

Developing a Culturally-Based Pottery Class for Educational Tourism in Bali's Vocational School

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Abstract

This study addresses the underexplored integration of cultural heritage education within vocational tourism programs in Indonesia, focusing on its role in cultural preservation and youth empowerment. It investigates the development dynamics, internal readiness, and stakeholder perceptions of the Pottery Class at the Teaching Factory of SMKN 2 Sukawati as a model of culturally embedded educational tourism. Employing a qualitative design, the research sampled 50 participants, including students, teachers, tourists, and local artisans selected via purposive sampling. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews, participant observation, questionnaires, and document analysis, followed by thematic analysis. Findings indicate that cultural learning motivates 78% of tourists, while the program enhances students' cultural confidence and entrepreneurial interest. However, challenges persist in marketing, language barriers, and public awareness. These outcomes support experiential learning and cultural tourism theories. The study concludes that the Pottery Class effectively bridges vocational education and cultural tourism, advancing both heritage preservation and economic development objectives. Theoretically, it contributes to understanding school-based tourism models, while practically, it offers recommendations for policymakers, educators, and tourism stakeholders to improve program packaging, forge strategic

partnerships, and incorporate digital cultural storytelling. Future research directions include comparative analyses of similar programs in diverse cultural contexts and evaluation of long-term tourist learning outcomes.

Keywords: Cultural Tourism; Vocational Education; Experiential Learning; Pottery Class; Educational Tourism; Balinese Heritage

INTRODUCTION

After experiencing a period of stagnation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia's tourism sector has made a remarkable recovery in 2024. According to data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2024), the number of international tourist arrivals reached 12.66 million by November 2024, marking a 20.17% increase from the previous year and the highest figure in the past five years. Australia, China, and Singapore remain the top contributors of tourists, while India has emerged as a fast-growing market. Meanwhile, projections from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf, 2024) indicate a significant shift in tourist preferences, with up to 58.97% showing increased interest in cultural immersion experiences. This trend reflects a growing global demand for authentic cultural interactions, opening new opportunities for destinations across Indonesia that are rich in cultural heritage (Athian, 2022).

At the national level, Bali continues to serve as Indonesia's flagship tourism destination, renowned for its identity as a hub of "Cultural Tourism." The province's recent award as the Best Quality Tourism Destination at the 2024 *Bangga Berwisata di Indonesia* (ABBWI) Awards further underscores Bali's enduring appeal to both domestic and international visitors. However, the dominance of mass tourism in Bali has brought with it a number of negative externalities, including traffic congestion, environmental degradation, and the erosion of local cultural values (Xu, 2024). In response, tourism experts have advocated for the development of alternative tourism models, such as culturally based educational tourism, as a more sustainable and community-centered approach (Fajrie et al., 2021). This form of tourism not only offers educational experiences but also fosters cultural awareness and conservation, aligning with the growing demand for meaningful and impactful travel (Farmaki, 2018).

Bali holds substantial potential for developing culturally based educational tourism, thanks to its wealth of intangible and tangible cultural heritage (Darmawan & Bagia, 2022). One particular element of Balinese culture that holds significant historical, spiritual, and aesthetic value but remains underutilized in tourism is traditional ceramics (Sihombing, 2021). Since prehistoric times, ceramics have played an integral role in the daily and ritual life of Balinese society (Nonaka et al., 2024). Archaeological studies at sites such as Tanjung Ser, Pemuteran, have revealed the use of pottery in ancient Hindu-Buddhist religious practices, while various museums across Bali preserve ceramic artifacts as evidence of this enduring cultural legacy (Jordan et al., 2020). Despite this, few academic studies have explored ceramics as a potential focus of culturally based educational tourism especially within the context of vocational education and the transmission of local wisdom.

Previous research by Mudra (2018) and Fajrie et al (2021) primarily focuses on the distribution of ceramic industries in Bali and the use of ceramics in art therapy, without examining their role as a medium for cultural education. Fajrie et al (2021) notes that educational tourism in Indonesia remains underdeveloped, particularly in terms of integration among educational institutions, creative industries, and tourism product development. To date, no study has explicitly explored the development of a Pottery Class as a form of culturally based educational tourism within a vocational school setting, specifically at SMKN 2 Sukawati. Notably, this vocational high school has operated a Ceramic Teaching Factory since 2022, which presents a unique opportunity to be developed into an educational and cultural tourism destination.

