

SUSTAINING CULTURAL HERITAGE THROUGH GENDANG BELEQ: ETHNOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS INTO IDENTITY, SUSTAINABILITY, AND TOURISM IN LOMBOK, INDONESIA

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Abstract: Gendang Beleq, a traditional musical ensemble of Sasak people in Lombok, Indonesia, embodies both cultural identity and heritage continuity. Rooted in the historical legacy of Lombok Kingdom, it remains a powerful symbol of social cohesion while also adapting to contemporary contexts. In the present era, where cultural heritage faces pressures from modernization and globalization, Gendang Beleq has also emerged as a resource for sustainable tourism and community empowerment. This study explores the historical, cultural, and sustainable tourism value of Gendang Beleq, a traditional musical ensemble integral to Sasak people of Lombok, Indonesia, examining not only its role in ceremonies, rituals, and local heritage preservation, but also its potential to foster cultural pride, intergenerational knowledge transmission, and economic opportunities through responsible and sustainable tourism development. The study employs a qualitative ethnographic approach, drawing on interviews, participant observations, and documentary analysis. Fieldwork was conducted in three culturally significant village, including Lendang Nangka, Kotaraja, and Kesik, where Gendang Beleq traditions remain vibrant. The findings highlight that Gendang Beleq is not only a cultural remnant of Lombok Kingdom but also a living tradition that continues to embody Sasak identity. Its practice has expanded into contemporary functions, including sustainable tourism activities such as cultural festivals, educational initiatives, and eco-cultural programs that encourage community participation and intercultural exchange. The study demonstrates that sustaining Gendang Beleq requires integrated cultural, environmental, economic, and education strategies. By linking traditional music with heritage preservation and regional development, Gendang Beleq exemplifies how local traditions can serve as dynamic resources for sustainability, identity formation, and tourism in Lombok.

Keywords: Gendang Beleq, preservation, cultural heritage, sustainable tourism, ethnographic, Sasak culture

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INTRODUCTION

Lombok island possesses rich local wisdom that can be leveraged for various purposes. In education context, tradition practices like Sasak Sade Village architecture, Bau Nyale tradition, and Sasak weaving can be integrated into science curricula to develop ethnoscience-based learning models (Hikmawati et al., 2020). In tourism context, Muaini et al. (2021) explain that Sade Village showcases tangible and intangible cultural attractions, including traditional buildings, weaving, and dance, while emphasizing accessibility and community involvement. To promote these cultural assets effectively, Rahayu & Yanis (2023) propose a multi-step communication model combining interpersonal, persuasive, and mass communication approaches that is recommended for tourism marketing. This integration of local wisdom into education and tourism can contribute to preserving cultural heritage while fostering economic and social benefits.

Gendang Beleq is a traditional musical instrument that constitutes one of the cultural preservations of Lombok Island (Mahmudah, 2023). It is a well-liked music group for the Sasak, the indigenous tribe of Lombok. The uniqueness of Gendang Beleq lies in the material which is made from buffalo leather which produces a distinctive, beautiful and unique sound (Fauzi et al., 2023; Lalu Amri Yasir et al., 2023; Novianto, 2022; Septiani et al., 2023; Sudiartawan & Utama, 2022).

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Supartha (2020) explains that Gendang Beleg is often used in various traditional ceremonies and traditional art performances. In the context of tourism, Gendang Beleg has an important role in increasing tourist attraction in Lombok. Fazalani (2020), further, mentions that tourist attractions in Lombok often feature Gendang Beleg performances as a unique cultural attraction, allowing tourists to experience the richness of local art and culture. Usually, this musical art is played using traditional Lombok clothes, thus adding a unique feel amidst the stunning natural scenery on this island.

In his review, he also highlights that each beat and intricate movement in Gendang Beleg performance reflects various aspects of Sasak life, including work, rituals, and spiritual connections with the land and natural surroundings. Similarly, Bewani (2019) writes that Gendang Beleg encompasses the essence of unity and cooperation in Sasak society. The collaborative effort required to play this drum harmoniously reflects communal values such as cooperation, teamwork, and social cohesion. Additionally, Munawir & Pradoko (2021) explained that the dances associated with Gendang Beleg reflect the interconnectedness between individuals and their cultural heritage, forming a sense of collective identity among the public. Di et al. (2023) finds that Gendang Beleg provides an authentic cultural experience for tourists. Tourists who visit Lombok have the opportunity to watch Gendang Beleg performance live, understand the history and meaning behind it, and feel the unique vibrations of the music. This finding was supported by Fazalani (2020) who confirms that Gendang Beleg is a vital symbol of the cultural identity of Sasak people.

Therefore, the promotion and preservation of Gendang Beleg does not only preserve cultural heritage, but also informs tourists about the rich and unique Sasak traditions. In recent, the originality of Gendang Beleg has changed in terms of its music and purpose due to technological advancements. To integrate the sustainability of Sasak Gendang Beleg culture as a source of tourist interest in Lombok, Markarma et al. (2022) propose a strong strategy that must be adopted. One of which is through the development of sustainable tourism through cultural preservation.

Traditional music and culture such as Sasak Gendang Beleg in Lombok have great cultural value and significantly contribute to the development of sustainable tourism (Zhang et al., 2023).

They aid in uncovering and investigating the cultural aspects of each area, thereby enhancing the extant and effectiveness of tourism planning and management (Van, 2020). However, Zunaidi et al. (2022) emphasize that the development of cultural tourism must adhere to sustainable development principles, considering economic, environmental, and socio-cultural factors. As, however, Liu & Shu (2020), in particular way describe how cultural heritage, like traditional music, can draw tourists and generate money for preserving heritage, but is also encounters obstacles, such as over-commercialization and the erosion of local traits. In order to achieve sustainable tourism (Ye et al., 2024) highlight why it is crucial to honor the cultural significance of cultural heritage and strike a harmonious equilibrium between economic growth and cultural conservation. Thus, by analyzing good practices in Gendang Beleg as a Sasak traditional music, suggestions can be provided for preserving the distinct cultural heritage in the growth of sustainable tourism in Lombok.

