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THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING LOCAL CULTURE OF THE TENGGER TRIBE IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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ABSTRACT

Although previous studies have examined Tenggerese cultural traditions, local wisdom, indigenous identity, and cultural tourism, limited attention has been paid to how customary authorities, village governments, and younger generations interact to negotiate cultural preservation in digital environments. In particular, the dual role of digital platforms as instruments for cultural documentation and as spaces that may transform cultural meanings and intergenerational transmission remains insufficiently explored. This study addresses this gap by examining the relationship between customary authority, institutional involvement, youth participation, and digital practices in the preservation of Tenggerese cultural identity. The research method used was a qualitative approach with a digital ethnographic design. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique that categorized actors into three main pillars: 1 Dukun Pandita, 2 village government, and 3 the younger generation. Digital practices, particularly the circulation of cultural photographs, ritual videos, and historical narratives through YouTube and TikTok, provide opportunities to document and disseminate Tenggerese traditions beyond their geographical boundaries. However, the circulation of decontextualized cultural content may also simplify ritual meanings and encourage the commodification of cultural practices. The three informant groups provide complementary perspectives on cultural preservation. Dukun Pandita and traditional elders explain the customary authority and symbolic meanings underlying cultural practices. Village government representatives provide insights into institutional policies and local preservation initiatives. Meanwhile, younger generations reveal how cultural identity is interpreted, practiced, and represented through digital platforms. Their perspectives enable the study to examine the interaction between customary legitimacy, institutional support, and intergenerational cultural participation.

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INTRODUCTION

The Tenggerese are an indigenous people inhabiting the area around Mount Bromo in East Java, known for their rich culture and philosophy of living in harmony with nature. This community firmly upholds a social identity rooted in ancestral traditions, in which harmony among humans, nature, and God is the primary foundation of their lives (Haliim, 2018; Laksono et al., 2020). Various traditional rituals, such as the Yadnya Kasada ceremony, are not merely religious activities but also serve to strengthen social integration and maintain ecological balance in the Bromo region (Zurohman et al., 2022; Astina et al., 2021a).

However, Mount Bromo's position as an international tourist destination has dual consequences. On the one hand, tourism improves economic prosperity; on the other, the tide of globalization and modernization puts significant pressure on the traditional values of the Tenggerese (Delphin & Sutisna, 2022). This challenge has become increasingly complex with the advent of the digital era, where the rapid development of information technology has begun to transform people's lifestyles, especially the younger generation. The phenomenon of attachment to digital devices is feared to erode awareness of real social relationships and cultural values that have long guided the tribe's life (Delphin & Sutisna, 2022; Abdullah et al., 2026).

Therefore, cultural preservation efforts are no longer sufficient through conventional methods alone. An adaptive strategy is needed that uses digital technology as a preservation tool rather than a threat. The use of social media and digital platforms for cultural promotion and the documentation of traditions is highly relevant to ensuring that the Tenggerese heritage remains recognized and valued by future generations (Susanto & Numata, 2023). Through an approach that balances tradition and modernity, it is hoped that the Tenggerese cultural identity will remain alive and responsive to the challenges of the times amid the maelstrom of digital transformation (Astina et al., 2021; Tohari & Azizah, 2022).

The concept of culture as a way of life views culture not as a collection of artifacts, symbols, or aesthetic expressions separate from social life, but as a comprehensive framework that both shapes and is shaped by society's daily practices. Culture is a system of ideas, actions, and human works acquired through the learning process in social life (Gunawan et al., 2026a). Culture does not exist outside of social life, but is inherent in the way humans think, act, and interact (Rachmadyanti et al., 2021; Wiratomo et al., 2025). Culture encompasses values, customs, language, norms, and ways of thinking embedded in social experiences, serving as a framework of meaning that organizes social actions and relations (Bahrudin, 2022). Culture occupies a central position in social life and plays a role in shaping how individuals understand the world, interpret experiences, and position themselves within social structures (Astina et al., 2021).

Understanding culture as a way of life carries the critical implication that culture is

never neutral or free from power relations. Certain ways of life are always produced, maintained, and contested within specific social and historical contexts. Williams views culture as an arena for struggles over meaning, where dominant values are negotiated, challenged, or reproduced through everyday practices (Rachmadyanti et al., 2021). This idea is reinforced by Koentjaraningrat, who emphasizes that cultural systems of ideas and values serve as guidelines for social behavior formed through learning processes within specific social structures (Wiratomo et al., 2022). Therefore, culture as a way of life always reflects the relationship between perceived legitimate values and the social positions of its proponents. Therefore, culture cannot be understood as a static inheritance, but rather as a dynamic process that is constantly reinterpreted.