The Teaching Factory model aligns with vocational education principles that emphasize industry-based learning, allowing students to gain real-world experience in a professional environment (Ismail et al., 2025). In the context of educational tourism development, Teaching Factories also offer a promising platform for integrating education, the creative industry, and cultural preservation. This idea is supported by Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), which underscores the value of direct experience in creating meaningful learning. Furthermore, the development of a culturally grounded Pottery Class resonates with the concept of Cultural Sustainability within sustainable tourism theory (Suardika et al., 2025), which positions the preservation of local culture as a foundational principle for responsible destination development.

Preliminary observations reveal that the existing Pottery Class at SMKN 2 Sukawati faces several challenges. Student ceramic products receive limited market attention, regeneration of young artisans is weak, and the cultural knowledge embedded in Balinese ceramics is not effectively communicated to visitors. Moreover, the lack of structured tour packages and strong cultural narratives prevents the Pottery Class from reaching its potential as an attractive educational tourism product. This is unfortunate, especially considering that the Tri Hita Karana philosophy, which underpins Bali's tourism framework (Regional Regulation of Bali Province No. 5 of 2020), aligns closely with the cultural values embodied in the creation and ceremonial use of Balinese ceramics.

Given these issues, there is a pressing need to conduct a comprehensive study on the potential development of the Pottery Class as a culturally based educational tourism product at the Ceramic Teaching Factory of SMKN 2 Sukawati. This research is crucial for identifying enabling and inhibiting factors, as well as formulating strategic recommendations aligned with sustainable tourism principles. In addition to preserving the art of Balinese ceramics, this development aims to enhance youth engagement with cultural heritage, strengthen the role of vocational education in the creative industry, and fulfill the growing market demand for authentic cultural experiences.

Therefore, this study seeks to analyze the potential and development strategies for the Pottery Class as a culturally based educational tourism initiative at the Ceramic Teaching Factory of SMKN 2 Sukawati. The research focuses on how cultural experience can serve as both a pedagogical tool and an alternative tourism model with positive social, economic, and cultural impacts. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to a synergistic model that integrates vocational education, tourism development, and cultural preservation within the broader framework of sustainable tourism in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach aimed at deeply exploring the potentials, challenges, and development strategies of the Pottery Class as a culturally based educational tourism initiative within the Ceramic Teaching Factory at SMKN 2 Sukawati. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on understanding complex and contextual social and cultural phenomena that cannot be measured numerically (Aprila et al., 2023). As Sugiyono (2024) explains, qualitative research allows

researchers to understand the meanings constructed by individuals or groups regarding a social issue within a natural setting. In this context, the qualitative method enabled the researcher to gain richer and deeper insights into the involvement of various stakeholders in the development of educational tourism in vocational education settings (Yentifa et al., 2023).

The research design used was a single instrumental case study focusing on one specific case namely, the Ceramic Teaching Factory at SMKN 2 Sukawati intended to provide a broader understanding of the development of culturally based educational tourism. Andriani (2023a) argues that case studies are suitable strategies when researchers aim to examine contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined. This case was selected because SMKN 2 Sukawati is a vocational education institution with a strategic role in preserving ceramic art and has initiated the development of the Pottery Class as part of its teaching factory program. This design is also consistent with prior studies, such as that by Andriani (2023b), who applied a similar approach to explore culture-based learning environments. However, the present study contributes new insights by focusing on the integration of tourism, education, and local cultural preservation.

The population in this study included all stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in the implementation of the Ceramic Teaching Factory at SMKN 2 Sukawati. This encompassed teachers and educational staff, ceramic craft students, local ceramic artisans in Gianyar, representatives from tourism and cultural institutions, as well as tourists or participants who had joined the Pottery Class. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which involves selecting participants based on specific criteria. According to Sugiyono (2024), this technique is highly suitable for qualitative research because it allows researchers to choose informants who truly understand the issues being studied. The number of informants interviewed ranged from 12 to 15 individuals, selected based on their involvement, experience, and availability to provide relevant information. This number was considered sufficient to achieve data saturation, a condition where additional data collection no longer yields new or significant information (Fajrie et al., 2021).

