that the findings of the study are both analytically sound and contextually relevant.

3.4 Data Collection Techniques

This study employs multiple data collection techniques to obtain comprehensive and reliable qualitative data related to cultural tourism development in the Tanimbar Islands Regency. The use of multiple techniques is intended to ensure data richness and support triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity of the research findings. The primary techniques applied in this

study include observation, documentation, and informal interviews with local community members. These methods are selected because they allow the researcher to capture both observable cultural practices and the underlying meanings associated with them. In qualitative research, data collection is not limited to gathering information but also involves interpreting social and cultural contexts [22]. Therefore, the selection of these techniques is aligned with the research objective of understanding cultural identity as a dynamic and socially constructed phenomenon. The overall process of data collection can be systematically illustrated through a methodological flow, as presented in Figure 5.

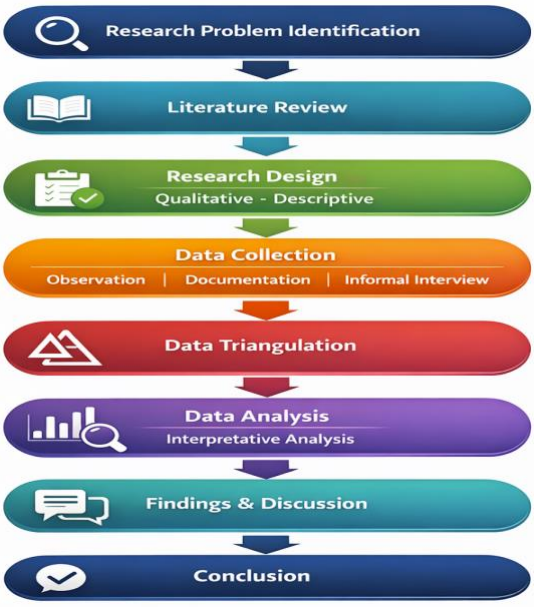


Figure 5. Research Methodology Flowchart
Source: Developed by the Author

As illustrated in Figure 5, the data collection process begins with the identification of research problems and a comprehensive literature review, followed by the formulation of a qualitative research design. Observation is conducted to directly examine cultural practices such as traditional dances, weaving activities, and ceremonial attire within their natural settings. This technique enables the researcher to understand how cultural expressions are performed and experienced in everyday life. Documentation is used to collect visual and written records, including photographs, field notes, and relevant archival materials that support empirical analysis. In addition, informal interviews are carried out to obtain insights from local communities regarding the meanings, functions, and transformations of cultural practices. These interviews are flexible and conversational, allowing participants to express their perspectives in a natural manner.

The combination of these data collection techniques enables the study to capture both explicit and implicit dimensions of cultural tourism. Observation provides direct evidence of cultural practices, while documentation ensures that these practices are systematically recorded for analysis. Informal interviews, on the other hand, offer deeper insights into community perspectives, values, and interpretations. The integration of these methods strengthens the credibility of the research through methodological triangulation. Triangulation allows the researcher to cross-verify data obtained from different sources and reduce potential bias. This approach is particularly important in cultural research, where meanings are often subjective and context-dependent. Therefore, the use of multiple data collection techniques enhances both the validity and reliability of the study.

Furthermore, the data collection process is conducted with consideration of ethical principles, particularly in engaging with local communities and cultural practices. Respect for cultural norms, traditions, and community consent is prioritized throughout the research process. The researcher ensures that data collection activities do not disrupt cultural practices or misrepresent local values. In addition, participants involved in informal interviews are informed about the purpose of the study and their voluntary participation. Ethical considerations are essential in maintaining trust between the researcher and the community. This approach also supports the sustainability of cultural tourism by promoting respectful and responsible research practices. Consequently, the data collection process not only generates academic knowledge but also contributes to ethical engagement with cultural heritage.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Cultural Diversity as a Foundation for Tourism Development in Tanimbar Islands Regency

Cultural tourism development in the Tanimbar Islands Regency is strongly rooted in the richness of local cultural expressions that have been preserved across generations. These cultural expressions function not only as markers of social identity but also as symbolic systems that embody philosophical, spiritual, and historical values of the local community. Within the framework of cultural tourism, such expressions are categorized as intangible cultural heritage that holds significant potential for experiential tourism development. Contemporary tourism trends indicate that visitors increasingly seek authentic, meaningful, and immersive cultural experiences rather than conventional mass tourism attractions [21], [22]. Therefore, cultural expressions in Tanimbar represent a strategic foundation for developing identity-based tourism.

