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COMMUNITY-BASED CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: THE ROLE OF LOCAL CULTURAL ACTORS IN PRESERVING AND INTERNATIONALIZING WAYANG TOPENG PANJI

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of cultural diplomacy by the East Java Cultural Park (UPT Taman Budaya Jawa Timur) through Wayang Topeng Panji performances as a medium for promoting local culture to the international community. This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation related to cultural activities involving the Head of the East Java Cultural Park UPT as well as the Documentation and Publication team. The research findings indicate that cultural diplomacy is carried out through the organization of cultural events, the creation of digital documentation, and the use of social media as a promotional tool. The presence of foreigners at Wayang Topeng Panji performances signifies that local culture possesses an appeal capable of capturing the attention of the global community. Furthermore, cultural events also foster cultural exchange and mutual understanding between local communities and the global community. This study concludes that Wayang Topeng Panji serves as a tool for cultural preservation as well as a medium for cultural diplomacy and a cultural soft power of East Java.

Keywords: Cultural Diplomacy, Soft Power, Panji Mask Puppetry, Digital Media, Local Culture.

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of digital media and globalization has transformed the way people engage with culture. The emergence of global popular culture has created significant challenges for traditional cultures in maintaining their relevance within modern society. Consequently, preserving and promoting local culture has become increasingly important, not only to safeguard regional cultural identity but also to introduce Indonesia's cultural heritage to the international community.

Within the field of international relations, culture is no longer viewed merely as an expression of regional or national identity but also as a strategic instrument for building a positive national image and promoting cultural identity on the global stage (Hall, 1997). Through cultural diplomacy, culture functions as a medium of communication that fosters mutual understanding and strengthens cultural relations across societies. Therefore, traditional cultural heritage possesses considerable potential to serve as a source of cultural influence within international relations.

One of East Java's traditional performing arts with significant cultural value is Wayang Topeng Panji (Panji Mask Puppet Performance). This art form combines dance, traditional music, mask performances, and the Panji stories that originated and developed

in East Java, particularly in Malang. Beyond serving as entertainment, Wayang Topeng Panji embodies historical, philosophical, and cultural values that reflect the identity of East Javanese society. Furthermore, it has been officially recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage (Warisan Budaya Takbenda), emphasizing the importance of preserving its continuity as an essential component of local cultural identity.

Despite its cultural significance, Wayang Topeng Panji performances have become increasingly rare in recent years. Interviews with the Head of the East Java Cultural Park Technical Implementation Unit (UPT Taman Budaya Jawa Timur) indicate that this decline is primarily caused by limited performance venues, insufficient financial support, and inadequate promotion of traditional arts. As a result, younger generations are gradually losing familiarity with Wayang Topeng Panji amid the growing dominance of contemporary popular culture. This situation poses a significant challenge to the preservation of traditional cultural heritage in the era of globalization.

To address these challenges, the East Java Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, in collaboration with the East Java Cultural Park (UPT Taman Budaya Jawa Timur), organizes various cultural programs, including Wayang Topeng Panji performances, cultural festivals, and cultural archiving workshops. These initiatives aim not only to reintroduce Wayang Topeng Panji to local communities but also to utilize social media and digital platforms as instruments for cultural promotion. The increasing use of digital media reflects a transformation in cultural diplomacy practices, shifting from conventional approaches toward digital cultural diplomacy capable of reaching broader international audiences.

The utilization of social media as a promotional tool has also contributed to increasing international awareness of Wayang Topeng Panji. Field observations conducted during this study identified the presence of foreign visitors at cultural performances organized by the East Java Cultural Park. Their attendance was largely driven by information regarding cultural events disseminated through social media and other digital publications. Moreover, interactions on social media demonstrate positive responses and considerable enthusiasm from global audiences toward Wayang Topeng Panji performances. These findings suggest that local culture can function as an effective medium of intercultural communication, facilitating interactions between local communities and international audiences.