Within the framework of culture as a way of life, change is understood as an inherent part of cultural continuity. Williams rejects views that idealize culture as pure and unchanging because they freeze it in a particular form and ignore the actual practices of community life (Gunawan et al., 2026b). In line with this, Koentjaraningrat emphasized that culture is dynamic because humans, as its supporters, continue to learn, adapt, and respond to changes in the social environment (Suwarta et al., 2025). Cultural continuity lies not in uniformity of form or mere preservation of symbols, but rather in the continuity of cultural meaning and function in regulating social life (Sejati et al., 2023). Culture survives not by rejecting change, but by negotiating it in everyday practice.

The concept of culture as a way of life also emphasizes that it operates through learned social practices rather than being biologically inherited. Social learning is the primary mechanism for cultural inheritance, through repeated interactions in shared life (Batoro et al., 2017). Ways of speaking, thinking, behaving, and acting are learned until they are internalized in an individual's consciousness and actions (Barizi & Mustofa et al., 2024; Sukmawan, 2023). Culture, therefore, lives not only in discourse or symbols but also in everyday actions that seem simple yet are ongoing and meaningful in social life.

The cultural identity of the Tenggerese community is expressed not only through its philosophical values but also through a distinctive configuration of customary authority, collective rituals, and relationships with the natural environment (Agus, 2024). One of its most significant cultural practices is the Yadnya Kasada ceremony, which functions not merely as a religious ritual but also as a collective expression of social identity, customary obligations, and the community's relationship with Mount Bromo. Within this cultural structure, Dukun Pandita and traditional elders play important roles in maintaining customary knowledge and interpreting the meanings underlying traditional practices. These interconnected dimensions shape the continuity of Tenggerese cultural identity through everyday social relations and intergenerational cultural learning.

The development of Mount Bromo as an international tourist destination is increasingly intersecting with digital globalization, shaping the cultural environment of the Tenggerese community. Tourism activities encourage the circulation of cultural images and traditional practices to wider audiences, while digital platforms accelerate

their promotion and consumption beyond geographical boundaries. Through social media, cultural representations can become part of tourism narratives, allowing Tenggerese traditions to gain greater visibility. However, this interaction may also encourage the presentation of cultural practices primarily as tourist attractions, potentially separating ritual performances from their customary meanings. Consequently, tourism and digitalization should not be understood as separate forces, but as interconnected processes that influence how Tenggerese culture is practiced, represented, and interpreted.

The increasing integration of digital media into everyday communication has created new conditions for cultural learning and social interaction among younger generations (Ainin & Tabrin, 2024; Efendi et al., 2022). However, the extent to which digital engagement changes their participation in traditional activities and relationships within the Tenggerese community requires further examination. Rather than assuming that digital device use automatically weakens customary relationships, this study investigates how younger Tenggerese individuals negotiate digital participation alongside their involvement in family interactions, community activities, and traditional cultural practices.

Previous studies have contributed significantly to understanding Tenggerese cultural identity, traditional ceremonies, local wisdom, religious harmony, and sustainable tourism. However, these studies have largely addressed specific dimensions of Tenggerese culture, such as ritual practices, ecological knowledge, social harmony, or tourism development. Less attention has been paid to examining how customary authorities, village governments, and younger generations interact to maintain cultural continuity amid digital transformation. In particular, the relationship between digital representations of cultural practices, customary authority, and intergenerational transmission remains insufficiently explored. This study addresses this gap by employing a digital ethnographic perspective to examine how cultural identity is negotiated through interactions between customary institutions, local government, younger generations, and digital environments.

The theoretical framework of this study integrates Raymond Williams' concept of culture as a way of life with Manuel Castells' concept of the network society. Williams provides a foundation for understanding culture as a dynamic system of meanings, values, and everyday social practices through which collective identities are continuously reproduced and negotiated. Meanwhile, Castells explains how digital networks reshape social relationships and the circulation of information, symbols, and cultural representations across geographical boundaries. Bringing these perspectives together allows this study to examine Tenggerese cultural identity as a lived social practice that is increasingly negotiated within interconnected digital environments. While Williams helps explain what cultural continuity means in everyday community life, Castells provides an analytical perspective on how digital networks influence the processes through which cultural meanings are produced, circulated, and transformed.

The continuity of Tenggerese cultural identity does not necessarily require rejecting

social and technological change. Instead, cultural preservation involves an ongoing negotiation between inherited customary values and emerging forms of social expression. Digital documentation, cultural promotion, and contemporary communication may provide new opportunities for cultural adaptation. Nevertheless, such adaptation needs to remain connected to customary authority and the meanings attached to traditional practices. In this context, Dukun Pandita and traditional elders are important in maintaining customary interpretations and guiding the boundaries within which cultural practices can be represented and adapted. Therefore, cultural resilience depends not on preventing all forms of change, but on ensuring that adaptation does not undermine the legitimacy, meanings, and social functions of customary traditions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a digital ethnographic (ethnographic) design. The ethnographic approach was chosen to obtain an in-depth description of the Tenggerese value systems, rituals, and adaptation mechanisms for maintaining their local culture (Creswell et al., 2023). Given that the problem lies in the "digital era," this method was expanded through a netnographic perspective to examine how digital interactions and social media use influence or transform cultural preservation practices (Hakim et al., 2024).