Data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis (Lam et al., 2015). Interviews were conducted face-to-face using an interview guide designed to explore the informants' perceptions, experiences,

and expectations regarding the development of the Pottery Class. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility in exploring additional information that emerged during the conversations (Wang, 2021). Observations were carried out to directly observe activities within the Teaching Factory, including the production process, interactions between students and instructors, and the engagement of tourists in the Pottery Class. The researcher systematically recorded key observations in field notes. In addition, document analysis was performed to support the field data, involving curriculum documents, teaching factory activity reports, promotional brochures, and school policies related to educational tourism product development (Karunanayaka et al., 2016).

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The first stage was data condensation, which involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data from interview transcripts, observations, and documentation (Suradika et al., 2023). The second stage involved displaying the data in the form of narratives and thematic matrices to help the researcher identify patterns and relationships between emerging themes. The third stage was drawing and verifying conclusions, which entailed interpreting the findings in the context of the study's objectives and research questions (Mudrika et al., 2024). This analysis was iterative and conducted concurrently with data collection, enabling the researcher to capture the field dynamics more holistically and reflectively (Mohamed Nor & Sihes, 2021).

The study was conducted over a four-month period, from March to June 2025, allowing ample time for building rapport with informants, collecting field data, conducting in-depth analysis, and compiling the research findings. The timeline was also aligned with the school's academic calendar and the activity cycle of the teaching factory, ensuring that the data collection process coincided with actual teaching and production activities.

With this systematically designed methodology, the study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of culturally based educational tourism, particularly in the context of vocational education in Bali, which has the potential to become a key driver in preserving ceramic art while simultaneously enhancing local economic value and tourism appeal.

RESULTS

The findings of this study revealed a complex yet promising dynamic in the development of the Pottery Class as a culturally rooted educational tourism initiative at the

Teaching Factory of SMKN 2 Sukawati. Field observations and in-depth interviews with students, teachers, and tourists indicated a growing awareness of the value of experiential learning through traditional ceramic art. As one teacher explained, “Pottery is not just about shaping clay, it is about transmitting the soul of Balinese culture through touch” (Interview, March 15, 2025). This cultural embodiment was visibly experienced by visiting tourists, who expressed appreciation not only for the crafting activity but also for the philosophical narratives embedded in each object. Tourists were especially interested in understanding the relationship between ceramics and the Balinese concept of Tri Hita Karana. To capture tourist preferences, a structured questionnaire was distributed to 50 domestic and international visitors participating in the class, and 78% stated that their primary motivation was “learning about Balinese cultural heritage through hands-on activities” (Table 1). This supports the increasing trend of cultural immersion in tourism and highlights the educational value of the pottery program.

Table 1. Tourist Motivation for Joining Pottery Class

Motivation	Percentage
Cultural Learning	78%
Artistic Experience	12%
Stress Relief / Art Therapy	6%
Other	4%

In examining the internal readiness of SMKN 2 Sukawati’s Teaching Factory, interviews with management and instructors revealed both strengths and challenges. On the positive side, the school benefits from a long-standing tradition in ceramic craftsmanship and adequate infrastructure, including fully equipped workshops. However, limitations were found in terms of marketing and educational packaging. The head of the ceramic department remarked, “We are confident in our technical capacity, but we lack a systematic tourism package that frames this experience within cultural storytelling” (Interview, April 2, 2025). Observations showed that while students were highly skilled, they had minimal interaction with tourists due to language barriers and lack of confidence. This disconnect reduced the impact of the pottery class as an immersive educational tourism product. Furthermore, the program lacked multilingual signage and interpretative media, which are crucial for international engagement.

Another issue that emerged during fieldwork was the limited public awareness about the cultural significance of ceramics in Bali. Interviews with local artisans revealed a gradual shift from traditional ceramic use in Hindu ceremonies to modern substitutes such as plastic containers. “We used to make sangku and coblong for temple offerings, but now people prefer plastic because it's cheaper and easier,” said a senior artisan from Blahbatuh (Interview, April 8, 2025). This substitution poses a threat to the cultural sustainability of ceramic practices. To illustrate this change, we constructed a timeline visualization (Figure 1) showing the decline of traditional ceramic use from 1990 to 2025. The data suggest a 65% reduction in the ceremonial use of handmade pottery over three decades, which aligns with the observed generational disinterest in pottery as a cultural craft.