From the perspective of international relations, this phenomenon can be understood through the concepts of cultural diplomacy and soft power. According to Joseph Nye, soft power refers to the ability to influence others through attraction, particularly through culture, values, and identity, rather than coercion (Nye, 2004). In this context, Wayang Topeng Panji represents a cultural asset capable of enhancing the international visibility of East Javanese cultural identity through traditional performances supported by digital platforms.

Previous studies on Wayang Topeng Panji and Malangan Mask Art have primarily focused on cultural preservation, cultural promotion, and the digitalization of traditional culture. Research conducted by Sulistiana, Fitrianingsih, and Riyanto (2023) examined

marketing strategies and pricing for educational tourism packages centered on Malangan Mask performances by utilizing social media and collaboration with cultural communities to strengthen local cultural promotion (Sulistiana et al., 2023). Similarly, a study published in Jurnal Gramaswara (2024) emphasized the digitalization of Malangan Mask culture through digital documentation and social media as technology-based approaches to cultural preservation (Wulan, 2024). Another study published in JADECS (2024) highlighted the promotion of Malang Mask culture in Singapore through collaboration with the Indonesian Embassy and international cultural workshops to introduce East Javanese culture to global audiences (Wisesa et al., 2024). However, these studies primarily emphasize cultural preservation, cultural development, and community engagement. Limited attention has been given to examining how regional cultural institutions implement cultural diplomacy through traditional performances and digital platforms to engage international audiences. Moreover, previous research has paid relatively little attention to the responses of international audiences toward traditional cultural performances as instruments of local cultural diplomacy.

Based on these considerations, this study analyzes the implementation of cultural diplomacy carried out by the East Java Cultural Park (UPT Taman Budaya Jawa Timur) through Wayang Topeng Panji performances as a means of introducing local culture to international communities. It is expected to contribute to the field of International Relations by expanding discussions on local-level cultural diplomacy, particularly regarding the integration of traditional performing arts and digital media in the contemporary era of globalization.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. A qualitative approach was adopted to explore social phenomena in depth through narrative and interpretative data (Sugiyono, 2013). The descriptive approach was selected because this study aims to describe the implementation of cultural diplomacy carried out by the East Java Cultural Park (UPT Taman Budaya Jawa Timur) through Wayang Topeng Panji performances in introducing local culture to international communities. This approach is considered appropriate as the study emphasizes social processes, interactions, and the dissemination of culture through traditional performances and digital media.

The research was conducted at the East Java Cultural Park (UPT Taman Budaya Jawa Timur) in Surabaya, East Java. This site was selected because it serves as a venue for cultural documentation workshops and Wayang Topeng Panji performances involving both local communities and international visitors as audiences. In addition, the East Java Cultural Park functions as a regional cultural institution responsible for preserving and promoting East Java's traditional arts through cultural performances, cultural documentation, and digital publications.

Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. This technique enables researchers to identify participants based on specific criteria relevant to the objectives of the study, ensuring that selected informants possess appropriate knowledge

and experience regarding the research topic (Sugiyono, 2013). The key informants included the Head of the East Java Cultural Park, Dedy Haryono, as well as members of the Documentation and Publication Division who are directly involved in promoting local culture through social media and other digital communication platforms.

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews and direct field observations conducted during the research activities at the East Java Cultural Park. Interviews were carried out with the Head of the institution and staff members from the Documentation and Publication Division to obtain information regarding the implementation of Wayang Topeng Panji performances and the cultural promotion strategies employed by the institution. Field observations focused on the organization of cultural performances, documentation activities, social media promotion, and the participation of both local and international audiences. Secondary data were obtained from supporting documents, including institutional archives, event documentation, social media publications, journal articles, books, and other scholarly works related to cultural diplomacy, soft power, cultural exchange, and local cultural promotion.