The study on Sasak culture preservation where Gendang Beleg as the core object of the study is relevant to sustainable tourism because it contributes to the preservation of Lombok culture, which constitutes one of the most important aspects of sustainable tourism (Dewi et al., 2023). In addition, Sabur & Güneş (2023) state that it also helps in recognizing and safeguarding local products through cultural indication applications, which is vital for sustaining cultural-based tourism. Rasdi et al. (2022), further, analyzes that responsible tourism practices, such as preserving local traditions, can enhance the image and competitiveness of tourist destinations, leading to sustainable tourism development. Additionally, Xu & Ito (2022) suggest that getting to know cultural factors is crucial for planning sustainable heritage tourism. Overall, the study on Gendang Beleg as Sasak culture preservation aids sustainable tourism by conserving culture, safeguarding local products, engaging local communities, and improving heritage site planning.

However, researches on cultural preservation in Lombok with Gendang Beleg as the object of the study has not been widely conducted. In fact, there are only three documents found in Scopus related to the research. First, a study conducted by Novitasari et al. (2023) which explores Gendang Beleg as one of the most famous traditional musical instruments of Sasak culture in Lombok from an ethnomathematics point of view. Second, a study conducted by Hikmawati et al. (2021) which aims to describe local wisdom on the island of Lombok that has the potential for ethnoscience to develop a learning model at Junior High School. This study even only highlights Gendang Beleg one out of five potentials to be studied. Third, a study in the form of book chapter from Harnish (2016) which discusses the synthesis of music and dance in Gendang Beleg, the aestheticization of ensembles for state purposes and the detraditionalization or secularization of forms related to it, as well as the religious politics that underlie many of the points. Of these three studies, none have explicitly addressed Gendang Beleg as a singular subject of the study from a historical standpoint, including considerations regarding the rationale for the preservation of Gendang Beleg, the nature of its preservation models and strategies, the potential for Gendang Beleg to function as a sustainable tourism offering, and the resultant impacts and advantages for the cultural context in which it exists.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive ethnographic investigation of Gendang Beleg as a core element of Sasak cultural heritage in Lombok. More specifically, this study seeks to (1) examine the historical dimensions of Gendang Beleg as a manifestation of Sasak identity and tradition, (2) analyze the cultural, social, and economic benefits of preserving Gendang Beleg for Sasak community, and (3) explore strategies and frameworks for positioning Gendang Beleg as a sustainable tourism product that balances cultural conservation with economic development.

Based on these objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Gendang Beleg has a high historical value on Sasak culture of Lombok

H2: Gendang Beleg can be preserved as a sustainable tourism product

H3: Preservation of Gendang Beleg has positive benefits for Sasak culture itself

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have examined the influence of heritage tourism on the sustainable development of communities and the overall well-being of local populations. These investigations have revealed that heritage tourism can yield both favorable and unfavorable consequences on the social determinants of health. Favorable outcomes encompass economic advancements, cultural revitalizations, enhancement of infrastructure, and amelioration of social welfare provisions (Brooks et al., 2023).

However, Muzamil & Sfodera (2023) argue that heritage tourism may result in negative consequences like limited community involvement, restricted land access, livelihood loss, community displacement, increased outmigration, crime, and cultural erosion. In order to attain sustainable tourism development, Mzembe et al. (2023) state that it is crucial to involve local communities in governance and decision-making processes, while also granting them access to resources and programs. Similarly, Stoica et al. (2022) emphasize that the contribution of online communities, like vloggers, in establishing sustainable tourism has been acknowledged. In their review, Amoiradis et al. (2023) conclude that government mechanisms, community agency, and supranational institutions, play a pivotal role to integrate sustainable development into cultural heritage tourism. The comparative analysis of cultural tourism in various regions, such as Bali and Lombok, allows for the identification of areas that can be enhanced and sustainability can be increased. Overall, to achieve sustainable tourism development, it is essential to balance tourism requirements with responsible resource use take environmental, social, and economic needs into account.

Cultural Heritage and Tourism

It is important to recognize that cultural heritage has a central role in influencing tourist behavior and preferences (Chaigasem & Kumboon, 2024). Lussetyowati (2015) stated that cultural tourism does not only facilitates cultural exchange between tourists and host communities, but also becomes an important instrument in sustainable development. The incorporation of cultural elements in the tourism sector also open up new opportunities in marketing destinations and linking them to authentic experiences (Chen, P. et al., 2023). In this instance, the expansion of tourism with a cultural orientation can become a destination identity (Lenggogeni & Syafrizal, 2023) that can influence tourists' decisions to visit. Thus, this certainly has a significant role in driving the economy, promoting tourism as well as revitalizing the cultural heritage of our ancestors. Local culture is a major attraction for tourists looking for unique and authentic experiences (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2024). Tourists are often interested in getting to know the traditions, customs, arts and culture of local communities. Local culture strengthens the identity and identity of a region or community (Rastegar & Ruhanen, 2023). Waldo et al. (2023) suggest that tourism that focuses on local culture helps maintain and promote cultural and historical heritage, as well as respecting traditional values. Local cultural tourism can be a bridge to build understanding and tolerance between cultures. Tourists who engage with local culture often have a deeper experience and better understand the local community. Cultural Conservation is an effort to safeguard, preserve and care for cultural elements which include cultural heritage, traditions, art, language and cultural practices passed down from generation to generation (Hussain et al., 2023). The goal of cultural conservation is to ensure that these elements remain alive and well so that they can be preserved and passed on to future generations (Pearson & Thompson, 2023). Cultural conservation and sustainable tourism often focus on involving local communities in the management and benefits of tourism. This can include training and education, promotion of local handicrafts, and economic empowerment of local communities.