This study employed a qualitative digital ethnographic design to examine how Tenggerese cultural practices are maintained, represented, and negotiated across both offline and online environments. Digital ethnography was considered appropriate because the research focuses not only on the use of digital technologies but also on how digital interactions intersect with everyday cultural practices, customary authority, and intergenerational cultural transmission. The approach enabled the researcher to examine the relationship between offline cultural activities, including customary interactions and traditional ceremonies, and online representations of Tenggerese cultural identity through social media platforms. By combining field-based observation, in-depth interviews, and digital content observation, the study sought to understand how digital environments provide opportunities for cultural documentation and dissemination while potentially transforming the meanings and representations of customary practices.

The research was conducted in Ngadisari Village, Sukapura District, Probolinggo Regency, East Java, within the cultural landscape of the Tenggerese community surrounding Mount Bromo. The village was selected for its relevance to the study of Tenggerese cultural continuity, particularly the relationships among customary traditions, community institutions, tourism activities, and contemporary digital communication. The cultural context of Ngadisari offers an opportunity to examine how traditional values and practices are maintained through customary institutions and community interactions, even as the community becomes increasingly exposed to tourism-related activities and digital media. Its location within the Mount Bromo tourism area also makes it relevant for investigating how local cultural identity is represented and circulated to wider audiences through digital platforms. Accordingly, Ngadisari was considered a suitable research

setting for exploring the interaction between customary cultural practices and digital transformation.

Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure the authenticity and depth of the data obtained (Miles et al., 2024). Informants in this study were classified into three main pillars: a) Customary Pillars: Romo Dukun Pandita and Tenggerese traditional elders as the highest authorities in maintaining the purity of rituals (e.g., the Yadnya Kasada ceremony and Pak Bambang as the head of the Tenggerese Paruman, as well as representatives from the Probolinggo Regency Education and Culture Office); b) Structural Pillar: Village government and community leaders who are familiar with formal cultural preservation regulations and policies were interviewed by the researcher; c) Digital Pillar/Youth Generation: Interviews with representatives of Tenggerese youth who actively operate digital platforms (local content creators, Tenggerese cyber community activists) as key actors in cultural dissemination in the digital space. Research data were collected through three main, complementary techniques:

1) Participant Observation: Researchers engaged directly in the field to observe the daily cultural behavior of the Tenggerese people and how digital devices and technology were integrated into their lives (Spradley, 2016). Observations were also conducted digitally on Tenggerese cyber community accounts on social media (Instagram, YouTube, TikTok);
2) In-Depth Interviews: Interviews were conducted semi-structured based on an interview guide. The interviews focused on informants' perceptions of the challenges posed by digital penetration, the commercialization of culture, and creative strategies for using technology in traditional education.
3) Documentation Study: Data collection based on physical documents (customary records, village monographs) and digital documents (photo archives, video documentaries of rituals, and local regulations related to digital cultural preservation).

The study involved 8 informants selected through purposive sampling. They were classified into three analytical groups. The customary pillar consisted of 2 informants, including Romo Dukun Pandita and Tenggerese traditional elders who possessed knowledge of customary values, ritual practices, and cultural transmission. The structural pillar comprised 3 informants, including representatives of the Ngadisari Village government and relevant government officials involved in cultural preservation policies and programs. The digital pillar consisted of 3 younger-generation informants, including local content creators and members of Tenggerese digital communities who actively used social media to communicate or disseminate cultural information. This classification was intended to capture complementary perspectives on customary authority, institutional involvement, and youth participation in digital cultural preservation.

The data analysis process adopted an interactive Thematic Analysis model (Braun & Clarke, 2016). The analysis stages included: a) Data Condensation: Transcribing interview results, field notes, and digital data, then selecting and focusing on data relevant to the issue of Tenggerese preservation and digitalization; b) Coding: Categorizing data

into specific themes, such as the Threat of Digital Disruption to Cultural Sacredness, Digitalization of Rituals as Commodification vs. Education, and Cultural Resilience of the Tenggerese Young Generation; c) Data Display: Presenting structured data in the form of text narratives, matrices, or flowcharts showing relationships between cultural variables; d) Conclusion Drawing/Verification: Formulating the meaning of the presented data and reconfirming it with the theory of local cultural preservation of the Tengger tribe in the global era.

To ensure the credibility and objectivity of the results of this qualitative research, the researcher applied the principle of triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 2016). Triangulation was conducted in two ways:

a) Source Triangulation: Comparing information regarding the urgency of cultural preservation from a theological-traditional perspective (Romo Dukun Pandita) with a practical-modern perspective (Tengger Youth Generation);
b) Technical Triangulation: Constructing data by verifying the results of in-depth interviews with evidence from field observations and analysis of documents/digital content found.