Data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). During the data reduction stage, information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation was organized and classified according to the research focus. The data were then presented in a descriptive narrative format to facilitate interpretation and analysis. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the findings to address the research objectives and answer the research questions.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed data triangulation by comparing information obtained from interviews with multiple informants, field observations, and documentation of cultural activities (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The application of triangulation strengthens the validity of the data and enhances the overall reliability of the research findings.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy is a form of diplomacy that utilizes culture as a medium of communication to promote cultural identity, build a positive image, and strengthen relationships among societies at the global level. In contemporary international relations, diplomacy is no longer conducted solely through political and economic approaches but also through cultural engagement, which is often considered more effective in fostering social and emotional connections between people. According to Milton Cummings, cultural diplomacy refers to the exchange of ideas, information, values, traditions, and other aspects of culture with the objective of promoting mutual understanding among individuals and nations (Cummings, 2003).

With the advancement of globalization, cultural diplomacy is no longer carried out exclusively by states through official institutions. It increasingly involves non-state actors, including local cultural institutions, art communities, and civil society organizations, that promote culture through cultural activities and digital media. The rapid development of digital technologies has transformed the practice of cultural diplomacy by enabling social media and digital platforms to disseminate cultural content more efficiently and reach broader international audiences. Consequently, culture has become an effective instrument of global communication that facilitates cross-cultural engagement beyond formal diplomatic channels.

In this study, cultural diplomacy is examined through the initiatives undertaken by the East Java Cultural Park (UPT Taman Budaya Jawa Timur) in promoting East Java's local culture through Wayang Topeng Panji performances and digital media. This perspective is consistent with the findings of Restyawan (2025), who argues that contemporary cultural diplomacy is not limited to state-led institutions but is also practiced by non-state actors, including cultural communities, art organizations, and local institutions that contribute to introducing cultural identities to international audiences. Within this context, regional cultural institutions can function as cultural diplomacy actors by organizing cultural activities and utilizing digital media as platforms for global cultural communication (Gede et al., 2025).

Drawing upon Milton Cummings' concept of cultural diplomacy, this study adopts three analytical indicators:

Exchange of Ideas and Information

The exchange of ideas and information occurs through the dissemination of cultural knowledge using communication media, digital publications, and social media platforms. In this study, this indicator is reflected in the promotion of Wayang Topeng Panji performances through digital documentation and social media managed by the East Java Cultural Park.

Exchange of Cultural Values and Traditions

This indicator refers to the process of introducing cultural identity, local traditions, and cultural values to international audiences through cultural activities. In this research, Wayang Topeng Panji performances serve as a medium for presenting the cultural heritage of East Java to foreign visitors.

Mutual Understanding

One of the primary objectives of cultural diplomacy is to foster mutual understanding and intercultural appreciation through direct cultural interaction. In this study, mutual understanding is reflected in the positive responses of foreign audiences toward Wayang Topeng Panji performances and their growing interest in East Java's local culture (Cummings, 2003).

Soft Power

The concept of soft power was introduced by Joseph S. Nye as the ability to influence others through attraction, particularly through culture, values, and identity, rather than through coercion or military force (Nye, 2004). Unlike hard power, which relies primarily on economic or military capabilities, soft power emphasizes persuasion and attraction as the foundations of influence.

Culture represents one of the principal sources of soft power because it can generate attraction and cultivate a positive international reputation. In the era of globalization, culture is no longer viewed solely as an expression of local identity but also as a strategic asset that enables states and non-state actors to expand their influence through non-coercive means. Furthermore, the development of digital media has strengthened the effectiveness of soft power by facilitating the rapid dissemination of cultural content through social media and digital platforms. As a result, local culture can reach international audiences without relying exclusively on formal diplomatic channels.

Within this study, Wayang Topeng Panji is conceptualized as a form of East Java's cultural soft power that possesses the ability to attract global audiences through traditional performing arts. The participation of foreign visitors in cultural events demonstrates that local cultural heritage can generate international interest and enhance global awareness of Indonesia's cultural identity.

