



STRATEGIES FOR ENCHANCING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF BATIK BAKARAN AS CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM ASSET IN BAKARAN VILLAGE, PATI REGENCY

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Abstract

Batik Bakaran is one of Indonesia's traditional textile arts that holds significant cultural and historical value. Preserving this heritage is not only important for maintaining cultural identity but also for developing cultural-based tourism. This research aims to analyze the strategies implemented to sustain the existence of Batik Bakaran and promote it as a cultural tourism attraction in Bakaran Village, Pati Regency. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the study involved interviews with artisans, local government officials, and tourism stakeholders. The findings indicate that preservation efforts include the development of batik training programs, integration of batik education in schools, and the revitalization of traditional motifs. Meanwhile, promotion strategies focus on branding, digital marketing, and the creation of batik tourism packages. The study concludes that collaborative efforts between artisans, communities, and the government are crucial in ensuring the continuity and economic potential of Batik Bakaran through cultural tourism.

Keywords: Batik Bakaran, Cultural Heritage, Cultural Tourism, Preservation Strategies, Community Empowerment



1. INTRODUCTION



Figure 1. Burnt batik

Source: researcher 2025

Cultural heritage plays an increasingly vital role in the contemporary global landscape, particularly in the context of identity formation, sustainable development, and creative economic growth. As globalization continues to blur national boundaries, the preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) has emerged as a strategic imperative for many nations seeking to assert their cultural distinctiveness while participating in global cultural exchange. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines intangible cultural heritage as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities, groups, and sometimes individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.” This includes oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, festive events, and traditional craftsmanship, among which textile arts such as *batik* are prominently featured.

Indonesia, a vast archipelagic nation with over 17,000 islands, is one of the world’s most culturally diverse countries. This diversity is expressed through more than 700 ethnic groups, each with unique customs, artistic traditions, and localized knowledge systems. This multicultural landscape is not merely a backdrop to national identity—it forms the very fabric of the Indonesian sociocultural ecosystem. As such, Indonesia has a profound responsibility to safeguard its cultural expressions, both tangible and intangible. The urgency of this task is amplified by the country's socio-economic disparities, environmental vulnerabilities, and increasing exposure to homogenizing cultural influences.

Despite its rich cultural capital, Indonesia continues to face multifaceted developmental challenges, including high poverty rates, regional inequality, and limited access to resources in rural areas (Prasetya, 2023).

These challenges often hinder efforts to preserve traditional knowledge and arts, particularly in communities where economic survival takes precedence over heritage conservation. In such contexts, cultural heritage becomes both a site of vulnerability and a potential resource for empowerment and resilience. The Indonesian government and civil society organizations have increasingly recognized this dual role of heritage, especially within the framework of sustainable tourism and creative industries. Batik, a traditional textile art



form, stands at the intersection of art, culture, identity, and economic livelihood in Indonesia. More than a decorative fabric, batik is a medium through which generations have expressed philosophical values, historical narratives, and community identities. Each motif, color, and pattern carry symbolic meaning, often tied to local myths, religious beliefs, or environmental elements. In 2009, Indonesian batik was officially recognized by UNESCO as a *Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*. This global recognition has spurred a resurgence of interest in batik, both within and outside Indonesia. However, as batik continues to evolve within the context of globalization and mass production, questions have arisen regarding authenticity, sustainability, and the preservation of traditional techniques.



Figure 2. Tools and materials for batik, burnt batik

Source: researcher 2025

Among the various regional styles of batik in Indonesia, *Batik Bakaran* represents a lesser known but culturally rich tradition originating from Bakaran Village in Pati Regency, Central Java. Distinct from the more commercially dominant batik centers such as Solo, Yogyakarta, or Pekalongan, Batik Bakaran is characterized by its naturalistic motifs, dark earthy tones, and irregular crack-like patterns that resemble burnt surfaces. These visual features are not accidental; they reflect the community's historical relationship with nature,



local legends, and spiritual beliefs. The term *Bakaran*, which literally means “burnt” in Indonesian, is derived from the legend of Nyai Ageng Danowati, a noblewoman of the Majapahit Kingdom who introduced the art of batik to the area in the 14th century after fleeing from political unrest. The name of the village itself is believed to have originated from a land-clearing ritual involving fire, which eventually became part of the area’s cultural identity.