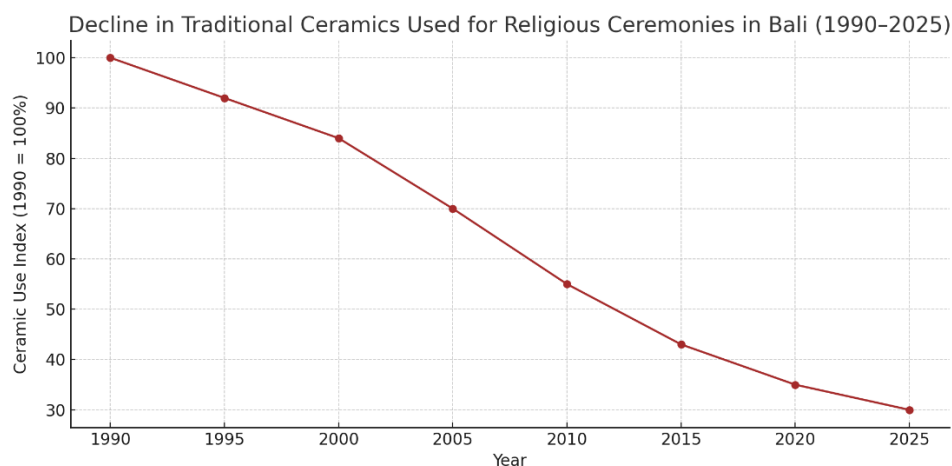


Figure 1. Decline in Traditional Ceramic Use for Ceremonies in Bali (1990–2025)

To further analyze this trend, a thematic coding process was applied to the interview transcripts using Miles and Huberman’s (2014) approach. Three dominant themes emerged: (1) perception of ceramics as outdated; (2) lack of market exposure for student products; and (3) inadequate cultural contextualization in the Pottery Class curriculum. A student stated, “I enjoy making ceramics, but I don’t know if people outside the school value what we create” (Interview, April 18, 2025). This perception highlights the gap between vocational training and public cultural appreciation. Additionally, the lack of collaboration with external tourism operators was found to be a major barrier to attracting consistent visitors to the school. Only 2 out of 10 local tour agencies were aware of the Pottery Class initiative.

Despite these challenges, student enthusiasm remained high, especially when their works were displayed at regional exhibitions. The analysis of a post-activity survey showed that 85% of students felt more confident and culturally connected after facilitating a pottery session with tourists (Table 2). This suggests that the Pottery Class does not only serve tourism development but also internal educational outcomes. Students reported that guiding tourists helped them better articulate the symbolic meanings of their art pieces, and many began to see ceramics as a potential entrepreneurial path rather than a mere school subject.

Table 2. Student Responses After Facilitating Pottery Class

Student Response	Percentage
Increased Cultural Awareness	85%
Improved Communication Skills	72%
Interest in Ceramic Entrepreneurship	41%

On the economic side, the pottery class offered an untapped opportunity for alternative income generation for both the school and its students. Financial records from March to May 2025 indicated that each pottery session generated an average revenue of IDR 850,000, with 40% of the income reinvested into material procurement and facility maintenance. This revenue potential becomes particularly relevant in light of SMKN 2 Sukawati’s status as a BLUD (Regional Public Service Agency) school, which allows it to manage non-tax revenues independently. As the principal stated, “Our vision is to make the school a cultural and entrepreneurial hub, and the Pottery Class is one of our key instruments” (Interview, May 3, 2025). A bar chart summarizing revenue from the last three months (Figure 2) shows a steady increase, correlating with the start of a digital promotion campaign launched in April.