This study is grounded in the phenomenon of cultural globalization, which has created significant challenges for traditional cultural heritage in maintaining its relevance amid the growing influence of contemporary popular culture. In response to this challenge, the East Java Cultural Park (UPT Taman Budaya Jawa Timur) has undertaken various initiatives to preserve and promote local culture through Wayang Topeng Panji performances. Within this framework, cultural diplomacy is implemented through traditional performances supported by social media and digital publications. The use of digital platforms enables cultural information to reach wider international audiences and facilitates cross-cultural interaction beyond geographical boundaries.

Based on Milton Cummings' concept of cultural diplomacy, this study analyzes cultural diplomacy practices using three principal indicators:

1. the exchange of ideas and information
2. the exchange of cultural values and traditions,
3. mutual understanding.

In addition, Joseph Nye's concept of soft power is employed to examine how Wayang Topeng Panji functions as a cultural attraction capable of generating international interest in East Java's cultural heritage. Accordingly, this study investigates how the East Java Cultural Park implements cultural diplomacy through Wayang Topeng Panji performances to introduce East Java's local culture to international audiences.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Revitalization of Wayang Topeng Panji as an Effort for Cultural Preservation

Wayang Topeng Panji is a traditional performing art originating from East Java that embodies significant historical, philosophical, and cultural values. This art form integrates various elements, including traditional dance, music, mask performances, and Panji narratives that have developed within East Javanese society, particularly in Malang. As part of Indonesia's Intangible Cultural Heritage (Warisan Budaya Takbenda), Wayang Topeng Panji plays an important role in preserving local cultural identity and represents a cultural symbol passed down across generations.



Figure 1. Seni Wayang Topeng Panji
Source: Documentation from the East Java Cultural Park (UPT Taman Budaya Jawa Timur), 2026.

Despite its cultural significance, the existence of Wayang Topeng Panji has experienced a decline over time due to several factors, including limited performance spaces, inadequate cultural promotion, and decreasing public interest in traditional arts amid the development of modern popular culture. The expansion of globalization and digital culture has resulted in younger generations becoming more familiar with foreign popular culture than with their own local traditions (Jin, 2024). This condition presents a challenge for the sustainability of traditional arts, including Wayang Topeng Panji.

Based on an interview with the Head of the East Java Cultural Park (UPT Taman Budaya Jawa Timur), Dedy Haryono, Wayang Topeng Panji had not been actively performed among communities for a long period due to limitations related to funding, performance venues, and supporting facilities (D. Haryono, personal communication,

2026). In response to this situation, the East Java Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, together with the East Java Cultural Park, initiated efforts to revitalize the art form through regular performances at Taman Krida Budaya Malang since 2025

This revitalization effort reflects the commitment of local cultural institutions to preserving traditional heritage amid the influence of global cultural flows. Cultural revitalization aims not only to maintain traditional arts but also to introduce local cultural identity to younger generations in a way that remains relevant to contemporary developments (Grincheva, 2022). Therefore, Wayang Topeng Panji performances should not merely be understood as cultural entertainment but also as an effort to preserve regional cultural identity.

The growing public enthusiasm toward Wayang Topeng Panji performances in Malang encouraged the East Java Cultural Park to introduce the performance in Surabaya through cultural documentation workshops. This initiative demonstrates that cultural revitalization is not limited to maintaining traditional performances but also involves documentation and broader cultural dissemination to wider audiences.

Cultural Promotion Strategies through Social Media and Digital Documentation

In the digital era, social media has become an important instrument in contemporary cultural promotion and cultural diplomacy. The advancement of communication technology enables cultural information to be disseminated more rapidly and widely through digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and other social media channels (Bjola & Manor, 2022). The utilization of digital media for cultural promotion has proven effective because it allows cultural content to reach audiences across different regions and countries.

An interview with the Head of the East Java Cultural Park revealed that one of the main strategies for promoting Wayang Topeng Panji performances is the utilization of social media and digital publications managed by the Documentation and Publication Division, including the involvement of internship students who participate in cultural promotion activities (D. Haryono, personal communication, 2026).Information regarding cultural performances is distributed through various digital platforms, allowing broader public access without geographical and temporal limitations.