Traditional dances constitute one of the most prominent cultural expressions in Tanimbar. These dances are not merely artistic performances but serve as integral components of ritual and ceremonial practices within the community. They reflect values of social cohesion, respect for ancestors, and collective identity. In tourism contexts, traditional dances provide experiential value by allowing visitors to engage with local culture through performance and storytelling. However, their transformation into tourism attractions requires careful management to avoid oversimplification and loss of symbolic meaning. As highlighted in cultural tourism

studies, maintaining authenticity is essential to ensure long-term sustainability and cultural integrity [21]. Thus, traditional dances function both as cultural heritage and tourism assets.

In addition to dance, woven textiles (tenun ikat) and customary attire represent tangible cultural expressions with strong symbolic and aesthetic value. Tenun ikat in Tanimbar carries philosophical meanings embedded in its motifs, such as protection, identity, and social status, which are transmitted across generations. Meanwhile, customary attire integrates these woven elements into a visual representation of cultural identity, particularly in ceremonies and traditional events. From a tourism perspective, these cultural elements enhance destination attractiveness by creating distinctive visual and experiential characteristics. They also provide opportunities for creative economy development through handicrafts and cultural products. These cultural expressions can be visually illustrated to provide a clearer understanding of their forms and roles within tourism development, as presented in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Cultural Expressions in Tanimbar Islands Regency: (a) Traditional Dance, (b) Ikat Weaving, (c) Customary Attire

Source: Field documentation.

The findings indicate that cultural expressions in Tanimbar possess strong potential to be developed as sustainable tourism assets. However, the transformation of these cultural elements into tourism products must be supported by appropriate governance, community participation, and cultural preservation strategies. Without such mechanisms, there is a risk of commodification that may reduce cultural authenticity and social meaning. Previous studies emphasize that cultural tourism development must balance economic benefits with cultural sustainability and community empowerment [22], [26]. Therefore, cultural expressions in Tanimbar should be positioned not only as tourism attractions but also as integral components of a broader development framework. This approach ensures that tourism contributes to both economic growth and the preservation of cultural identity.

4.2 Cultural Value Transformation and Tourism Attractiveness

The findings indicate that cultural resources in the Tanimbar Islands Regency undergo a transformation process from symbolic cultural value into tourism attractiveness through a series of interpretative and institutional mechanisms. Cultural expressions such as traditional dances, woven textiles, and customary attire initially function as embedded symbolic systems within local communities, representing identity, cosmology, and social structure. Within the context of tourism development, these symbolic values are reinterpreted and repositioned as experiential assets that can be consumed by visitors. This transformation reflects the process of converting cultural capital into tourism value, as emphasized in Cultural Capital Theory [2], [21]. Therefore, cultural value transformation represents not merely a functional shift but a structured and sequential process involving reinterpretation, mediation, and selective adaptation within the tourism system.

From an analytical perspective, the transformation of cultural value into tourism attractiveness can be understood as a value chain process that begins from pre-visit perceptions and continues through on-site experiences to post-visit impacts. Cultural resources are first interpreted and communicated through information, promotion, and storytelling that shape visitor expectations. These meanings are then translated into tourism products through creative adaptation, including staged performances, handicraft commercialization, and cultural events. Subsequently, these products are integrated into tourism experiences that emphasize authenticity, engagement, and cultural immersion. This sequential process reflects contemporary tourism dynamics that prioritize experience-based consumption and meaningful interaction [21]. The overall process of cultural value transformation within the tourism value chain can be conceptually illustrated as shown in Figure 7.



Figure 7. Process of Cultural Value Transformation within the Tourism Value Chain

Source: Adapted from tourism value chain framework and modified by the author.

As shown in Figure 7, cultural resources function as the foundational element that generates symbolic value, which is communicated through pre-visit information and interpreted through tourism experiences during the visit. These experiences are supported by tourism system components such as accommodation, attractions, infrastructure, and local services, which collectively shape visitor engagement. The transformation process continues into post-visit outcomes, including memory formation, satisfaction, and cultural appreciation, which further influence destination image and future visitation. This value chain perspective highlights that tourism attractiveness is not inherent in cultural resources but is constructed through interconnected stages of interpretation, experience creation, and service integration.

The transformation of cultural value in Tanimbar demonstrates that cultural tourism can function as a strategic mechanism for socio-economic development while preserving cultural identity. Traditional dances, woven textiles, and customary attire are not only transformed into tourism products but also embedded within a broader tourism system that generates economic

value, strengthens community participation, and supports cultural sustainability. However, this transformation must be carefully managed to avoid cultural commodification and the loss of symbolic meaning. Therefore, effective governance, community involvement, and adaptive innovation are essential to ensure that the tourism value chain remains inclusive and sustainable. This transformation framework provides a critical foundation for the development of identity-based cultural tourism strategies, which will be further elaborated in the subsequent section.