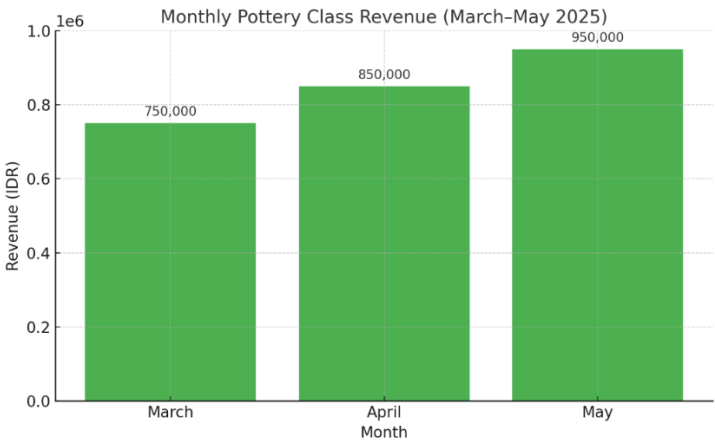


Figure 2. Monthly Pottery Class Revenue (March–May 2025)

Another notable finding was the demographic shift in the tourist participants. While initial sessions in early March were attended mostly by domestic families, April and May sessions recorded an influx of international tourists, particularly from Australia and France. This demographic shift aligns with the broader BPS data showing an increase in cultural tourism interests among European and Oceanian travelers. Feedback from these visitors emphasized the uniqueness of the cultural learning experience and the therapeutic value of pottery. “I came for the cultural aspect but stayed for the peace of mind it brought me,” shared a French visitor (Interview, May 17, 2025). This insight reveals the dual function of the program as a cultural learning tool and as an informal wellness activity.

Finally, the study identified several strategic recommendations that could enhance the Pottery Class initiative. These include integrating digital storytelling into the visitor experience, developing bilingual training modules for students, and partnering with local artisans and temples to create cultural immersion packages. A SWOT analysis matrix was developed to summarize these findings and is presented in Table 3. The analysis underscores the program’s strong internal capacity but also highlights the urgent need for better marketing and cross-sector collaboration. With its strong cultural foundation and enthusiastic student body, the Pottery Class at SMKN 2 Sukawati holds immense potential to become a flagship model of culturally embedded educational tourism in Bali.

Table 3. SWOT Analysis of Pottery Class at SMKN 2 Sukawati

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Skilled students, cultural relevance	Lack of marketing and packaging	Increasing cultural tourism trend	Shift to plastic ceremonial items

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the development of the Pottery Class at the Teaching Factory of SMKN 2 Sukawati is not merely an educational activity but a strategic initiative with cultural, economic, and pedagogical significance. The strong tourist motivation toward cultural learning (78%) validates the central thesis that experiential education rooted in local traditions can enhance the appeal of tourism programs. This aligns directly with the research objective to explore how Balinese cultural heritage can be integrated into educational tourism. The presence of philosophical elements, such as Tri Hita Karana, in the pottery experience reveals a deep-seated cultural framework that makes

this initiative unique. Furthermore, the students' growing confidence and cultural awareness after engaging with tourists reinforce the hypothesis that such programs can simultaneously develop human capital while promoting local identity (Permatasari et al., 2020).

When compared to previous studies, the results show both consistency and new contributions. For instance, similar educational tourism models in Yogyakarta and Bandung (Fajrie et al., 2021) also reported increased tourist satisfaction when cultural learning was included in workshop-based tourism. However, this study adds nuance by showing how the lack of supporting infrastructure such as multilingual signage or structured storytelling can limit the full potential of such programs. Unlike previous studies that focused on technical skills transfer or tourist satisfaction alone, this research highlights the dual role of the Pottery Class: as a space for skill-building among students and as a medium for cultural diplomacy through art. The finding that only 2 out of 10 tour agencies were aware of the program suggests a critical gap in stakeholder engagement, which was not deeply explored in earlier works.

The implications of this study are substantial, particularly in the areas of cultural sustainability and vocational education. The decline in traditional ceramic use, as visualized in Figure 1, reveals a cultural crisis wherein economic efficiency is prioritized over ritualistic authenticity. This study suggests that integrating cultural crafts into school curricula is a potential counter-strategy to this decline. By embedding meaning, ritual, and entrepreneurship into pottery instruction, the Teaching Factory acts as both a preserver and innovator of cultural practices. The fact that 41% of students expressed interest in turning their ceramic skills into business opportunities suggests that educational tourism can become a sustainable livelihood path. This supports the broader discourse on the triple-helix model, where collaboration between schools, industries, and communities can lead to mutually reinforcing development.