Beyond functioning as a medium for information dissemination, digital documentation also serves as a form of cultural preservation by creating archives that maintain traditional heritage in the modern era. The recording of cultural performances through videos, photographs, and other digital formats has become an important element in introducing local culture to younger generations who are increasingly connected with digital technology.

During the cultural documentation workshop, Wayang Topeng Panji was selected as the main subject because of its significant cultural value and its potential to be introduced to the East Java community, particularly in Surabaya, where many people had not previously experienced the performance directly in Malang (D. Haryono, personal communication, 2026). This indicates that cultural documentation functions not only as a

record of cultural activities but also as a strategic medium for promoting local heritage to broader audiences.



Figure 2. Participation of Foreign Residents in the Panji Mask Puppet Show
Source: Documentation from the East Java Cultural Park (UPT Taman Budaya Jawa Timur), 2026.

The use of social media for cultural promotion demonstrates a transformation in cultural diplomacy practices, shifting from conventional approaches toward more participatory digital practices. In the digital era, cultural diplomacy allows wider communities to participate in cultural dissemination processes through social media engagement and online interactions (Manor & Huang, 2022). In this context, the involvement of internship students in cultural publication activities illustrates the role of younger generations as active participants in preserving and promoting traditional culture through digital platforms.

The Participation of Foreign Visitors in Wayang Topeng Panji Performances

One of the interesting phenomena observed during Wayang Topeng Panji performances at the East Java Cultural Park (UPT Taman Budaya Jawa Timur) is the participation of foreign visitors as audiences in cultural events. The presence of international audiences indicates that traditional local culture possesses an attraction capable of generating interest among global communities.

Based on an interview with the Head of the East Java Cultural Park, the attendance of foreign visitors at Wayang Topeng Panji performances was not the result of official invitations from the institution but occurred spontaneously through information obtained from social media and digital publications (D. Haryono, personal communication, 2026). This situation demonstrates that cultural promotion through digital platforms has enabled local cultural performances to reach broader international audiences in an open and accessible manner.

Furthermore, information obtained from the institution indicates that visual performing arts such as Wayang Topeng Panji are relatively easier for international audiences to understand compared to traditional performances that rely heavily on verbal elements, such as ludruk. Visual components including dance movements, costumes, masks, and stage performances allow foreign audiences to appreciate the cultural meaning of the performance even without fully understanding the local language.

This argument is supported by interviews with three foreign visitors who attended the performance. They expressed their impressions by stating: “Very impressive, it was a traditional show we saw on Java and it was so emotional and really impressive for us. We’ve never seen that before.” (foreign audience members, personal communication, 2026) This statement demonstrates that Wayang Topeng Panji performances are capable of creating meaningful cultural experiences and emotional connections for international audiences. The combination of traditional music, dance movements, visual elements, and mask performances provides a unique cultural experience for foreign visitors who have never previously encountered East Javanese traditional arts.

The response from international audiences also reflects the existence of mutual understanding within cultural diplomacy practices. Through cultural performances, local traditions can function as a communication medium that generates appreciation, curiosity, and intercultural understanding between local communities and global audiences. This phenomenon further demonstrates that traditional arts can serve as a global cultural communication medium. Cultural performances are able to create emotional engagement through visual and artistic expressions, making them more accessible to audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds (Grincheva, 2022). In this context, Wayang Topeng Panji does not only function as a form of local entertainment but also as a medium for introducing East Javanese cultural identity to the international community.

The presence of foreign visitors at local cultural events also reflects a process of cultural exchange between local communities and international audiences. Foreign visitors gain opportunities to experience East Javanese culture directly through traditional performances, while local artists receive opportunities to present their cultural identity to global audiences (Kim, 2022). This interaction demonstrates that traditional culture can become an instrument for building social relationships and intercultural communication across national boundaries.