The batik produced in Bakaran incorporates both *keraton* (palace) and *pesisir* (coastal) elements, resulting in a unique aesthetic that blends formal symbolism with expressive fluidity. Traditional artisans in the region continue to use natural dyes and manual tools such as *canting*—a small copper container with a spout used to apply wax designs to fabric. One of the leading figures in the revival of Batik Bakaran is Mbah Bukhori, a fifth-generation artisan who emphasizes the philosophical depth and craftsmanship involved in traditional batik-making. He has introduced contemporary motifs such as *Mina Tani* (fish and rice), which symbolize the agricultural and maritime livelihoods of the local population. His work exemplifies the dynamic interaction between tradition and innovation; whereby cultural heritage is not merely preserved but revitalized through community-based creative practice.

However, Batik Bakaran, like many other regional traditions in Indonesia, faces a host of challenges that threaten its sustainability. The most pressing issues include competition from machine-printed textiles that imitate traditional batik motifs, limited transmission of skills to younger generations, and environmental degradation caused by chemical dyes and industrial waste (Apriliani, 2018).

Additionally, in the increasingly saturated batik market, Batik Bakaran struggles to establish a distinctive brand identity, particularly when compared to more established batik centers. In some cases, younger members of the community view traditional batik-making as economically unviable or culturally irrelevant, further endangering its continuity. The preservation of intangible heritage such as Batik Bakaran requires more than documentation or state recognition; it necessitates the active involvement of local communities, sustainable production practices, and adaptive marketing strategies. Local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*), embedded in the techniques, stories, and values of batik artisans, plays a critical role in ensuring the resilience of this heritage. Furthermore, the intersection of cultural preservation with the creative economy offers new opportunities for empowering artisans, generating income, and strengthening community cohesion. Within this framework, batik functions as both a cultural artifact and a contemporary commodity. The challenge lies in maintaining the authenticity and integrity of traditional batik while enabling it to evolve in response to changing economic, social, and environmental conditions. This is particularly relevant as Indonesia seeks to promote its creative economy as a pillar of national development, as outlined in various government programs and cultural policy frameworks.



Figure 3. Photo of the batik festival in Bakaran village

Source: Bakaran 2025 batik museum management

Literature Review

Tourism as a Driver of Local Development

Tourism has long been recognised as a strategic sector capable of generating regional income and stimulating local economic growth (Nugraheni & Aliyah, n.d.). Beyond its direct contribution to foreign-exchange earnings, employment creation and infrastructure development, a well-managed tourism industry can also safeguard cultural assets by converting them into revenue-generating attractions (Wiast, 2011). Nevertheless, top-down development models have too often marginalised host communities and accelerated environmental degradation (Balitbangkumham, 2018). To correct these imbalances, Indonesian policy has shifted toward community-based tourism, most visibly through the village-tourism (desa wisata) programme that embeds residents in decision-making and profit-sharing arrangements (Rogi, 2015; Shayari & Istanabi, 2023). Indonesia's Tourism Act (Law No. 10/2009) further underscores tourism's multidisciplinary character, requiring coordination among government, business, and local stakeholders to meet both visitor expectations and community needs (Suwantoro, 2004).

Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism positions local heritage—tangible and intangible—as the core attraction, with the expectation that tourism and culture will reinforce one another in a “balanced, harmonious, and sustainable” partnership (Salah Wahab, 1992). Visitors pursue such trips to deepen their knowledge of other societies, enjoy artistic performances, or participate in heritage festivals (Nugraheni & Aliyah, n.d.). For Indonesia, this niche is critical because distinctive cultural expressions give the nation a competitive identity in the global marketplace (Wahab, 1992). What distinguishes cultural tourists from leisure tourists is their explicit motivation to encounter “the way of life” of the host community, often through direct engagement in religious rituals, craft workshops, and historic commemorations.