Gendang Beleq's historical significances

Gendang Beleq, a significant traditional instrument in Lombok, possesses historical significance. Its connotative meaning is characterized by courage, spirit, and strength (Saifuddin, 2018). The instrument has evolved in terms of its musical form and function (Sumardi, 2018). The historical significance of Gendang Beleq is assessed by examining how it affected other historical entities, such as through its tempo-special impact and influence on other entities through Wikipedia links (Takahashi et al., 2011). While one paper lacks information on the historical significance of Gendang Beleq (Heidegren, 2018), another paper highlights the significance of this topic in the domain of heritage and cultural tourism, underscoring its role in safeguarding and advancing local culture (Wyllie, 2014).

Tourist appeal and cultural influence

Cultural communication, trade in cultural products, and inbound tourism greatly impact the visitor economy (Chen, Q. et al., 2023). Resources in heritage tourism are essential for understanding tourists' cultural identity. Aesthetic, tourist involvement, and mental experience influence cultural identity in heritage tourism (Yang et al., 2022). The cultural sector relies on the connection between culture and tourism to support and encourage innovation and creativity. The destination's image is influenced by this relationship and it also helps to connect tourists with local population (Dramićanin & Sančanin, 2020). Cultural memories, contact, and attitude to the culture affect tourists' desire to return in cultural and creative tourism; cultural memory is the prevailing influence (Dašić & Savić, 2020). Cultural and historical heritage of tourist destinations increase their appeal, leading modern tourists to choose cultural-historical tourism.

Economic Impact and Community Development

Cultural heritage brings economic benefits such as tourism income, infrastructure growth, and enhanced social services (Mekonnen & Berhanu, 2022). However, restrictions on local community participation and resource access, livelihood loss, and culture erosion are negative constitute negative impacts as well (Ellis, 2019). To ensure sustainable community development, involving host communities in heritage tourism governance and decision-making process, while also providing them access to resources and programs, is crucial (Tait et al., 2016). Collaboration is vital for efficient urban development that is sustainable for both the environment and the people in urban communities (Brooks et al., 2023).

Additionally, community engagement, stakeholder involvement, and partnership working are vital for achieving successful cultural heritage development (Ismail et al., 2023). Overall, the conservation of cultural and historical heritage can promote economic stability, knowledge acquisition, and cultural endurance.

Gendang Beleg as an economic driver

The article by Sumardi (2018) examines the development of Gendang Beleg in its musical form and its connection to its function. Similarly, Miftah et al. (2023), in her article, emphasizes the significance of small and medium enterprises (UMKM) in economic growth. It also stresses the necessity of market orientation and product innovation to gain a competitive edge. The findings indicate that Gendang Beleg, as a cultural heritage distinct musical tradition, has potential to enhance tourism and assists local businesses, including UMKM in Lombok. By displaying Gendang Beleg shows and integrating them into tourism events, it can allure tourists and produce profits for the community. Furthermore, promoting market orientation and product innovation in Gendang Beleg industry can improve competitiveness and boost regional economic growth.

Community empowerment and economic contributions

Community empowerment plays a pivotal role for economic development and growth. Supports and resources from government, businesses, and industries contribute to economy empowerment (Sukiyani, 2021). This involves improving skills, knowledge and attitudes, increasing entrepreneurship, and enhancing economic capacity (Herwina & Mustakim, 2019). In addition, community-based tourism and tourist village development are effective strategies for empowering communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Sulaiman et al., 2022). These initiatives aim to conserve the environment, empower local communities, and preserve local culture (Jenah et al., 2020). However, in order to overcome the obstacles of institutional management, business development, and marketing promotion, certain challenges must be tackled. The success of community economic empowerment programs relies on community members' response and participation. Overall, community empowerment initiatives lead to economic growth, independence, and improved living standards.

Preservation Efforts and Future Prospects

The significance of safeguarding cultural heritage and its potential for the future is becoming increasingly prominent in contemporary society (Bridgewater & Rotherham, 2019). The establishment of holistic frameworks for the protection of cultural heritage is imperative for the sustenance and progression of minor nations (Version, 2021). Preservation efforts on within the realm of tourism concentrate on the import of cultural legacy in engendering economic, ecological, and societal merits (Loureiro et al., 2022). Scholars have successfully discerned plausible perils to cultural heritage (Della Spina et al., 2023; Guo et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2023), like plundering and the heritage obliteration, and have placed special emphasis on the imperative of public admittance and safeguarding cultural heritage (Trček, 2022). Technology tools such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence have been examined for conserving cultural heritage purpose. However, their implementation has revealed significant limitations (Qiu et al., 2022). Future trends in tourism research encompass the realms of place creation and environment which signify the necessity for pioneering methods in cultural heritage (Abstract, 2021). Heritage protection spending correlates with tourism GDP. It is important to balance heritage preservation and tourism income. Good management practices can help achieve this balance.

Challenges in sustaining Gendang Beleg's tradition

The challenges of preserving Gendang Beleg's tradition are technology's impact on its development and the necessity for a more comprehensive grasp on its musical structure and purpose (Sumardi, 2018). Some other challenges also involves traditional houses destruction due to the earthquake disaster in 2018, the buildings and facilities are not properly managed, and there is a need to improve the quality and quantity of tourist attractions (Meita, n.d.). Additionally, in playing Gendang Beleg traditional music, cohesiveness is essential for its beauty and harmony (Zulkarnaen et al., 2022). The sustenance of Gendang Beleg's tradition depends on building strong relationships among stakeholders, including the community and managers, and promoting an engaged society in overseeing supplementary services (Mahmudah, 2023). Introducing Gendang Beleg and its playing technique to young generation is crucial for preserving and appreciating traditional music in Lombok (Markarma et al., 2022). The cultural, moral, and religious values of Gendang Beleg shape character education and guide the lives of Lombok people (Azmi & Pamadhi, 2019).