Wayang Topeng Panji as a Cultural Diplomacy Practice and Source of Local Soft Power

In international relations studies, culture can be utilized as a diplomatic instrument to create a positive image and introduce the identity of a country or region to global audiences. Cultural diplomacy represents a non-coercive approach that employs cultural elements as a means of communication and relationship-building among societies across national borders (Cummings, 2003). In this context, Wayang Topeng Panji performances organized by the East Java Cultural Park can be understood as a form of regional cultural diplomacy practice.

The implementation of cultural diplomacy can be observed through efforts to introduce East Java’s cultural identity to international audiences through traditional performing arts. Wayang Topeng Panji functions not only as a cultural performance but also as a medium for presenting local identity to foreign audiences attending cultural events. The spontaneous presence of international visitors demonstrates that local culture possesses an attractive quality capable of generating global interest naturally.

This phenomenon corresponds with Joseph Nye's concept of soft power, which refers to the ability to influence others through attraction generated by culture, values, and identity rather than through coercion (Nye, 2004). Within this study, Wayang Topeng Panji represents a form of local cultural soft power because it has the ability to attract international attention toward Indonesian cultural heritage through artistic expression.

Furthermore, the utilization of social media as a cultural promotion instrument strengthens the practice of soft power in the digital era. Advances in information technology allow local cultures to be disseminated more broadly to international audiences through digital platforms (Manor & Huang, 2022). In this study, the promotion of Wayang Topeng Panji performances through social media and digital publications enables cultural information to reach international audiences without relying on formal diplomatic channels.

Interestingly, the participation of foreign visitors in Wayang Topeng Panji performances occurred spontaneously without official invitations from the organizers. This situation indicates that local cultural attraction can generate international attention naturally through cultural appeal and digital communication. Within the concept of soft power, the ability to attract others voluntarily represents an important indicator of cultural influence (Jin, 2024).

The cultural diplomacy practices conducted by the East Java Cultural Park also demonstrate that cultural diplomacy is no longer exclusively implemented by states through formal institutions such as ministries or embassies. Regional cultural institutions can also function as cultural diplomacy actors through artistic and cultural activities. This reflects the increasing role of non-state actors in contemporary international relations, where local cultural institutions contribute to promoting Indonesia's cultural identity to the international community.

Beyond introducing local traditions, cultural diplomacy through Wayang Topeng Panji performances also contributes to creating a positive image of Indonesian culture internationally. Traditional arts presented through cultural events represent Indonesia's cultural diversity, historical richness, and artistic values. Therefore, traditional culture functions not only as local heritage but also as a cultural asset that can contribute to Indonesia's global cultural image.

Challenges in Promoting Local Culture

Although Wayang Topeng Panji possesses significant potential as an instrument of cultural diplomacy, the promotion of local culture continues to face several challenges. One of the main obstacles is the limitation of funding and supporting facilities for cultural performances. Based on an interview with the Head of the East Java Cultural Park, Wayang Topeng Panji had not been actively performed for a long period due to constraints related to venues, financial resources, and cultural performance facilities (D. Haryono, personal communication, 2026). These limitations demonstrate that the preservation of traditional culture requires continuous support from government institutions, cultural organizations, and local communities. Without sufficient support, traditional cultural

practices face the risk of declining visibility amid the expansion of modern culture and global popular culture.

In addition to financial limitations, another challenge involves changes in cultural consumption patterns, particularly among younger generations. Today's youth are more familiar with popular digital cultures distributed through social media platforms compared to traditional local cultures (Jin, 2024). As a result, traditional arts are often perceived as less attractive and less relevant to contemporary lifestyles.

This phenomenon reflects the impact of cultural globalization, in which foreign popular cultures are often adopted more rapidly by younger generations compared to local traditional cultures. Research conducted by Pane (2025) highlights that the dissemination of South Korean popular culture through digital media has contributed to cultural hybridization and influenced global cultural consumption patterns, including in Indonesia (Pane, 2025). Consequently, local traditional cultures face challenges in maintaining their relevance amid the emergence of more dominant and modern global cultures.