Cultural Sustainability and Heritage Preservation



Safeguarding cultural heritage is first and foremost a matter of maintaining collective identity (Hasan, 2024). Yet globalisation, urbanisation, and media diffusion have accelerated the erosion of local traditions. Scholars therefore call for systematic cultural education that extends beyond performance arts to encompass values, beliefs, and historical consciousness, thereby cultivating “cultural competence” among younger generations (Hasan, 2024). Effective preservation strategies combine community festivals, craft competitions, and digital storytelling with state support for site restoration, cultural centres, and artist subsidies. Crucially, heritage preservation is most durable when the artefacts or practices remain embedded in everyday life; dormant traditions with no living practitioners are extremely vulnerable to extinction.

Local Wisdom

Local wisdom constitutes the tacit knowledge and adaptive practices that have evolved within particular socio-ecological contexts (Reni Vitasurya et al., n.d.). It comprises both material expressions—architecture, crafts, tools—and non-material elements such as leadership norms, oral literature, and moral codes (Wahyu, 2015; Anwar et al., 2018). Integrating local wisdom into tourism planning not only differentiates destinations but also reinforces community resilience (Choirunnisa et al., 2021). Ayatrohaedi (in Puspita et al., 2024) highlights four defining characteristics of local wisdom: pre-colonial endurance, adaptive openness, community control, and normative guidance for future cultural evolution. These attributes make local wisdom a valuable framework for place-based, sustainable tourism strategies.

Batik Bakaran as Cultural Heritage



Gambar 4. Foto batik bakaran di home industry

Sumber : peneliti 2025

Batik, inscribed by UNESCO in 2009 as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, epitomises Indonesia’s textile artistry and socio-historical narrative. While scholarly debate persists over its precise origins, consensus holds that Indonesian batik techniques and motifs have evolved into a distinctly local art form (Soemarjadi et al., 2001; Dedi, 2009). Batik Bakaran—a coastal variation produced in Bakaran Village, Pati Regency—features sombre earth tones and motifs laden with regional symbolism. Its genesis is interwoven with local legends of Nyi Danowati and the sacred site of Punden Nyai Ageng, imbuing the cloth with spiritual resonance. Although synthetic dyes are now common, artisans still observe traditional



production taboos and ritual practices, such as the prohibition against using chicken meat to obtain the classic 'mede' blue (Field interview, 2025). Motifs such as Gandrung employ geometric patterns—parallel lines, dots, and floral abstractions—to convey themes of romance and fertility, while the distinctive crackle (remukan) left by wax resist adds aesthetic depth. Beyond its artistic value, Batik Bakaran functions as an income source for local women who juggle factory work with batik production and continue to participate in communal labour exchange (rewang) during life-cycle ceremonies. The craft's embeddedness in social relations thus underlines the intertwined goals of economic empowerment and cultural continuity.

Preservation and Utilisation

Heritage policy distinguishes between preservation—the safeguarding of authenticity, integrity, and continuity of cultural properties—and utilisation, which seeks to translate preserved assets into educational, economic, or diplomatic benefits (Bagus Brata et al., n.d.). In practice, the two agendas converge: only by ensuring viable contemporary uses can traditional arts sustain practitioners and attract investment. For example, heritage sites converted into cultural parks generate tourism income while financing conservation, and educational outreach programmes turn traditional knowledge into curricular content that reinforces cultural pride among youth.

Cultural Property Protection under Indonesian Law

Indonesia's Cultural Property Law (Act No. 11/2010) classifies heritage into objects, buildings, structures, sites, and cultural landscapes, each subject to specific conservation protocols. This comprehensive legal framework strengthens earlier, narrower protection regimes and aligns domestic practice with global heritage conventions. The law's explicit recognition of both terrestrial and underwater heritage broadens the scope of safeguarding efforts, pertinent to Indonesia's maritime archaeology and coastal textile traditions such as Batik Bakaran.