Future strategies for cultural preservation and economic growth

Consideration of global crises, like the Covid-19 pandemic, is necessary for future strategies to preserve culture and foster economic growth. The current crisis can be viewed as a chance to enhance the resilience and sustainability of the Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS) through utilizing creativity and innovation (Ost & Saleh, 2021). Additionally, knowledge of historical and cultural vulnerability to seismic events can aid in developing strategies for preserving cultural heritage in a region (Bovo et al., 2019). The cultural heritage sector has transitioned from protection to adaptive reuse and spill-over effects for sustainable development and regional growth (Ultural et al., 2017). In China, the preservation of cultural heritage is connected to culture and development, but encounters challenges because of uneven regional development and limited resources (Magazine, 2014). Finally, costs and benefits are important in incorporating cultural heritage in urban development projects; collaborative efforts and negotiations are crucial for value and reaching settlements (Baarveld & Smit, 2011).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research employs qualitative analysis through an ethnographic approach. Ethnography serves as a qualitative

research method that concentrates on studying cultural phenomena and human behaviours through extensive observations, interviews, and documentary evidence (Amoiradis et al., 2023; Reeves et al., 2013; Whitehead, 2005). Furthermore, it provides comprehensive details of social phenomena and helps to find out the motivations behind human behaviours (Whitehead, 2005). Within the framework of tourism studies, ethnography offers invaluable insights by providing an in-depth comprehension of the experiences of tourists, hosts, and other relevant stakeholders (Whalen, 2018). It facilitates immersion in specific contexts, thereby enabling longitudinal analyses of touristic phenomena (Davies & Jaimangal-Jones, 2020).

Data collection was carried out both primary and secondary data. In terms of primary phase, this research relies upon interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure a holistic perspective on community engagement in cultural preservation. The data collection was executed across three distinct villages in Lombok, specifically Lendang Nangka Village, Kotaraja Village, and Kesik Village. These selected villages were identified due to the enduring presence and maintenance of Gendang Beleq as Sasak traditional music. In terms of the interviews, this study incorporated several informants (see figure 1), comprising cultural practitioner, educator, tourism awareness group leader, local community, Gendang Beleq craftsman, village head, Gendang Beleq performer, local tourguide, event organizer, and tourist. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected through theoretical studies obtained from various resources, such as documentation from those three chosen villages monographs, collection of Sasak Lombok encyclopedia, Central Statistics Agency of West Nusa Tenggara Province and East Lombok Regency, as well as literature studies in scientific journals.

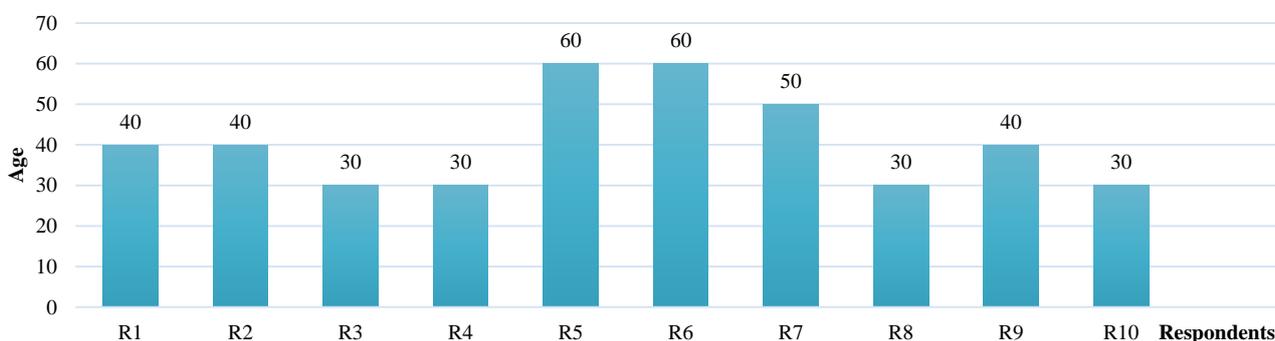


Figure 1. List of respondents (Source: Author's own data)

Note:

R1 : Cultural Practitioner (M)	R6 : Village Head (M)
R2 : Educator (F)	R7 : Gendang Beleq Performer (M)
R3 : Tourism Awareness Group Leader (M)	R8 : Local Tour Guide (M)
R4 : Local Community (M)	R9 : Event Organizer (F)
R5 : Gendang Beleq Craftsman (M)	R10 : Tourist (F)

The process of data analysis encompasses several critical stages, including data preparation, review, coding, categorization, and theme development (Bradley et al., 2007; Vaismoradi et al., 2016). The analytical process must be systematic, transparent, and meticulously documented to uphold the reliability and credibility of the study (Ahmed, 2024). Referring to the study conducted, data analysis was performed utilizing MAXQDA software to facilitate the analytical process. The findings from the interviews were transcribed to a digital platform to undergo the coding phase. Subsequently, the coding outcomes were organized based on the themes development. While qualitative data analysis software is accessible, the researcher remains the principal in the interpretation and conceptualization of the data (Liamputtg, 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical value of Gendang Beleq

Gendang Beleq represents a traditional musical expression characteristic of Sasak ethnicity residing in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara (NTB). The term 'Gendang' refers to a percussion instrument similar to a drum, while 'Beleq' in Sasak lexicon signifies 'large,' thus rendering 'Gendang Beleq' to denote a large drum. Historically, the origins of Gendang Beleq trace back to the period of the kingdom of Lombok. This musical form was employed to invigorate the spirits of soldiers on the verge of departing to or returning from the battlefield. It serves a significant role as a motivator and embodies the strength, valor, and dignity of Sasak community. Beyond its military purpose, Gendang Beleq also possesses substantial spiritual and cultural significance, being utilized in a variety of traditional ceremonies.