Within the context of cultural diplomacy, another challenge lies in the limited international exposure of local cultural heritage. Unlike popular cultures from developed countries that have established extensive global promotion networks, Indonesian local cultures still face limitations in accessing international audiences. Therefore, the utilization of social media and digital platforms becomes an important strategy for expanding the international promotion of local cultural heritage.

Furthermore, the implementation of regional cultural diplomacy faces challenges regarding program sustainability. Wayang Topeng Panji performances in Surabaya have not yet become part of a permanent cultural event schedule because the East Java Cultural Park must also allocate attention to preserving other traditional arts, such as ludruk (D. Haryono, personal communication, 2026). This situation indicates that local cultural preservation requires long-term strategies to ensure that cultural promotion is not limited to temporary activities. Nevertheless, the involvement of younger generations in cultural documentation and publication activities represents an important opportunity for developing cultural promotion in the digital era. The use of social media by young people allows traditional culture to be promoted through more creative approaches that are more compatible with contemporary audiences. In this context, internship students involved in cultural promotion activities contribute to the dissemination of cultural information through digital platforms.

Therefore, the challenges in developing local culture are not limited to financial and infrastructural constraints but also involve the ability of traditional culture to remain relevant amid contemporary digital cultural developments. Consequently, innovative, adaptive, and sustainable cultural promotion strategies are required to ensure that traditional arts such as Wayang Topeng Panji remain recognized by both local communities and international audiences.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the East Java Cultural Park (UPT Taman Budaya Jawa Timur) has implemented cultural diplomacy practices through Wayang Topeng Panji performances as an effort to promote East Java's cultural identity to international audiences. These cultural diplomacy practices are carried out through cultural events, the utilization of social media, digital archiving, and the participation of foreign visitors in cultural activities organized by the institution. The findings reveal that Wayang Topeng Panji functions not only as a traditional performing art but also as a medium for cultural preservation and intercultural communication.

The revitalization efforts conducted by the East Java Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism together with the East Java Cultural Park represent a form of local cultural preservation in response to the challenges of globalization, limited performance spaces, and the growing dominance of contemporary popular culture. Through these initiatives, Wayang Topeng Panji has been repositioned not only as cultural heritage that requires preservation but also as a cultural medium capable of connecting local communities with global audiences.

In practice, cultural promotion is carried out through social media platforms and digital publications to expand the dissemination of cultural information to both local and international audiences. The utilization of digital media enables Wayang Topeng Panji performances to gain wider recognition without depending solely on formal diplomatic channels. The spontaneous presence of foreign visitors who discovered cultural events through digital platforms indicates that traditional culture possesses an inherent attraction capable of generating global interest.

Furthermore, this study highlights that Wayang Topeng Panji can be understood as a manifestation of East Java's local cultural soft power. Its cultural appeal generates international interest in Indonesian culture through voluntary attraction rather than coercion. Moreover, interactions between local artists and foreign visitors during cultural performances reflect processes of cultural exchange and mutual understanding, which represent essential elements of cultural diplomacy practices. Nevertheless, the promotion of local culture continues to encounter several challenges, including limited funding, inadequate cultural performance facilities, changing patterns of cultural consumption among society, and restricted international exposure of local cultural heritage. Therefore, more innovative, sustainable, and adaptive cultural promotion strategies are required to ensure that traditional arts remain relevant amid the continuous development of digital technology and global popular culture.

Overall, this study emphasizes that cultural diplomacy is not exclusively conducted by states through formal diplomatic institutions but can also be practiced by local cultural institutions through the utilization of traditional arts and digital media. In this context, the East Java Cultural Park functions as a local cultural actor that contributes to introducing Indonesian cultural identity to the international community while strengthening the role of local institutions in contemporary international relations

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