Informants were selected based on their knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in activities relevant to Tenggerese cultural preservation. The selection criteria differed according to the three informant groups. For the customary pillar, participants were selected based on their recognized customary roles, knowledge of Tenggerese traditions, and experience in traditional ceremonies or cultural activities. For the structural pillar, participants were required to have direct responsibilities or relevant experience in village governance, cultural programs, or institutional initiatives related to cultural preservation. For the digital pillar, participants were selected based on their membership in the Tenggerese younger generation and their active involvement in digital activities, such as producing, sharing, documenting, or engaging with cultural content through social media. These criteria ensured that the selected informants could provide relevant information concerning customary authority, institutional support, and digital cultural participation.

Digital observations were conducted on selected Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok accounts that published content related to Tenggerese cultural practices and community life. The accounts were purposively selected for their relevance to the research objectives, particularly their engagement with traditional ceremonies, cultural identity, local knowledge, and the representation of Tenggerese traditions. The observation was conducted from January 2026 to May 2026.

The digital materials examined included photographs, short-form videos, documentary content, captions, and user interactions. Content was included when it directly represented Tenggerese cultural practices, customary traditions, local identity, or the involvement of younger generations in cultural dissemination. The analysis focused on how cultural meanings were presented, how users responded through comments and other forms of interaction, and how traditional practices were represented in educational,

promotional, or tourism-related contexts. These digital observations were used as complementary data and were compared with information obtained through interviews, field observations, and documentary sources.

In-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview guides tailored to the three categories of informants. The interviews explored participants' knowledge, experiences, and perceptions regarding cultural preservation and digital transformation. The interviews with customary leaders focused on the meanings of traditional practices, customary authority, ritual continuity, and the transmission of cultural knowledge. Interviews with structural informants examined institutional responsibilities, village-level cultural programs, tourism-related developments, and government support for cultural preservation. Meanwhile, interviews with younger-generation informants explored their use of digital platforms, involvement in cultural documentation, perceptions of Tenggerese identity, and participation in traditional activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Local Cultural Dynamics of the Tengger Tribe in the Digital Era

Digitalization has brought about fundamental changes in the communication and social interaction patterns of contemporary society. Through digital technology, communication occurs instantly, across space, and with virtually no geographical boundaries, so that social relations are no longer solely based on physical proximity. Social media, instant messaging platforms, and various virtual spaces then function as primary arenas for the exchange of meaning, self-expression, and the formation of social networks. In this situation, individual identities are formed not only through direct experiences but also through digital representations such as posts, comments, and widely consumed online symbols. Identity has become performative and fluid, as it is continuously negotiated according to the logic of digital platforms and audience responses. These changes demonstrate that digitalization goes beyond mere technical functions and serves as a new social structure that shapes how individuals understand themselves and their place in society.

The research results indicate that digitalization has significantly influenced the very existence of Tengger culture. So far, Bromo Tengger has only been popular for tourism. At the same time, the Tengger tribe's culture requires better documentation. It conveys a profound message to Indonesian society in general about the local culture in Ngadisari village, Sukapura sub-district, Probolinggo regency.



Figure 1. In-depth Interview with Ngadisari Village Officials

Meanwhile, these individual-level changes are closely linked to the dynamics of digital globalization, which accelerates cultural encounters. The flow of information, images, and symbols moves rapidly across national borders via the internet and digital media, allowing cultural products, lifestyles, values, and discourses from various regions to coexist simultaneously in the same social space. This situation results in rapid, multilayered cultural interactions, exposing society to unprecedented cultural diversity. However, these cultural encounters are not always balanced, as cultures supported by economic and technological forces tend to be more dominant. Nevertheless, digital globalization also opens space for dialogue, hybridization, and the formation of new meanings through intercultural encounters. Thus, the acceleration of cultural encounters is a crucial characteristic of the digital social order, which is both global and complex.

Amidst this intensity of cultural encounters, the local culture of the Tengger people faces a serious challenge: the risk of standardization. The dominance of mass-produced global content circulated through digital platforms has the potential to shift local Tengger cultural practices, values, and expressions. Digital media algorithms tend to prioritize popular and uniform content, making it increasingly difficult for contextual and community-based local traditions to gain visibility. Consequently, the uniqueness of Tenggerese local culture may narrow in meaning or be adapted to global tastes to survive in the digital landscape. This situation not only threatens the sustainability of cultural heritage but also weakens the collective identity of local communities. Digitalization demands a conscious, reflective cultural strategy so that Tenggerese local culture can adapt creatively without losing its distinctiveness.

