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Analyzing the Impact of the “Pesona Budaya” Festival on Village Branding and Cultural Sustainability in Pengadangan Village, East Lombok

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how a community based cultural festival sustains identity and strengthens destination branding in Pengadangan village. This qualitative study employs thematic analysis based on semi-structured interviews (purposive sampling) with key informants such as the village head, Pokdarwis members, and local residents. Theories of Place Branding and Cultural Sustainability serve as the conceptual foundation. The results indicate that the festival, with its central ritual *Betetulak* and traditional Sasak performances, strengthens the village's religious and customary identity, fosters mutual cooperation (gotong royong), and creates economic opportunities through local creativity. Overall, the *Pesona Budaya* Festival supports cultural sustainability and enhances Pengadangan Village's branding, positioning it as a potential model for sustainable cultural tourism development.

Keywords: *Pesona Budaya Festival; Village Branding; Cultural Sustainability; Pengadangan Village*

INTRODUCTION

Cultural festivals have become a central strategy for economic diversification and destination marketing globally. Amidst globalization and tourism development, annual festivals can serve not only as entertainment but also as a valuable strategy for building local identity and preserving cultural heritage. According to the *United Nations World Tourism Organization*, (UNWTO, 2022) Cultural tourism not only contributes to economic growth but also strengthens a community's identity and social sustainability. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf, 2023) has positioned the development of culture-based tourism villages as a key strategy to strengthen national tourism competitiveness. The

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establishment of a tourism village is seen not only as a new economic space but also as a means of preserving traditional values and strengthening community character.

Pengadangan Village located in Pringgasela District, East Lombok is one of the villages that implements culture as a primary strategy to preserve and build village branding. Since 2018, Pengadangan Village has been designated as a Tourism Village through Decree (SK) No. 188.47 / 101.a / PAR / 2018 by the Regent of East Lombok. As one of the tourism villages that still strongly upholds the traditions and cultural identity of the Sasak people, Pengadangan Village took a strategic step in the form of the *Pesona Budaya* Festival (Desa Pengadangan, 2021). *Pesona Budaya* has become an annual festival that has been held regularly since 2017 as one of the village's attractions. *Pesona Budaya* is an event that instills the principle of "Traveling without harming one's identity" this is what underlies every community activity in the *Pesona Budaya* event (Desa Pengadangan, 2021). The *Pesona Budaya* Festival in Pengadangan Village is a concrete manifestation of the community's efforts to preserve Sasak cultural heritage while developing the village's tourism potential. This festival (inside lombok , 2018) showcases traditional arts, rituals, and local crafts, and serves as a promotional tool to introduce Sasak cultural values to tourists. The local government and community view this event as a pillar in strengthening the image of tourist villages and promoting sustainable tourism.

As an annual event, the success of this festival lies in its ability to strengthen awareness and foster the community's desire to participate in preserving Sasak culture (Syufina et al., 2024). The *Pesona Budaya* Festival shows that cultural preservation and tourism development in Pengadangan village can go hand in hand with active community participation. The core of this festival is the Sasak traditional ritual called *Betetulak*, a unique ritual that only exists in Pengadangan Village and is a strong cultural brand asset (*unique cultural asset*). *Betetulak* is a sacred tradition that functions as a means of warding off disaster and a ritual of coronation or inauguration of *kyai* or local religious figures. In the *Betetulak* ritual process, there is a combination of customs and religions called religious customs that have values in every process or procedure of implementation by involving all elements of society including Toga, Toma, and the role of the younger generation of Pengadangan Village (Puspita, Erlin Ira, Syarifuddin, 2023).

Pengadangan Village's ambition to achieve international *calendar event status* presents critical challenges that require in-depth analysis. The main challenge that arises is the risk of cultural commodification, the process of transforming ritual value (*use value*) into

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market commodities (*exchange value*) to meet tourism demand (Hubaib, 2021). As stated (Ilhami & Soehadha, 2023) in the study of Sasak traditions, such as *Bau Nyale* , which has experienced significant risks where excessive commercialization ultimately erodes the meaning of the original philosophy. Thus, this cultural commodification has the potential to create inauthentic experiences and erode *the* sacred value of a culture, thereby damaging the long-term brand image of the destination (Erwen et al., 2025).