Gendang Beleq represents not merely a singular musical instrument, but rather a comprehensive musical ensemble comprised of multiple instruments, among which the most prominent are: a) Gendang Beleq itself: usually played in pairs (*gendang mama*/male drum and *gendang nina*/female drum) by two people who hang the instruments on their shoulders, b) Gong: being a marker of tempo and part in the performance, c) *Cemprang*: additional percussion instruments, d) *Saron* or *petuk*: metal musical instrument resembling gamelan, and e) Bamboo flute: instrument that beautifies the melody. All instruments included can be seen in Figure 2. Meanwhile, in executing Gendang Beleq, the performers engage in rhythmic drumming using their hands while simultaneously executing dynamic movements or dances, rendering Gendang Beleq performance particularly captivating (Figure 3). All instruments are played in an upright position and are often arranged in systematic formations. The dancers' movements are integral to the performance itself. Moreover, Gendang Beleq is usually played and performed at some necessary events, including funeral agenda, cultural festival, traditional competitions and

others, most of which can be seen in Figure 4. Overall, Gendang Beleq transcends mere musical entertainment; it serves as a custodian of the identity and pride of Sasak populace. With a profound historical legacy, vigorous performances, and a pivotal role in both social and spiritual contexts, Gendang Beleq remains an indispensable component of Lombok’s cultural fabric.



Figure 2. Gendang Beleq performance (Source: Author(s)’ own picture)



Gendang Beleq



Gong



Cempang



Saron or Petuk



Bamboo flute

Figure 3. Components of Gendang Beleq (Source: Author(s)’ own picture)

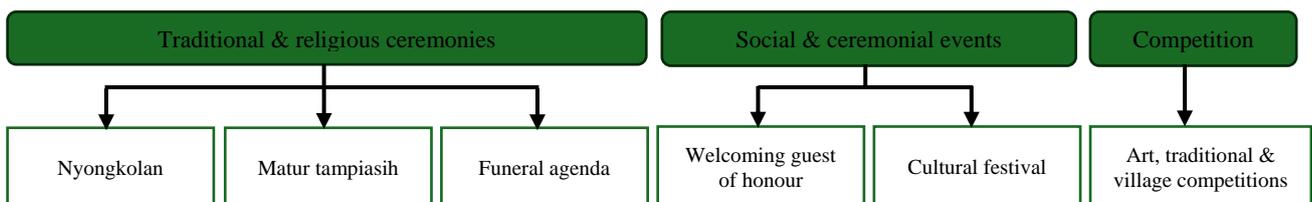


Figure 4. The use of Gendang Beleq in Sasak traditional events (Source: author’s own design)

The impacts and benefits that the preservation of Gendang Beleq

The findings of this study indicate that the preservation of Gendang Beleq as a Sasak traditional music plays a crucial role in promoting sustainability, cultural conservation, and tourists’ benefits. These three overarching themes emerged

strongly from the interview data, showing that the continuation and celebration of Gendang Beleg go beyond artistic value – they contribute meaningfully to environmental awareness, community well-being, and enriching visitor experiences.

The music's dynamic performance and deep cultural significance make it a vital asset for both the local community and the broader goals of sustainable tourism and heritage preservation.

Table 1. Sustainability (I = Interview; R = Respondent; D = Document; J/P = Journal/Paper)

Theme	Subtheme	Quotations	Source
Sustainability	Environmental preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When we play Gendang Beleg at any events, we also talk about protecting the forests where the drum materials come from. It makes us more aware that nature and culture are connected. • We use wood from trees that are replanted. Teaching my apprentices to be responsible with natural resources is part of keeping the music alive. • We combine Gendang Beleg performances with tree-planting days. The music brings the community together, and we use that moment to raise awareness about the environment. 	I; R1 I; R5 I; R9
	Empowerment of local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gendang Beleg performances attract tourists, which creates jobs for our youth and boosts the local economy. It gives pride and purpose to the whole village. • Learning Gendang Beleg helped us connect with our roots. Now I teach kids in my village – it's building confidence and keeping our tradition strong. • Every performance involves many people – dancers, drummers, costume makers. It brings everyone together and supports small businesses in the area. • Tourists love watching Gendang Beleg, and I get to tell them story behind the music. It's a way to share our culture and earn a living at the same time. • We use Gendang Beleg in community events to unite people. It builds teamwork, discipline, and gives young people a sense of responsibility. • Gendang Beleg serves not only as a ceremonial performance but as a unifying force that fosters community identity and intergenerational collaboration. Its revival has stimulated local economies through cultural tourism and empowered youth through active participation in preserving their intangible heritage (Adapted from cultural heritage studies on Lombok traditional arts). 	I; R3 & R6 I; R2 I; R1 & R4 I; R8 I; R6 & R9 D; J/P
	Social enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gendang Beleg strengthens communal bonds by involving various social groups – youth, elders, artisans – in collective performance. This fosters mutual respect, intergenerational dialogue, and a shared sense of identity within Sasak community (Adapted from studies on traditional music and social cohesion in Indonesia). • As a public performance deeply rooted in ritual and celebration, Gendang Beleg plays a role in reinforcing local values, encouraging social participation, and promoting cultural pride, which in turn enhances community resilience (Inspired by ethnographic research on music and community development in Lombok). 	D; J/P D; J/P

Under the theme of sustainability, three key aspects were identified: environmental preservation, empowerment of local communities, and social enhancement. Several respondents, as seen in Table 1, shared that Gendang Beleg performances are often used to raise awareness about protecting forests, particularly as the drum materials come from natural resources.