One of the younger informants explained that digital platforms had become an important source of information about Tenggerese cultural activities. The informant stated, “From a young age, the Tengger people are accustomed to being conscious of preserving their culture.” This statement indicates that digital communication has expanded the channels through which cultural information circulates, although it does not necessarily replace direct participation in customary activities.

Challenges of Local Tenggerese Culture in the Digital Era

Today's digital space is increasingly dominated by global popular culture, widely disseminated through social media, streaming services, and other online channels. Entertainment, lifestyle, and cultural symbols from global production centers gain high visibility, supported by large-scale creative industries and established technological infrastructure (Wiratomo et al., 2026). This dominance is reinforced by digital platform algorithms that consistently promote highly engaging content, resulting in the continued repetition and solidification of global popular culture as a primary reference point. This situation gradually shapes users' tastes, preferences, and cultural orientations toward a relatively uniform direction. Therefore, global popular culture no longer functions merely as entertainment but has evolved into a cultural force influencing society's social imagination.

The strong flow of global popular culture in the digital space has implications for the decline of local Tenggerese cultural practices, especially among the younger generation. Intense exposure to global culture makes the younger generation more familiar with transnational symbols, styles, and values than with the local traditions that have developed within their social environment. The local cultural practices of the Tenggerese people, which require direct involvement, ongoing processes, and communal bonds, are often perceived as inconsistent with the fast-paced, instantaneous nature of digital life. Furthermore, the limited representation of Tenggerese culture in digital spaces further weakens its appeal to younger generations. This situation has led to a shift in cultural orientation, resulting in a diminishing presence of local Tenggerese cultural practices in everyday life. The analysis of selected tourism-oriented digital content suggests that visual representations of Mount Bromo are more prominent than explanations of the cultural meanings underlying Tenggerese traditions.

The declining involvement of the younger generation in local Tenggerese cultural practices has weakened intergenerational cultural transmission. One example of the misinformation found in the digital world concerns the origins of the Tenggerese civilization itself. Many outsiders assume that the Tenggerese civilization originated with the Majapahit Kingdom. However, an interesting and surprising fact is that the Tenggerese civilization emerged long before the Majapahit Kingdom was founded. This is evidenced by the Muncang Inscription. This inscription suggests that an established worship ceremony for the sacred Mount Bromo took place in the region as early as the tenth century and continued through the Singhasari and Majapahit periods, which referred to this area as hila-hila, meaning "sacred"! This is perhaps the origin of the Tenggerese people. They chose the mountain as the axis of life. Interviews with younger participants revealed different patterns of engagement with Tenggerese cultural practices. While some informants continued to participate in customary ceremonies, others described their involvement as occasional or dependent on family and community invitations. These accounts suggest that digitalization should not be interpreted as a uniform cause of cultural disengagement. Rather, the relationship between digital media use and cultural participation varies across individuals and social contexts.

In mythology, the Tenggerese people are associated with the demigod Maha Rsi Dada Putih and his consort Dewi Jeneng. They were sent down from heaven and lived on Mount Bromo, where they were given offspring to preserve the true teachings (wahyu jati). From this couple were born children and grandchildren, including Dewi Loro Anteng and Dewa Jaka Seger (Tengger). Unlike epigraphic evidence, the narratives of Maha Rsi Dada Putih, Dewi Jeneng, Dewi Loro Anteng, and Dewa Jaka Seger belong to the domain of collective mythology and oral tradition. Their significance lies not in establishing a chronological historical account, but in providing symbolic explanations of ancestry, spiritual values, and the collective identity of the Tenggerese community.

The natural transmission of culture through direct interaction within families and communities is hampered when the younger generation no longer actively participates. Differences in cultural experience between older and younger generations create a gap in

understanding the values, meaning, and function of local traditions. In the digital context, cultural knowledge is often reduced to brief information detached from the process of deep appreciation and internalization. As a result, the sustainability of Tenggerese local culture is vulnerable due to a lack of strong inheritance mechanisms. This demonstrates that cultural challenges in the digital era concern not only the existence of traditions but also the continuity of the transmission of meaning between generations.

The society formed in the digital era is understood as a network society. This society is characterized by a social structure built on digital information networks. This structure reflects a shift from previous social patterns based on territorial hierarchies and relatively stable institutions to more flexible and dynamic forms of social organization (Castells, 2010). Through networks, social, economic, and political relations can extend beyond geographic boundaries, making connectedness a more decisive factor than physical proximity. In this context, actors' positions in society are increasingly determined by their level of connectivity and their ability to access, process, and utilize information. Thus, network-based social structures place information flow at the center of organizing social life.

In a networked society, meaning, identity, and power are shaped through global information flows circulating within digital networks (Castells, 2010). In this society, information serves not only as a source of knowledge but also as a primary medium for the formation of social consciousness and the construction of individual and collective identities. In this environment, power is no longer solely centered on traditional institutions but rather on actors' ability to organize, filter, and distribute information within the network. Actors who control strategic network nodes have significant influence over the formation of dominant discourses and the shaping of public social perceptions (Castells, 2010). Therefore, power relations in a networked society are dynamic and highly dependent on actors' positions within global information flows.