Significance of Batik Bakaran within the National Heritage System

Batik Bakaran contributes to national heritage not only through its unique aesthetic but also by exemplifying the triad of historical continuity, artistic excellence, and community-based knowledge transmission. Its motifs encode local cosmology, its production processes teach environmental stewardship through natural dye use, and its economic role demonstrates the viability of small-scale, women-led creative industries. Given these attributes, Batik Bakaran aligns closely with UNESCO's criteria for Outstanding Universal Value and with Indonesia's development agenda that champions the creative economy as a pillar of inclusive growth.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research is an approach to conducting research that focuses on phenomena or natural occurrences. Qualitative research is foundational, naturalistic, or characterized by its connection to real-world settings, and it cannot be conducted in a laboratory but rather in the field. Therefore, this type of research is often referred to as naturalistic inquiry or field study. This research uses two sources of data: primary data and secondary data. This aligns with Sari & Zefri (2019), who state that primary data is information obtained directly from the source, collected firsthand, and secondary data (Harmoni & Bangsa, 2023), which is more superficial and does not provide an in-depth understanding of the subject's substance, information, facts,



and realities under study. As secondary data, this information is not determinative (not substantive); however, it can help clarify the depiction of the research reality. This research uses data collection techniques, including interviews (Devi et al., 2022a). The interviewer actively applies communication skills in the process. The goal of the interviewer is to use these skills actively, namely: first, to encourage the interviewee to express their opinions, and second, to guide the conversation between the interviewer and the source of information in a question-and-answer format. While the interviewer leads the conversation, the interviewee retains the freedom to express their views in response to the questions posed by the interviewer.

Observation, according to Putri Adinda Pratiwi et al. (2023), is a data collection technique obtained through direct field observation. Documentation, as stated by Waruwu (2024), is a technique for finding authentic evidence and gathering information relevant to the research questions. This study also uses the quantification method.

Additionally, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) will be conducted. In this stage, the author will engage in discussions, exchange ideas, and meet with artisans and stakeholders to gather views and experiences related to the conservation of Batik Bakaran, as well as identify the challenges and opportunities in its preservation efforts.

The validity of data is crucial to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings. According to Yin (2018), there are four main criteria: construct validity (the alignment of concepts with data), internal validity (the cause-and-effect relationship between events), external validity (the generalizability of results), and reliability (the consistency of results). In this study, validity is tested through construct validity and internal validity with the approaches of triangulation and pattern matching (Prof. Dr. Sapto Haryoko, M.Pd., 2020)

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



Gambar 5. Foto batik bakaran di home industry batik bakaran

Sumber : peneliti 2025

The preservation of *Batik Bakaran* as an intangible cultural heritage must be understood through a multidimensional lens that intertwines cultural sustainability with tourism-based economic resilience. Utilizing the explanation building approach and grounded in empirical data from interviews, observations, documentation, and FGDs, this study frames Batik Bakaran as a living tradition that negotiates its existence between tradition and transformation.

Cultural Preservation Dynamics



Cultural preservation, as theorized by Iman et al., is not merely about resisting change but about actively maintaining and transmitting cultural values, symbols, and practices in a continuously shifting social environment. In the case of Batik Bakaran, traditional motifs such as *gandrung*, *bergat ireng*, and *gringsing* embody the collective memory of the coastal community—replete with ecological wisdom, ancestral symbolism, and local spirituality. These motifs are preserved not just through physical repetition but through a socially embedded process of cultural learning and inheritance, where elders such as Mbah Bukhori become the living conduits of intergenerational knowledge. Empirical evidence supports this theoretical claim. Observations revealed that traditional batik production in Desa Bakaran continues to employ *canting*-based techniques and natural dyes—approaches deeply interwoven with the local cosmology and ecological ethics. Interviews confirmed that these techniques are not just aesthetic choices but are loaded with philosophical meanings, affirming the idea that heritage is both material and moral. However, the data also suggests a fragile state of cultural reproduction. FGDs with youth groups unveiled a growing disinterest among younger generations, who view batik-making as labor-intensive and economically inferior. This phenomenon aligns with theoretical concerns about cultural erosion in the face of modernization. As Iman et al. highlight, the sustainability of a cultural practice depends heavily on its perceived relevance and socio-economic value in the eyes of the youth. Thus, cultural preservation in Bakaran is not only a question of *how* traditions are maintained, but also *why* and *by whom*. Furthermore, the absence of an integrated cultural ecosystem—evident in weak institutional support, minimal curriculum integration, and a lack of structured training—prevents batik from evolving with the times. Although government initiatives have attempted to promote local culture, they have yet to produce a collective strategy for revitalizing Batik Bakaran. As Alwasilah's model of cultural revitalization suggests, sustainable cultural renewal requires three interconnected stages: cognitive awareness, collective planning, and creative innovation. In Bakaran, the cognitive and affective attachment to batik is strong, but the infrastructural and pedagogical supports for planning and innovation remain underdeveloped.