Some groups have even paired performances with tree-planting activities, showing a direct connection between culture and environmental responsibility. Furthermore, the preservation of Gendang Beleg has economically empowered locals through job creation in performance, craftsmanship, and tourism. It also promotes social cohesion by involving people of various ages and backgrounds, enhancing intergenerational relationships and shared community pride. This is in line with the findings from several relevant studies; such as a study conducted by Liu & Song (2025) who found that traditional Chinese folk music in Lingnan Region promotes the sustainability use of natural resources and highlights the value of biodiversity in marine, forest, and agricultural ecosystems, a study by Grant (2013) who revealed that ethnic minority in Cambodia's highlands use traditional music as a tool for intergenerational communication and community development, and a study by Martínez-Rodríguez et al. (2022) who found that primary education students perceive musical heritage as a valuable sustainable resource, shaping individual and collective identities, and fostering meaningful intercultural dialogue. In terms of cultural preservation, Gendang Beleg serves as a living symbol of Sasak heritage, generating a strong sense of identity and appreciation among both locals and outsiders as seen in Table 2. Respondents emphasized that performances not only keep traditions alive but also serve as unique cultural expressions that differentiate Lombok as a travel destination. Its powerful rhythms and ceremonial context attract tourists, making it an authentic cultural attraction that cannot be found elsewhere.

These cultural experiences contribute to preserving the intangible heritage of Sasak people while supporting the creative economy. This is in line with the findings from several relevant studies; such as a study conducted by Lam (2023) found that Ta Oi people of Thua Thien in Vietnam integrate folk music into community cultural events and religious rituals as a distinctive form of expression, fostering interpersonal bonds and spiritual connections, a study by Csurgó & Smith (2022) highlighting how their traditional music as one of the cultural heritage elements enhances destination uniqueness and appeal to tourists in search of authentic cultural experiences in rural Hungary, and a study by Ezenagu (2020) revealing that Nigeria leverages its cultural, historical, and ethnic components – including traditional music – as a key resources to attract tourists, emphasizing that cultural tourism is driven by visitors' desire to experience unique heritage. Lastly, the preservation of Gendang Beleg provides several benefits for tourists (Table 3), as highlighted by the themes of destination enjoyment, education and awareness, and intercultural interaction.

Visitors enjoy the visual and auditory spectacle of the performances, which enhance their travel experiences and provide deeper cultural immersion. Additionally, Gendang Beleg acts as an educational tool, offering insights into Sasak values, rituals, and social structure. Through interaction with performers and community members, tourists gain cultural

awareness and foster respectful cross-cultural dialogue. This is in line with the findings from several relevant studies; such as a study conducted by Rudan (2020) who found that incorporating traditional music into tourism in Croatia’s Istria and Kvarner Regions enhances the overall tourist experience, a study by Wang (2024) who concluded that multicultural music education plays a vital role in fostering understanding and appreciation of diverse musical traditions, and a study by Croke et al. (2024) that presented a conceptual framework demonstrating that musical participation serves as an effective medium for facilitating intercultural interactions. Altogether, these findings show that Gendang Beleq not only preserves a vital tradition but also supports sustainable tourism, cultural education, and social development.

Table 2. Cultural Preservation (I = Interview; R = Respondent; D = Document; J/P = Journal/Paper)

Theme	Subtheme	Quotations	Source
Cultural conservation	Appreciation of cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gendang Beleq represents our identity as Sasak people. Preserving it means preserving who we are. • I teach young people not just to play the instruments, but to understand the meaning behind every rhythm and movement. • We perform Gendang Beleq at many events, so our generation doesn’t forget our culture. • Making traditional costumes and instruments for Gendang Beleq keeps old crafts alive in the modern world. • Documenting Gendang Beleq through videos and workshops helps more people appreciate and protect this heritage. 	I; R1 I; R2 I; R7 I; R5 I; R9
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We showcase Gendang Beleq in exhibitions to raise awareness about its cultural and historical value. In the old days, Gendang Beleq was played for heroes. Today, keeping it alive is how we honor our ancestors. • Gendang Beleq, as a form of intangible cultural heritage, embodies the spiritual, historical, and social values of Sasak people. Preserving it through education, performance, and documentation is essential for maintaining cultural continuity and fostering local pride (Adapted from UNESCO reports and ethnomusicological studies on traditional Indonesian performing arts). 	I; R1 & R9 I; R6 D; J/P
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When tourists hear Gendang Beleq, they know they’re in Lombok – it’s something they can’t find anywhere else. • We often invite Gendang Beleq groups to perform at our local destinations. Guests love it because it gives them a real taste of Sasak culture. • Including Gendang Beleq in festivals makes our events stand out and leaves a strong impression on visitors. • I’ve been to many islands, but the energy of Gendang Beleq in Lombok made the place unforgettable. • Gendang Beleq is more than music – it tells the story of our land and people. That’s what makes Lombok unique as a destination. • As a vibrant and ceremonial musical tradition unique to Sasak people, Gendang Beleq enhances the cultural identity of Lombok as a tourist destination, offering authentic local experiences that distinguish it from other regions in Indonesia (Adapted from cultural tourism and ethnomusicology literature on traditional Indonesian arts). 	I; R8 I; R1, R8 & R9 I; R9 I; R10 I; R1, R3, R4 & R6 D; J/P
	Tourist attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gendang Beleq, with its powerful rhythms and dynamic performances, serves as a living spectacle that captivates tourists, offering a sensory gateway into Sasak cultural life and enriching the overall travel experience in Lombok (Adapted from tourism and cultural heritage studies on traditional performing arts in Southeast Asia). 	D; J/P

Table 3. Tourists’ Benefits (I = Interview; R = Respondent; D = Document; J/P = Journal/Paper)