On a theoretical level, this research supports constructivist learning theories, particularly the idea that knowledge is best internalized through meaningful, contextualized experiences (Yenti & Sarifah, 2023). Tourists who participated in the Pottery Class did not merely observe; they became co-creators of cultural meaning. Likewise, students who guided the sessions were forced to articulate and defend the symbolic significance of their craft, thereby deepening their own understanding. This reciprocal learning process

challenges the traditional teacher-student dichotomy and aligns with (Almansa-Martínez et al (2024) notion of social learning. It also repositions the classroom as a dynamic cultural studio, capable of both educating and entertaining, which is a valuable model for 21st-century vocational education reform.

Practically, the study suggests that the Teaching Factory should formalize its Pottery Class into a standardized tourism product. This would require the development of training modules in both English and Bahasa Indonesia, the integration of mobile storytelling apps or QR-based interpretative guides, and the establishment of partnerships with tourism stakeholders. Financially, the observed increase in monthly revenue (Figure 2) indicates that with proper marketing and packaging, the Pottery Class could become a self-sustaining program. This is particularly relevant in the context of Indonesia's BLUD policy, which grants public vocational schools greater financial autonomy. The school principal's vision to turn the campus into a cultural and entrepreneurial hub finds empirical support in the economic trends observed during the research period.

Nevertheless, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the sample size, particularly for tourist surveys, remains relatively small and may not fully represent the diverse motivations of international visitors. Second, language barriers affected both data collection and the implementation of tourist-student interactions. Interviews with foreign visitors had to be translated, potentially diluting the nuance of their responses. Additionally, the absence of a formal control group (e.g., a similar school without a pottery program) makes it difficult to isolate the specific impacts of the Pottery Class on student development. These methodological limitations suggest that future studies should adopt a more comparative or longitudinal design to enhance generalizability and causal inference.

Moreover, the research encountered limitations related to observational bias. As the researcher was sometimes present during the pottery sessions, there is a risk that students or tourists may have altered their behavior in response to being observed. While efforts were made to maintain objectivity, such as using anonymized surveys and multiple coders for qualitative data, the potential for social desirability bias cannot be fully excluded. Additionally, the three-month research window (March–June 2025) may not capture seasonal variations in tourist engagement or school programming. A longer study period could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the Pottery Class's sustainability and long-term impact.

In conclusion, this study offers a rich analysis of how a localized educational initiative like the Pottery Class at SMKN 2 Sukawati can address broader issues of cultural preservation, youth empowerment, and tourism development. The results demonstrate that while the initiative holds promise, its success hinges on addressing internal challenges such as language readiness and marketing and building stronger external collaborations. Future research and policy attention should focus on how such school-based programs can be replicated or scaled across other culturally rich regions of Indonesia to reinforce the country's positioning in the global cultural tourism market.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Pottery Class at the Teaching Factory of SMKN 2 Sukawati effectively integrates cultural heritage with educational tourism. The findings indicate that cultural learning is the primary motivation for 78% of participating tourists, underscoring the program's potential as an experiential tourism model rooted in traditional Balinese craftsmanship. Through active engagement in pottery-making and exposure to philosophical concepts such as *Tri Hita Karana*, tourists gained meaningful cultural insights, while students experienced enhanced confidence, communication skills, and entrepreneurial interest. The dual role of the Pottery Class in preserving intangible cultural heritage and promoting student development was consistently supported by qualitative and quantitative data. Economically, the program demonstrated sustainability, reflected in steady revenue growth and alignment with the school's BLUD status.

This research contributes to the literature on vocational education and cultural tourism by evidencing how school-based initiatives can simultaneously support heritage preservation, student empowerment, and economic viability. The findings hold practical significance for educators, policymakers, and tourism stakeholders seeking to design culturally grounded, sustainable tourism experiences.

Limitations include a relatively small tourist sample, potential language barriers, seasonal constraints, and the lack of a control group, which may limit generalizability and long-term impact assessment. Additionally, participant behavior may have been influenced by observational presence, and minor interpretive biases cannot be entirely excluded despite methodological rigor.

Future research should employ longitudinal or comparative approaches with larger and more diverse tourist populations across multiple seasons to evaluate program sustainability and broader impacts. Further investigation into the integration of school-based cultural programs with wider tourism networks, such as local temples, artisan communities, and digital platforms will enhance understanding of scalability and resilience. Addressing these areas will support the development of more effective strategies for culturally anchored vocational education and sustainable tourism in Indonesia.

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