4.3 Strategy for Identity-Based Cultural Tourism Development

The development of identity-based cultural tourism in the Tanimbar Islands Regency requires an integrated and adaptive strategy that aligns cultural resources, tourism value chains, and institutional governance. Cultural assets such as traditional dances, woven textiles, and customary attire should not be treated merely as static attractions, but as dynamic resources that generate symbolic and economic value. In this context, the tourism value chain plays a crucial role in transforming cultural resources into meaningful tourism experiences through stages of interpretation, production, and service delivery. Therefore, strategic development must ensure that each stage of the value chain—from pre-visit information to post-visit experience—is effectively managed and interconnected. This approach allows cultural tourism to function as a system rather than isolated activities. Consequently, the integration between cultural assets and tourism systems becomes the foundation of identity-based tourism development.

A key strategy involves strengthening cultural interpretation and experience design to enhance tourism attractiveness and visitor engagement. Cultural meanings embedded in dances, weaving motifs, and traditional attire must be translated into narratives that are accessible and meaningful to tourists. This can be achieved through guided storytelling, curated performances, and interactive cultural experiences that emphasize authenticity and local identity. In addition, creative adaptation should be encouraged to transform traditional practices into tourism products without losing their symbolic significance. This aligns with contemporary tourism trends that prioritize experiential and place-based tourism [21]. By enhancing interpretation and experience design, cultural tourism can offer differentiated and high-value experiences. Thus, interpretation becomes a critical bridge between cultural authenticity and market demand.

Another important strategy is the empowerment of local communities through community-based tourism (CBT) approaches. Local communities should be positioned not only as cultural custodians but also as active participants and beneficiaries of tourism development. This includes strengthening local capacity in cultural production, tourism services, and small-scale enterprises such as handicrafts and cultural performances. Community involvement also ensures that cultural values are preserved and transmitted across generations. Furthermore, participatory governance mechanisms are necessary to ensure equitable benefit distribution and prevent external dominance in tourism development [26]. In peripheral regions such as Tanimbar, where cultural identity is a key asset, community empowerment becomes essential for sustainable tourism development. Therefore, CBT serves as a strategic mechanism for aligning economic development with cultural preservation.

Finally, the development of identity-based cultural tourism must be supported by integrated governance, infrastructure development, and digital innovation. Institutional coordination between government, local communities, and private stakeholders is required to ensure coherent policy implementation and resource management. Infrastructure improvements, including accessibility, accommodation, and supporting facilities, are essential to enhance the overall tourism experience within the value chain. In addition, digital technology can be utilized to strengthen promotion, storytelling, and market access through social media and digital platforms. However, these developments must be aligned with sustainability principles to avoid over-commercialization and cultural degradation. Therefore, a balanced approach that integrates governance, community participation, and technological innovation is necessary to ensure long-term sustainability. This strategic framework reinforces that identity-based cultural tourism can serve as a driver of inclusive and sustainable development in the Tanimbar Islands Regency.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that cultural diversity in the Tanimbar Islands Regency, particularly traditional dances, woven textiles, and customary attire, constitutes a strategic form of cultural capital that can be transformed into tourism value through structured processes of interpretation, adaptation, and integration within the tourism value chain. The findings reveal that tourism attractiveness is not inherently embedded in cultural resources but is constructed through sequential stages that include pre-visit information, on-site experiences, and post-visit impacts. By applying Cultural Capital Theory and sustainable tourism perspectives, this study confirms that cultural resources can generate economic benefits, strengthen community identity, and support cultural preservation when effectively managed. The conceptualization of cultural value transformation within a tourism value chain framework provides a comprehensive understanding of how symbolic meaning is converted into experiential and economic outcomes. Therefore, identity-based cultural tourism emerges as a viable approach for developing tourism in peripheral and archipelagic regions such as Tanimbar.

Furthermore, this study highlights that the success of identity-based cultural tourism development depends on the integration of cultural interpretation, community participation, and institutional governance. Strategies such as strengthening cultural storytelling, empowering

local communities through community-based tourism, and improving infrastructure and digital promotion are essential to enhance tourism competitiveness and sustainability. However, the transformation process must be carefully managed to prevent cultural commodification and ensure that authenticity and symbolic meaning are preserved. The study contributes theoretically by integrating cultural capital, tourism value chain, and sustainability frameworks into a unified model of tourism development. Practically, it offers strategic insights for policymakers and stakeholders in designing inclusive and sustainable tourism development policies. Future research is recommended to explore the quantitative measurement of cultural value and to examine the long-term socio-cultural impacts of tourism development in similar peripheral contexts.

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