Theme	Subtheme	Quotations	Source
Tourists’ benefits	Destination enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They (tourists) said that watching Gendang Beleq performance in the village was the highlight of their trip. The energy, the costumes – it made Lombok feel alive and unforgettable. • We include Gendang Beleq in cultural tours because it brings joy and excitement. Tourists love the rhythm and always ask to see more. • The dynamic and ceremonial nature of Gendang Beleq performances enhances visitor enjoyment by offering rich experiences that connect tourists emotionally to the destination (Adapted from cultural tourism literature on traditional music and visitor engagement). 	I; R8 I; R8 & R9 D; J/P
	Education and awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We use Gendang Beleq in our lessons to teach students about local history and values. It’s a fun way for them to learn their roots. • Through practicing Gendang Beleq, the kids not only learn music but also discipline, teamwork, and cultural pride. • Gendang Beleq performances often include stories and rituals that raise awareness about our traditions, making people more appreciative of Sasak heritage. 	I; R2 I; R2 I; R1
	Intercultural interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gendang Beleq serves as a medium for intergenerational knowledge transfer, teaching younger generations about Sasak history, values, and ceremonial practices (Adapted from ethnomusicology studies on traditional music in education). • As a living tradition, Gendang Beleq fosters cultural awareness by embedding more lessons, social roles, and communal identity within its performances (Based on cultural heritage education frameworks in Southeast Asia). • Incorporating Gendang Beleq into formal and informal learning environments enriches cultural literacy and strengthens students’ connection to their local heritage (Drawn from educational research on arts-based learning and indigenous knowledge). 	D; J/P D; J/P D; J/P

Strategies pertinent to the preservation of Gendang Beleq as a viable sustainable tourism product

To preserve Gendang Beleq as a viable and sustainable tourism product, a multi-prolonged strategy is essential – one that honors its historical depth, supports local communities, protects the environment, and enriches visitor experiences.

First and foremost, cultural preservation must be prioritized by institutionalizing Gendang Beleq performances within tourism programming. This can be done by establishing cultural festivals, heritage circuits, and educational performances that integrate Gendang Beleq into the storytelling of Lombok's Sasak identity. These performances should maintain the authenticity of the traditional ensemble – including gendang mama and nina, gong, cemprang, saron, and bamboo flute – while also educating audiences on their meanings and historical roots (Harnish, 2019). Government support for documentation, digitalization, and training programs can also ensure the transmission of knowledge to younger generations, safeguarding this intangible heritage for future use (Hitchcock et al., 2009; UNESCO, 2003). From sustainability perspective, linking Gendang Beleq to environmental initiatives is a powerful approach. Since the instruments are crafted from natural materials, performances can be paired with environmental campaigns such as tree planting, forest conservation, or sustainable material sourcing. This not only raises ecological awareness but also underlines the interconnectedness of culture and nature (UNESCO, 2012). Supporting eco-friendly workshops for crafting traditional instruments can further minimize ecological impact while preserving artisanal knowledge (Arief & Sulistyadi, 2020; Scheffers, 2018).

Another important dimension is community empowerment. Gendang Beleq can serve as an economic catalyst through job creation in areas such as performance arts, tourism services, traditional costume and instrument production, and tour guiding. Local cooperatives or cultural centers can coordinate performances and allocate revenue for community development, ensuring equitable benefits (Hitchcock et al., 2009). Engaging multiple generations in practice and performance also reinforces social cohesion and fosters intergenerational knowledge transmission (Cohen, 1988; UNESCO, 2003).

Finally, enhancing tourist engagement is vital for sustainability. Tourists seek immersive and meaningful experiences; thus, integrating Gendang Beleq into cultural workshops, interactive exhibitions, or musical storytelling sessions can transform passive viewing into active learning (Richards, 2018). These encounters promote intercultural understanding and respect, creating a deeper appreciation for Sasak traditions (UNWTO, 2016). Informative materials, guides, and interpretation in multiple languages can further enrich the experience, positioning Gendang Beleq not just as entertainment, but as a medium for cultural dialogue and education (Timothy & Boyd, 2003).

In conclusion, the preservation of Gendang Beleq as a sustainable tourism product requires coordinated strategies across cultural, economic, environmental, and educational dimensions (Figure 5). By embracing its multifaceted value, Gendang Beleq can continue to inspire pride among Sasak people and admiration among global visitors.

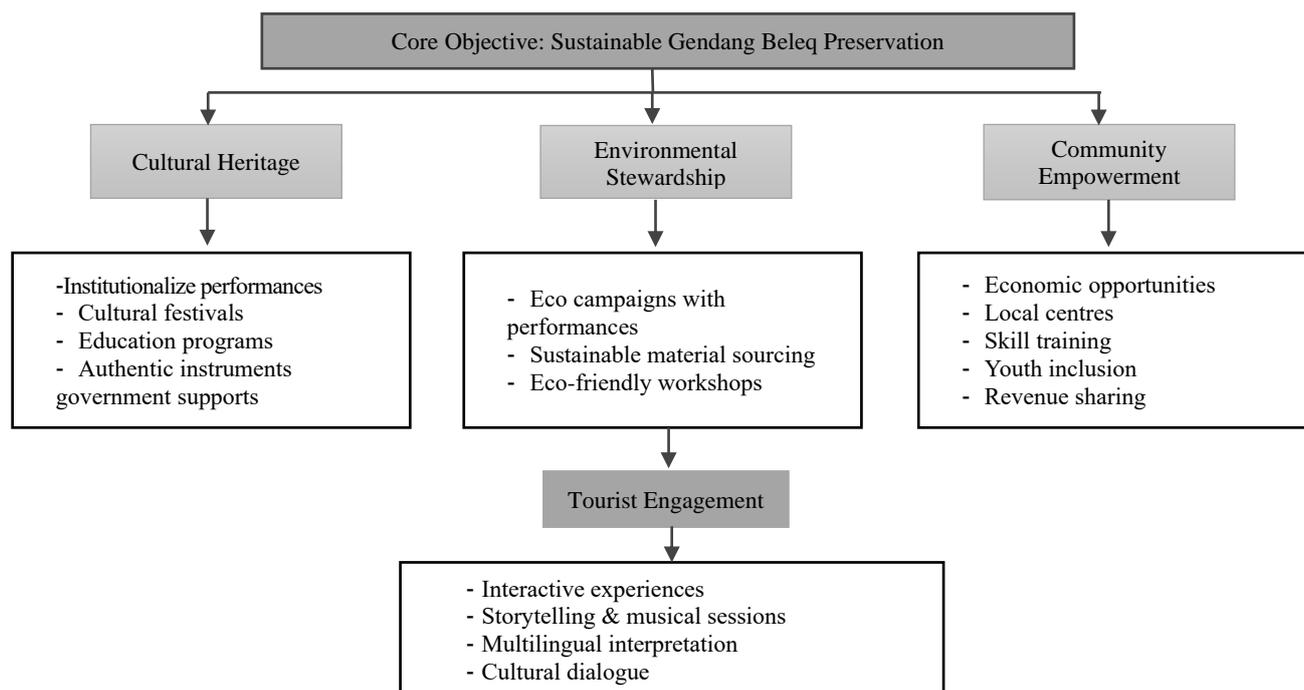


Figure 5. Strategies proposed to preserve Gendang Beleq as a sustainable tourism product (Source: author's own design)