These changes in power structures and relations also influence the cultural dynamics within a networked society. Culture is no longer strictly bound to specific physical spaces and geographic boundaries, but instead moves in a virtual, transboundary space through digital media (Castells, 2010). Cultural practices, symbols, and values circulate rapidly within the global network, enabling intensive cross-cultural encounters and interactions. Digital media serve as the primary means of cultural dissemination and transformation, thereby intensifying cultural exchange and hybridization. However, cultural movements in virtual spaces are also marked by inequality. This is because, in virtual spaces, cultures supported by economic and technological power have greater dissemination power. Therefore, culture in a networked society develops in a cross-border virtual space, reflecting both global openness and unequal power relations.

Tenggerese Local Culture in the Digital Ecosystem

Digitalization, for Uzelac, is the creation of a new space for cultural production that is no longer entirely dependent on conventional cultural institutions. The development of

digital technology creates a cultural environment that enables the simultaneous, decentralized creation, distribution, and consumption of culture (Uzelac, 2008). The digital space opens opportunities for individual actors and communities to produce cultural expressions independently, without going through the strict curation mechanisms of previous modern cultural systems. In this context, digital culture represents not only a shift in medium but also a fundamental shift in the logic of cultural production, one that is increasingly open and network-based.

In line with these changes, Uzelac emphasizes that culture in the digital ecosystem is fluid, open, and participatory. Culture is no longer understood as a fixed, closed collection of works but rather as a process that continually changes through interactions among users in digital space (Uzelac, 2010). Participation is a key element because individuals act not only as consumers of culture but also as producers and curators of meaning. This fluid nature allows culture to evolve through ongoing exchange, adaptation, and reinterpretation, thereby blurring the boundaries between creator and audience (Chalim, 2023).

In this fluid and participatory cultural environment, Uzelac emphasizes the importance of an active, innovative presence of local Tenggerese culture within the digital ecosystem. Tenggerese culture cannot simply be preserved as a static heritage; it needs to be translated into forms of expression that align with the logic of digital media (Uzelac, 2023). This active presence includes the ability to use digital technology, platforms, and networks to create dynamic, communicative cultural representations. Without innovative strategies, Tenggerese culture risks being marginalized in the competitive global digital cultural landscape. Therefore, the sustainability of Tenggerese culture in the digital era is largely determined by its capacity to adapt and participate creatively in the digital cultural space.

The Impact of Network Society on the Local Culture of the Tengger Tribe

In the context of the network society, the local culture of the Tengger tribe faces increasing external pressures amid the intensification of digital globalization. Castells explains that global information networks enable the rapid flow of cultural symbols, images, and narratives, allowing cultures supported by large-scale economic, technological, and creative industries to exert far greater power (Castells, 2010). This pressure manifests not only in the dominance of global lifestyles and cultural symbols but is also reinforced by the logic of digital platforms that prioritize content that is easily accepted and highly interactive. As a result, the local culture of the Tengger tribe often finds itself in a subordinate position because it lacks the capacity for equal distribution within the global network. This situation demonstrates that network society creates asymmetrical cultural relations, as Castells emphasizes that power within networks operates through control over information and symbolic flows.

These external pressures become even more significant because, in a networked society, cultural representations play a central role in the formation of meaning and identity. Identity in contemporary society is constructed through communication

processes mediated by global information networks, not solely through direct social experience (Castells, 2010). Cultural images, narratives, and symbols that circulate repeatedly in digital spaces form the primary frame of reference for individuals in understanding themselves and their social groups. Therefore, cultures that receive extensive representation in digital networks have a greater influence on identity formation, while less represented cultures risk being marginalized and losing relevance in society's consciousness.

The implications of this condition are evident in the weakening of collective identity when local Tenggerese culture is significantly absent from digital spaces. In a networked society, digital spaces serve as the primary arena for the production and circulation of social meaning, so the absence of local Tenggerese culture in global information networks directly reduces shared symbolic references (Castells, 2010). This situation particularly affects the younger generation, whose socialization and identity formation processes are heavily mediated by digital technology. As a result, the Tenggerese people's local cultural values, symbols, and narratives are increasingly used as a basis for collective identification, leading to an erosion of shared identity. This situation confirms Castells's view that the sustainability of collective identity in a networked society depends heavily on a culture's ability to be present and actively participate in global information flows.