To date, research examining the *Pesona Budaya* Festival (FPB) comprehensively in relation to *village branding* and *cultural sustainability* is still very limited. Much previous research tends to focus more on and measure the direct economic impact of festivals on local host communities, particularly in small Portuguese towns (Pereira et al., 2021). Meanwhile, (Putra et al., 2023) village festivals are highlighted as a marketing strategy to strengthen destination image through effective event management. However, these studies have not yet delved deeply into the cultural and participatory aspects that shape the social meaning of the festival itself. The research (Suhartadi et al., 2024) discusses how tourist villages can build an image through local culture, but the focus is still on the concept and management strategies of external parties and does not discuss much about how local communities interpret these activities culturally and spiritually while still preserving traditional culture.

This research is relevant considering the urgency of developing cultural tourism in East Lombok, which still requires special attention, particularly in maintaining a balance between preserving local values. The "Pesona Budaya" Festival in Pengadangan Village is the main focus of the community's efforts to build *village branding* , strengthen Sasak cultural identity and values, and transform the village towards sustainable tourism. Therefore, a comprehensive study is needed to understand how cultural practices such as this festival can be a strategic instrument in maintaining tourism sustainability while strengthening the region's cultural image.

METHOD

This study is grounded in two main theories: Place Branding and Cultural Sustainability, which complement each other conceptually. Place Branding Theory (Mason & Turner, 2020) focuses on how an authentic image can be constructed to reflect a village's cultural and local identity. Meanwhile, *Cultural Sustainability Theory* is used to examine how cultural practices and local values are preserved, adapted, and inherited amidst the dynamics of modern tourism (Soini & Dessein, 2016). Both frameworks serve as analytical lenses to explore how cultural practices contribute to sustainable village branding. These two theories also serve as a framework for understanding the relationship between cultural sustainability

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and branding. The *Pesona Budaya* Festival is used as a strategic tool to improve the image of Pengadangan Village and maintain Sasak traditions.

This study applies a qualitative descriptive approach to explore community perceptions and participation in the *Pesona Budaya* Festival. Data collection was conducted through interview techniques, this technique was used to explore the views, experiences, and direct interpretations of key informants, namely someone who has a socio-cultural and important role in their group regarding the *Pesona Budaya* Festival (Sakir, 2024). The selection of informants was carried out using purposive sampling techniques, namely sampling techniques that deliberately select subjects based on their knowledge and involvement in the implementation of the festival (Ferdinand, 2014). The main objective of this study is to systematically describe and analyze the role and meaning of the annual Festival. *Pesona Budaya* in building *village branding* and supporting the cultural sustainability of the Pengadangan Village community, East Lombok.

The data analysis used was thematic analysis technique . In his research (Wahyu, 2022), it explains that thematic analysis is one of the most common approaches used in qualitative research that aims to find themes through the process of identification and interpretation of collected data. Therefore, the thematic analysis approach is considered relevant to examine the perceptions and experiences of the community regarding the role of the "Pesona Budaya" Festival in strengthening village branding and cultural sustainability in Pengadangan Village. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and semi-structured so that researchers obtained accurate and more in-depth data and were flexible according to the context being studied. Interviews were conducted with stakeholders as shown in table 1. Key informants consisted of the village head, the organizing committee, as well as local communities and visitors who were directly involved in the activities.

Table 1. Profile of Key Informants

No.	Position/Role	Affiliation
1	Village Head	Village Obstacle
2	<i>Pokdarwis</i> Member	Village Obstacle
3	Local Resident	Village Obstacle

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pesona Budaya as the Branding of Pengadangan Village

Pesona Budaya is an annual event routinely held by the Pengadangan Village community. The *Pesona Budaya* event introduces Sasak culture to the wider community and has become a hallmark of Pengadangan Village. The Pengadangan community uses the *Pesona Budaya* Festival as a primary tool for developing their identity. This festival showcases the identity and character of the religious and traditional Sasak people through the Betetulak traditional ritual, cultural propagation, religious propagation, and community social propagation. Typical symbols of this event include *the Tembolak Abang*, or red tray, and the traditional *Sekurdi cloth* of Pengadangan Village. Interviews revealed that the festival was initiated by the community's desire to improve the village's image, which was often misunderstood as a backward region and filled with negative stigma. The Head of Pengadangan Village explained:

"For some time, Pengadangan has been known for its negative aspects. However, through this festival, we want to demonstrate that the Pengadangan community has a strong culture, faith, and traditions. The village government, community leaders, and the younger generation are working together to create a culturally appealing event that will improve the image and enhance the Pengadangan village's brand."

Pengadangan Village demonstrates the values of togetherness and spirituality that characterize the Sasak people through this annual festival. His research (Jafarli & Canavari, 2025) confirms that by considering local values, unique characteristics, and experiences offered to tourists, the concept of village branding or *destination branding* is used to build the image and identity of a place. Cultural heritage preservation, community engagement, and socio-economic sustainability are closely linked to branding in rural areas.

Since its inception in 2017, this festival has been held annually and features various Sasak arts and rituals, including Betetulak, Begibung, and a traditional costume parade. These activities reinforce the village's history and serve as a tourist attraction. It is one of a series of traditional rituals routinely performed annually to celebrate this cultural enchantment. A member of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) also stated that community involvement in every stage of the festival is a key factor in building a positive image for the village:

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"The entire community is involved, from children to adults—from youth to traditional leaders. We work together from preparation to the day of the cultural event. That's what makes outsiders see Pengadangan as a unified and culturally strong community."

This approach aligns with the concept of *community-based branding*, where the community plays a key role in shaping and maintaining the identity of a tourist destination. Through this festival, the community not only showcases its culture but also emphasizes local values such as togetherness, sincerity, and respect for ancestral traditions. Furthermore, Pesona Budaya serves as a tool to uphold Pengadangan's belief as a "Gama Traditional Village," meaning a village that maintains a balance between religion and tradition. This new image has evolved into a type of *rebranding* that grows organically through community participation and is not an external construct. Therefore, this festival is not merely a ceremonial activity, but also a useful strategy for enhancing the identity of the tourist village and increasing its attractiveness.

The Pesona Budaya Festival Strengthens the Identity and Local Values of the Pengadangan Village Community

The *Pesona Budaya* Festival not only presents cultural performances, but also provides the Pengadangan community with an opportunity to communicate with one another and express their local values. The Sasak people's cultural identity is deeply rooted in traditional practices, faith, and social togetherness. During the festival, symbols and rituals such as *Betetulak*, *Begibung*, and traditional Sasak dances are demonstrated, depicting the balance between humans, nature, and God. The Pengadangan Village Head explained:

"Through this Pesona Budaya festival, we want to demonstrate that tradition and religion are inseparable. We live with both, and from there, society learns to respect each other. Tradition is a symbol; religion cannot be separated from tradition. Because our ancestors studied tarekat (Islamic order) and ma'rifat (knowledge), this tradition is the first religious practice carried out through symbols that convey religious messages. Therefore, this culture is not deviant or idolatrous. Because our ancestors considered this inherited cultural activity to be a religious activity."

Pengadangan Village wants to demonstrate that customs and culture are not inherently negative; on the contrary, every practice reflects Islam and religious beliefs. The community is religious and traditional. This statement demonstrates that Pesona Budaya serves as a socio-cultural tool that strengthens the community's moral and spiritual values. The

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Pesona Budaya Festival also serves as a means of imparting values to future generations, helping them remember their cultural history.

A study of the Mango Festival in Penggarit Village (Ristanto et al., 2023) shows that festivals based on local wisdom can serve as effective communication tools to strengthen village identity and increase tourist appeal. This aligns with the practices of the Pengadangan Village community, given that the Pesona Budaya Festival serves as a significant platform for representing the Sasak community's identity through the Betetulak tradition and other spectacular cultural performances. Furthermore, each series of events is always in line with religious law, as conveyed by the head of Pengadangan Village:

"Betetulak is a mandatory ritual at the Pesona Budaya Festival. It is routinely performed by the community when disease outbreaks, calamities, and natural disasters occur. During the betetulak, a communal prayer is held, specifically a prayer to ward off disaster. A prayer to return everything to the Almighty, as tulak signifies return."