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide substantial support for all three proposed hypotheses concerning the cultural and sustainable tourism value of Gendang Beleq in the context of Sasak society in Lombok.

Hypothesis 1 (H1) posited that Gendang Beleq has a high historical value within Sasak culture of Lombok. The findings strongly affirm this hypothesis. Originating from the era of Lombok kingdom, Gendang Beleq was more than a musical expression – it was a spiritual and motivational force during wartime, symbolizing courage, honor, and cultural identity. Over time, its role has expanded into a vital component of traditional ceremonies, cultural events, and communal gatherings. The detailed structure of the ensemble – including instruments such as gendang mama and nina, gong, cemprang, saron, and bamboo flute – reflects a rich heritage that transcends simple musical function.

As such, Gendang Beleq embodies the historical and symbolic essence of Sasak people, positioning it as a powerful living representation of their intangible cultural heritage. Hypothesis 2 (H2) proposed that Gendang Beleq can be preserved

as a sustainable tourism product. This hypothesis is also well supported by the study findings. Participants highlighted multiple avenues through which Gendang Beleq performances with conservation efforts – such as forest preservation and tree-planting – demonstrates a unique linkage between cultural expression and ecological stewardship. Economically, the tradition provides job opportunities in performance, instrument making, costume design, and tourism services, contributing directly to local livelihoods. Socially, it encourages intergenerational involvement and knowledge transmission, strengthening community ties. These multidimensional benefits align with broader trends in sustainable cultural tourism, where heritage practices are leveraged to support both community development and visitor engagement.

Hypothesis 3 (H3) stated that the preservation of Gendang Beleq has positive benefits for Sasak culture itself. The results confirm this hypothesis by demonstrating that preservation efforts reinforce cultural pride, social cohesion, and community identity. Respondents noted that the continuation of Gendang Beleq fosters cultural appreciation among the younger generation and deepens the sense of belonging within the community. Furthermore, the international appeal of Gendang Beleq performances enhances the visibility of Sasak culture globally, contributing to intercultural understanding and respect. Tourists are not only entertained but educated, gaining meaningful insights into Sasak values, traditions, and worldview. These cultural interactions benefit both hosts and guests, and reinforce the importance of safeguarding intangible heritage as a dynamic and evolving resource. Taken together, the findings affirm that Gendang Beleq is a culturally rich, socially embedded, and environmentally conscious practice that holds substantial potential for sustainable tourism development. Its preservation requires integrated strategies that respect its historical roots, empower local communities, promote environmental stewardship, and enhance visitor experiences. These outcomes are consistent with previous studies in other cultural contexts. First, a study by Lestari & Yusra (2022) who examined various Sasak ethnomedicine cultural practices in Lombok and found that such practices not only preserve culture but also improve the economic quality of Sasak families and communities. Second, a study by Soeswoyo et al. (2025) who found how local traditions (intangible heritage) can be preserved, and how they serve as tourism attractions while encountering challenges like stakeholder capacity, community participation, etc. And third, a study by Choong et al. (2024) who addressed how music is perceived by local communities, how it brings socio-economic benefits, and how this participation influences support. In conclusion, Gendang Beleq is not only a testament to the resilience and creativity of Sasak people but also a promising model for how traditional arts can be meaningfully integrated into sustainable tourism and cultural conservation frameworks.

CONCLUSION

This study has reaffirmed the profound historical, cultural, and sustainable value of Gendang Beleq as an integral component of Sasak heritage in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. The research supports all three proposed hypotheses, highlighting that Gendang Beleq is not merely a traditional musical ensemble, but a living cultural symbol representing the courage, identity, and social cohesion of Sasak people. Beyond its ceremonial roots, the preservation of Gendang Beleq provides measurable benefits in sustainable tourism, community empowerment, environmental consciousness, and intercultural education. Through performances tied to eco-friendly initiatives, economic opportunities for local artisans, and cultural tourism strategies, Gendang Beleq has evolved into a dynamic force for heritage preservation and regional development. This study also underscores the potential of integrating intangible cultural heritage into broader sustainable tourism frameworks. As demonstrated by relevant global studies, traditional music like Gendang Beleq can serve as a unique bridge between past and present, tradition and innovation, local communities and global audiences.

While this study offers meaningful insights into the cultural and sustainable tourism value of Gendang Beleq, it is not without limitations. The reliance on qualitative methods, particularly interviews, may constrain the generalizability of findings, as the perspectives gathered are context-specific and may not reflect the full diversity of Sasak communities. Additionally, the study did not provide quantitative assessments of the economic or environmental impacts of Gendang Beleq-related tourism, nor did it thoroughly address issues such as cultural commodification, authenticity, or generational engagement gaps. Future research should therefore consider mixed-methods approaches to measure tangible impacts, conduct comparative studies across cultural contexts, explore strategies for youth engagement and digital preservation, examine policy and institutional dynamics, and investigate tourist perceptions to enhance sustainable and respectful cultural tourism practices. In summary, while Gendang Beleq is a powerful example of living heritage with multi-dimensional value, its continued relevance will depend on proactive, inclusive, and evidence-based approaches that navigate the balance between preservation and progress.

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