Adapting the Tengger Tribe's Local Culture in the Digital Era

Integrating the Tengger Tribe's local cultural values into modern life is a key prerequisite for cultural sustainability amidst social change accelerated by digitalization. Within the framework of culture as a way of life, cultural values can survive only when embedded in everyday social practices, not merely maintained through symbols or formal rituals (Castells, 2010). Culture is a system of ideas, actions, and works learned and implemented in community life (Castells, 2010). Therefore, values such as cooperation, ecological wisdom, and communal ethics need to be translated into modern work patterns, social relations, and lifestyles to remain relevant for the younger generation. Without such integration, the Tengger Tribe's local culture risks becoming detached from the lived experiences of its supporting community and losing its normative function as a guide for social action. Adapting the Tengger Tribe's local culture must therefore be oriented toward strengthening substantive values that can coexist with the dynamics of modernity.

Digitalization can serve to expand cultural meaning when used reflectively and in context. In a networked society, digital technology enables cultural practices to circulate beyond geographic boundaries and their communities of origin, thus opening up new spaces for the production and exchange of meaning (Castells, 2010). Digital space is an open and participatory cultural ecosystem in which culture is not only disseminated but also created and reinterpreted through user interaction (Uzelac, 2010). However, the expansion of cultural meaning does not occur automatically, as it depends heavily on how cultural representations are constructed in digital space. Shallow representations detached from social context have the potential to reduce the complexity of the local cultural

meanings of the Tenggerese people. Therefore, digitalization needs to be positioned as a cultural medium that enriches cultural meaning, rather than simply as a means of visual distribution or entertainment.

On the other hand, adapting local Tenggerese culture in the digital era also carries the risk of cultural commodification without reflecting on its values. Market logic and digital platform algorithms tend to push culture into forms that are easily consumed, visually appealing, and economically valuable, thereby risking its reduction to a symbolic commodity. Williams reminds us that culture is always embedded in power relations, so that the process of cultural production and circulation is never free from dominant interests (Williams, 2010). In the context of a networked society, this power operates through control over the flow of information and symbolic representation (Castells, 2010). As a result, the local culture of the Tengger people can lose its social function and historical meaning when separated from the living practices of the community that supports it. Therefore, adapting the local culture of the Tengger people requires critical awareness so that the use of digital technology is not solely oriented towards visibility and economic gain, but remains grounded in the sustainable preservation of cultural values and meaning.

The Younger Generation and the Challenges of Local Tenggerese Culture

The younger generation is increasingly engaging with global culture, fueled by increased access to digital media and transnational communication platforms. Continuous exposure to global cultural products such as music, film, fashion, and lifestyle shapes cultural preferences that tend to transcend geographic boundaries and local traditions. This fosters a more cosmopolitan identity orientation while simultaneously placing local Tenggerese culture in a less dominant position in the daily lives of the younger generation. As a result, global culture is often perceived as a symbol of modernity and progress, while local Tenggerese culture is viewed as static and less relevant to the dynamics of the times. The younger generation's exposure to global culture has led to a decline in the use of local Tenggerese languages and cultural practices in social and domestic settings. Regional languages are increasingly used less as a primary means of communication, both in interpersonal interactions and in educational and media contexts. Cultural practices such as traditional rituals, traditional arts, and communal values are also experiencing reduced participation, especially among the younger generation, who are more familiar with global popular cultural expressions. This decline not only reflects changes in preferences, but also indicates a shift in the function of the local language and culture of the Tengger tribe in building social identity.

The declining engagement of the younger generation in the language and local cultural practices of the Tengger people has contributed to a crisis in the internalization of cultural values. Values embedded in local traditions, such as solidarity, respect for nature, and collective ethics, are no longer fully internalized as behavioral guidelines. The process of transmitting values between generations is hampered by the weakening of social spaces that previously served as channels for cultural transmission. This crisis has

impacted the fragility of the continuity of local Tengger culture and poses serious challenges to efforts to maintain cultural identity amidst globalization.

The Role of Education, Community, and Digital Technology

Education plays a strategic role as a space for critical cultural reflection in addressing social changes triggered by digitalization and globalization. Through dialogic and contextual learning processes, educational institutions can encourage students to understand the local culture of the Tengger people not merely as a legacy of the past, but as a system of meaning that continuously interacts with contemporary realities. Critical reflection on culture enables the younger generation to consciously and rationally assess, interpret, and reactualize local values. Thus, education serves as an arena for developing cultural awareness that can bridge local traditions and the dynamics of modernity.

In this context, digital technology has emerged as a tool that strengthens education's role in cultural learning. Digital platforms, online archives, and interactive media enable the presentation of the Tengger people's local culture in a more engaging and accessible way, aligning with the learning styles of a younger generation accustomed to digital media. The use of technology not only expands the reach of cultural education but also supports the documentation and revitalization of potentially marginalized cultural practices. With this integration, the cultural learning process becomes more dynamic, encouraging students' active involvement in critically understanding and appreciating their cultural identity.