The community's active and enthusiastic participation in the festival reflects a very positive cultural empowerment, and because the rich local values are not only properly preserved but also attractively displayed as valuable village branding assets, such activities are still ongoing. As one Pengadangan Village resident stated:

"Of course, we are very enthusiastic and fully support the implementation of this Pedana Budaya Festival. This Pedana Budaya Festival is different from other cultural events, because each region has its own unique culture, especially in Pengadangan village, which combines Sasak culture with Islamic culture."

For this reason, this festival is not just entertainment but plays a strategic role in fostering social cohesion among villagers and enhancing the village's cultural image at the broader regional level. This finding aligns with research (Shofa, 2025) showing that cultural preservation not only maintains traditions but also creates identity, financial independence, and social resilience. Polowijen Village has proven its ability to strengthen social solidarity through rituals and instill a shared awareness of the importance of ancestral cultural heritage.

The Role of Festivals in Transforming Pengadangan Village Towards Sustainable Tourism

The Pesona Budaya Festival is not just an annual event but a hallmark of Pengadangan Village. Pengadangan Village's transformation into sustainable tourism *through* the Pesona Budaya Festival serves as a platform to promote the customs and culture of the

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Sasak people, making them more widely known and a priority for cultural tourism. As the village head of Pengadangan expressed his hopes, he stated:

"Because the Pesona Budaya has become a national event and a highlight of the East Lombok tourism calendar, the Pengadangan community must preserve and enhance this annual activity. Furthermore, this event earned a MURI record for carrying a dulang (a small basket) because over 4,000 people can carry the dulang (a large basket)."

According to studies (Ani Wijayanti & Yitno Purwoko, 2022), the active participation of local residents is crucial for community-based tourism destination management. A bottom-up approach based on community initiatives has proven successful in maintaining sustainable tourism activities, optimizing local potential, and improving the well-being of local residents. As the number of tourist attractions around the village increases, public awareness of environmental sustainability is growing. The village government is asked to maintain environmental cleanliness during the festival, as the location is located near Mount Rinjani National Park.

In addition to supporting economic growth and raising public awareness of environmental issues, cultural festivals also contribute to tourism sustainability. (Aulia et al., 2024) In their research, they also stated that festivals are not only entertainment venues but also strategic tools for promoting sustainable development through the integration of economic, socio-cultural, and ecological elements. Social and cultural sustainability can be achieved by involving local communities in the planning and implementation of festivals, which increases the community's sense of ownership of their traditional heritage. The Pengadangan Village Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) also emphasized that this activity involved all community leaders, traditional leaders, and religious leaders from the beginning of its planning.

"From children to the elderly, the village community is comprised of people who participate in this cultural enchantment. Initially, the only visitors were from neighboring villages, invited government officials from East Lombok, and other traditional leaders. We also initially paid media to cover the event. But now, the Pengadangan village cultural enchantment has been covered by journalists and almost all national television stations."

This is what makes the Pesona Budaya Festival not only serve to promote and preserve culture but also contribute to social and economic change in the Pengadangan community. Culture-based tourism can foster local development and empowerment through active community involvement. Overall, this festival exemplifies the perfect collaboration between the principles of tradition, faith, and village tourism development plans.

CONCLUSION

As one of the cultural villages in East Lombok, Pengadangan Village has great potential to become a model for sustainable tourism development that relies on local wisdom. Through the Pesona Budaya Festival, the community not only showcases Sasak traditions and beliefs but also implements a community-based tourism strategy that prioritizes cultural, social, and economic aspects across the board. This approach demonstrates that local cultural preservation and economic development can go hand in hand without sacrificing the community's traditional and religious values. In the long term, the festival's sustainability is expected to strengthen Pengadangan Village's reputation as an authentic and unique cultural tourism destination. Furthermore, the festival is also expected to help preserve Sasak cultural heritage in a sustainable manner.

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