Cultural Tourism and Economic Integration

Simultaneously, this study locates Batik Bakaran within the broader framework of cultural tourism, defined by Choirunnisa et al. as a form of tourism in which culture is the principal attraction. Cultural tourism, if well-managed, can serve as a powerful tool for both heritage preservation and economic empowerment. Batik Bakaran, with its rich history and unique motifs, is a potent cultural asset that could attract both domestic and international tourists. Documentation and interviews with batik entrepreneurs revealed that participation in cultural exhibitions, workshops, and batik festivals had provided artisans not only with increased visibility but also with alternative revenue streams. However, the market remains saturated with mass-produced *batik printing*, leading to value distortion. Visitors and even locals struggle to distinguish between authentic hand-drawn batik and machine-made replicas, further undermining the perceived cultural and economic worth of Batik Bakaran. The theoretical indicators proposed by Choirunnisa et al. for evaluating the effectiveness of cultural tourism are highly relevant here. Key elements such as *cultural authenticity*, *economic benefit to local communities*, and *environmental sustainability* emerge as both opportunities and challenges. While the authenticity of Batik Bakaran motifs is maintained by a core group of artisans, the lack of environmental safeguards such as proper waste management from dyeing processes threatens long-term sustainability. Interviews noted the limited use of certified



natural dyes and the absence of eco-labeling, which could otherwise position Batik Bakaran competitively in global ethical markets.

FGDs with community members revealed that the sense of cultural identity remains strong. Batik Bakaran is still perceived as a local emblem, often worn during ceremonies, cultural events, and official functions. However, deeper cultural engagement—such as educational programs, batik schools, and intergenerational mentorship—remains minimal. Choirunnisa et al. argue that tourism must not only commodify culture but also educate and elevate the cultural consciousness of both hosts and guests. In Bakaran, cultural tourism has yet to fully deliver this transformative function.

Theoretical Convergence and Emerging Implications



Figure 6. Photo of the Bakaran Batik Festival in Bakaran Village in 2022

Source: Bakaran Batik Manager

The convergence of both theoretical perspectives—cultural preservation and cultural tourism—suggests that Batik Bakaran exists at the nexus of identity, economy, and sustainability. Preservation cannot be seen as a passive act of conservation, nor can tourism be pursued solely as a profit-driven endeavor. Both require intentional design, multi-sector collaboration, and cultural sensitivity. This study illustrates how local wisdom *kearifan lokal* can be mobilized as a strategy of resilience. Traditional knowledge systems, spiritual symbolism, and cooperative practices such as *gotong royong* act as social capital for both preserving culture and adapting it to tourism markets. However, without institutional coordination, educational support, and technological adaptation, this potential remains untapped. In conclusion, the preservation and promotion of Batik Bakaran should be reimagined as a dynamic and strategic enterprise—one that honors its historical roots while embracing innovation, education, and eco-consciousness. Cultural preservation is not an end in itself; it is a vehicle for sustainable development, community empowerment, and intercultural dialogue. Through this lens, Batik Bakaran is not merely fabric—it is a cultural narrative, a pedagogical tool, and an evolving symbol of national identity.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the sustainability of Batik Bakaran hinges on a multi-faceted approach that involves cultural education, digital empowerment, and policy support. The integration of Batik Bakaran into the tourism industry presents a promising opportunity for economic development, but it requires coordinated efforts from all stakeholders, including the community, local government, and tourism sector. The research suggests that fostering youth engagement, providing digital training, and developing supportive policies are crucial steps toward ensuring



the long-term preservation and growth of Batik Bakaran. By addressing the challenges identified and leveraging the opportunities within tourism and digital technology, Batik Bakaran can thrive as a symbol of cultural pride and a valuable economic asset for the village of Bakaran.

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