In addition to the roles of educational institutions and technology, families and communities remain fundamental spaces for transmitting cultural values across generations. Daily interactions within the family environment provide the initial medium for introducing the language, norms, and local cultural practices of the Tengger people. At the same time, the community extends this process through social activities, rituals, and collective traditions that reinforce a shared identity. The synergy among formal education, digital media, and the social environment facilitates the natural and sustainable internalization of cultural values, enabling the younger generation to build a strong cultural identity amid the currents of globalization and modernity.

The Role of the State and Public Policy

The state has a strategic responsibility to protect and document culture through digital mechanisms to ensure the preservation of cultural heritage in the era of globalization. The use of information technology and online platforms enables the government to digitize cultural artifacts, historical documents, traditional arts, and regional languages, making them easily accessible to the wider public. This approach not only facilitates cultural preservation but also strengthens public awareness of local values that are vulnerable to being marginalized. Thus, digital documentation is a crucial tool for ensuring cultural sustainability in today's fast-paced, globally connected context.

Alongside digitalization efforts, strengthening the local cultural ecosystem of the

Tengger people is a complementary strategic step. The state can strengthen this ecosystem through sustainable structural, financial, and regulatory support, including through arts education institutions, cultural studios, indigenous communities, and local training programs and festivals. This holistic approach encourages the revitalization of traditional practices, local arts, and community values, so that culture is not merely archived but remains alive in social life. With systematic intervention, the local cultural ecosystem of the Tengger tribe can remain relevant, adaptive, and competitive amidst the ever-growing currents of globalization.

The state's role is also evident in regulating the cultural industry to prevent the displacement of local values due to the dominance of global cultural products. Regulations and public policies allow for a balance between the expansion of modern creative industries and the protection of traditional cultural practices. Concrete measures, such as incentives for local content production, restrictions on the dominance of certain foreign content, or support for creative works that promote cultural identity, ensure that the modernization of the cultural industry does not erode local roots. Instead, these interventions strengthen the link between the creative economy and the preservation of cultural heritage, enabling cultural development to align with global dynamics.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the challenges of preserving Tenggerese cultural identity in the digital era and explored the potential role of digital media in supporting cultural sustainability. The findings indicate that digitalization creates both opportunities and challenges for the continuity of Tenggerese culture. On the one hand, the increasing circulation of global popular culture and the tourism-oriented representation of Mount Bromo may limit the visibility of local cultural knowledge, values, and traditions. On the other hand, digital platforms provide opportunities to document, communicate, and disseminate Tenggerese cultural heritage to wider audiences.

The main challenges of cultural preservation include the dominance of global cultural expressions in digital spaces, the risk of reducing traditional practices to visual or tourism-oriented content, and the need to maintain intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge. These challenges demonstrate that cultural preservation involves more than merely maintaining rituals and cultural symbols. It also requires sustaining the meanings, values, and social practices through which Tenggerese identity is reproduced in everyday community life. Digital media can be an important tool for strengthening cultural identity when used to document traditional ceremonies, preserve oral histories, promote local languages, and disseminate knowledge of Tenggerese cultural values. However, digital representation should not be separated from the cultural context in which traditions are practiced. The involvement of customary institutions is therefore important in ensuring that digital documentation respects the meanings, norms, and sacred dimensions of local traditions.

Younger generations also have a strategic role in maintaining and introducing Tenggerese culture. Their familiarity with digital platforms can be directed toward

producing educational content, documenting cultural practices, and communicating local knowledge to broader audiences. Such participation should complement direct involvement in customary ceremonies, family interactions, and community activities rather than replace these essential processes of cultural transmission. This study contributes to research on local culture and digital media by understanding cultural preservation as a process of negotiating identity, cultural meaning, and digital representation within a networked society. By bringing together the perspectives of culture as a way of life and network society, the study highlights the importance of connecting everyday cultural practices with the changing structures of digital communication. Practically, cultural preservation requires collaboration among customary institutions, families, educational institutions, local communities, and government agencies. Recommended initiatives include developing community-based digital cultural archives, documenting traditions and oral histories, creating educational content through social media, and establishing guidelines for the ethical and culturally appropriate representation of sacred traditions.

Despite these contributions, this study has limitations. Its focus on Ngadisari Village means that the findings should not be generalized to all Tenggerese communities without further comparative investigation. Furthermore, the qualitative approach provides contextual insights. However, it does not measure the prevalence of digital media use, changes in language practices, or the comparative visibility of Tenggerese cultural content across platforms. Future research could examine cultural preservation across different Tenggerese villages, investigate intergenerational cultural transmission over time, analyze the visibility of local cultural content on social media, and explore the relationship between customary authority, tourism commercialization, and digital cultural representation. Ultimately, the sustainability of Tenggerese cultural identity depends not on rejecting digital transformation, but on ensuring that technological adaptation remains grounded in community knowledge, customary values, and meaningful intergenerational participation.

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